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THE PRACTICE OF LOCAL PARTNERSHIP IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT
The Cases of Newent (UK) and Sault (France)

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ABSTRACT

This research is concerned with the practice of local partnerships in the promotion of rural development with particular reference to two case study areas, Newent in the UK and Sault in France.

In recent years, local partnership working has become increasingly common in the promotion of rural development. It is presented by academics, politicians, policy makers and practitioners as 'inherent' and 'imperative' to the preparation and implementation of rural development programmes today. However, there still exists limited understanding and knowledge about local partnership working in practice and the validity and importance of such statements. To advance this understanding the present research had four main objectives organised around the identification and the exploration of four main issues: the reasons, the processes, the outcomes and the implications of the local partnership practice in rural development.

The author has sought to elucidate the subject by means of a detailed exploratory study involving the longitudinal observation of two particular examples of local partnerships. Two case study areas were selected, both with an active history of rural development initiatives and partnership working at parish or commune level. Newent is a small town in the Forest of Dean, which has sought to address growing socio-economic decline in recent years by preparing and implementing a regeneration strategy through local partnership working. Sault is a village in Provence, which has had to respond to depopulation and various economic difficulties as well as the closure in 1996-98 of the military base of Albion. Qualitative data on local partnership evolution and operation, collected in both areas between 1998 and 2001, was assembled from documentary research, semi structured interviews and direct observation at meetings.

This investigation has allowed the identification of various explanations for the recent increase in the practice of local partnership in rural development, explanations which are mainly associated with the underlying context of the rural development process today and with the meaning of the partnership concept itself. From this investigation local partnership working in rural development has emerged as a long-term, progressive, comprehensive and pragmatic process that is organised over time. Its existence and longevity depend primarily on the local context, the existence of opportunities, the issues to be addressed, a broad mobilisation of local/rural actors, a flexible local space, some local re-organisation as well as regular and concrete achievements. In this respect, the most commonly reported outcomes of local partnership working pertain to the process of partnership working more than to the tangible outputs that may have resulted from it. These meet the initial expected benefits from such a practice as for example broader participation, greater reciprocity between rural development actors and territories, and an increase in local capacity for development action.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Marie-Eva James

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“The thing with partnerships, is that theoretically, text book, we all know they are a good idea, we all know we should be in there, we all know we should be active and supportive, and we all know in theory, how it should work, but it doesn’t quite happen like that because, what happens is that people have different views, agendas, and different priorities, and a strong character and personality that can make or break. You know partnerships can be small and stunningly good; they can be so huge and unwieldy, where nothing happens at all. It is a combination of the people and situations and the starting point of something bigger. It is the money, which will kick-start everything. Partnerships, you can’t achieve anything without them. They are a nightmare to organise, to administer and maintain, but you have to strive for them, because to make something really successful you have to get owners in it... Now of course if it is a great success then all is well and people want to be part of it. If it is a hopeless mess nobody wants to get really involved. So it is a kind of double edged thing, where you have to start with the premise that everybody should be involved.”

*Extract from Interview with the
Economic Development Officer of Gloucestershire County Council, July 1998*

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Rise of the Local Partnership Approach in Rural Development

The development of rural areas is increasingly recognised as a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted and multi-actors process (Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2000), a process that requires a global and integrated vision of rural economy and society in order to accommodate the heterogeneous nature and function of rural areas and their local specificities (Bryden, 1998).

New directions in rural development have revealed the need for '*comprehensive and integrated strategies*', which call for the combinations of all activities of development and the inclusion of all the target population (Saraceno, 1994; Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998). They have also exposed the importance of '*locally driven*' and '*actor-oriented*' approaches (Hindess, 1986; Teisserenc, 1994). Such approaches bring all levels of government and a wide range of cross-sectoral interests into innovative forms of cooperative relationships and arrangements (Le Roy, 1997; Goodwin, 1998). These arrangements are referred to today as '*Partnerships*' (OECD, 1990; Cork Declaration, 1996).

Partnerships are introduced as a prerequisite to rural development. They are seen to have the potential to offer a mechanism for bringing together the variety of interests and perspectives necessary to implement integrated actions and therefore to accommodate the increasing diversity of rural socio-economic conditions (Mannion, 1996; Le Roy, 1997; Ilbery, 1998). These 'interests' include single individuals and groups drawn from the public sector in the form of central government, public agencies and local authorities representatives, the private sector, and increasingly today the voluntary and community sectors (Nevin and Shiner, 1995). The partnership approach is a widely promoted and implemented approach in Europe and other developed economies (OECD, 1990, Westholm *et al.*, 1999). It influences, and is present in, a wide range of key policy statements applicable to the development and management of rural areas in Europe. The Cork Declaration (1996, p. 3), for example, insists on the need for "rural development policy based on partnership and co-operation between all levels concerned", reinforcing the tendency towards partnership in a number of government and European funded policy and programmes.

The term 'partnership' is commonly defined as an "association of persons or organisations having a joint interest and characterising a combination of unions" (Collins Dictionary, 1996, p. 536). However, there is no universally agreed or consistent definition of 'partnership' in the field of rural development, nor is there an agreed or consistent definition within or common to the other fields promoting partnership.

Indeed, whilst, 'Partnership' has become a key term and notion in the field of Rural Development today, it has been a key term and notion in the field of organisational management, urban regeneration and local economic development and political administration for some time. In the field of organisational management, the formation of partnership/collaborative arrangements among organisations has been considered as a strategy that organisations can use to cope with the complexity of their environment (Gray and Wood, 1991). In the field of political administration, partnership has been considered as a partial solution to resource constraints and a way to cope with the increasing fragmentation of the institutional environment (Hambleton, 1995; Ricordel, 1995). In the field of urban regeneration, partnership has been seen as a useful approach in tackling the multidimensional problems and issues of urban decay (Lawless, 1991; Bailey *et al.*, 1995; Le Galès, 1995a). Finally in the field of local economic development, partnership working is viewed as valuing and accommodating the wide variety of actors who take part in the development process (Bennett and Krebs, 1991).

A commonly held view across these different fields is that partnership working is used to solve multi-dimensional problems that are unmanageable for one single organisation (Waddock, 1989) generating a new and necessary coalition that, until recently, could not be contemplated. It is presented indeed as a politically neutral approach that appeals to all and hence is able to bring together such previously separate groups drawn from the public, private, voluntary and community sector (Hutchinson, 1994; Teisserenc, 1994). Another commonly held view is that partnership helps to foster added value and synergy. Indeed the theory is that "pooling expertise and resources in a complementary rather than purely competitive fashion can increase the total impact of a project, the whole being greater than the sum of the parts" (Haughton and Whitney, 1989, p. 9). Another forwarded argument is that partnership can reduce the duplication of provision and actions (Hutchinson, 1994).

The notion of partnership in rural development has been largely inspired by these different conceptions. It is also inspired by community development and participatory

conceptions (Barnes, 1999, Wright, 1990), reflecting the growing belief that the role of the voluntary and community sector should be raised to that of 'partners' in the search for development solutions (Warburton, 1998).

The partnership approach is strongly supported and encouraged by policies and is also welcomed by rural development practitioners (Edwards *et al.*, 1999, Wilcox and Charlton, 1997; Teisserenc, 1994). All praise the potential benefits that can be derived from this approach particularly in undertaking local rural development action (LEADER Observatory, 1997). These supposed benefits are many and include for example local social cohesion, coherence in development strategy, pooling of resources, dynamism, and innovation.

Yet, still little is known about the application of the local partnership approach in practice and further understanding and knowledge about local partnership working merits much closer study. With this in mind, the following section discusses the research context.

1.2 The practice of Local Partnership in Rural Development: The Research Context

In an increasingly diversified and differentiated countryside (Ilbery, 1998, Marsden, 1998b), local partnership working has risen to the top of the political and policy agendas at local, central and European levels. Whether organically grown, promoted or imposed by the requirements of applications for central government or European funding, local partnership working has become a widespread practice and an important model of development in rural Europe today (Westholm *et al.*, 1999; Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998, Mannion, 1996).

As noted earlier, whilst it is the object of considerable and regular acknowledgment within the rural development literature, research on local/rural development partnerships is still in its infancy. For some time, knowledge on these particular partnerships has been confined to the potential merits and/or risks of the practice.

The general consensus that local partnership working is inherent to the implementation of local rural development action disguises the limited understanding that exists about its application in practice. Indeed, much remains to be known about the practice of local

partnership in rural development; about the circumstances of local partnership creation; about the process of partnership development; about the mechanisms employed and the processes involved; about the constraints and difficulties of local partnership working, and about the achievements of this practice. These are strong arguments for furthering the knowledge and understanding of the increasingly popular practice of local partnership in rural development.

In this respect and in the light of current knowledge available on partnerships and partnership working, in different arenas of research and most particularly in development research, the present author acknowledges that researching partnership holds considerable challenges (Lawless, 1993; Bailey, 1994). Indeed, 'partnership' emerges as a topical, rapidly evolving as well as complex notion and practice. It is by its essence a notion and practice that federates a variety of relationships, institutionalised or not, between various sectors. It covers a vast number of applications that are characterised by variable geometry, content and modalities. Finally, a variety of approaches and interpretations potentially exist in relation to a practice that holds multiple and inter-related analytical implications (Chatrie and Uhaldeborde, 1995; Lowndes *et al.*, 1997).

Amongst the different areas of research that focus on partnership, three particular ones have been identified as offering concurrently notable insights into partnership and partnership working. These include regeneration and development research, administration and political science research and organisational management research. Reference to the existing knowledge on partnership within these three areas has been considered necessary to the general understanding of partnership before going on to contemplate the scope for investigation of the local partnerships in rural development.

Partnership has been central to *Regeneration /Development research* (Mackintosh, 1992; Lawless, 1993; Teisserenc, 1994; Osborne, 1998; Hall, 2000). Whether it is referred to as co-operation between local authorities of the same or different levels and government agencies, to the inter-relationship between big firms or small businesses, or amongst network of SMEs, there has been a growing argument, in recent years, that development is today tied strongly to the different links that are established between the actors of development, drawn from the public, private or voluntary sector (Tourjanski-Cabart, 1996). Bennett and Krebs (1991) explain that partnership, in a development perspective, is used to argue that not only factors of production but also the actors involved in managing each factor have to be brought together to secure development. Following this

perspective, various authors suggest that partnership and partnership working raises a number of issues in relation to the actors, the strategy and the pedagogy of development (Teisserenc, 1994). Hence, the study of partnership in relation to regeneration and development may have a focus on a number of issues, such as community participation, consensus, capacity, and strategy building as well as issues of territorial and structural organisation (Le Roy, 1997; Fordham *et al.*, 1999).

Partnership has also been at the core of '*Organisational and Management research*'. For the last 20 years there has been amongst organisational theorists the resolute belief that "there is a need for flexibility in order to cope with rapid change and with the need of diversity, as opposed to the pursuit of standardisation that characterised the mass production era. The development of more flexible patterns of working will depend very much on the creation of co-operation between organisations and loosely coupled systems through partnership" (Child, 1987, in Leach *et al.*, 1994, p. 46). From this perspective, various investigations have been undertaken concerned with conceptualising and theorising the cooperation between organisations. Research in this field has been particularly concerned with working towards the identification of the needs for alliances, the steps involved in creating those alliances, the potential for co-operation to solve intractable problems and the factors related to the success of partnership (Waddock, 1986; Gray and Wood, 1991).

Finally, partnerships have recently been the object of particular attention within *Political Administration and Political Sciences Research* particularly through the emerging concept of '*governance*' (Le Galès, 1995a; Goodwin, 1998; Jones and Little, 2000). Indeed partnership working is explained within the broader change in state structures and the new processes of local government (Stoker, 1999). Cherrett (1999, p.112) maintains that partnership cannot be isolated from "the structures and processes of governance within which they operate [as] partnerships develop as part of these processes, reflecting and contributing to their nature". Therefore the analysis of partnership in terms of governance leads to a focus on a variety of issues, including those of legitimacy, democracy and accountability, but also issues of power and conflicts (Jones and Little, 2000, Edward *et al.*, 2000).

Research in these three different fields brings forth the wide conceptual and practical importance of partnership working and emphasises the wide range of settings in which partnerships are being undertaken. These three fields also bring forward the potential

analytical perspectives that embrace this notion and its practice. It provides insights into the origins and the meaning of the notion of partnership as well as into the variety of mechanisms, processes and outcomes that are currently associated with the practice of partnership.

As discussed above, the local partnership approach has become a widespread principle and practice in rural development and is currently implemented in many countries in Europe and other developed economies. Included in these countries are France and the UK, which in the last 10 years have both witnessed the increasing promotion of local partnership for addressing rural development (i.e. The Rural White Paper, 1995 and 1999; Loi D'Orientation pour l'Aménagement du Territoire, 1995 and 1999). These two countries, have witnessed also a wide application of the practice of local partnership. Whilst evolving in two different environment due to their respective national contexts, interesting parallels can be drawn from the practice of partnership that characterise both the UK and France in rural development. Although there are many differences particularly in relation to the political and local management culture and the local structures and the distribution of power within the local government, both experiences share very similar issues, arguments and expectations.

In choosing to provide a UK-French dimension to this research, the present author does not disregard the role and importance of the national economic, political, institutional and cultural contexts on the way partnerships emerge, are formed and develop. On this particular point, Newman and Verpreat (1999, p. 487), reinforce the work of Savitch (1998), and establish that partnership experiences and developments are highly dependent on national political and cultural contexts. They argue that the existing forms of partnership “seem to reflect deep rooted traditions and cultures in the business of government and different histories of state formation”. However they also argue that the common practice of partnership has caused national political and institutional contexts to be gradually *'re-negotiated'* and are now presenting common patterns. Consequently, it is important, when looking at partnerships, to consider national institutional and political contexts where they meet today, ruled by the politics of partnership, and not only as *'static background'*. In opting for such an approach, it becomes possible to go beyond contextual contrasts and parallels, and concentrate on partnership's internal dynamics.

The author has decided to examine case studies in both France and England for this research, not as a comparative study but rather, for the purpose of uncovering the extent

of the presence of issues of common interests. Such an examination is chosen as a means of establishing some general principles of local partnership practice within the context of rural development. The aim and objectives for this research are now considered.

1.3 Research Aim, Questions and Objectives

In the last few years, local partnerships have become common practice in rural development. Local partnership working is presented by academics, politicians, policy makers and practitioners as inherent and imperative to the preparation and implementation of rural development action today. However, there only exists a limited understanding and knowledge about local partnership working in practice and about the reasons on the basis of which such statements can be made. To advance this understanding the present research draws on the experience of practical examples of local partnership, operating in the UK and in France.

Four research questions form the foundation of this research:

1. What are the reasons for the recent increase in the practice of local partnership in rural development?
2. What are the key characteristics of local partnership working mechanisms employed to address rural development?
3. What are, in practice, the processes involved in and the outcomes associated with local partnership working in rural development?
4. How appropriate and capable is the local partnership approach in rural development?

To assist in the development of a response to these questions four main objectives for this research have been established:

1. To identify and explore the reasons for the growing use of partnership practice with particular reference to the application of partnership practice to the rural development domain;

2. To examine the local partnership arrangements that are currently employed to deliver rural development;
3. To examine what is currently known about the practice of partnership and, through a case study approach,
 - a) explore and describe how local partnerships come about and operate in practice,
 - b) identify and describe the perceived outcomes of the practice of local partnership;
4. To establish what are the implications of the local partnership practice in the domain rural development and to discuss the extent to which the expectations placed on partnership are justified in practice.

1.4 The Research Approach

“Serious problems exist for the researcher in coming to grips with the nature and purpose of partnership” (Bailey, 1994, p. 293)

The nature of the research questions and objectives, combined with the practical aspect of the subject under consideration, has shaped the design of this study. The terrain of research being relatively new, rather complex and with no established and systematic analytical framework, the study design follows an inductive and exploratory approach.

Objectives 1, 2 and 3 required a review of academic and applied research literature: literature pertaining to the notion and practice of partnership, to rural development and to local rural development partnerships was examined, and provides the conceptual framework for this research. The literature proposes a number of methodological approaches that are suitable to the study of partnership in its broad definition, approaches that are also reviewed. A critical literature and methodology review has therefore been constructed, the conclusions of which have influenced the design and undertaking of the empirical investigation.

The investigation of local partnership working in rural development means focussing on a context dependent, action-oriented, and pragmatic process (Bailey *et al.*, 1995). Each local area has its own history, actors and specific way to approach local partnership working. Consequently only an observer grounded in the local situation can seize the different mechanisms and processes involved, current or past, and the complex links that

result in local partnership working. With objectives 2 and 3 in mind, a research approach that allows an investigation into the practice of local partnership within its 'real-life context' (Yin, 1994) has been preferred. The empirical investigation therefore consists of case studies. The resource and time constraints on this research, imposed by its scope and practicality, have encouraged the identification of just two case studies, one in the UK and one in France.

A commonly held view in the literature is that partnership working is difficult to investigate due to the numerous parties involved who may be drawn from various institutional and policy frameworks (Bailey *et al.*, 1995), and the degree of informality in the relationships and interactions (Lowndes *et al.*, 1997). The sparsity of theoretical literature available relating to the investigation of the partnership practice compounds this problem. Consequently, the mechanisms and processes characterising the partnership have to be deduced from documentation and interviews with key players.

The nature of the empirical investigation has required the use of a multi-methods approach. A set of research methods is therefore used to explore the experience of local partnership in the two study areas selected for this investigation. These include an examination of historical documents, the use of semi-structured open-ended interviews with a variety of key actors, and attendance at meetings. Relying essentially on individual perceptions and written sources and given the issues that characterise the investigation of partnership practice, including for example such issues as 'motivation', 'representation', 'mobilisation', and 'interaction', the analysis of the material collected is predominantly of a qualitative nature. The different methods used for the collection and the analysis of the data are presented and discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

Although the context for empirical research concerns the UK and France, this research does not make any comparative claims, as cross-national comparisons would distract this research from its intended purpose. Rather than drawing comparisons between the UK and France the author suggests that mutual benefit can be drawn from the individual experience of each case.

1.5 Introduction to the Case Studies

A common approach to investigating partnership working has been to rest the investigation on a formal or semi-formal partnership arrangement or structure. The various examples of local partnership arrangements and practice in rural development, in France and in the UK, shows that the practice of local partnership in rural development is not confined to a specific body or structure. The author has had therefore the idea to select two analogous study areas, an English parish and a French commune, both in a rural area, both showing evidence of an active history of rural development initiatives and partnership working experiences at parish or commune level. The targeted areas had to be accessible in both countries to minimise travelling time and expense. Hence, the author was advised by her research advisor to look for a study area near to home in France and near to Cheltenham. Two areas, at the level of the district were selected thus:

- the Forest of Dean District (Gloucestershire, UK);
- the Département of Vaucluse (Provence Alpes Côtes D'Azur, France).

Within these areas, the Parish of Newent and the Commune of Sault were selected. The mode of and reasons for selection is discussed in chapter 4.

1.5.1 Newent, Gloucestershire, UK

The practice of local partnership observed in the Newent area rested on an organically grown and predominantly Town Council-led approach. The practice united a variety of organisations and representatives drawn from various sectors and evolved through different stages. It really began to develop as part of the work undertaken through the preparation of a locally-based regeneration strategy. It then evolved through the application to a Rural Challenge Bid; the work carried out as part of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) to culminate, at the close of the study period, in the creation of the Newent Millennium Trust and the development of new linkages with the other rural towns of the Forest under the aegis of the Forest of Dean Regeneration Partnership.

1.5.2 Sault, Vaucluse, France.

The practice of partnership observed in the Sault area rested on a institutionalised, local authorities-led partnership practice. Although there had been evidence of early

partnership efforts in the mid 1980s at communal and intercommunal level, the local rural development partnership practice took a new dimension during the 1990s. This started with the creation of the *Comité de Bassin d'Emploi* of the Pays of the Ventoux (CBE P-V) in 1991, uniting local elected representatives and local entrepreneurs to discuss and plan the future of the 'employment area'. The practice developed further with the creation of the *Community of Communes of the Pays de Sault (CdC-PS)*, in 1992, when the municipality of Sault with 4 other municipalities, decided to join their efforts and resources to formulate a common local development strategy. In 1995-96, the local partnership practice moved forward with the pact of co-operation between the CBE-PV and the CdC P-S and with the announcement of the dismantling of a major Air Force Base. The partnership practice therefore developed at a new level with the creation of an '*Intercommunal*' Syndicate, the SIVU of Albion. A supra-communal grouping, this structure re-grouped 13 communes (including Sault) and two 'Comités de Bassin d'Emploi' and launched the preparation of a redevelopment plan for the areas significantly affected by the closure of the Air Force base, as this is explained further in chapter 4.

Hence, the case studies for this research reflect on two examples of local partnership practice concerned with the engagement of both a rural parish in UK and a rural commune in France in rural development action.

1.6 Summary

This chapter has provided an introduction to the present research and a presentation of the aim of the present research via the four research questions, and the associated research objectives. Chapter two provides a review of the existing knowledge on partnership drawing on regeneration and development research, administration and political science research and organisational management research literature. Chapter three provides a review of the literature on rural development and on local rural development partnerships. Chapter four presents the strategy adopted for this research before providing a description of the background context of each study area, together with an analysis of the unfolding history of the practice of local partnership in each location. Chapters five, six and seven reports the empirical evidence with regard to local partnership building and working and the outcomes of the local partnership practice in turn. Chapter eight discusses the research findings while chapter nine concludes on these findings, reflects on the adoption of a trans-national perspective and on the methodology of the present research before considering the broader implications of the findings for theory and policy, and making recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2. PARTNERSHIP: NOTION AND PRACTICE

2.1 Introduction

Central to an investigation into the nature of, and issues that surround, the practice of local partnership in rural development is an examination of the existing knowledge about partnership as a notion and a practice without regard for the context of its specific application. Whilst partnership has become a key notion and practice in the field of rural development today, it has been for some time in other fields such as for example urban regeneration and local economic development, organisational management and public and political administration. These three particular arenas of research have been identified as offering concurrently notable insight into the notion and practice of partnership. In this chapter the author reviews therefore the existing knowledge on partnership and its practice drawing on both the academic and applied literature in these three arenas of research.

Thus this chapter sets out, in section 2.1, to consider some of the reasons and factors commonly associated with the rise of the partnership approach. In various domains it reveals that the reasons and factors that underlie that rise are several and that the contemporary notion of partnership is the product of 30 years of evolution and diverse application. Such characteristics account for, in part, the rather broad meaning attributed to partnership and the diversity in the existing types of partnership, as considered in sections 2.3 and 2.4. The chapter then goes on to explore in section 2.5 the key issues that are commonly associated, in the literature, with the practice of partnership. Hence, sub-sections 2.5.1 to 2.5.10 review existing knowledge relating to the different stages of partnership development; the influence of the context on the practice of partnership; the partnership issue; the partners; the partnership structure; partnership resources; the area of coverage of the partnership practice; the difficulties and constraints associated to partnership working; the implications and the outcomes of partnership. This review reveals that any investigation concerned with the understanding of the partnership practice is a complex operation that is likely to draw upon a variety of intertwined issues. Therefore, the chapter ends by providing a review of some of the conclusions that are considered to be applicable to the guidance of subsequent analysis of the partnership practice.

The conclusions and understandings drawn from this review will provide a foundation for a discussion of the application of the partnership approach in the context of rural development.

2.2 The Rise of the Partnership Approach

In recent years, the partnership approach has become a popular approach when addressing complex social, economic and environmental issues (Hambleton *et al.*, 1995; Uhadelborde, 1995). It is today a well-established instrument for public policy formulation and implementation in most European countries and developed economies (Westholm, 1999; OECD, 1995b). Throughout the years the notion and practice of the approach has evolved significantly.

Indeed, as pointed out by Bailey *et al.* (1995) and later re-affirmed by Jones and Little (2000), the idea of partnership has witnessed profound change and various manipulations in the last 30 years. Hence, partnership “has not been a static principle but subtly changing concept as differing actors are given room at the table and the attitudes of those there change”(Jones and Little, 2000, p. 174). The literature proposes several explanations for this rise and evolution.

Within Europe, a number of commentators place the contemporary idea of partnership at the heart of European and regional development and inner city regeneration initiatives. These commentators argue that the evolution of the notion of partnership is intrinsically linked to these developments and initiatives.

Hence, Conroy (1996) argues that the contemporary notion of partnership has been largely inspired by the ideas of the European Commission with reference to the relationships between states and international institutions as well as with reference to sub-regional relationships, between government bodies and public administrations, businesses, unions, and non-governmental organisations. Within a European perspective the notion of partnership originally embraced a very specific meaning:

“ It was a political solution to a double problem. The first problem was the coherent and consistent expenditure of larger structural funds to achieve cohesion between regions at a time when disparities in standards of living were widening and a response to the protectionism of some member states politically and economically vis-à-vis each other and the community itself. In this sense partnership was a large scale and articulated response to relations at a moment of time” (Conroy, 1996, p. 32).

Cohesion has been, and still is, the European Union primary aim and partnership serves the idea that all, local, regional, national, public, private, and voluntary actors must come together and get organised to face the socio-economic pressures of global competition through European integration (Bryden, 1998; Esparcia *et al.*, 2000).

Partnership has also been a notion principally associated with urban regeneration and has experienced in this field substantial change throughout the years (Le Galès, 1995b; Bailey *et al.*, 1995). The notion of partnership emerged in the field of urban regeneration in the late 1970s with the growing realisation that traditional strategies and organisations were showing signs of deficiency when tackling the multidimensional problems of urban dereliction and decay. The partnership approach was seen then primarily as a method to improve the co-ordination and the delivery of central and local government services and regeneration strategies (Lawless, 1991). In the 1980s, the idea of partnership in urban regeneration evolved and was interpreted as lying at the core of neo-liberal ideologies and as a means to increasing the responsibility and role of the private sector (Hastings, 1996). This often led to the definition of partnership as the ‘the middle ground’ (Waddock, 1986) or ‘blurring’ between the public and the private sector (Gaudin, 1995; Stoker, 1996). Yet Jones and Little (2000, p.173) believe that “this blurring essentially took the form of imbuing the public sector with the entrepreneurial spirit of the private sector, or removing power from the public sector and placing in the hands of new institutional forms”. Le Galès (1995b), whilst sharing similar views, however insists that the idea of partnership must be considered beyond neo-liberal ideologies and manoeuvres. He strongly defends that partnership must also be seen as a pragmatic adaptation to economic and social change, to the inevitable fragmentation of public action in a period of rare financial resources and to the problem of state effectiveness and legitimacy. This point of view, according to Stoker (1999), is certainly that of practitioners, as these tend to explain inter-organisational working principally on the basis of ongoing uncertainty and change, and also of resource constraints and cuts in government funding leaving organisations very little choice but to co-operate, in order to secure efficiencies and economies of scale.

Le Galès (1995a) argues also that one may be tempted to include much more to the rise of the partnership approach and the evolution of the notion of partnership than the various orchestrations undertaken for the purpose of European development and urban regeneration. The partnership phenomenon has indeed been, observed in the majority of

developed economies within and outside Europe (Waddock, 1986 and 1989; OECD, 1995b; Gray and Wood, 1991).

Many commentators argue that the rise and changing nature of the notion of partnership must be considered against the backdrop of profound multidimensional changes and restructurings that have been occurring in most developed economies. Whilst the ways and processes by which these restructurings have happened clearly vary from country to country, it is however possible to identify from the literature some common determining factors that appear to apply to most of these countries. As further discussed below, these factors include the globalisation of economy and society (Le Galès, 1995a; OECD, 1995a; Arnaud, 1997), the need to reduce environmental instabilities and complexities (Waddock, 1989; Wood and Gray, 1991) and the growing recognition and role of networks (Castells, 1996; Lowndes *et al.*, 1997). They also include the decreasing role of the nation state and traditional machineries of government at central and local level (Hambleton et al, 1995; Arnaud, 1997), the fragmentation of public action, as well as the expansion of the stakeholder society (Elcock, 1994; Imrie and Wilks-Heeg, 1996).

Le Galès (1995b) argues that, whilst one may be wary of 'economic determinism', the multidimensional restructurings experienced in most developed economies are not unrelated to the economic transformations that have been witnessed in the last 20-25 years, transformations commanded by the increasing processes of globalisation and the end of fordist regulation. These processes of economic globalisation, characterised by capital mobility and the abolition of spatial constraints, are commonly advanced to explain the profound transformation of relationships between the state, the market and the civil society, now recognised as globally interdependent (Castells, 1996; Bryden, 1998).

Waddock (1989, p. 78), looks at it from a slightly different perspective and claims that the "increasing complexity and turbulence in society, combined with very large and powerful organizations, has inevitably resulted in a proliferation of less familiar and more complex interactive organizations". This view is reaffirmed by Gray and Wood (1991, p. 3) who assert that " the formation of collaborative alliances among organizations is touted as a significant strategy that organizations can use to cope with the turbulence and complexities of their environment". Central to this strategy is 'access to information' and 'interactive learning' (Dommergues, 1988) providing "powerful resource of social capital - trust, shared norms and expectations - which facilitate

effective collaborative response to increasingly unpredictable economic circumstances” (Garmise and Rees 1997, p.104).

The emphasis on the role of information, trust and reciprocity is reflected in the increasing recognition of the role of networks (Castells, 1996; Planque; 1991). Networks are generally described as arising from, and sustained by, the interrelationships between organisations (individual or groups), held by shared beliefs and values. They are depicted as flat forms of organisation in contrast to hierarchical models of organisation. They tend to be of a voluntaristic nature and not formally constituted. They are commonly seen as allowing flexibility and reciprocity, collective know-how, access to internal and external opportunities, and innovation (Perrin, 1991; Hambleton *et al.*, 1995; Lowndes *et al.* 1997).

These different processes are said to have contributed to the profound transformation of the role of the nation-state and to have made the old quarrel between state-dependent and/or market-based actions somewhat obsolete (Commission on Global Governance, 1995; Arnaud, 1997; Garmise and Rees, 1997). The nation state becomes a ‘Partner-State’, taking on a new role, that of a regulator, an arbitrator following the principle of collective interest, but also an instigator and a negotiator (Teisserenc, 1994; Ricordel, 1997; Reigner, 2001). Within this perspective the traditional mechanisms of government and territorial development have witnessed profound reconsideration as has the nature of public intervention in general, not providing anymore the necessary answers to ward off the consequences of economic and social change (Le Galès, 1995a; Goodwin, 1998). Within this context, it is possible to witness the emergence of atypical governing modes, commonly referred to today as the ‘*new governance*’ (Stoker, 1999). This emerging governance is characterised by new mechanisms of co-ordination and negotiation to organise the increasing interactions between the state, the market and increasingly, civil society in order to establish consensus or obtain a common agreement to execute programmes of action in which numerous interests are involved (OECD, 1995a).

The innovative aspect of this multi-dimensional restructuring certainly lies in the growing part played by civil society in this emerging governance (Commission on Global Governance, 1995). Bryden (1998, p. 2) explains that in reaction to the sometimes oppressive size and scope of global reordering, “the trend is increasingly to promote the importance of ‘identities’, ‘cultures’ and ‘communities’ which do not necessarily correspond to the entity formed by the traditional ‘Nation State’”. Rather, it is around

regional and local communities, identities and cultures that processes of governance and development are being re-organised. For Bryden these communities “represent a more human or meaningful scale of organisation in a world of trading blocks, economic alliances, giant corporations and big governments” (p. 2-3). He adds that, increasingly, communities must be seen as forming around interests as well as places. Within this perspective, ‘associations’ and ‘interest groups’ are becoming a growing phenomenon in which the various ‘stakeholders’, individual or group, have the opportunity to play a role and be drawn into the economic, political, social, environmental decision-making processes (Koolman, 1993; Commins and Keane, 1994; Arnaud, 1997).

Following this perspective, the notion of partnership has been led to evolve, to accommodate not only the public and private sectors but also increasingly today, the voluntary and community sectors (Nevin and Shiner, 1995; Jones and Little, 2000).

The constantly evolving notion of partnership accounts for, in part, the meaning of partnership remaining relatively unclear and a subject of contention.

2.3 The Meanings of Partnership

“There is no legal definition of partnership, nor is there anything that we can call a typical partnership” (Lawless, 1991, p. 10)

The term partnership has been a term used and applied predominantly, although not exclusively, in the context of urban regeneration and public policy. Other terms, for example ‘coalitions’ (Molotch, 1976), ‘collectivities’ (Astley and Fombrun, 1983), have often been used synonymously with ‘partnership’ in the literature and ‘partnership working’ has often been considered synonymously to ‘collaboration’ (Wood and Gray, 1991) or ‘inter-organisational working’ (Waddock, 1989) or ‘inter-agency working’ (Hambleton *et al.*, 1995). These terminologies have their origins in a range of academic research areas, including the organisational, political, economic and social sciences.

Despite, or maybe due to the wide use of the word partnership, there is no clear universal definition of partnership to be found. Research on partnership reveals that ‘the elasticity of the concept’ (Peck and Tickell, 1994) as well as its changing nature (Bailey *et al.*, 1995), giving to the notion of partnership ‘a high level of ambiguity’ (Mackintosh, 1992), and a wide range of possible meanings (Bennett and Krebs, 1991) inhibiting the development of a widely accepted or all encompassing definition. This explains in part

why 'partnership' is repeatedly accused to be an 'over-used and fashionable idea' (Bailey 1994, Forrester, 1990), a 'buzzword of the 1980-90s' (Osborne, 1997), a 'politicised concept' (Hastings, 1996) or even a 'meaningless concept' (Lawless, 1991).

In the absence of an agreed definition of partnership, researchers have commonly resorted to elaborating their own working definition providing a wide range of interpretations of the notion of partnership. Yet, these interpretations rely strongly on the context, focus and perspectives of the research undertaken. Moreover, the existing definitions of partnership rarely provide tangible criteria. Instead, there has been a tendency in defining partnership to emphasise rather broad and immaterial ideas such as 'value-added' (Le Galès, 1995b), 'capacity' or 'synergy' (Mackintosh, 1992).

However, emerging from an analysis of the literature, the author has identified recurrent terminology in the variety of existing definitions. Hence, partnership is generally depicted as a process involving an inter-organisational arrangement that mobilises a coalition of interests around shared objectives and a common agenda, as a means to respond to a shared issue or to realise specific outcomes.

In the search for clarification of the meaning of partnership, the content and scope of each of these five different predominant components are examined and discussed below.

2.3.1 Partnership: 'a process'

Partnership is commonly defined as a process (Epstein, 1979, Waddock, 1986). Gray (1989, p. 5) for example clearly refers to "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible". Roberts and Bradley (1991, p. 209), talk about "a temporary, organised, interactive process". Similarly Gray and Wood (1991), describe partnership as 'interactive process' in order to describe an "action that changes over time and according to circumstances"(Gray and Wood, 1991, p. 146).

2.3.2 Partnership: 'an inter-organisational arrangement'

Most definitions of partnership equate partnership with a collaborative 'arrangement' or 'organisation' (Waddock, 1989, Slee and Snowdon, 1997). Hence, partnership is described as an "arrangement among otherwise independent organisations" (Waddock, 1989, p. 79). It is said to occur "when two or more are joined together in one body, scheme or organisation in which co-operative endeavours are undertaken" (Forrester, 1990, p. 10).

Some commentators suggest however that one must beware of any reduction of the notion of partnership to any kind of co-operative arrangements. Forrester (1990), for example, insists that partnership cannot be considered as synonymous with just any form of joint-working relationships or arrangements. She believes that partnership must be distinguished from, for example, business based co-operative relationships such as sponsorships, awards, or competitions. She argues that there is more to partnership than the provision of funds for a worthwhile promotional activity, and that it must be seen to rest strongly on the common recognition of collective needs and interests leading to close and sustained relationships.

In the same vein, Lowndes *et al.* (1997) confirm the need for a distinction between partnership and other existing types of inter-organisational relationships. For example, they define partnership in contrast to networks. They argue that partnership involves organised relationships and tends to have a formal basis. These relationships may be of a 'voluntaristic' nature but, as opposed to networks, they may also be imposed. These authors explain that which separates these two forms of inter-organisational relationships resides in the focus, the nature of motivation, the membership, the boundaries, the composition but also the formalisation of the arrangement. Thereby, as one form of collaborative relationship, 'partnership' must be understood as retaining a certain degree of formalisation.

Although some authors tend to adopt a rather inflexible position in characterising partnership, describing it as "a formal organisational framework" (Walsh *et al.*, 1998, p. xiii), most definitions of partnership tend to follow a less fixed position presenting partnership as being of a rather flexible nature. Whilst it has been accepted that partnerships retain in essence a certain degree of organisation, some definitions present

partnership as “the result of formal or informal arrangements” (Wilcox, 1994, p. 10), as characterising:

“the wide array of relationships that may range from the temporary interactions of various organisations around a common problem to those in which multiple organisations drawn from different sectors are represented in an on-going enterprise that is set up as a separate organisation” (Waddock, 1989, p. 79).

2.3.3 Partnership: ‘a coalition of interests’

Whatever the level of formalisation, partnership is generally described as representing a ‘coalition of interests’:

“ [Partnership] mobilises a coalition of interests and the commitment of a range of partners” (Walsh et al., 1998, p xiii)

“ Partnership conceal(s) a variety of collaborative relationships as varied and sometimes competing interests assemble in consensual alliances and coalitions” (Stewart and Collett, 1998, p. 59).

However, the nature and origins of these ‘interests’ are neither always very clear nor defined. Gray and Wood (1991, p. 144), for example refer to a ‘stake in a shared problem’. They specify that this stake is bound to change or be re-defined over time and suggest also that there is no reason to believe that partnership implies a comprehensive representation of all individuals, groups or organisations with an interest in a problem domain (stakeholders).

Some commentators are more specific about the nature of the interests involved in partnership. For example, Forrester (1990) refers to an ‘inter-sectoral arrangement’; a ‘tripartite relationship’ combining the private, public and the voluntary sector, and Bailey (1994) talks about “a coalition of interests drawn from more than one sector” (p. 293). The definition of partnership used by the European Union also makes a clear reference to the interests likely to be involved in a partnership:

“[Partnership is] structure of participation amongst various subjects, both public and private, who agree to collaborate at the implementation of a coherent strategy to integrate the less privileged groups within the area” (EC Commission, 1998, Appendix 3, p. 13).

2.3.4 Partnership: 'shared objectives and a common agenda'

"Partnership is an arrangement in which objectives are shared and a common agenda is developed between different agencies in pursuit of a common goal" (Slee and Snowdon, 1997, p. iv).

The scope of partnership is not always clearly defined and is presented generally in rather broad terms. Thus, it is commonly said that a partnership is established in order that the relevant interests or stakeholders can work together to 'some joint purpose' (Gray and Wood, 1991; Wilcox; 1994). Gray and Wood (1991, p.146) specify that, in pursuit of this purpose, the stakeholders will use "shared rules, norms and structures, to act or decide". They add that this sharing may involve an implicit recognition between the different stakeholders, but however usually involves an explicit agreement on the rules and norms that will command an interactive process. Following this perspective Bennett and Krebs (1991, p. 82) suggest that "partnership can range from agreement between actors to work together towards a common end, to agreements which form a legal contract which specific targets for performance are defined by the contracting parties".

Moreover, it is often argued that partnership must be understood as an arrangement that is directed towards a common objective or a set of common objectives, which the different stakeholders will be in a position to act or decide upon (Waddock, 1989; Forrester, 1990; Gray and Wood, 1991, Bennett and Krebs, 1991; Lowndes *et al.* 1997). Hence whilst stakeholders may agree to follow shared rules within the alliance, these can still keep their independent decision making powers. Again there may be some variation, and some stakeholders may give up some of their autonomy, but it must be understood that the loss of complete autonomy will then characterise a different form of inter-organisational relationship that cannot come under the term partnership.

A commonly held view is that the purpose of the partnership influences considerably the way the partnership structures are to be considered (Robert and Bradley, 1991; Baltazian, 1997; Wilcox and Charlton, 1997). In this sense, Robert and Bradley (1991) argue that the partnership structures should be seen as temporary and adaptable to any necessary transformations, subject to collapse or readjustment to the partnership purpose.

These specifications above allow further distinction between partnership and other form of co-operation such as any kind of corporate organisations, which do not allow decision-making autonomy or groups such as clubs or associations, which may not have a specific problem solving agenda.

2.3.5 Partnership: ‘a means to respond to a shared issue or to realise specific outcomes’?

Finally partnership is often depicted, as means to respond to an issue or a problem, and generally a multidimensional issue or problem (Waddock, 1986) a problem “too complex and too protracted to be resolved by unilateral organisational action”(Gray and Wood, 1991, p. 4),

Sometimes definitions of partnership suggest the outcomes towards which partnership is directed, however the nature of these outcomes varies considerably and is generally mentioned in very equivocal or vague terms. For example, Waddock (1986) talks about ‘the resolution of social problems’ while Pasquero (1991) and Teisserenc (1994) refer to ‘social change’. Selky (1991, p. 92) refers to an increase in systemic capacity to respond to the environment, while other authors focus on the provision of a potential for achieving a broader vision (Westley and Wredenburg, 1991; Nathan and Mitroff, 1991). Mackintosh (1992), suggests that partnership should be seen as creating ‘synergy’, and Hambleton *et al.* (1995, p. 9) view partnership working “as an instrument for the management of change not only in policies and spending but also in practice and approach”. However, Gray and Wood (1991) argue that a definition of partnership should leave the consequences or outcomes of partnership unspecified to any definition and open to empirical investigation.

To conclude this discussion of definition, partnership is therefore presented in the literature as a rather broad and flexible notion that characterises a collaborative effort between normally rather distinct and separate groups in some form of inter-organisational/sectoral arrangement in order to address some shared problem. This trait makes the notion under study a very utilised and a widely applicable notion, which explains the great variety of types of partnership to which we turn now.

2.4 The Different Types of Partnership

“...we recognise that there is no unique form of partnership, nor any specific form which is best in a given set of circumstances. Rather there are a wide variety of forms, the applicability of which varies from place to place and problem to problem.” (Bennett and Krebs, 1991, p. 174)

An examination of the rise of the partnership approach and of the definitions of partnership has revealed that the notion of partnership has developed and diversified

significantly in the past years. This accounts for, in part, the important variety in the types of partnership and the differing terminology that exists in relation to partnership in the literature.

Indeed, it is possible to identify several types of partnership in the literature. These reflect the important diversity that characterises partnerships and also provide the means to differentiate between the different forms of partnership. Drawing up a complete list of the different possible types of partnership would be an impossible task and a restrictive list would provide a limited picture of the reality and extent of the partnership practice (Bailey *et al.*, 1995). This section therefore provides a general review of the most commonly identified types of partnership.

In the literature 'partnership' comes under a variety of labels such as for example 'symbiotic partnership' (Pelmuter and Trist, 1986), 'systemic partnerships' (Waddock, 1986), 'social partnerships' (Waddock, 1989). These various types of partnerships, according to Pasquero (1991), whilst exhibiting some differences, must be seen to hold a common trait:

" They are initiatives designed to address complex social, system wide issues, which are ill-defined and emerge over time. Their role is to foster social problem solving across organizations, through the multipartite collaboration of otherwise conflicting interests, while retaining their autonomy and relying on influence more than on authority" (p. 41).

Yet, these so-called 'conflicting interests' generally imply sectoral differences (see 2.3.3). This explains why it is possible to find in the literature the popular label of 'Public-Private Partnership'. According to Waddock (1986, p. 273), "as with all partnerships, public-private partnerships represent the coming together of interested parties - partners - into a coalition for the purpose of responding to an issue or a problem of mutual concern". She argues that the difference between public and private partnerships and other types of partnership rests in the nature of the partners. Although the term 'public-private partnership' may appear as a rather circumscribed type of partnership limited to business-governmental arrangements, the OECD (1990), Bennett and Krebs (1991), and Le Galès (1995b), suggest that it must be understood as encompassing much broader relationships. The main parties to be considered in public-private arrangements may include therefore, single businesses, business bodies (for example Chamber of Commerce), voluntary groups of business interests, community

groups, co-operatives, trade unions, central, regional and local government authorities and agencies.

Efforts at categorisation also sometimes distinguish between '*top-down*' and '*bottom-up*' partnerships. Bailey *et al.* (1995, p. 27) explain that "partnerships are normally created through a catalytic process of either a top-down or bottom-up nature". Top-down partnerships, these authors argue, are established as a response to policy initiative by central government; they follow national guidance in fixing the membership, the funding and the partnership's remit. Bottom-up partnerships, they also argue, are examples of partnerships that are more fluid and flexible and depend on considerable extent on local circumstances and the views of key players, involved in establishing the partnership. However, such a dichotomy rarely applies and it is possible to find that local forms of partnership often meet at the junction of these two processes (Bennett and Krebs, 1991; LEADER Observatory, 1997).

Local partnership is again another common type of partnership. This type is commonly used in the arena of regeneration/development and generally described as a set of organised inter-sectoral relationships at the level of an area (Teisserenc, 1994; OECD, 1996; Walsh *et al.*, 1998).

Efforts at categorisation also sometimes distinguish between *formal* and *informal* types of partnership. Such distinction generally concerns the level of structuring of the partnership arrangement. Hence, Wilcox (1994) argues that *informal* partnerships occur generally when the project is specific and clearly achievable. *Formal* partnerships are characterised with the creation of a formal structure established to deal with long term and complex issues.

Hall *et al.* (1996) proposes a typology of partnership according to the level of involvement of the partnership members. They identify four types of partnership arrangements. The classification first comprises partnerships as *a shell*, which refers to a situation in which the involvement of non-leading agencies is nominal. Second, it includes *consultative* partnerships to describe an arrangement that is controlled principally by the partnership leader and when the other partners are consulted about funding issues and bids or allowed to make marginal changes. Third, *participative* partnerships refer to those arrangements in which partners have a role in the decision-making processes. Finally Hall *et al.* (1996) refer to *autonomous* partnership to describe

an arrangement in which partners have direct, sustained and genuine involvement in the decision-making processes.

This overview shows the critical diversity of partnerships and that their categorisation may be infinite. For example, it has been suggested that further categorisation may be undertaken by concentrating on the varying institutional forms of the partnership (Le Roy, 1997). However, the object of this section has been to show not only the great variety of existing partnerships but also to introduce and clarify some of the most common types of partnership, as reference to these will be made during the course of this research.

2.5 The Practice of Partnership

The review of the different definitions and types of partnership reveals the very diverse and complex nature of partnership. Such a characteristic may suggest that it is very difficult to generalise from these vastly different types and forms of partnerships when it comes to understanding how partnerships work. However, early studies into the practical workings of partnerships have suggested that, although differences may be expected, it is however possible to establish some common ground among this diversity (Waddock, 1989, Gray and Wood, 1991; Hastings, 1996; Baltazian, 1997). This section therefore builds upon some early findings on the practice of partnership. These are considered to be applicable in guiding subsequent partnership working analyses.

2.5.1 The Different Stages of Partnership Development

“An understanding of partnerships requires critical assessment of the context of partnership formation as well as the development process through which such partnerships go” (Waddock, 1986, p274).

Influenced by the work undertaken on the life cycle of organisations, Waddock (1989) identifies three main stages of partnership development. These comprise the stages of ‘initiation’, ‘establishment’ and ‘maturity’. The stage of initiation, she argues, begins with the establishment of a partnership forum, often resulting from the effort of a ‘convenor’. During this stage, communication and structure remain rather informal. Waddock (1989) associates the stage of establishment with the ‘crystallisation’ of the partnership purpose and the beginning of specific programme *foci*. Finally, the maturity

stage, she argues, involves a re-evaluation of the purpose and a reassessment of partnership activities.

Based on the observation of 12 differing partnerships in Britain, Wilcox and Charlton (1997) propose an illustrative model of partnership development. They argue that this model is not prescriptive and prevents an assumption that any partnership must follow the stages of the development process identified in their research. Therefore Wilcox and Charlton (1997) assert that fairly consistent pattern to the development of partnership working emerged from their research, from which they have identified five main stages of partnership development (p. 2-6):

- Stage one – The partners come together through mutual recognition of a common need, or in joint effort to obtain public funds. If they have not worked together before, the partners begin the process of overcoming differences in backgrounds and approaches building trust and respect. There may be a need for training, building each partner's capacity to operate effectively in this new organisation.
- Stage two - Through a process of dialogue and discussion, the partners establish the common ground, and work towards agreeing a vision and mission statement or initiative. The original core groups of partners might agree on the need to involve more individuals and organisations in the initiative. The partners develop mechanisms for assessing needs and quantifying the size of the task they propose to undertake.
- Stage three – The formal framework and organisational structure of the partnership is designed and put in place. The partners set specific goals, targets and objectives linked into the agenda for action.
- Stage four – The partnership delivers its action plan, whether this be service provision or some other function. The executive arm seeks to maintain the involvement of all partners; he formulates policy decisions and ensures the continuing accountability of the partnership. There is an on-going process of assessing, evaluating and refining the operations of the partnership.
- Stage five – Where appropriate, the partners plan their exit strategy. This involves developing a new set of goals for the survival and continuation of the work of the

initiative in some form. Partners seek to create life after death by transferring the assets of the partnership back into the community with which they work.

Whatever the scenario Waddock (1989) and Wilcox and Charlton (1997) argue that the development of partnership working will depend highly on the context in which the partnership practice is taking place.

2.5.2 The Influence of the Context on the Practice of Partnership

“The evolution of partnerships begins in a context of environmental forces that cause a partnership to be initiated” (Waddock, 1989, p. 79).

From an organisational management perspective, Waddock (1989) insists on the fact that environmental forces surrounding the life of an organisation are various. These may be competitive, institutional technological, or task-related but also political, socio-cultural or economic. Some of these forces can work against collaborative interactions between independent organisations, most particularly economic or sometimes political forces. Other forces however tend to facilitate the generation of interaction despite the absence of structuring mechanisms and the existence of competition, creating a context for interdependency. From a combination of the major findings drawn from a series of empirical investigations and previous conclusions made in the literature related to inter-organisational arrangements, Waddock (1989) proposes six so-called ‘environmental forces’ or ‘pressures’. These are as follows:

- The ‘Mandate’ or the ‘Legal System’:

Through a mandate, the legal system can provide a mechanism to link organisations that would not be led otherwise to interact or co-operate. A mandate brings together the different organisations that are seen to share an interest in a problem.

- An existing ‘Network’:

Networks are seen to allow the introduction of the members of a potential partnership to each other and to the issue that is of mutual concern or benefit to them. Lowndes *et al.* (1997, p. 337) confirm this observation in asserting that “networks provide the basis from which partnerships often develop”.

- A ‘Third Party Organisation’ or ‘Broker’:

‘Third Party Organisation’ or ‘Broker’ can be a partnership linking mechanism with its purpose being to bring together organisations into action. It intervenes when

organisations are not in a position to interact and perhaps do not even perceive that they actually share a problem with other organisations. The role of the third party is then the one of a catalyst, recognising the potential overlap and bringing partners together. This may happen through a conference, technical assistance, or a grant.

- A 'Crisis':

A crisis may also represent a very strong linking mechanism, mobilising partners to act when organisations realise that the crisis cannot be overcome by the action of one organisation alone. Waddock distinguishes between an external crisis, providing an impetus for partnership development, and an internal crisis, which originates within the potential partnership organisation and appears to draw partners into interaction.

- A 'Visionary Leadership':

A visionary leader or convenor can draw together potential partners through the force of her/his vision, personality, status or role in a partnership forum. The convenor plays an essential role in the process of mobilisation and coalition building, and is examined further in section 2.5.4 (ii).

- A 'Common Vision':

Waddock explains that a common vision implies the existence of a generalised perspective in an area, or a common understanding about an issue or a problem, shared by a group of actors involved because they wish to do something about this issue. A common vision may arise out of a situation that calls for a solution or for improvement.

According to Waddock (1989), such 'environmental forces', have a predominant role on the development and the outcomes of the partnership. These, she asserts, taken individually or in association must be seen as providing the necessary linkages that can facilitate partnership when present and impede it when they are lacking. Thus, she argues, "the partnerships evolving out of these forces are inherently fragile" (Waddock, 1989; p. 82).

Gray and Wood (1991) in their research on collaborative working also emphasise the importance of the context. Drawing on the findings of a series of investigations on the context and preconditions of collaboration from different theoretical perspectives, they stress the importance of '*stakeholder motivations*' and '*structural conditions*' in the rise of collaborative alliances. The identified factors are, as follow:

- high stake and high interdependence (Longsdon,1991);
- a shared purpose to achieve a common ‘transmutational end’ (Robert and Bradley, 1991);
- the need to protect common resources and need for governance rules (Golish, 1991);
- the need of individual organisations to maximise efficiency and reduce transaction costs (Fleisher,1991);
- an awareness amongst stakeholders of the need to achieve a shared understanding of problems and the need for a collective response to those problems (Nathan and Mitroff,1991);
- the gaining of a strategic advantage and the degree of organisation (Westley and Wredenburg,1991).

Therefore, the context is believed and observed to play an important role in the way partnership come about and should always be given particular attention. Three main contextual factors emerge as playing a particular role in partnership development. These include circumstantial, motivational and structural factors.

2.5.3 The Partnership Issue

Waddock (1989, p. 82) claims that “issues abound around which the partnership might develop”. The partnership issue may be “as narrow and specific as a local rush hour traffic snarl or as broad and unwieldy as balancing economic and ecological interests in national public policy” (Gray and Wood, 1991, p.148). In any event, the so-called ‘issue’ at the origin of the partnership initiation, must be understood as a question that has proved to be unanswerable to a single organisation or to government-wide attempts at answer it; an issue on which the potential partners organisations believe they can have an impact on; and also an issue that captures and maintains the interest of the partners organisations (Hambleton *et al.* , 1995, Ricordel, 1997, Baltazian, 1997; Goodwin, 1998).

Yet, the partnership issue does not always exist intrinsically and is not always well understood and delimited; sometimes it may even be necessary to work on the nature of its conception. Waddock (1986) characterises this phase of conception as the phase of ‘issue crystallisation’.

i) 'Issue Crystallisation'

“Issue crystallisation describes a process of shaping or forming an issue so that understanding can be built around it and action can be taken” (Waddock, 1986, p. 83).

As argued in the literature, some characteristics are necessary for an issue to be amenable to solution through partnership (Waddock, 1986; Pasquero, 1991; Lowndes *et al.*, 1997; Baltazian, 1997). Such characteristics includes for example:

- interdependence amongst organisations/actors that causes them to engage in joint efforts;
- perception of benefits to be derived by each of the organisations, a benefit that must compensate whatever is the cost involved in participation;
- the issue must be of significant importance to the potential partner.

The partnership issue is argued to be central to partnership formation and operation (Waddock, 1989; Gray and Wood, 1991; Hutchinson, 1994; Baltazian, 1997). Firstly, because the issue may suggest, to a certain extent, those that may be the relevant partners to be mobilised and secondly, it may attract other potential partners who believe they have a stake in this issue. Sometimes, however, some stakeholders may not be aware of their real interests in participating or even be unclear about what the issue may be. The process of mobilisation, as examined in section 2.5.4ii) below, then becomes an important step in partnership building.

Once the partnership issue is clarified enough to interest the different organisations for joint working, the next task is to formulate the partnership purpose(s) that will respond to this issue.

ii) Formulation of the Partnership Purpose

“To a large extent, the purpose of a given partnership will be determined by the dominance of a particular linking mechanism(s) that initiated it in the first place, although that purpose may change over time because it appears to be emergent” (Waddock, 1986, p. 280).

This phase is said to involve the building of consensus, determining what the goals and scope of the partnership will actually be. The partnership issue may inform the formulation of the partnership purpose or the purpose may be emergent. According to Bailey *et al.* (1995), the nature and extent of the purpose adopted must be seen as varying, depending on the nature of the partnership. Hence, “ it may be pre-determined if the partnership is part of a wider governmental programme or it may evolve out of the perception of need and the priorities identified by the membership”(p. 28).

According to Hutchinson (1994), individual agendas, different cultures and also policy priorities will influence the formulation of the partnership purpose. He explains that the various organisations involved in partnership have their own agenda for committing themselves to the arrangement. To ensure this commitment, the purpose has to contain the prospect that this agenda will be met, as partners are drawn by their own goals and agendas. Hutchinson (1994) also argues that the formulation of the purpose has to accommodate the ‘clashes of cultures’, and the different methods of working. He also suggests that the purpose will depend on the nature of the partnership. Hence, a bottom up approach to partnership, he believes, usually advocates long-term capacity building, often aiming to continue working after the initial partnership arrangement has moved on. The top-down approach, on the other hand, seeks quicker results through actions and projects that aim to leave a legacy for future development.

The lifetime of the partnership organisation is also presented as an important element in the formulation of the partnership purpose and *vice versa* (Waddock, 1989). Thus as Bailey *et al.* (1995) observe some partnerships will be established for a specific time period to oversee a particular task, others may be time-limited to the length of the policy initiative, whereas a third category may operate on a semi-permanent or open basis. Whatever the scenario Wilcox and Charlton (1997) insist that the establishment of the partnership purpose and goals is critical to partnership evolution. It helps to create a shared vision that is accepted and favourable for all partners. It provides a basis from which objectives can be formulated. And it is also seen to ensure commitment from all the partners.

2.5.4 The Partners

“Partnership as organisation is, in a sense, at the mercy of the partners. Should the linkage binding the partners together break down or a power struggle emerge, the very existence of the partnership is in peril.” (Waddock, 1989, p. 95)

It emerges from the literature on partnership that central to the practice of partnership are the different individuals and organisations drawn into a partnership arrangement, these are commonly referred to as the ‘partners’.

i) Definition

In the literature, the term ‘partner’ is generally used to refer to those individuals and organisations that act as representative of a sector of activity or a specific interest, and that have a ‘stake’ in the issue for which the partnership arrangement is being established (Gray and Wood, 1991; Wilcox, 1994). The ‘partner’ is presented as playing, from the outset of the local partnership practice, a central role:

“The success of the partnership development process is related to the continuity of relationships among organizational actors (...) because of the need to build and maintain a working relationship among members” (Waddock, 1989, p. 84)

The LEADER Observatory (1997, p. 7) argues that to be a partner is “to take part in (involvement); to be part of (choice); to side with (commitment); and to impart (communication)”. In that respect, it argues that the ‘partner’ must be distinguished from the simple ‘actor’:

“The partnership approach, which compels a person or an organisation to become involved and to take risks, marks a qualitative difference with the attitude of the mere actor who, by definition, ‘has a role’, ‘plays a character’: he is elected, a professional representative, an entrepreneur” (LEADER Observatory, 1997, p. 7)

Several authors argue that the origin and number of actors/stakeholders drawn into a partnership very much depend on the partnership issue, as well as on the requirements of the different stages of partnership development (Gray and Wood, 1991, Bennett and Krebs, 1991; Wilcox and Charlton, 1997). Regardless, the mobilisation of the partners is presented as central to the development of the practice of partnership (Gray and Wood, 1991; Teisserenc, 1994; Baltazian, 1997; Wilcox and Charlton, 1997).

ii) The mobilisation of actors/stakeholders

It is often stated that partnership building requires the mobilisation of a set of legitimate actors/stakeholders prepared to combine their efforts, knowledge and skills to resolve a shared issue (Gray, 1989, p. 71). As explored in sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.3, it has been suggested that the context and the partnership issue dictates to a large degree the initiation of partnership, as they strongly affect stakeholders' motivations in taking part in joint working. The mobilisation of actors/stakeholders is presented in the literature as essential to the identification of all the relevant interests that may be drawn into a partnership (Selsky, 1991). Wilcox and Charlton (1997) suggest that 'relevant interest' is that which will be affected by the initiative, directly or indirectly, that which will be needed as a resource or those who feel that they have the right to be involved.

According to Gray (1989) Waddock (1989) mobilisation lies in the action of a convenor. The nature and the role of a convenor are first examined before considering the methods for and the implication of such mobilisation.

The 'convenor'

Gray (1989) explains that the role of the convenor is not only to be an initiator but also to "identify and bring all the stakeholders around the table" (p. 71), to be a mediator, at least at the time of partnership creation. According to Gray (1989) the main characteristics attached to this convening role consist of some convening power as well as certain legitimacy amongst the different stakeholders and an unbiased and even-handed approach to the partnership issue. Gray and Wood (1989) and Waddock (1989) add that being a convenor requires a number of qualities such as for example being appreciative, having a sense of vision together with the ability to identify all the relevant actors/stakeholders to be drawn into the partnership.

Methods for mobilisation

Very little is in the literature in relation to the methods that may exist to draw stakeholders into partnership. However, the creation of a temporary structure has been one of the methods proposed. A group of actors/stakeholders may take the initiative to form such a structure in order to reflect on the different issues and the potential strategy to help the creation of a partnership (Slee and Snowdon, 1997; Baltazian, 1997). Another

proposed method is that of consultation. The representatives of all the sectors and organisations that may have an interest in the partnership issue may first be consulted in order to be made aware of the initiative (Wilcox, 1994; Teisserenc, 1994; Wilcox and Charlton, 1997).

Forums, meetings, and workshops are also suggested as useful method of mobilisation. These different techniques are seen as the first opportunity to gather a set of representatives drawn from various sectors and organisations to reflect upon the possibilities and the scope of a potential partnership. The purpose therefore is to allow information, clarification and possibly an initial cohesion between representatives drawn from disparate areas. The use of other techniques such as questionnaires, public display or the use of the media is also proposed. Generally it emerges that methods of mobilisation will depend on the partnership issue and on the level of awareness that actors have of this issue and of the possibility of entering into joint working. In any case scenario these different methods of mobilisation must aim to develop participation and interaction (Waddock, 1989; Slee and Snowdon, 1997; Lowndes *et al.*, 1997).

iii) Participation of Partners in the Partnership

Participation is used here to describe the process through which individuals and organisation position themselves actively in the process and becomes as such, partners (Wilcox, 1994). This process raises several issues, which are now explored.

First is the issue of *representation*; indeed concern is frequently expressed about the appropriate level of representation within partnership:

“Must all stakeholders be identified and brought around the table for collaboration to proceed?” (Gray and Wood, 1991, p. 154).

“Concern is raised when one or two individuals are chosen to represent the many different group interests, which are found within a community” (Hutchinson, 1994, p. 341).

The question of ‘representativeness’, as proposed by Lowndes (1997), must be considered in both its aspects. A first aspect concerns the extent to which the partners reflect, in their personal characteristics, a specific interest that affects the partnership issue. The second aspect concerns the extent to which the relevant interests are party to

discussions and have someone to represent them. The exclusion or non-representation of some interests may have a major impact on the operation and outcomes of the partnership (Ricordel, 1997, Wilcox and Charlton, 1997):

“Stakeholders who are excluded can possibly interfere with the adoption of agreed-upon outcomes by introducing damaging information or by calling into question the legitimacy of the process” (Gray and Wood, 1991, p155).

Although Gray and Wood (1991) admit that the presence or absence of stakeholders can clearly have an impact on subsequent interactions amongst the parties, they also argue that in certain cases the participation of the entire stakeholding population is neither necessary to achievement nor detrimental to those who did not participate. Hutchinson (1994) adds that the issue of representation must be carefully thought about within considerations of ‘legitimacy’. He explains that among the wide range of actors, the selected representatives must be legitimate, and must present appropriate interests, qualifications, and experience. Thereby, depending on the partnership’s aims and objectives, the configuration of partners should comprise (p. 339):

- those, however few, that are most interested in working in partnership to solve a problem;
- those most powerful and influential;
- those who seek a solution, whatever their power;
- individuals for their personal skills and expertise;
- representatives that can make on the spot decisions;
- the majority of stakeholders.

Another important issue is the issue of *continuity*:

“The success of partnership development is related to the continuity in the relationships” (Waddock, 1989, p. 84).

Waddock (1989) explains that problems are likely to occur either when organisations with an interest in the issue are left out of the partnership, or when key organisations drop out or fail to participate. She believes that a sustained commitment and participation is essential to the coalition building process and consequently to partnership success. Continuity allows a progressive building of trust and understanding and the reductions of prejudices and the reticence while discontinuity on the other hand may be costly, and limit further progress in working on the coalition building process (Waddock, 1986).

Moreover another central issue to participation is the issue of *organisation, role and balance of power* between partners. It is often argued in the literature that any partnership arrangement should be clear about the respective roles and responsibilities of the different partners (Wood and Gray, 1991; Wilcox and Charlton, 1997). It is also commonly suggested that a genuine partnership must involve power and responsibility sharing (Waddock, 1989; Slee and Snowdon, 1997). Teisserenc (1994) takes this statement further and argues that partners should be seen as equal in cooperation. However, in this respect, Bennett and Krebs (1991) argue that, in practice, partnership working does not necessarily imply that all actors are equal partners; a particular point shared by Wilcox (1994), who also specifies that “the various parties do need to feel that they are involved to an appropriate degree” (p. 10). According to Bailey *et al.* (1995) the balance of power between partners must be seen as “a reflection of the membership, the benefits, and access to resources and influences that each stakeholder brings, and the interaction between the membership (p.28).

Fourth and finally is the issue that concerns the process of *decision-making*. Within partnership, the decision-making process depends on the structural arrangement and the ground for action that is given to the different partners on the partnership issue (Waddock, 1986; Hutchinson, 1994; Wilcox and Charlton, 1997).

2.5.5 The Partnership Structure

Much of the literature on partnership associates partnership working with a specific structure (OECD, 1990; Hutchinson, 1994; Walsh *et al.* 1998). The creation of a partnership structure is seen to enable administration and decision-making and to ensure effective action through work programmes and projects (Wilcox, 1994).

Drawing on the work of Jacobs (1992), Hutchinson (1994) establishes a distinction between an ‘exclusivist’ structure (open to an elite) and a ‘pluralistic’ structure (open to and encouraging every sectoral and political interest). However, there may be a variety of ways to structure a partnership. As it appears from the diverse examples observed in both the academic and applied research, most partnerships comprise at least a ‘partnership board’ and a ‘project manager’. Sometimes, it is possible to find that a partnership has opted for some sort of legal status, providing governing rules for the organisation, or has

started up as a trust. A less formal structure, based on mutual agreement, may however be preferred (Wilcox, 1994; Baltazian, 1997).

Wilcox and Charlton (1997, p. 39) argue that although partnership structures vary significantly the most common organisational structure is one that comprises three discrete elements:

- a governance function – the executive body of the partnership;
- a management function – those who are charged with implementing the partnership's activities;
- a consultative function – the various committees, subcommittees and steering groups that report to the executive body.

2.5.6 Partnership Resources

Part of the rhetoric about partnership is that inter-organisational relationships are necessary to combine resources or assets (Gray and Wood, 1991; Mackintosh, 1992). 'Expertise' and 'skill' are often considered as resources in the literature (Wilcox, 1994). However, the term 'resource' has often one single meaning, that of finance or funding. The financial benefit from working in partnership is often described as presenting a strong drive in the setting up of a partnership:

“Many joint ventures are held together very strongly by a common external objective, of which the most frequent is the attraction of a financial contribution from third party. (...) Budget enlargement must be considered as a common form of glue for joint ventures especially local schemes seeking a common interest amongst partners” (Mackintosh, 1992, pp. 217-218).

As partnership commonly implies cross-sectoral involvement, this third party could be interpreted as being the private sector. However, if it is possible to see an increase in a partnership arrangement between the public and private sector with the intention to help with the mobilisation of new resources, this generally means to access government funding:

Partnership has become the key to unlocking competitive allocated resources from both Brussels and Whitehall.” (Peck and Tickell, 1994, p. 263)

Indeed in many cases, particularly in the arena of regeneration and development, setting up a partnership is a pre-condition for receiving public funding (For example SRB Challenge or LEADER programmes).

2.5.7 The Area of Coverage of the Partnership Practice

The area of coverage of the partnership practice is only briefly acknowledged in the literature. It emerges that this area may vary enormously depending on the partnership issue and objectives (OECD, 1990). It is also suggested that the identification of boundaries helps in mobilising the various interests. However these boundaries do not always correspond to a pre-determined geographical and/or administrative area (Bailey, 1994).

2.5.8 The Difficulties and Constraints to Partnership Working

Some limiting factors in the development of partnerships have been identified and discussed in the literature. Waddock (1989), for example, argues that partnership is rarely the result of natural inclination. She notes also that particular attention should be given to the existing prejudice between sectors and organisations, particularly when it involves the public and private sectors:

“ Private-sector members may perceive public-sector members to be lazy and unproductive, whereas public-sector participants may perceive private-sector counterparts to be greedy and socially irresponsible” (Waddock, 1989, p. 84).

Other authors bring forward the difficulty of accommodating the different ideologies, values and methods as well as the differences in agendas in a partnership (Pasquero, 1991; Hutchinson, 1994). Pasquero (1991) suggests that contextual elements or external factors such as sectoral interests, power positions and social structure outside the partnership arrangement have also an indisputable influence on partnerships and their evolution.

2.5.9 The Implications of Partnership Practice

Six main implications attached to partnership attract particular attention in the literature on partnership. These are now considered.

i) Democracy and Accountability

The increasing use of partnership often excites concern about the implications that this practice may have for democracy and accountability. These two issues are regularly the object of discussion, and are often the reason why this practice may prove to be contentious. Hutchinson (1994), for example, argues that the reduction of power of elected authorities and the growing influence of private and community sectors have a potential to affect the democratic balance of an area, raising concerns about the nature and operation of partnership on several grounds: structure, decision making processes, legitimacy and accountability. Peck and Tickell (1994) emphasise this point claiming that partnership implies that decision-making tends to be removed from democratic control.

The issue of accountability is another issue that often produces some concern.

Accountability means knowing who is answerable to whom. Yet, as Wilcox (1994) argues, this may be difficult in a partnership where representatives come from various origins, where management committees are often not formally constituted, and where the decision and implementation depend on a multitude of working groups. As Clarke puts it:

“The interplay of organisations and interests can better reflect the realities of life; and the existence of organisations (and contacts) with specific objectives and more effective service delivery. However, there is no guarantee of a strategic framework within which all can operate and direct their energies and attention, there are weaknesses in accountability and there is often a yawning gap between those involved and the governed” (Clarke, 1994, p. 1).

Hambleton *et al.* (1995) argue that the main criticism about partnership lies in its potential to weaken, conceal and sometimes exhaust the process of accountability. Within the considerations of accountability, he distinguishes between, accountability towards the public, in forming concerns about how citizens can hold the partners to account; political accountability, questioning about how the politicians can hold partners to account; and financial accountability.

ii) Power and conflicts

Hutchinson (1994) gives particular attention to the issue of power and conflict, and explains that conflict must be seen as a characteristic of partnership, particularly at the time of initiation. Individual agendas, he argues, may not be mutually supportive and

can, for example, impose differing priorities for each on the parties involved, leading to conflict within the partnership. In the same vein, Teisserenc (1994) argues that partnership must be understood as being characterised with dialogue and inevitable confrontation and oriented towards an always conflictual and competitive co-operation.

iii) The issue of time

The factor of time is another issue brought forward by Hutchinson (1994). Partnership building is a lengthy process, and yet partnership often needs to achieve results quickly, essentially because of structural factors (financial or national deadlines), but also to give credit to such a practice. However, the Local Government Management Board in 1993 expressed some concern about trying to hurry such a process (pp. 43-44):

“Powerful forces militate against the success of interagency working. Constant change within individual organisations and in the organisational landscape as a whole makes it difficult to build and sustain relationships. (...) An emphasis on competition between agencies and on short-term measures of performance discourages the investment of time and knowledge required to develop joint working.”

Partners need time to gain an understanding, to compromise with each other's agendas and methods of working, and to establish whether there are grounds upon to agree or disagree. Partnership requires commitment and sustained collaboration, and therefore the investment of time is believed to be fundamental (Wilcox and Charlton, 1997, Lowndes *et al.*, 1997).

iv) Transformation

“Partnership becomes a mutual struggle for transformation” (Mackintosh, 1992, p 216)

Partnership is presented by Mackintosh (1992) as an attempt at a mutual transformation of cultures and objectives. Indeed, she believes that partnership provides a process whereby partners seek to change or challenge the aims and operating cultures of other partners. She asserts that partners do not work with others to find common ground but to move the objectives and culture of the other more towards their own ideas. However looking more closely into this particular issue, Hastings (1996) defends the process of transformation, in the way Mackintosh defines it, as more unidirectional than mutual. The idea of mutual transformation, she believes, can only be applicable where partners are willing to change. Otherwise, it is not mutual but unidirectional.

Teisserenc (1994) puts the issue of transformation in a better light and asserts that partnership leads to new social relationships that are characterised by dialogue and confrontation, and oriented towards a 'conflicting and competitive co-operation'. He explains that partnerships provide a basis whereby competition and co-operation are no longer paradoxical. He believes that actors enter this new process as if they had reciprocal rights and obligations. Bailey (1994, p. 298) agrees with this compliant approach describing partnerships as "arenas of bargaining and negotiation about purpose and objectives".

2.5.10 The Outcomes of the Partnership Practice

The literature on partnership suggests that another important issue relevant to the understanding of partnership practice is that of outcomes, both expected and resultant (Waddock, 1989; Gray and Wood, 1991).

One of the fundamental questions for researchers and policy planners is what is the real potential of the partnership approach for addressing a given issue or problem which inevitably raises another question about how partnership potential can be assessed. To gain this understanding requires drawing insight into partnership outcomes.

The term 'outcome' is commonly used to describe those achievements that result from a situation, an activity or a process (Collins Cobuild, 1999, p. 1172). In relation to partnership, the term 'outcome' is commonly used to describe those general results of plans and actions, both expected and resultant, which it is possible "to see, hear, and feel" (Wilcox, 1994) or "the more abstract achievements of the partnership" (Wilcox and Charlton, 1997).

The consideration of partnership outcomes brings about a wide variety of research interests and questions. For example, what are the expected outcomes of partners when deciding to work in partnership? Are some special results impossible to achieve without partnership? What constitutes a successful partnership? Are specific outcomes associated with the success or the failure of partnership working? (Gray and Wood, 1991) What are the factors that contribute to the successful management of partnership? (Wilcox and Charlton, 1997) How far does the partnership bring additional benefits and how far could the same benefits have been achieved through traditional means? (Bailey *et al.*, 1995)

When addressing any of these questions, it appears that the outcomes that are emphasised differ in an important way depending on the focus of research and the theoretical orientations. Gray and Wood (1991, p.18) observe that “some consider whether the problems were solved; some examine whose problems were solved; some question whether shared norms were achieved; some focus on the survival of the partnership alliance itself”.

In both the theoretical and applied literature, there is a strong argument that, when considering partnership achievements, the process by which results are achieved is as important as the results themselves (Waddock, 1989; Wilcox and Charlton, 1997).

One suggested way of examining partnership outcomes is that of using a life cycle or life stage analysis (Wood and Gray, 1991) which consists of exploring the evolution of the partnership once the initial objectives have been met and considering whether or not the partnership is able to evolve from its initial objectives towards broader ones. However much of the research on the outcomes of partnership working to date has only been undertaken with consideration to success and effectiveness. One aim of research has been therefore to develop criteria for assessing partnerships. Yet, it is often argued that there exist some difficulties in identifying standards and criteria for assessing partnerships and thus analysing partnerships’ achievements:

“While practitioners enthuse about the process of consensus building and the cultural transformation of participants, researchers often search in vain for hard evidence of impact and achievements” (Bailey, 1994, p. 253).

There is indeed no real agreement, in theory or in practice, over what should be considered or measured when looking at partnership outcomes, and when considered in terms of success what may constitute such success. Hence, for example, reporting the views of practitioners, Wilcox and Charlton (1997) observe that:

“For some, the sole criterion of a successful partnership operation is one that meets its stated objectives and delivers beneficial outcomes to its ‘target audience’. For others, however this measure must be tempered by a consideration of the processes by which the aims of the partnership are met” (p 52).

The true question therefore is whether the potential of partnership working should be approached in terms of outputs or processes, in other words, if a distinction should be

drawn between the ends and the means of the practice. However in the light of the criteria used to assess partnerships such distinctions do not seem to be made in the literature.

Travers *et al.* (1995) in a study of joint working in metropolitan areas propose for example two components for assessing successful partnership each providing a framework for analysis. These include *effectiveness* and *accountability*. Hambleton *et al.* (1995) further this approach by breaking down these two criteria:

1. Effectiveness

Hambleton *et al.* (1995) explain that, when looking at partnership achievements, the researcher should concentrate on whether or not the partnership arrangement is meeting its stated objectives. In that perspective, they argue that it is important to distinguish between the following criteria (pp. 10-11):

- *Objectives*: What are the reasons for developing partnership working? For example, it is important to distinguish between arrangements that make policy, influence policy, make decisions about the use of policy resources, focus on a practical outcome or implement a project, share information and experience.
- *Value for money*: Does the expenditure of effort and resources on partnership working represent good value for money?
- *Responsiveness*: How responsive are the partnership arrangements to the need of the different participants?
- *Stability and flexibility*: How resilient are the partnership arrangements in the face of changing circumstances?

2. Accountability

Hambleton *et al.* distinguish between the following criteria:

- *Relating to the public*: How can citizens hold those engaged in partnership to account?
- *Political accountability*: How do elected politicians hold those engaged in partnership to account?

- *Financial accountability*: In partnership arrangements, where are decisions on spending made? How are financial accountability maintained?

Approaching partnership from a rather different angle and focussing essentially on partnership as a process, Mackintosh (1992) suggests that the evaluation of partnerships should be considered on the basis of three criteria, namely:

1. Synergy:

Mackintosh uses this the term synergy to describe “the creation of additional profits, through combining the different assets and powers, and an associated negotiation process over the distribution of those profits, partly to increase the returns to private stakeholders and partly to serve social ends” (p. 213). Mackintosh insists however on the fact that “whilst a valid problem for evaluation, the extent of additionality from partnership is a difficult issue to assess in practice” (p. 214).

2. Transformation:

Mackintosh uses the term ‘transformation’ to describe the process whereby partners seek to change or challenge the aims and operating cultures of other partners.

3. Budget Enlargement:

Mackintosh notes that most partnerships are very strongly held together by a common external objective, of which the most frequent is a financial contribution from a third party.

On the basis of early research into the workings of partnership, Wilcox and Charlton (1997) suggest that, in the view of partnership practitioners, when attempting to measure the partnership performance, it is important to distinguish between three related elements (p. 54):

1. inputs - the resources used in terms of money, people, buildings, equipment, etc.;
2. outputs - the tangible products or services provided by the partnership (these might include such measures as training places provided, the number of people housed, and advice leaflets distributed);

3. outcomes – the more abstract achievements of the partnership (for example improvement of employment prospects).

Wilcox and Charlton (1997, p. 55) report however that it is becoming “progressively more difficult to assess each of these elements as one moves from simple input measures to the broader impact of the work of the partnership” and that whilst the majority of externally imposed mechanisms tend to emphasise measures of short terms inputs and outputs, very little is known about long term outcomes.

Garmise and Rees (1997) reinforce this particular point:

“In both our case study areas, there was often a tendency to orientate towards the short term benefits of partnership formation - EU funding, inward investment or whatever - rather than the long term dividends to be derived from increasing local learning capacity” (p. 116).

2.6 Analysing Partnerships

In the absence of an established knowledge and theory on partnership, a variety of theoretical models of analysis and theoretical perspective have been used and/or proposed to explain partnership and partnership working.

Hence, in the field of organisational management, for example Gray and Wood (1991), investigate inter-organisational arrangements in addressing three broad issues: pre-conditions, processes and outcomes. To help with the investigation, they examine the contribution and limits of existing theories for explaining inter-organisational working. These include resource dependence theory; corporate social performance theory, institutional economics theory; strategic management theory, social ecology theory; microeconomics theory; institutional theory, negotiated order theory and political theory. One of the main conclusions of Gray and Wood (1991)’s research is that whilst these different theories collectively provide insights into inter-organisational working, none offers a sufficiently comprehensive basis for analysis.

In the particular field of urban regeneration, the main theoretical propositions rests on various concepts such as ‘growth coalition’, ‘new corporatism’, and ‘regimes’, as well as ‘policy network’. Various authors argue that none of these proposition have yet proved to offer a sufficiently comprehensive foundation or a very helpful way of analysing and

explaining partnership working within, or outside, the urban context (Lawless, 1993; Bailey *et al.*, 1995). The main criticisms of these propositions is that they “tend to visualise partnership in an essentially positive light: the willing coalescence of mutually supportive interest groups seeking to boost business opportunities” (Lawless, 1993, p. 1322). Moreover, they tend to over emphasise the influence of indigenous businesses or interests in policy making and underestimate the role of local government and bureaucracy in the process.

A number of authors suggest that whatever the theoretical base used to analyse partnership and partnership working, such analysis should always be considered in relation to both the external and internal dynamics of partnership, looking at both the ‘inter-organisational domain’ or ‘problem level’ and the ‘single organisation’ or ‘stakeholder level’ (Waddock, 1989; Wood and Gray, 1991).

When examining inter-organisational working within the inter-organisational field, Nathan and Mitroff (1991) provide a model that conceptualises the multiple levels of inter-organisational relationships and the different forms of interactions existing around, and alongside, partnership arrangements. Developed specifically in relation to corporate business, this model proposes a positioning of the different levels contained within the ‘inter-organisational field’. It argues that the ‘action set’ (which equates to partnership) is formed in a context where a ‘focal organisation’ (individual partners) may be part of:

- ‘organisation sets’ (organisations that have direct, ongoing task-related links to the focal organisation);
- ‘networks’ (which consist of links both potential and actual, direct and indirect, among sets of organisations);
- ‘industry’ (encompassing those organisations that share similar objectives) .

In the same vein, Mackintosh (1992, p. 213) asserts that any analysis of partnership practice “has to be multidimensional to be useful: it needs to help participants and observers to identify the various kinds of things which are ‘going on’ within a scheme at any time”.

In addition, Bailey (1994) and Hastings (1996) argue that the analysis of partnership working needs to be realised in conjunction with the actors’ perceptions of the environment in which the partnership process is taking place. Hastings suggests that it is

necessary to establish the nature of the dynamics or relationships between the different partners, the partners' perceptions of the process in which they are engaged, and to assess the extent to which collaborative alliances relate to the specific context of the partnership. Teisserenc (1994, p.168) adds that "partnership cannot be observed and understood through an analysis only of actors and their relationships, or limited to the functioning of the partnership organisation or structure, or even uniquely approached in terms of power relationship and conflict of interest". Instead, Teisserenc (1994) argues that partnership should be analysed via a consideration of the partnership capacity offering the various development actors involved the means to transcend personal interests and to become co-responsible of a larger interest.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the literature about partnership, both as a notion and as a practice. These conclusions and recommendations provide some useful insights than can, and should, be considered in the examination of partnership working in the context of rural development.

Clearly, the literature suggests that both the notion of partnership and its practice are constantly evolving. Various explanations for the rise and evolution of the partnership approach emerge from the examination of the available literature. The various orchestrations undertaken for the purpose of European development and urban regeneration generally play an important part in these explanations. However it is possible to identify from the literature another set of factors. These include the globalisation of the economy and society, the need to reduce environmental turbulence and complexities, the growing recognition and role of networks. They also include the decreasing role of the nation-state and traditional machineries of government at central and local level, the fragmentation of public action, as well as the expansion of the stakeholder society.

The examination of the literature suggests also that the term partnership contains a certain level of ambiguity and does not have a consistent definition. Moreover no truly typical partnership can be defined and if all definitions are accepted, partnership can vary significantly in form, type, objective and scope. Furthermore, despite the various efforts undertaken in various arenas of research to provide some explanation of partnerships, there is no comprehensive theory of partnerships, and so no universally accepted

analytical framework exists. In any event the analysis of partnership needs to be multidimensional to be useful, in order to help participants and observers to identify the various kinds of things which are “going on” in the partnership at any time. Moreover it requires a close consideration of the perceptions of those involved.

The review of existing knowledge of the practice of partnership reveals that partnership working depends strongly on contextual and motivational factors. It reveals also that an examination of the context, the processes, and of the outcomes is important to the understanding of partnership working. This suggests that any investigation concerned with understanding how partnerships work is likely to draw upon a variety of issues, including for example issues of mobilisation, participation, representation, role, organisation and resources, as well as issue of time, power, conflict and transformation.

In order to embrace the complexity of partnership working, one way of examining the practice of partnership is to explore partnerships through the process of partnership development, roughly divided between the formation and operation of the practice, the approach adopted in the study which follows.

But first it is necessary to explore the way that the partnership approach has progressed to be at the core of rural development action and conceptions.

CHAPTER 3. THE LOCAL PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the emergence of the notion and practice of local partnership in the context of rural development. It reviews the rural development literature which helps illustrate the growing importance of local partnership working as an approach to rural development and helps in setting out a framework for analysing specific examples of application.

Rural development appears today as a complex reality and notion, which makes it rather difficult to grasp and circumscribe. The notion of rural development reflects the 'rural world' today, a world that is no longer analogous with agriculture only, that is heterogeneous and subject to on-going change, and which is itself difficult to define. In addition, the notion of rural development rests today on a wider understanding of 'development', whereby development emerges as a process which does not consist merely of achieving objectives in specified narrow economic and quantitative terms uniformly within the national territory (Kearney *et al.*, 1994). Indeed, it is also recognised as a process by which social products come about (Falk and Kilpatrick, 2000). These include for example the 'culture of action' (Teisserenc, 1994), the 'power of self-determination' (Commins and Keane, 1994) as well as 'empowerment' (Wright, 1990) and the 'capacity of people to act' (Goodwin, 1998, Le Galès, 1995a). Finally 'development' is increasingly recognised as a spatialised process, which must take account of the important diversity of localised social-economic dynamics.

Consequently, rural development action today, as pointed out by Keane (1997, p.173), rests not only on the recognition of the multidimensional nature of rural economies and societies, but also on an appreciation of "the contribution that the recipients of development initiatives may make to their design and implementation through principles of subsidiarity". It is from this perspective that the implementation of rural development action has increasingly required the use of integrated, actor-orientated and locally driven approaches bringing together individuals and organisations, all levels of government, and a wide range of cross-sectoral interests into co-operative arrangements.

Thus, in the light of the profound changes affecting rural areas, this chapter begins with an examination of the different interpretations associated with the 'rural' as well as the notion of 'development'. It then considers the 'rural' from a development perspective. The chapter emphasises how, still deprived of a universally recognised definition, the 'rural world', as a reality, a notion, or an object of development has become more complex and considerably diversified, a trait that rural development action seeks to accommodate with a variety of approaches including the partnership approach.

3.2 Rural Change

It is now an established fact that rural areas are dynamic and constantly changing in response to a wide range of social, economic, environmental and political factors (Ilbery, 1998). However, the evolution of rural areas has been marked, throughout the past years, by profound and rapid changes (Chapuis, 1986; Houée, 1996; Ilbery, 1998), that have "taken place more quickly, more dramatically and with greater consequences than ever before" (Blunden and Curry, 1988, p. ix).

Within a modern society increasingly dominated by technological progress, the principal function of rural areas has been initially to supply resources for industrial and urban development (Lowe and Bodiguel, 1990; Le Roy, 1997). Within this context, the countryside therefore has had to evolve through highly regulated and state-supported strategies placing agriculture and land use as "the pole around which the 'merry go round' of other economic activities would swing" (Marsden, 1998a, p.13). In that regard, the development of rural areas was essentially defined around criteria of agricultural productivism and efficiency (OECD, 1988; Lowe and Bodiguel, 1990; Winter, 1996). However, as agricultural productivity began to rise, employment opportunities decreased sharply compounding the depopulation and community disintegration that had originally commenced with the rural exodus.

The early 1980s witnessed a sharp turn in the evolution of the rural world in most developed economies (Robinson, 1990; OECD, 1988). This led to a radical shift in both population and economic activities (Marsden, 1998b). As growing prosperity and car ownership have made it possible to separate work place from residence, and as the rural 'way of life' became more and more attractive, rural areas experienced a substantial immigration of 'ex-urban' people particularly through the phenomenon of *counter-*

urbanisation (Robinson, 1990; Kayser *et al.*, 1994; Houée, 1996; Little and Austin, 1996).

Consequently, alongside social diversification and partly associated with it, rural areas have been witnessing an important diversification of their economy (Lowe and Bodiguel, 1990). Agriculture has gradually lost its dominance in rural economy, society, and culture and agricultural activity has gradually been restructured and readjusted towards activities 'on and off the farm' (Marsden, 1998a). Turning away from its former dependence on primary production, rural activity has become increasingly shared between agriculture, manufacturing, and services (Le Roy, 1997).

Rural change also includes the progressive opening of rural areas to the 'wider forces', increasingly affected by broader socio-economic and political processes, influenced by global trade and capital movements, a globalisation much facilitated by the development of techniques of communication and information (Bryden, 1998). Finally amongst these forces of restructuring and adjustment it is worth noting the considerable reinforcement of the environmental function of rural areas due to the increasing concern for sustainability, wilderness areas and fragile eco-systems (Rio Conference, 1992, O'Riordan, 1998).

The recent multi-dimensional changes affecting rural areas have also revealed the diverse characteristics of rural areas:

“ Rural areas differ markedly in their economic structure and activities, their natural and human resources, the peripherality of their location, their demographic and social condition (Bryden, 1998, p. 3). ”

Hence, behind the abiding and protected landscape that has for so long distinguished rural life, a life intrinsically tied to extensive land uses and primary industries, there today lies a complex and constantly evolving reality. This reality has caused notable developments in the way the 'rural' may be interpreted and in the way it is approached from a development perspective.

3.3 Meanings of the 'Rural'

"There is a growing realisation in the literature that the quest for any single, all-embracing definition of the rural is neither desirable nor feasible. (...) One response to this would be to propose a compound definition of the rural which would attempt to capture the multiple meanings of the word, but this would be to downplay the situated specificity of these multiple meanings which is precisely that which must be of interest to researchers." (Halfacree, 1993, p. 34)

The term 'rural' is, under any circumstances, a term difficult to grasp and negotiate. Whilst it is extensively used in most countries, the conceptions and definitions attached to the term vary from country to country (OECD, 1988). Bodiguel, Buller and Lowe (1990), comparing 'Rural Studies in Britain and France', explain that, one of the reasons for this is that conceptions and definition of the 'rural' are highly conditioned by national social, economic and cultural history, reflecting the changing political, and economic considerations, the different institutional priorities and statistical and geographical factors.

The search for a clear and indisputable definition of the 'rural' or 'rurality' has been a central preoccupation of research, for years, within a variety of academic disciplines, and has been the subject of continuing debate and disagreement. As a result, numerous interpretations appear within the literature.

Some authors argue that the different attempts to provide a definition of what the 'rural' may be, represents a vain effort (Ilbery, 1998), as it represents a 'chaotic' (Urry, 1984) and 'obfuscatory' conception, lacking of 'explanatory powers' (Hoggart, 1990). However, even if this rather despondent position may be proved right, 'doing away with the rural' (Hoggart, 1990), should not prevent us from trying to explore the different ideas and interpretations associated to the 'rural' particularly when it takes an essential place in one's study (Cloke, 1994).

The 'rural' has been commonly referred to as a spatial category and the different attempts to define the 'rural' have reflected the various conceptions of this particular 'space', conceptions that have moved progressively away from associating the 'rural' as a static or residual entity to approaches that highlight its heterogeneous nature (Le Roy, 1997; Ilbery, 1998). Traditionally, the different attempts to define the 'rural' have followed a rather empirical approach. The existence of the 'rural' being generally accepted (Halfacree, 1993), conventional definitions have mainly been concerned with identifying

the observable and measurable parameters that appeared 'representative' of the rural space. Hence rural areas have been commonly associated with agriculture and farming, extensive land uses and landscape (Philo, 1991), small lower order settlements, loose networks of infrastructure (Clout, 1993), as well as with small and primary industries (Le Roy, 1997). 'Low population density' and 'remoteness' are two other convenient parameters that have been, and still are, central to definitions of the rural (Diry, 1999; Houée, 1996), the justification being that they have the advantage of being "numerical and applicable to the whole of the national territory" (OECD, 1988, p.13).

Whilst such parameters may have reflected a certain 'rural' reality, and still do to an extent, it appears that the evolution that has taken place in agriculture and the on-going restructuring that has affected rural society and the rural economy have made the use of these parameters somewhat obsolete and narrow. They are accused of failing to capture the increasing diversity of rural areas and diversification of the rural economy, society, and culture (Bryden, 1994; Ilbery, 1998) and to describe the rural as 'a shrinking' or 'residual' category (Cloke, 1985; OECD, 1989; Bodiguel, Buller and Lowe, 1991).

Defining the 'rural' in contrast to the 'urban' through sharp dichotomies or continua has been another commonly used approach. The merits of this approach were hardly contestable within the reality of pre-industrial societies, as in these societies, economic activity was associated extremely closely with the two socio-cultural systems at either pole of the rural/urban dichotomy (Robinson, 1990). The rural was analogous to agriculture and opposed to the urban, which was coincident with industrial activities and services (Saraceno, 1993).

The distinction between rural and urban space has also been at the centre of determinist conceptions arguing that people's socio-cultural characteristics may vary according to the type of environment in which they live (Wirth, 1938). The argument used is that the physical environment, including population density, has an influence on behaviour and attitudes. Hence, it has been proposed that rural areas engendered a distinctive 'way of life' characterising a "cohesive identity based on respect for the environmental and behavioural qualities of living as part of an extensive landscape" (Cloke, 1989, p. 173).

Although this division between rural and urban may have again reflected an economic and sociological reality, there are a number of reasons to believe that this dichotomy reflected also various ideological movements taking side either for the 'rural' or the

'urban' (Le Roy, 1997). On one side a number of theories associated the urban with 'modernity', 'progress', and 'positive values', whilst rural areas were portrayed as a symbol of the past, as the trademark for 'archaic' methods, lifestyles and modes of thinking (Aron, 1962; François-Poncet *et al.*, 1991). On the other side, rural areas were portrayed in a rather 'idyllic' light (Newby, 1986; Marie and Viard, 1977), presenting the 'rural' as a corollary of a protected, steady, harmonious community life as opposed to the unstable and impersonal urban life:

"Rural life is associated with an uncomplicated, innocent, more genuine society in which traditional values persist and lives are more real. Past times, friendships, family relations and even employment are seen somehow more honest and authentic, unencumbered with the false and insincere trappings of city life or with their associated dubious values" (Little and Austin, 1996, p. 102)

Yet, it is now accepted that rural areas can "no longer be equated simply with particular types of land use or economic activity. Neither can rural areas be characterised by any particular or unique social or cultural behaviour" (Bodiguel, Buller and Lowe, 1991, p. 42). The post-war economic and social changes, blurring the distinction between the rural and the urban (Robinson, 1990) soon revealed that there was no such thing as a rural space in opposition to an urban space, just as there was not one rural space but a variety of rural spaces.

Indeed, when the principle of the rural-urban continuum moved from its original form which simply positioned the rural and the urban as two extreme poles of one continuum, it gave ground to further interpretations. These interpretations were based on a new argument, that of along this continuum, it was possible to identify, between the city and the most remote village, a variety of living communities coinciding with different levels of 'urbanism' and 'ruralism' (Duby, 1985). It gradually became apparent that behind the term 'rural' laid a very diverse reality:

"The principle of a rural urban continuum has allowed the emergence of another dimension to approaching the 'rural' both in revealing the complexities of rural societies and in bringing forward that behind the term rural may lay very different realities" (Le Roy, 1997, p. 63).

The principle of a continuum has often been denounced, however, as empirically unreliable and limited, failing to reflect the potential rural aspects of urban spaces and *vice versa* (Pahl, 1966; Newby, 1986). This principle has also been criticised for being theoretically flawed, as it assumes the existence of 'the rural' without really questioning

it (Falk and Pinhey, 1978) and also rests on an absolute conception of space. The same criticisms were made regarding the interpretation of rural space as a locality:

“Rural localities, if they are to be recognised and studied as categories in their own right, must therefore be carefully defined according to what make them rural. None of the previously discussed definitions has adequately achieved this” (Halfacree, 1993, p. 28)

On the basis that the main difficulties encountered in defining ‘the rural’ rest on a misconceptualisation of space, academic interpretations have turned towards ideas of social construction, arguing that the ‘rural’ may be considered as a socially and culturally constructed space (Mormont, 1990). The argument here is that definitions so far have reflected determinist convictions, whereby space is considered as if it retained causal powers, giving rise to a certain type of society. But this does not take into consideration the part of space that is being produced, engineered by this same society and its social structures (Smith, 1984). Halfacree (1993, p. 26) explains that there is a need for an appreciation of rural space that “neither prioritises its empirical structure nor relies upon a false dichotomy between space and society”. Instead he argues that attention should be paid to the ‘realm of discourse and social representation’ and places the rural and other related terms “as words and concepts understood by people in everyday talk” (p. 29), used in the various academic and lay discourses, but also in popular and professional discourses (Jones, 1995).

The above examination shows that there is a variety of views on how to define ‘the rural’ and what ‘the rural’ may mean, to such a point that it sometimes undermines its legitimacy. Nevertheless, what can be retained from the recent interpretations of the ‘rural’ is that one should be able to distance oneself from seeking a definitive and universally accepted notion of rurality (Hoggart, 1990; Ilbery, 1998; Phillips, 1998). Instead there is an incitement to look for approaches and interpretations that bring forward, allow and/or reconcile the variety of meanings and also perceptions of the ‘rural’ (Curry and Blunden, 1988; Philo, 1992; Murdoch and Pratt, 1993).

Thus, section 3.2 and 3.3 have shown that behind the term ‘rural’ lies a differentiated and rapidly evolving reality as well as a variety of possible meanings. The factual evidence and theoretical recognition of rural diversity and differentiation has had a direct influence on the way the ‘rural environment’ is interpreted and approached from a development perspective today. Indeed, as later observed in section 3.5, one major aim of rural

development policy and action has been the setting up of a methodology that takes account of the differences between rural areas and that accommodates the multidimensional and multi-faceted issues of rural areas. At the core of this methodology lies the promotion of territorial and partnership approaches. Yet, before proceeding to a discussion about rural development and about how the partnership approach has become a key approach in rural development, the next section first unravels the notion of 'development'.

3.4 The Notion of Development

Traditionally, conceived as a uni-linear improvement from poverty to wealth (Rostow, 1960; Unwin, 1994), the notion of 'development' has essentially been defined in sectoral and quantitative terms and has been strongly associated with capital accumulation and economic productivism. However, in the past few years the meaning attached to this notion has considerably broadened and 'development' is associated with 'a wide variety of different things' (Buller and Wright, 1990) in the literature today.

For Teisserenc (1994), the notion of development must be seen as a process of change, made of different steps, capable of taking a territory, understood as an economic, social, institutional reality, from one state to another one, and thus whether it is about developing actions, projects, people, or societies. Buller and Wright (1990, p. 5) insist however that change in any form cannot always be taken as synonymous with development and "development as a process and an achievement is both personally and ideologically value laden as is the recognition of a developed 'end-state' and the identification of the means to reach it". These authors also argue that there is no universal agreement as to what development may mean, and whether it is considered as a process of change emerging from a distinct effort or not, as a goal, or a perceived achievement.

However, there is a common agreement that the term 'development' today stands for more than a simple abbreviation for 'economic development' (Unwin, 1994). Over the past twenty years, development research has progressively revealed the importance of the spatial, political, social and environmental dimensions of development leading to a more global and comprehensive conception of development. Moreover, going beyond the productivist considerations, development has become associated gradually with notions of 'modernisation', 'distributional justice' (Mabogunie, 1980), and more recently, with

the ideas of 'social products', 'sustainability' and 'self-determination' (Unwin, 1994; Ingham, 1993):

"Development is a process that must be accumulative and must bring not just an improvement in physical and social conditions but also durable gains in people's ability to sustain the conditions" (Buller and Wright, 1990, p. 3).

"Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable, to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1989, p. 8).

The concept of sustainability rests strongly with a critique of earlier forms of development and their social and ecological consequences (Warburton, 1998). Although this notion does not reject the need for economic development to meet human needs, it brings a new dimension to the development process by highlighting environmental costs, and by stressing a sense of responsibility for each individual regarding the impact of their action on the future of the generations to come.

Hence, in conjunction with the traditional 'quantitative' and 'sectoral' models of development, 'qualitative' and 'integrated' models are progressively incorporated into the development debate. These new models account for the 'inter-dependence' between the multiple components of development, components which, taken individually may not in themselves constitute development (Buller and Wright, 1990). They also raise the importance of local identity and local distinctiveness and the central role the 'locality' within the development process (Cox, 1998; Mabileau, 1993):

"Localities are not simply places or even communities: they are the sum of social energy and agency resulting from the clustering of diverse individuals, groups and social interests in space" (Cooke, 1990, p. 296).

"No longer implying a closed system of indigenous and exclusive causes and effects, unsituated in specific time and place, 'local' becomes a spatial and social context in which individuals experience and react to broad social and economic forces of change and development that are at work in society as a whole" (Buller and Wright, 1990, p. 11).

From this perspective, local people, and more generally local communities, have been given an increasing role in the development process, in which their participation is constantly argued to be fundamental (Wilcox, 1994; Moseley, 1996; Barnes, 1999). Participation relates to a process by which individuals, groups and organisations are informed, consulted about or even have the opportunity to become actively involved in a

project or a programme, which may imply a true control over decision-making and strategy formulation (Wilcox, 1994). At the core of the process of participation lie the growing notions of empowerment and/or capacity building. Given that participation is highly embedded within considerations of power (having the ability and means to achieve what is wanted) (Wright, 1990; Wilcox, 1994), there has been a growing argument that community participation relies on “the strengthening of the knowledge, skills and attitude of people” (Mannion, 1996, p. 7) so that people can gain a greater influence on their area’s development.

Hence, development as Kearney *et al.*(1994) claim is not just about increasing the amount of goods and services produced and consumed by society, it is also about what is today commonly referred to as ‘social capital’. Social capital appears as a fast growing as well as a controversial concept in the development debate:

“ In addition to creating jobs, disbursing loans, generating income, training the labour force and delivering services, the development planners must now confront head on the fuzzy task of shaping levels of inter-personal trust, feeling of belonging and responsibility, and the quality and efficacy of civic engagement in a community” (Wilson, 1997, p. 745)

Its increasing recognition as a key factor in development (Putnam, 1993) certainly raises some questions about what appears as a highly immaterial notion and/or goal. How can this social capital be described or measured? If identified, how can it be achieved, built?. These certainly are the very questions that are being addressed in current research. In attempting to address these question Falk and Kilpatrick (2000, p. 106) propose the following definition of social capital;

“the product of social interactions with the potential to contribute to the social, civic or economic well being of a community-of-common-purpose. The interactions draw on knowledge and identity resources and simultaneously use and build stores of social capital. The nature of social capital depends on various qualitative dimensions of the interactions in which it is produced, such as the quality of the internal-external interactions, the historicity, futuricity, reciprocity, trust and the shared values and norms”.

In the light of the above discussions, and in order to conclude this section on the meaning of development, the interpretation of Houée is proposed. For Houée (1996, p.13-14), development constitutes, in the contemporary era,

“an historical movement, arising from the diffusion of technological progress, and the urban and industrial revolution, which generates new modes of production, a new organisation of space and activities, and a durable transformation of the mental, social and cultural structures of a society. It also embraces the on-going creation of social forces and strategies that are organised into power relationships and institutions, which control these mutations and elaborate new ideological values. Consequently, development, thereby understood and experienced, is at the same time, a fact and an intervention that analysis must distinguish, but that social action cannot separate. It represents a series of complex transformations of a society, of the representation that social actors may have on these, of the means that are forged to master them, depending on the intentions that these actors have on people and society”.

Development therefore does not consist simply of the adaptation of a system of production or of top-down aid, but it also is seen to be concerned with the way actors of development perceive the area to be developed and adapt their individual attitudes to understand and envisage collectively, cohesively and strategically the future of that particular area. Such a conception of development has had a direct impact in the conception and management of the rural development process.

3.5 Rural Development

Having considered ‘the rural’ and ‘development’ we move on now to consider rural development.

3.5.1 Introduction

What after all is ‘rural development’? Is it a field of study and research? Is it a form of state intervention to promote the well being of rural people, or it is something which is happening anyway no matter what the academics or the bureaucrats do? (Best, 1983, p. 27).

If Houée’s (1996) perspective on development is retained (above), it may be argued that any of these interpretations may be applicable in defining ‘rural development’. It emerges from the literature that, highly dependent on the approach of the observer, rural development may be interpreted either within considerations of the general processes of change in rural areas or as specifically targeted policies and concerted efforts. This leaves both academics and practitioners forced to use the term with a great deal of relativism and pragmatism (Buller and Wright, 1990; Houée, 1996, Van Der Ploeg, 2000).

Deprived of a commonly agreed definition, the notion of rural development however retains in the literature a set of commonly identified processes, the examination of which provides the new foundations of rural development approaches today. And, alongside the need for adapting the content of these approaches to the new operation of rural economy and society, lies the growing importance of the institutional and organisational framework for implementation. These points are considered below.

3.5.2 The Process of Rural Development

i) Intervention, Subsidiarity, and the New Rural Governance

As observed in section 3.4, development cannot simply be perceived as a series of on-going changes. It also needs to be considered as being strongly influenced by the different convictions and ideologies with regard to structures in the economy and society (Houée, 1996, Le Roy, 1997) which have led development to be characterised as having a highly ‘interventionist’/‘activist’ character (Buller and Wright, 1990). This conception of development unquestionably dominates the rural development debate today, as rural development evolves increasingly under the influence of a wide range of governmental and non-governmental agencies and measures, and increasingly under both national and European regulations (Bryden, 1994) and the directions of ‘enabled’ local communities (Hambleton *et al.*, 1995).

According to Wilkinson (1992), such intervention can be legitimated in respect of several considerations. First, it is claimed to rest on economic efficiency. It has been assumed that one of the causes of rural ‘under-development’ was the failure of market mechanisms to exploit opportunities for profit making in the countryside. From this perspective direct intervention has been perceived as a necessary counterbalancing mechanism to exploit these neglected opportunities. The second consideration proposed is based on ideas of equity. Considerable attention has been given, in recent years, to the need for more economic and social cohesion and to combating the exclusion and the marginalizing of certain categories of people or areas (Delors, 1993). Numerous studies have revealed the significance of disadvantaged people living in rural areas, disadvantaged with respect to transport, access to services, employment etc. (Moseley, 1979; Mathieu, 1992) whilst other have shown growing differentiation in the development of some rural areas compared to others (Robinson, 1990). Intervention is seen here not only to re-establish social equity between rural and urban areas, and also

equity within rural areas. Wilkinson's third argument rests on the notion of societal interest. Indeed a strong emphasis has been placed in recent years on the importance of rural space being recognised as a repository of natural resources such as land air, water, biodiversity and resources that need to be preserved carefully in view of their long term importance for the economy and society (Rio Conference, 1992; OECD, 1988). It is therefore believed that it is in society's interest to intervene in the maintenance of rural areas making sure that rural land and other resources are managed and developed sensibly, and that "everyone, by this argument, has a stake in the stewardship of the countryside" (Commins and Keanne, 1994, p. 10).

From this perspective, rural development has become the object of a considerable number of initiatives, initiatives that do not originate today from the sole authority of central and local governments and are not uniquely public sector generated. The OECD (1988) observes that, much as a country-specific experience, in most cases, these initiatives are now emerging as a result of a long period of daily interactions between the growing network of organised socio-economic interests, governmental organisations at central and local levels, as well as between public and private agencies (Marsden, 1998). According to Goodwin (1998, p. 6):

" The signs are that these entangled hierarchies, which increasingly govern rural areas in a complex web of interdependence, are now the favoured mechanisms for rural policy formulation and service delivery at each level from the local to the European".

Therefore, the rural development process must be seen today as evolving as part as of a new model of rural governance, a model that is said to consist of 'interdependence', 'continuing interactions' and significant 'autonomy from the state' (Stoker, 1999, p. xvii). This emerging model certainly differs from the traditional governing processes that dominated in rural areas until 10-15 years ago. It was characterised by three key features: centralised and nationally uniform public intervention, the use of formal agencies controlled by elected political institutions (Ward and McNicholas, 1998) and almost exclusive agricultural focus (Newby et al, 1978; Winter, 1996).

Several processes are forwarded in the literature to offer some explanation for the changed nature of rural governance. Those most commonly identified are, for example, the emergence of new forms of intervention and control leading to the creation of non-elected agencies, the decentralisation of decision-making and programmes management, and also the increasing importance of the European Union and its *Structural Funds*

(Ward and Mc Nicholas, 1998). These bring together a variety of actors (local, regional and national) into new institutional arrangements to plan for, and administer, rural development programmes (OECD, 1990; Goodwin, 1998).

The new models of rural governance reflect the significant restructuring that has affected the role of 'Market' and the 'State' and the 'people' in the new structures of governance. As Goodwin (1998, p. 5) points out "the debate has shifted from whether old-style public intervention is better than the free market, or *vice versa*, to one in which the major questions now concern the way in which state and market can be integrated to provide the most effective co-ordination".

This new rural governance is also argued to characterise the forging of new relationships between the sub-state and the supra-state levels of government (Ward and McNicholas, 1999). The 'sub-state', referring to the local and regional level, is given a key role in this new governance:

" The involvement of local and regional authorities and other social, local and regional economic interest groups in the identification of problems and the quest for solutions limits the number of errors of diagnosis that are all too common when planning is carried out from the outside" (CEC, 1988, p. 62).

" The new governance must be seen as providing a 'capacity to integrate', giving shape to local interests, organisations and social groups, and on the other hand, a capacity to be represented outside developing strategies in relation to the market, the state, other communities and levels of government" (Le Galès, 1995a, p. 3).

The regional state may be seen here to act in a 'mediating capacity' between the central and the local state (Cloke, 1989).

Within this context, local government authorities and the local level, in general, have undergone fundamental changes. Local authorities cannot be seen anymore as institutions only concerned with collecting taxes and with service delivery (Stoker, 1991 and 1999). They now have the responsibility to respond to the growing concern over multi-faceted rural development issues, a task that calls for co-ordinated responses and inter-agency working (Hambleton *et al.*, 1995).

There have been several criticisms associated with the emerging form of local governance, and governance in general, mainly based on considerations of fragmentation,

complexity, power and accountability (Elcock, 1994). However, the traditional administrative and governmental structures, heavily controlled from the centre and vertically organised along strong sectoral lines, have been accused also of being a real obstacle to the comprehensive and differentiated action seen as necessary in addressing rural development. Within this perspective, the debate on governance has been oriented towards reconsidering the role of 'government'. The common argument is that both central and local government should concentrate on 'steering rather than rowing' as many commentators have suggested (Osborne and Geabler, 1993), considering there is evidence to show that by forming collaborative arrangements, local government can still achieve their objectives (Hambleton *et al.*, 1995).

ii) Integration, 'Territorialisation' and Local Action

Given the recognition of development as a multi-dimensional and comprehensive process of change, and given the increasing social and economic heterogeneity of the rural world there has been a strong argument in the literature for rural development to be understood today as an 'integrated' and 'territorial' phenomenon, in contrast to a sectoral one (OECD, 1988; le Roy, 1997).

The emerging agreement is that the rural development process is made of inter-dependent components and structures (OECD, 1988), calling for an integrated vision. The notion of integration has several implications in the literature. First it implies that all sectors of the rural economy, and not only agriculture, need to be taken into account, including secondary and tertiary sector activities (Le Roy, 1997; Storey, 1999), and that each sectors must not be considered in isolation from the others (Fraser, 1991):

" Economic development, for example, is no longer viewed primarily or solely as a question of agricultural development. It is increasingly recognised that other factors, such as investment and industrial strategies, employment policies, education, health, and social services, housing and transportations facilities, are interdependent, and affect each other, as well as agriculture, in the development of rural economies and communities" (OECD, 1990, p. 12)

From this perspective, there has been a growing concern to place the focus of rural development within a territorial/area-based perspective (regional or/and local), in which space is considered as a "unit of reference where a specific combination of factors (social, economic technological, institutional) are organised in a particular way"

(Saraceno, 1994, p. 237), and no longer coincides with a particular economic sector (see Section 3.2):

“Typically, integrated rural development suggests a territorial or area-based strategy through which sectoral policies and instruments may be integrated at the point of implementation”(Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998, p. 75)

“Development is place specific; although the forces governing it may be national or international, the outcomes are always localised”(Marsden et al., 1993, p. 129)

This territorial perspective is perceived as essential in allowing the ‘inclusion’ of, and ‘cohesion’ between, the different components of rural development (Mannion, 1996). It is also argued that it accounts for the profound ‘differentiation’ characterising the economic and social processes of change in rural areas, change that has been observed to occur “at different speeds and different directions according to local and external combinations of relationships operating in rural localities” (Marsden, 1998b, p.108).

There has indeed been a growing realisation that rural areas differ considerably in their economic structures and activities, their institutional capacities, their natural and human resources, the peripherality of their location, their demographic and social conditions, as well as their degree of social cohesion (Keane, 1997; Bryden, 1998). Accentuating the importance of rural diversity and local differences, the rhetoric of rural development places considerable weight on the significance of the local dimension of development. The common argument is that the ‘local context’ of each specific rural area determines its capacity to play an active role in its socio-economic evolution (Saraceno, 1994, p. 237).

Central to this local context are the ‘locals’, which leads this discussion on to the second implication of integration: it is argued that integration implies the direct involvement of all the interested parties (today commonly referred as actors or stakeholders), statutory and non-statutory, in the process of rural development (Storey, 1999). It is maintained that the process of integration is essentially one of building from the bottom up and takes as its starting point the local people living in an area (Frazer, 1991). They are believed to offer genuine local and community experience and views, through their own members and users. According to Osborne (1998, p. 291), “at their best, they can offer an independent voice not linked to political or commercial ends and they can provide specialist expertise in areas ranging from community care through to conservation and

the environment”. The need for involving local people is claimed to lie strongly within considerations of sustainability as considered in the next section.

iii) Sustainability, Community Participation and Empowerment

There is indeed a strong belief that in the current debate about the need for sustainable development (see section 3.1.3), local people should be given a key role in supporting the conditions for development in rural areas (Buller and Wright, 1990). The general argument is that although local people may be implicitly involved in the rural development process they are not necessarily in control of the decisions and orientations taken, and their participation should be seen as essential. Participation, as Shortall and Shucksmith (1998, p. 76) outline, “may mean anything from simply informing people of the existence of a project or initiative, through involving representatives of the community in some way, to encouraging the active participation of members of the community”.

On the one hand participation is seen as ensuring that any actions and decisions are sensitive to local circumstances:

“Local decision-making is likely to be more responsive to local circumstances than uniform plans. Improving quality of life in the countryside starts with local people and local initiatives” (DoE, MAFF, 1995, p. 16)

Moreover participation is perceived to secure local people’s interest, stake and solidarity:

“Communities that have a say in the development of policies for their locality are likely to be more enthusiastic about their implementation” (Curry, 1993, p. 33)

Following this perspective there has been a growing argument for the need to enhance people’s capacities and power of self-determination in rural areas (Commins and Keane, 1994), through a process of empowerment and capacity building. The concept of empowerment rests on the idea that “people should be subjects in their own world rather than objects in other people’s worlds” (Wright, 1990, p. 59). It is seen as a progressive process aimed at upgrading the local human resource base (Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998; Kearney *et al.* 1994). A commonly held view, in the literature, is that to increase empowerment it is necessary to enable individuals to gain a set of both inter-personal and group process skills, “as it is through the group that people gain confidence in

themselves, develop solidarity, and work at how to act collectively” (Wright, 1990, p. 59). Inter-personal skills are seen to include communication skills, especially active listening, but also relationship skills, such as mutual respect and, understanding, trust and empathy. Group process skills are considered to include conflict resolution as well as participatory problem-solving and decision-making, a set of skills that appears as inherent to the rural development process (Wilson, 1997).

iv) Networking and Collective working

Thus rural development is a process that increasingly permeates across sectors, as well as levels of government and territory (international, European, national, regional, local) (Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998); a process that is concerned with the evolution of an area and the opportunity to further endow that area with diverse resources necessary for its sustenance. The exploitation of such resources is argued to involve people’s action, and their personal skills and also their ability to co-operate in order to deal with the complexities of rural problems and to conceive and plan their individual and collective future. Within this perspective, learning to create linkages within and outside the local area and learning to act and work collectively is claimed, today, to be fundamental (Wilson, 1997, Teisserenc, 1995), in a context which increasingly appears as “ensembles of local and non-local connections, of combinations of local actions and action at a distance, situated in regional economies and different institutional contexts” (Marsden, 1998, p. 109).

Learning to work collectively, according to Teisserenc (1994) must be seen to facilitate the emergence and the diffusion of a true ‘culture of the actor’ and ‘culture of action’ in rural areas which, he argues, generally consists of bringing into the open, the undermining confrontation between identities and objectives and seeks to cement fragile relationships which would otherwise hinder rural development. Collective action is also argued to be the only way through the emerging rural governance, “as actors and institutions attempt to gain a capacity to act by blending their resources, skills and purposes into a viable and sustainable partnership” (Goodwin, 1998, p. 10). According to Logié (1992, p. 12), learning to act collectively is justified on the basis that “the sum of initiatives that constitute any action of development must be the result of a shared will in order to have a positive and durable impact”, and therefore to promote cohesion and ‘synergy’ instead of increasing fragmentation.

Growing attention is being given to the matter of ‘synergy’ in rural development literature, as “in the new rural development paradigm, mutual benefits and ‘win-win situations’ between different activities appears both strategic and desirable” (Van Der Ploeg *et al.* 2000, p. 393). Synergy is defined by Brunori and Rossi (2000, p. 410) as “linkages between two or more entities, whose joint effort produce effects that are quantitatively more far reaching than the effects of similar entities when they operate alone”. According to these authors, a basic form of synergy is ‘*complementarity*’. Complementarity occurs when different types of resources are combined in the interest of a particular task. A particular form of complementarity is ‘*hybridization*’. In this case they argue that synergy depends on the ability of actors in a network to develop links between areas of activity that are culturally or technologically quite distant from each other.

All of these processes identified account for the growing re-consideration and re-evaluation of objectives and approaches for rural development action.

3.5.3 Approaches to Rural Development

A key mechanism for addressing rural development action has been, and still is, ‘rural planning’ defined as “the deliberate creation and management of schemes aimed at fulfilling specified goals in the rural environment” (White, 1986, pp. 414-415). Most rural planning has, until recently, rested on top-down sectoral strategies, with strategies defined as a line of action that sets out the key problems, concerns and needs in an area to establish the future actions required to tackle these problems. Certainly it was true until the early 1990s that rural planning followed an essentially national and centrally controlled “piecemeal, problem by problem perspective on rural areas and issues” (OECD, 1988, p. 36). However, the growing diversity of the rural economy and society as well as the increasing differentiation characterising rural areas and the recognition of the role of localities in the general process of change, has presented rural development action, in recent years, with a pressing need to re-consider its traditional objectives and approaches.

i) Rural Development: between endogenous/exogenous and sectoral/territorial dialectics

It is commonly argued that rural development action must be seen to be organised and evolve today at the junction of two dialectics (Houée, 1996).

The first dialectic combines an exogenous and endogenous approach:

- An exogenous approach (top-down):

The approach is based on an objective and state-led approach to rural realities and comprises a set of policies and procedures, and financial inducements from the centre. This approach is concerned with the provision of what appears to be the 'generic' needs of rural areas. It generally comprises pre-established goals uniform to the whole national territory. However, increasingly today it also has to acknowledge the growing differentiation that characterises rural areas in their development, seeking to provide measures adapted to local circumstances, which are recognised as playing an important role in the development process.

- An endogenous approach (bottom-up):

In contrast to the exogenous approach, the endogenous approach rests on a 'subjective' perspective to development and a conception of local determination. Rooted in the history of the local area, this approach accounts for the set of specific internal dynamics in the valorisation of local resources, which constantly combine with the various proposals and measures coming from the top. It embraces the different community development approaches that have dominated the debate on rural development action in recent years (Buller and Wright, 1990; Moseley, 1996; Warburton, 1998), and emphasises the role of social action in the development process, for which a number of techniques, including consultation, animation, facilitation and participatory appraisals have been promoted (Moseley and Cherrett, 1993, Wilson, 1997). These are described as a growing family of approaches that enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan act, monitor, evaluate and sustain local circumstances (Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998). Indeed, the idea behind community development and bottom-up approaches is that local people are best placed to identify local needs as well as to design the strategies and implement the initiatives to meet those needs, and therefore should be given a role in the development of their local area. Community development is principally concerned with local people, organisations and institutions and the interaction between them.

The second dialectic opposes a sectoral approach in favour of a territorial one.

- A sectoral approach:

This approach appears as both vertical and specialised, focussing only on one dimension of the rural reality such as economic (for example agricultural), social, cultural, and environmental issues. Thereby it is possible to observe a number of targeted strategies which involve, for example, developing and diversifying economic activities, sustaining social services and access, and preserving, as well as enhancing, the environment.

However, given the recognition of development as a *multi-dimensional and comprehensive process of change*, the sectoral approach has been somewhat discredited in recent years. As the OECD (1988, p. 36) points out, there has been a growing realisation that issues “such as employment and income generation and stability, agricultural production, land use planning, environmental protection, deficient public infrastructure, health care and other human services shortages are affected by one another”.

This recognition of the need for multi-sectoral integration has also accounted for the need to formulate and generate approaches on a territorial foundation, which constitutes the second element of the dialectic.

- A territorial approach:

The territorial approach tackles rural development from a horizontal perspective and, as opposed to the sectoral approach, is perceived as a way of accommodating the recognised interdependencies between the various components of development. As Teisserenc (1994) discusses, the territorial paradigm, is a ‘soft concept’, a concept that is a focus of observations where it is possible to witness a set of internal and external networks, and consisting of the interdependencies between economic, political, social, and cultural relationships (Mendras, 1967). The absence of an agreed definition, according to Kayser (1990) does not however hinder its use, as its importance, he argues, must be seen as depending less on its meaning and more on the processes of which this ‘territory’ is perceived to be the object.

ii) Co-operative Approaches for Rural Development

Within this context, the inter-relationship between public-private / market-state / global-local becomes the key characteristic of rural development action, the implementation of which presents a considerable institutional and organisational challenge. As the OECD (1988,1990,1996) explains, the traditional systems of organisation and administration in developed economies generally reflect the sectoral perspective that has been dominant until now. Today these systems present major obstacles for coherent, comprehensive and integrated initiatives. There has been a growing awareness that the effectiveness of rural development initiatives has to be considered as relying very much on appropriate institutional and organisational settings. It is therefore possible to observe that, whilst country specific, it has been consequently possible to discern some common trends that would lead to the improvement of the formulation of rural development action in the context of global multi-dimensional/multi-sectoral perspectives (OECD, 1988). These have consisted of:

- a new division of labour between ministries and government departments, reflecting today's rural economic and social realities;
- the reform of territorial administration, with a particular emphasis on devolving economic and social decision-making and programme management closer to the local level;
- the establishment of hybrid organisations (public/private) such as multi-purpose co-operatives or local associations, but also rural development commissions and boards with relative autonomous status, which tend to stand outside the traditional government functioning;
- a growing use of convention, contracts, and programming which bring together a wide range of actors and accommodate the indispensable interaction between public-private/state-market/global-local.

Such directions have resulted in the bringing together within different forms of co-operative arrangements not only many sectoral departments but also different levels of government and a wide spectrum of private sector economic and social interests. As observed by the OECD (1990, p. 7), "in many countries the ultimate viability of comprehensive rural policy-making is seen to depend on the capacities of a considerable number of heterogeneous institutions to work out together durable forms of co-operation

that go beyond mutual consultations”. These cooperative arrangements are today commonly referred as partnerships.

“ While not seen as the panacea for solving rural development problems, partnerships are thought to be effective instruments for improving relationships among public agencies, levels of government and private sectors organisations, and for combining human and financial resources from a variety of sources for achieving rural policy objectives” (OECD, 1990, p. 13)

The promotion and implementation of partnerships has appeared, thus, to be the approach most developed countries are opting for. Highly country specific, it has been observed that partnership arrangements in rural development are of different types and can take a variety of forms (OECD, 1990; Westholm, 1999). Some may be ‘strategic’, covering a large area, involving a variety of strategic partners and address a wide range of issues, some may be ‘topic-based’ and focus on a specific issues, finally some may be ‘area-based’, also referred as ‘local’, operating over a smaller area at a level closer to local communities (Slee and Snowdon, 1997). Some may be formally binding while others consist of a more informal engagement. In any case, it is argued that the essence of any of these partnerships consists of the orchestration of rural development strategy building and implementation between the different sectoral interests, based on commonly agreed objectives and priorities that focus on the specific array of rural development issues (OECD, 1990).

The present research being particularly interested in the local form of the partnership approach in rural development, the next section focuses most specifically on the local partnership approach.

iii) The Local Partnership Approach in Rural Development

“Rural areas have a wide range of contexts and therefore face very varied development problems (...). These very different situations call for very different solutions, but all include local partnerships: whether by creating links between factions in conflict, mobilising the initiatives or finding alternative forms of organisation, this always involves bringing together a certain number of local actors to resolve a problem affecting the whole area concerned” (LEADER Observatory, 1997, p. 21)

The local partnership approach has become, in the past few years, highly promoted in rural development and is recognised by both academics and practitioners as inherent to the implementation of rural development action today:

“ the need to focus available resources on commonly agreed goals, as well as the dynamism injected in a project by the involvement of a large number of people, has made a strategic tool out of local partnership creation” (Bryden, 1998, p. 5).

The promotion of the local partnership approach rests on the idea that localised rural development action needs to consider not only the aims and substance of its various local projects, but also the processes through which these can be most effectively and appropriately implemented and delivered in the local area (Mannion, 1996; Bryden, 1998). The local partnership approach produces some important reconsiderations of the traditional mode of local operation and action in local rural development action (LEADER Observatory, 1997, Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998):

“Local partnerships involve the formation of a network of relationship and solidarity at the level of an area whose aim is to better develop the area’s potential and enrich the sectoral actions with a ‘transverse’, inter-sectoral debate. More than joint economic action, local partnerships represent a will to build or rebuild a social link or even a search for identity” (LEADER Observatory, 1997, p. 7)

The political and policy context, whether European, national, regional or local is argued to have played an important role in the development of the local partnership approach (Bryden, 1998). As pointed out by the OECD (1990) and later reaffirmed by Westholm *et al.* (1999), partnerships has become an appealing answer to a variety of economic and political challenges and has become an established approach to tackle rural planning and development in most developed economies. It is possible to identify a wide number of policy arenas, including economic regeneration and sustainable development, social exclusion, recreation and tourism as well as agriculture and conservation in which the local partnership approach has been adopted (Cherett, 1999).

The local partnership approach has been a key approach of the LEADER initiative launched in 1991 by the European Commission. ‘Local Action Groups’ and ‘Local Networks’ have been at the basis of European development policy, calling for strategies that gather local institutional, economic and voluntary partners. At the core of the thinking behind LEADER initiative is to give to a local team a global grant in order to prepare an integrated and sustainable strategy of development for a defined area and to promote negotiations and dialogue between the various actors concerned and also to promote exchange of good practice and information networks (Conroy, *et al.*, 1996, LEADER Observatory, 1997).

According to Chassagne (1993), the current model of local partnership in rural development has been strongly inspired by both the notion of the French 'Pays' and the various Anglo-Saxon principles of community development.

The 'Pays' is in France, a reality before being a concept. It "embodies profound solidarities. It represents a space, a landscape, an accent, a certain art of living, traditions and customs, and a heritage of common memories"(Le Roy, 1997, p.251). In 1975, the search for adapted solutions to the specific characteristics of rural areas brought forth the 'Contracts of Pays'. These contracts took the form of a financial incitement aiming at encouraging all local actors to cooperate for the valorisation of local resources and the local area. They consisted of an engagement between the state and the communes forming the Pays. These contracts assigned each of the partners with a specific contribution in order to realise the co-ordinated objectives of a programme (Rapport Deneux, 1976, Breillat, 1980). The contractual procedure was flexible "to adapt to the diversity of situations and of local demands: as many Pays as possible development measures, needs and aspirations" (Houée, 1996, p. 178). An evaluation of these contracts in the early 1980s reveals that half of these contracts opened to medium-term negotiations, offering a good basis for local planning. However financial attraction often resulted in a chase for grant more than in the emergence of self-development dynamics as initially expected (Houée, 1996).

The concept of the 'Pays' has been reintroduced with the Law of Orientation for the Planning and the Development of the Territory (4/02/1995, art 22-23). The Pays is now understood as representing the scale of the local area for development in which the local actors are led to co-operate. It is defined as a space of interdependence between town and countryside and as representing a space of 'solidarity':

"Today, a capacity to act, a conscience of local identity and resources, and local cultural dynamics are as many elements that participate in economic development. History, geology, climate, and people have shaped the personality and the unity of an area which are the true entities of rural development and not the traditional administrative boundaries" (Le Roy, 1997, p. 251)

The potential of the local partnership approach in rural development is widely advocated, the examples of local partnership arrangements are many, and yet there only exists a limited understanding and knowledge about how locally based rural development

partnerships work in practice and about the real potential of local partnership working for delivering rural development.

In the light of the current discussions about partnership working (see chapter 2), it can be argued that progress towards an answer to these questions requires the study of current partnerships and an examination of the different processes and outcomes that characterise this approach. It is unrealistic to expect the findings from such an examination to provide categorical answers to all of the above questions. However, the present study seeks to make a step towards the required answers, a step that starts by reviewing some common examples of local partnership arrangements and exploring the existing knowledge in the academic and applied literature relating to the practice of local partnership in rural development and the context for investigation.

3.6 The Practice of Local Partnership in Rural Development

Much of the literature on local partnerships in rural development has concentrated until recently, on a set of reasons for and/or against the local partnership approach and their political consequences rather than how local partnerships work and what these potentially achieve in practice. At the outset of the research most of the available knowledge on local partnership working in rural development emerged from 'good practice guidelines' (OECD, 1990; Wilcox and Charlton, 1997; LEADER Observatory, 1997; Slee and Snowdon, 1997).

Since this research began, relevant studies of partnership in a rural development context have provided further information on the practice of local rural development partnership. These include for example, the 'PRIDE' project (Partnerships for Rural Integrated Development in Europe), of which Westholm *et al.* (1999) and Esparcia *et al.* (2000) are interim reports, and 'Partnership Working in Rural Regeneration' (Edwards *et al.*, 2000).

As an extensive literature review, the first interim report of the PRIDE project (Westholm *et al.*, 1999) reveals the extent of the knowledge that exists on local partnership practice in rural planning and development in Europe, by distilling the experiences to date of eight European Countries, namely Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. This report collects much of the written academic and applied evidence existing on partnership and presents the various analyses that are associated with the workings of this growing practice in each of

these countries. It confirms the great variety of local partnerships that currently exist in the context of the rural development process, a process that is evolving broadly in the same direction within each of the countries studied, and generally within the European Union. The second interim report presents the results of an extensive exploratory survey of 330 examples of partnerships pursuing rural integrated development in the eight countries listed above, the aim of which was to gain knowledge on the constitution, functioning and impact of partnerships.

As part of the Area Regeneration Series led by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 'Partnership Working in Rural Regeneration' (Edwards *et al.*, 2000), presents the findings of a research project which analysed the experience of 150 rural partnerships operating in Wales and Shropshire. It investigates the processes involved in building and maintaining regeneration partnerships in rural areas, including locally based partnerships. This research lies within particular considerations of governance and empowerment.

In the context of the present research, the author has chosen to draw upon the conclusions of these very recent studies mainly, in chapter 8 setting them, alongside her empirical findings as part of the overall research discussion.

Early research and current research all confirm the need to clarify and expand understandings of local partnership working in rural development. They stress the important diversity of local partnership arrangements. They also expose the necessity for more systematic and in depth explorations of the process of local partnership working in rural development as well as the need for close consideration of the outcomes of the practice.

3.6.1 The Diversity of Local Partnerships in Rural Development

In the light of the LEADER Observatory Research and of the PRIDE research, it is possible to find that the promotion of the local partnership approach has resulted in a multitude of local partnership arrangements (LEADER Observatory, 1997; Westholm *et al.*, 1999).

Any attempt to identify and describe all the different Local partnerships arrangements that are currently employed to deliver rural development has proved to be an impossible task, as pointed out by the LEADER Observatory (1997, p. 26) "there exists an infinite

number of local partnership models, probably as least as many as there are contexts” or policy arenas (Cherett, 1999).

However it is useful to provide a review of the different types of local partnership arrangements in rural development that have been described so far in the literature.

Regarding the diversity of local partnership arrangements, the LEADER Observatory (1997) argues that a distinction must be made between local partnerships created at the initiative of individuals, business and professional organisations or public authorities. It argues that depending on the initiator the objectives and the process of partnership working is inevitably different. The LEADER Observatory also distinguishes between ‘management partnerships’ and ‘coordination partnerships’. Management partnerships are described as generally born of a circumstantial opportunity (programme or exceptional funding). They are limited in time and their objectives are argued to “follow a ‘project logic’ in which the objectives are generally loosely linked to allocating, distributing and consuming a budget” (LEADER Observatory, p. 13). Coordination partnerships are described as partnerships that aim to create a ‘social project’, and are based on an educational and rallying approach that takes time. The objective is to raise citizenship awareness to modify behaviour and obtain commitment from as many people as possible.

Regardless of the origins or the initiator, the ANDAFAR¹ (1997) distinguishes between local partnership arrangements that mobilise exclusively local actors, including local farmers, local authority representatives, elected or not, as well as local representatives from private, voluntary and community sector. The dialogue between these different partners is established around the future of the rural area with regard to planning and development. The ANDAFAR also refers to another example of local partnership arrangement, an arrangement that draws participants that are external to the local area. These external participants generally include the various representatives of organisations concerned with rural development. These partners may be associated at different stage of the implementation of local development initiatives, as technical, as relay-structure or co-financing structure.

¹ Association Nationale pour le Développement et l’Aménagement Foncier, Agricole et Rural

Notwithstanding the diversity that characterises local partnership arrangements in rural development, an analysis of the current research indicates that the majority of observed local partnerships:

- may find their origin in endogenous initiatives, though they are often introduced by top-down policy and programmes (Westholm *et al.*, 1999);
- consist of arrangements that draw partners from a diversity of cross sectoral interests, including the public, private, voluntary and community sector (LEADER Observatory, 1997; Westholm *et al.*, 1999);
- have as their principal aim is to define a common agenda and work toward a strategic and integrated approach for the development of the local area (Slee and Snowdon, 1997; LEADER Observatory, 1997);
- are commonly strongly dependent on external funding and policy support (Slee and Snowdon, 1997);
- rest on formal structures, which generally comprise a management board and sub-groups, the structure being legally binding or functioning on informal understanding and agreements (Slee and Snowdon, 1997; LEADER Observatory, 1997);
- are under the leading role of the public sector (LEADER Observatory, 1997; Slee and Snowdon, 1997)

The diversity of local partnerships in rural development being established, the next section turns to consider existing knowledge about the process of local partnership working in rural development.

3.6.2 The Process of Local Partnership in Rural Development

“Provided the expression ‘partner’ incorporates the notion of being part of, the practice of partnership is becoming an anchoring point of development in rural development: ‘being part of’ both actively and jointly, leads to the recognition of a common identity and the devising of a shared strategy which first take into account man and his environment” (LEADER Observatory, 1997, p. 8).

In the search for further understanding of the process of local partnership working in rural development, the current literature suggests that there is a need for a close

examination of a variety of issues (LEADER Observatory; 1997; Slee and Snowdon, 1997; Esparcia, *et al.*, 2000; Edwards *et al.*, 2000). These include, for example, the context and the reasons at the origin of partnership initiation; the process through which local partnerships develop; the organisation of local partnership working, the origin and role of partners and the resources of the local partnership. Other issues suggested as relevant to the analysis of local partnership working are the issues of participation, representation, democracy and accountability, power, as well as the issue of time. And finally, the issues of local/rural governance as well as the meaning of rural development itself are suggested to be important issues to be taken in consideration.

In the light of the research findings from the investigation of seven examples of local partnerships operating across rural Europe, the LEADER Observatory proposes that the process of local partnership development can be divided in five main stages:

Stage 1- Initialise, detect and mobilise;

Stage 2- Discuss, position oneself, propose;

Stage 3- Validate, schedule, finance;

Stage 4- Assemble, carry out, monitor;

Stage 5- Evaluate, adapt, relaunch.

Slee and Snowdon (1997) organise the local partnership process in rural development around four phases. These are the phase 'Setting up', 'Structuring', 'Operation' and 'Review'. They suggest that there is a need for the definition of the lifespan of the partnership and that such definition must aim for an appropriate time scale.

The LEADER Observatory (1997, p. 7) insists that any analysis of the process of local partnership working must acknowledge that this process may take a variety of forms. It asserts that the formation of a local partnership depends "on the nature and numbers of partners; the context in which the partnership has been created, the natural or legal persons who are behind it; the objectives that has been set and on the socio-economic culture of the area concerned (legal-administrative system, regulations in force, role of public authorities, institutional practice, exercise of citizenship etc.)".

The LEADER Observatory (1997, p. 26) also concludes that some contexts may require a partnership following a "mobilisation logic", in which the aim is based on reconciliation, on re-focussing a local dynamic in the area, therefore implying the creation of a local partnership from scratch. Other contexts may require a 'structuring

logic', whereby the partnership is set up within a strong institutional framework where a long tradition of interaction and even partnership can be witnessed. Thus the aim, in this context, is to co-ordinate and to structure the local dynamic.

The OECD (1990, p. 38) suggests that the development of a rural development partnership, including local partnerships, rests on the partnership's "political feasibility". Hence the partnership's aims, representation, organisation, management structure and operating processes should be, from the outset, politically feasible from the perspective of both internal and external parties to the partnership:

" Analysis of who the actors are, their values, beliefs and motivations, and their resources in the context of a possible rural development partnership arrangement and its purpose will provide insights into probable points of political consensus and conflict. It will help delineate which actors will be supportive, which will not, and which resources will be used, and how, to effectuate support or opposition (OECD, 1990, p. 38)."

This statement makes the link to another common suggestion about local partnership working in respect to the dependency of the local partnership on the actors willingness to co-operate, to negotiate, to share responsibility and to accept accountability (Kearney *et al.*, 1994).

Also commonly suggested is that the effective development and operation of local partnerships lies in the organisation of the local partnership practice (Slee and Snowdon, 1997; LEADER Observatory, 1997). The prevalent argument is that such organisation requires the establishment of a formal or informal structure to co-ordinate partnership actions, to carry out those activities and functions necessary to achieve the aims and objectives of the local partnership. In this perspective, Slee and Snowdon (1990) argue that a typical partnership structure should comprise a management board, a chairperson respected by the community of interests, and a project manager when sufficient resources are available. They also suggest that "a structure should leave the operations of partnership sufficiently flexible to allow for innovation and the ability to react to particular circumstances" (p. 12). Another commonly suggestion is that the organisation of the local partnership practice requires the definition of clear, well understood and mutually accepted aims and objectives, that promote and co-ordinate the whole of the local resources (OECD, 1990; Le Roy, 1997).

In the long list of suggestions made about local partnerships in rural development, it is also possible to find the need for equal representation between of the various local

interests (Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998). A recurrent suggestion has been that any local partnership arrangements must be organised with the main purpose being to offer local actors, including the voluntary and community sector, a key role in the development of their area, presenting local groups with the opportunity to have a say and present their views, particularly the most disadvantaged (Warburton, 1998; Le Roy, 1997). Slee and Snowdon, (1997, p. 8) suggest that relative to the level of representation and configuration of membership a “balance needs to be struck between a large number of partners, which render decision making unwieldy, and a small number of partners which may result in inadequate representation of different communities of interest. The parties selected should be chosen to match the overall aims and objectives of the partnership”. Once actively involved in a partnership, it may be necessary for some partners to relinquish some of their influence and power in order to place the aims of the partnership before the ambitions of any single partners (OECD, 1990; Slee and Snowdon, 1997).

Finally, it has also been commonly suggested that mechanisms should be put in place that allow the partnership to review its remit and membership and evaluate progress in achieving objectives and assessing outcomes (LEADER Observatory, 1997; Slee and Snowdon, 1997).

This point provides a link with the next section, which focuses more particularly on the outcomes of local partnership practice.

3.6.3 The Outcomes of Local Partnership Practice in Rural Development

“Local partnerships are not an end in themselves; their ‘raison d’être’ lies in their capacity to transform social relations, ways of thinking and behaviour and to be an instrument of innovation and development” (LEADER Observatory, 1997, p. 39).

Much of the literature on local partnership in rural development relates to the expected benefits from local partnership working. Hence it is frequently suggested that local partnerships must be seen to provide the means for a more effective preparation and implementation of rural development strategies in the local area (LEADER Observatory, 1997). They would do this by drawing on the necessary resources for development, both financial and human, including skills, expertise, and understanding, political and technological access as well as the indispensable ‘work force’ (Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998). The gathering of these different resources is seen to help in providing a relevant appraisal of needs and priorities and it also helps in building a collective commitment to

common objectives and the means to achieve them, minimising the 'implementation gap' between the intent and the action (Slee and Snowdon, 1997; Osborne, 1998).

In addition to these potential benefits, Slee and Snowdon (1997) add that local partnership working can offer a variety of other benefits such as the development of shared vision, the stimulus to action, the scope for skill development and sharing as well as synergy through the pooling of resources. Finally it has been argued also that local partnerships have the potential to introduce specific forms of 'basic' democracy by extending involvement to all socio-economic actors in the local area (Bryden, 1998).

Therefore, expected outcomes of partnership working appears to be concerned less with the outputs that are delivered through this approach than with the quality of the approach set up to deliver these outputs. In other words, when assessing partnership working, the focus should be more on the capacity to deliver than on the deliverables.

Slee and Snowdon (1997), argue that when assessing partnership working, it is necessary to base one's analysis on a number of performance indicators. These indicators should be related to the objectives of the partnership and act as markers to determine whether the aim and objectives have been reached. The examples of performance indicators that are proposed by Slee and Snowdon (1997, p. 22) include, economic outcomes, such as the number of jobs created through development projects; the financial turnover of the partnership and the amount of matching funding mobilised. Also taken into consideration is the number of organisations involved in the joint planning of initiatives; support through membership subscriptions (where applicable) and the number of projects implemented, projects underway, and their outcomes. The other indicators suggested include the feedback from the local community, including the media and different communities of interest and feedback from funding agency. Finally Slee and Snowdon (1990) suggest that consideration should be given to the level of 'additionality' in the partnership's work (achievement that otherwise would not have been possible), the extent to which the partnership's achievements are self sustaining as well as the extent to which local people are better able to take control of their destinies.

LEADER Observatory (1997) suggests that the assessment of the results of local partnership practice requires focussing on the 'quality of partnership action'. Indeed it suggests that "the quality of partnership action will guarantee the partnership vitality and

the ability to be a tool for coordinating the area's development" (p. 33). This quality, it is argued, can be assessed as three levels:

- Partnership as an instrument to rally stakeholders and to achieve social cohesion;
- Partnership as an instrument of dialogue and decision sharing;
- Partnership as an effective instrument to implement local development based on a number of conditions including the legitimacy of partnership action in the area, and partners' ability to act.

Along with the quality of partnership action, the LEADER Observatory (1997) proposes to look at the transformation of practices and the facilitation of innovation. In this respect, three main criteria for assessment are proposed:

- Partnership favours a better understanding between the area's actors;
- Partnership creates and strengthens the identity and recognition of a collective project at area level;
- Partnership introduces specific forms of democracy at the base, thus enabling a greater involvement of actors in the debate and action.

In their recent research on partnership working in rural regeneration, Edwards *et al.* (2000, p. 2) acknowledge that measuring the achievements of partnership working in terms of job or wealth creation or other forms of economic development is highly difficult to achieve "given the tangled matrices of governance within which partnership operate, the uncontrollable influence of external factors, and the lack of comparative data relating to a hypothetical non-partnership alternative". They claim that there is a need instead "to think of effectiveness in terms of realising the aims of the partnership working and reaping the supposed benefits of partnership working. Thus, effective partnership working might be where communities are fully engaged in identifying problems and solutions, where there is a pooling of resources, where replication of activities is avoided, where consensual decision making processes are instituted, and so on"(p. 2).

Westholm *et al.* (1999) and Esparcia *et al.* (2000), as part of the PRIDE Research argue that an assessment of partnership working in rural development may also be considered within consideration of 'additionality'. This consists of an investigation of the "net difference that the partnership approach makes compared to the conventional

development approach” (Moseley *et al.* 2001, p. 107). Their investigation involves an impact study using the FACT-method (Focussed Assessment through Cause-effect Tracing method), which seeks to establish a connection between a “host of outputs/outcomes apparent in the operation of the 24 case study partnerships to factors or actions in some way ‘determining them’ ” (p. 149).

The findings of these two very recent studies will be considered alongside the findings of the present research when appropriate, in chapter 8.

Therefore, the review of the literature suggests that there is not yet consistent agreement on how to approach partnership outcomes, on what may constitute effective partnership working and ultimately how to assess the role and potential of local partnership working in rural development. Research is still trying to establish how to further this understanding. The emerging view in the literature is that any investigation of partnership outcomes should not uniquely focus on tangible outputs and thereby dismiss the importance of process outcomes as the quality of partnership action should be seen to affect the partnership ability to promote rural development (LEADER Observatory, 1997; Edwards *et al.* , 2000). In this respect, the investigation must accept that the partnership practice is something that is highly context-dependent and therefore ultimately tied to local conceptions and culture (Edwards *et al.*, 2000). Consequently an investigation of partnership outcomes should be reflected in the opinions of those involved in the practice. A description and discussion of the views and attitudes of those involved would provide an indicator of how to develop criteria to benchmark effective local partnership working as well as the likely success of the partnership in rural development.

3.7 Conclusion

The management of the multi-dimensional nature of change and the increasing socio-economic diversification and differentiation of rural areas has played havoc with the traditional ‘top-down’, exclusively sector-based measures, which had characterised rural development until the early 1980s. With the aim of completing and reinforcing structural and macro-economic strategies, territorial, integrated, and bottom-up participative approaches have, in the last 15-20 years, transformed rural development action (Mannion, 1996). Characteristic of this transformation is the promotion of the local partnership approach. Promoted, in recent years by a wide range of policies at the

European, national and local levels, but also by practitioners, local partnership working has become common practice in the preparation and implementation of rural development action at the local level.

No universally accepted definition of 'partnership' or 'local partnership' exists. However in order to delimit the scope of the present research this author proposes the following definition drawn from a consideration of the various definitions put forward in the literature. Hence, the partnership refers in this research to "*a formal or informal arrangement which mobilises a coalition of diverse interests and resources and the commitment of a wide range of individuals and organisations, to act as partners around shared objectives and in order to address a defined problem*". It will be noted that, unlike much of the current research, the present research does not consider partnership as a structure but as a process of working.

Research on local partnership working in rural development is still in its infancy and there only exists a limited understanding and knowledge about the practice of local partnership working in rural development. Progress towards such understanding constitutes the basis of this research. A review of the literature on partnership working and local partnership working has indicated that there is no comprehensive theory of partnerships and that no universally accepted framework of analysis exists. In the absence of a comprehensive theory and established analytical framework, but benefiting from previous research on partnership working, research on the practice local partnership in rural development points to the need to develop an essentially practical, although theoretically informed, research strategy.

An examination of the origins, the context, the mechanisms and processes involved in the practice of local partnership as well as the outcomes expected and resultant emerge from the review of the literature to be relevant to the understanding of the practice of partnership. In undertaking such an examination this author has made the decision to enter the field without theoretical preconceptions or hypotheses to orient or guide the present research. Instead the practice of local partnership will be examined inductively. Moreover, the nature of the subject studied, context-dependent and pragmatic, characterised with flexible and fluid relationships (Bailey, 1994; Lowndes *et al.*, 1997) has encouraged this author to follow a qualitative rather than quantitative approach and to use case studies in an attempt to throw some further light on several issues raised in the introductory chapters.

The methodological issues associated with the empirical investigation are examined and discussed in the next chapter together with the methods that have been selected to collect and analyse the empirical evidence derived from the two case studies. The subsequent chapter will present in turn the evidence of the selected case studies focussing on the process of local partnership in rural development through the formation and operation of the practice and the perceived outcomes of this practice.

CHAPTER 4. THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION: RESEARCH STRATEGY AND PRESENTATION OF THE CASE STUDIES

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the author presents a rationale for the research strategy to examine the practice of local partnership in rural development. Within it the approaches and methods adopted for the empirical investigation are described. Case studies are used as the basis for the empirical work, and the two case study areas selected, namely Newent in the UK and Sault in France, are introduced. The background context of each study area is described together with an analysis of the unfolding history of the practice of local partnership in each location. In the final section of this chapter the author presents the emerging issues from the empirical evidence and describes the organisation of the evidence to be presented in subsequent chapters.

The aim of the present research has been stated via the four research questions, and the associated research objectives. To investigate local partnership working in rural development the researcher has a choice. The researcher could examine a 'representative sample' of instances of partnership working that are sufficient in number to provide the statistical power to enable quantitative conclusions and generalisations to be drawn. The researcher could examine a large number of partnership instances from which general trends and commonalities could be identified within the cases studied, whether using quantitative or qualitative methods. Alternatively, the researcher could perform a detailed exploratory examination of a small number of instances of partnership working, from which detailed understanding may be derived that can provide guidance and direction for future research.

Each strategy has a contribution to make, however a clear definition of the intended purpose of the study, and a judgement on the appropriateness of a particular strategy to the research questions, has provided guidance to the author on the strategy to be adopted. It has been decided that given:

- the limited detailed knowledge currently available about local partnership working in rural development;

- the requirement of the research questions to identify the characteristics of local partnership practice that is being used to deliver rural development, and the mechanisms, processes and outcomes inherent in the practice;
- the requirement of the research questions to provide insight into the appropriateness and capability of the local partnership approach in rural development;
- the bilingual ability of the researcher;
- the accessibility of the author to trans-national case studies,

the author can best contribute to knowledge through a detailed exploratory study focussing on the longitudinal observation of a small number of cases in the UK and France. It is anticipated that this strategy will confirm or challenge some of the existing knowledge about local partnership working in rural development whilst providing some additional insight through the ‘depth’ of observation that a small number of case studies allows.

4.2 Issues to be addressed in the Empirical Research

“Issues are chosen partly in terms of what can be learned within the opportunities for study” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 92).

The empirical research is concerned first, with exploring the mechanisms employed and the processes involved in the practice of local partnership working. The term ‘mechanism’ refers, in this research, to the methods and procedures involved the practice of local partnership. The term ‘process’ refers to the concurrent dynamics, the series of actions, involved in the practice of local partnership.

In order to help with the investigation, the author has made the decision to explore the mechanisms and processes involved in the practice local partnership through the process of local partnership development. The author has made the decision to split this process into two phases, the phase of partnership formation and the phase of partnership operation. In adopting this perspective particular attention can be given to a variety of issues including the context within which the practice is taking place, the reasons, influences and factors attributed to the initiation of the practice local partnership. Attention is given to such issues as organisation, structuring, and management of the local partnership practice; the partners, their motivations, involvement, role and actions; the place and scale of the local partnership practice as well as the difficulties and constraints of this practice.

In addition the empirical research is concerned with examining and describing the outcomes of the practice of local partnership, both expected and resultant, reflecting the views and attitudes of those involved. In undertaking such examination the researcher does not intend to perform an impact study. The intention is rather to throw some further light on the key issues of local partnership formation and operation as well as the role of local partnership practice in rural development.

4.3 Devising the Research Strategy

“Partnerships are by their very nature, difficult to research, given the multiple parties involved and the importance of informal relationships and contacts. The informality of partnership activity means that telephone conversations and chance meeting are as significant as pre-arranged discussions. The diversity and fluidity of relationships mean that it can be hard to identify and put boundaries around areas of partnership activity” (Lowndes, et al., 1997, p. 333).

Fundamental to the strategy to be adopted for the present research is the notion that this study aims to explore, in detail, the practice of local partnership in the context of rural development.

From a detailed exploration the present study aims to provide a depth of material around the research questions stated, rather than attempting to generalise ‘answers’ to these questions to all cases of partnership practice in rural development. The author considers the latter to be an ultimate objective of research in this field, towards which the present study intends to contribute.

As observed in the foregoing chapters, an exploration of partnership working requires the observation and analysis of a context-dependent, action oriented, and dynamic process that evolves over time and that operates on the basis of complex interactions between individuals and organisations and within different institutional frameworks (Waddock, 1989; Bailey, 1994; Lowndes, 1997, LEADER Observatory, 1997; Slee and Snowdon, 1997). Observation must be perceptive to the personal as well as the organisational aspects of the subject (Teisserenc, 1994; Hastings, 1996).

In order to allow a depth of longitudinal exploration, within the time and resource constraints imposed by a single researcher study, a case study approach was adopted for the present study.

4.3.1 The Case Study Approach

“ Case study research has the aim of studying in an open and flexible manner social action in its natural setting as it takes place in the form of interaction or communication and as interpreted by the respondents” (Sarentakos, 1998, p. 193)

According to Yin (1994, p.1) the use of the case study is preferred “when the focus is a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context”. Sarentakos (1998, p.192) adds that the case study must be “considered to be valid forms of enquiry [...], when the researcher is interested in the structure, process and outcomes of a single unit”. Moreover Garwitz (1996, p. 700) describe the case study as “characterised by its objective: gather a maximum of information on a specific and limited subject, generally from simple desire of information, description or classification”.

Stake (1998) explains that different researchers may have different purposes for studying a case. He opposes the *‘intrinsic case’*, whereby the study is undertaken to gain understanding of the particular case and the case is the main interest, to the *‘instrumental case’*. The *‘instrumental case’* provides a basis for the phenomenon to be analysed. In this perspective the case is of secondary interest and “plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else” (Stake *in* Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p.88).

The majority of research exercises that have examined or are currently examining the practical working of partnerships, use case studies (Waddock, 1989, Bennett and Krebs, 1991, Gray and Wood, 1991; Lawless, 1993; Bailey, 1994; Le Galès, 1996; LEADER Observatory, 1997; Edwards *et al*, 2000. Cavazzani *et al*, 2001). The general argument for using case studies when investigating partnership working is that case study research provides access, in context and in depth, to the internal dynamics of the partnership (Waddock, 1989). It is commonly argued that the case study approach allows an understanding of the overall process of partnership working providing insight into its historical evolution and the complexities involved in forming, developing and sustaining partnership working (Gray and Wood, 1991, LEADER Observatory, 1997; PRIDE Project Methodology Manual, 1999).

Whilst the case study remains the preferred strategy to investigating the practice of partnership (see Section 4.3.1), the use of a case study approach brings some concerns about issue of external validity, about how far the findings emerging from ‘the case’ can be generalized (Yin, 1994; Garwitz, 1996). Generalization is often sought through

extending the instrumental case study to a large number of cases in order to establish some recurrences of patterns in the findings.

Hence for example, contemporary to this research, the PRIDE project research started off with the use of an extensive survey, which identified 330 examples of partnership in the eight countries forming the area of research. The strategy was to “see how far the patterns and themes recur through the partnerships and constitute a conceptually and logically coherent framework for generalizability” (PRIDE Methodology Manual, 1999, p. 13). Amongst these 330 examples, 24 ‘representative’ cases were selected for further and more in-depth exploration. In like manner, Edwards *et al* (2000) chose first to define their study area and then to undertake an extensive desktop and library exercise to produce a database of rural regeneration partnerships operating in the study region. Amongst the 150 partnerships identified, 50 were the subject of a postal questionnaire survey, and the decision was made to work from the data of the 33 questionnaires returned to look into activities, constitution and organisation as well as the resources of these partnerships. The purpose was to identify the factors structuring the environment of working in partnership. More in-depth research, focussing on attitudes towards partnership working and the experience of working in the partnership, required them to narrow the study down to six case studies.

Literature on the case study approach confirms that a small numbers of cases can still give insights and understanding without pretending to be the basis for wide ranging generalisation (Robson, 1993). Moreover, according to Denzin and Lincoln, (1998, p. 91), “case study can usefully be seen as a small step toward grand generalisation, but generalisation should not always be emphasised in all research”. They argue that “damage occurs when the commitment to generalize or create theory runs so strong that the researcher’s attention is drawn away from features important for understanding the case itself”. On this particular issue, Sarentakos (1998) explains that, amongst the number of measures proposed by qualitative researchers to guarantee external validity, ‘cumulative validation’ whereby “a study can be validated if its findings are supported by other studies”(p80) may be considered. Cumulative validation is considered in the present research as contemporary to this research are a number of studies likely to confirm and/or inform the findings (see Section 3.6).

The nature of an exploratory study of the practice of local partnership suggests strongly that a qualitative approach to the data collection and analysis of the case studies will be

most appropriate. It is expected that the personal opinions of those involved, along with documentary evidence from the history of the cases studied, will comprise the sources of information to be gathered. Clearly, the design of the research strategy will need to consider qualitative methods of data collection and analysis.

4.3.2 A Qualitative Approach

“Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving and interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that the qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 3).

Quantitative studies, which consist essentially of an observation of the frequency in the facts and opinions analysed with very little consideration of the context (Frisch, 1999) do not coincide with the overall aim of the present research; to explore the various dynamics of local partnership working in context.

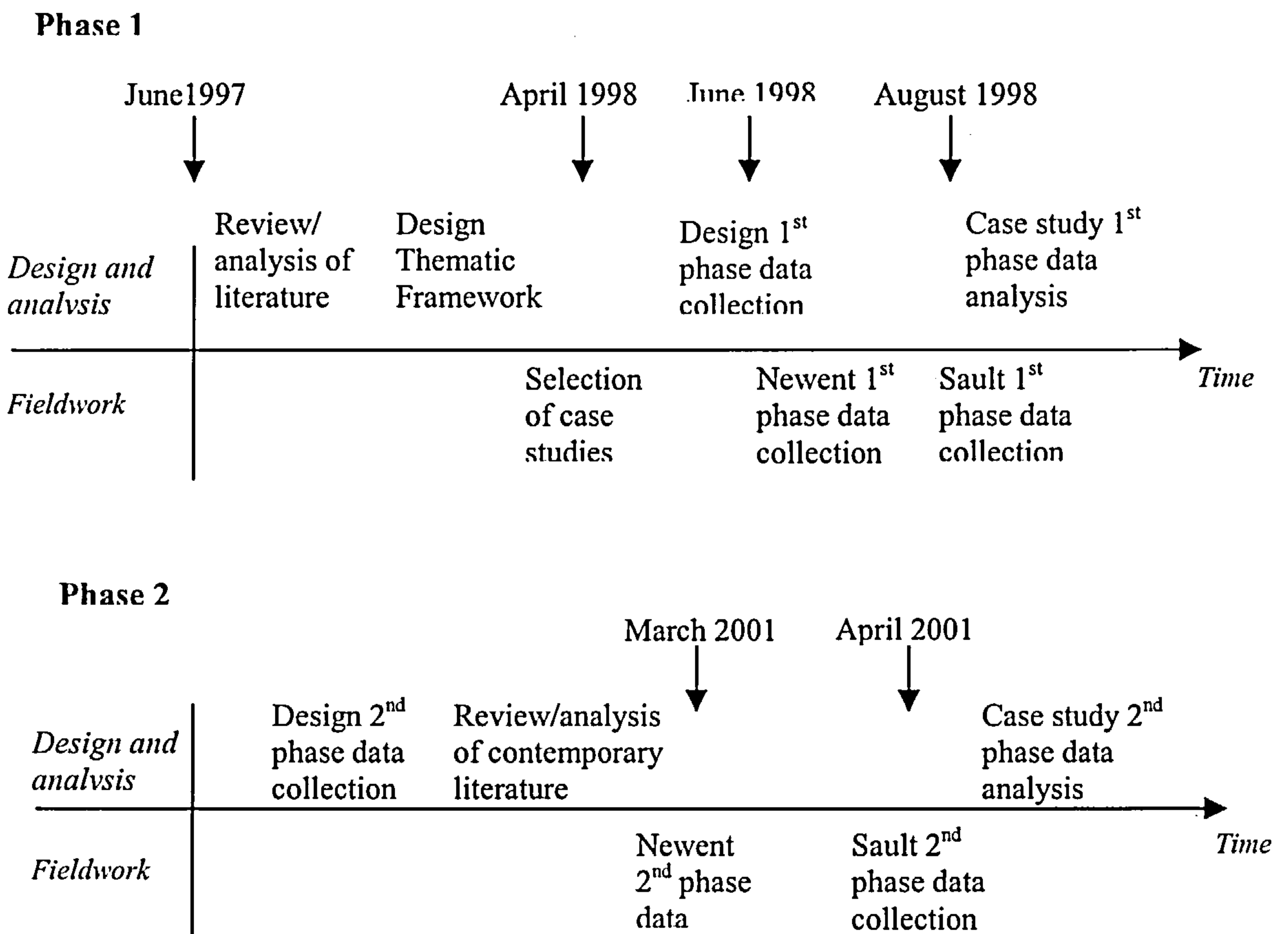
Instead, the adoption of a qualitative approach, which aims to comprehend the various reasons and considerations that underlie events, facts, actions, values and opinions analysed (Denzin and Lincoln, 1996; Frisch, 1999), is preferred. Indeed the main reason for adopting a qualitative approach lies in the various fundamental characteristics of qualitative enquiry. It is well established that a qualitative approach allows an investigation of real word situations as they unfold (Sarentakos; 1998) and a comprehension of whole phenomenon under investigation when understood as a complex system (Denzin and Lincoln, 1996). It is also argued in the literature that a qualitative approach provides the means to access dynamic systems and give attention to process and change (Flick, 1998). Another commonly held view is that the adoption of a qualitative approach allows inductive analysis in which the researcher is immersed in the details and specifics of data to discover important categories and also allows personal contacts and insights as the researcher gets close to the people, situation and phenomenon under investigation (Sarentakos, 1998; Garwitz, 1996, Frisch, 1999).

4.3.3 Outline of the Research Approach

As this chapter proceeds the author will describe the methods of the empirical investigation of the present study in detail. However to assist navigation through the chapter an overview of the research approach is provided here.

The following schematic illustrates the activities undertaken in the present study.

Figure 4-1: Schematic Overview of Research Approach



4.4 Selection of the Case Study Areas

As introduced in chapter 1, the present research explores case studies in the UK and France. Most of the research undertaken on partnership has rested on the examination of the internal workings of a specific partnership organisational structure. However, the author decided to investigate local partnership working not just as part of a specific structure but as part of a local process. Consequently, the process of selection of the case study has consisted of the selection of ‘case study areas’ (Grawitz, 1996). Considering the scope of the research and the limitations imposed by time and resource constraints two case study areas were selected, one in each country. The selection of the case study area has raised issue of ‘representativeness’.

4.4.1 A Representative Case Study Area

“The case will be selected to represent some population of cases. The phenomenon of interest observable in the case represents the phenomenon generally” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 100).

The practice of local partnership is a practice that concerns a wide variety of local areas involved in rural development action. This reality has constrained the author from identifying or defining, objectively, a ‘representative’ or even ‘typical’ area in each country. Denzin and Lincoln (1998), however suggest that in this kind of situation, “potential for learning is a different and sometimes superior criterion to representativeness” (p.101). Hence, for example, in Bailey *et al.* ’s research (1994, p.3-4) the potential for learning predominated. The selection of the case studies depended on three *personal criteria*. First, they looked for examples of partnerships “that were reasonably well established, in the hope that there would be clear evidence of action ‘on the ground’”. Second, they wanted examples that “illustrated the range of origins, whether genuinely local in the sense of being promoted by residents or the local authority, or inspired by public or private initiatives”. Thirdly they looked for examples in a variety of contexts.

In the absence of what might be considered as a ‘representative’ or ‘typical’ study area, this author made the decision to look for a ‘study area’ which presented an active history of rural development initiatives and that was characterised by the existence of an established local partnership. The criteria that were used for the selection of the case study areas are now considered.

4.4.2 Criteria of Selection for the Case Study Areas

The overarching criterion for the selection of case studies within this research has been that the study areas had to be accessible in both countries to minimise travelling time and expense. This author has established other criteria to guide the selection of the case studies. Hence, in a search for a case study it was expected that:

- the case allowed a ‘bottom-up exploration’, meaning the exploration of the different processes involved in the local partnership practice from the implication of the local community upward;

- the practice of local partnership lay in the preparation and supervision of an agreed strategy for the development/regeneration of a locally defined rural area;
- the practice of local partnership was characterised by a coalition of interests drawn from the public, private and voluntary sector and from more than one level of government;
- local partnership working had been observable for a period of at least 2 to 3 years;
- the researcher would have free access to investigating the operating practice.

At the outset of the present research, the researcher was advised by her advisory team to look for a study area near to her home in France and near to Cheltenham. Consequently, at first, two areas, at the level of the district, and both showing evidence of an active history of rural development initiatives and partnership working experiences at parish or Commune level, were selected, thus:

- The Forest of Dean District (England)²
- The Department of Vaucluse (France)³

Within each area, two key individuals involved in the rural development process within each area were contacted. Meetings were arranged also to help the researcher to explore the different experiences of local partnership practice within two districts. These meetings enabled the researcher to explore the different example of local rural development partnerships in each area:

In the Forest of Dean (UK):

- The Director of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (also Secretary of the County Association of the Town and Parish Council);
- The Project Manager of the Forest of Dean Rural Development Programme;

In Vaucluse (France):

- The Director of the Comité de Bassin d'Emploi du Pays d'Apt;
- The Director of the Comité de Bassin d'Emploi du Pays de Sault.

² See Appendix 2

³ See Appendix 3

During these meetings, the two respondents in each study area suggested a number of options for research, however with a strong emphasis on a specific local area:

- The Parish of Newent (Gloucestershire, Forest of Dean, UK)⁴
- The Commune of Sault en Provence (Provence Alpes Cotes d'Azur; Vaucluse, France)⁵

Following these meetings the author made the decision to establish contact with a representative of each of these areas.

4.4.3 First Contacts in Each Study Area

Early April 1998, the author made contact with one key local representative in both Newent and Sault. As a result meetings were organised with the Mayor of Newent and the President of the Communauté de Communes of the Pays of Sault. During these meetings each local representative were asked to respond to the following questions:

- Origins/reasons/initiator of the local partnership practice?
- Partners/participants/the people/organisations involved?
- Contribution and general role of these partners within the partnership practice?
- Purpose/objectives of partnership working?
- Organisation of the partnership practice?
- Activities of the partnership?
- Evolution / prospective of the partnership?

From these initial meetings it was possible to confirm the suitability of the two study areas. Both local representatives welcomed this research and assured the author of their support in helping her access to contacts, documents and partnership meetings, the three main sources of evidence that have been retained for this research. These are now considered. The study areas are presented in sections 4.7 and 4.8.

⁴ See Appendix 2

⁵ See Appendix 3

4.5 Methods of Enquiry

“Case-study research involves studying individual cases, often in their natural environment, and for a long period of time and employs a number of methods of data collection and analysis” (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 191).

Data collection for case studies can rely on many sources of evidence and therefore there exist many possible methods for collecting data (Yin, 1994; Quivy and Campenhoudt, 1995; May, 1997). The list of possible sources of evidence can be quite extensive; it includes for example, documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, and even physical artefacts. Yin (1994, p. 80) argues that “no single source has complete advantage over all the others. In fact the various sources are highly complementary, and a good case study will therefore want to use as many sources as possible”. When following a qualitative approach the information that is collected is predominantly in text form rather than numerical. It is commonly argued in the literature that there may be no attempt to translate text or verbal information in a quantified format (Sarentakos, 1998, Frisch, 1999). Hence it is accepted to illustrate issues in the respondent’s own words for example (Moris and Coperstake, 1993; Denzin and Lincoln, 1996).

Various sources of evidence and therefore methods of data collection have been used in research to investigate partnerships. These sources vary from case to case and often depend on the unit of analysis and the scale and resource of the research. Hence, documentary research (Edwards *et al*, 2000), questionnaire survey (Esparcia, *et al* 2000), interviews (Bailey, 1994), workshops and focus groups (Lowndes *et al.*, 1997) are all research techniques that have been used to investigate partnership.

In the present research, three methods of data collection were retained, namely documentary research, semi-structured interviews and direct observation at meetings during the field visit. The development of converging lines of enquiry to explore the same phenomenon, and the need for complementarity and corroboration, form the rationale for using multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 1994).

4.5.1 Data Collection

i) Delimitation of the Study Period in each Case Study

Part of the present research strategy is to focus on a longitudinal observation of the case studied. Early evidence derived from the preliminary meetings in each study area allowed the author to establish that a period of observation of six years was possible in both study areas. The period upon which the empirical investigation focused on the practice of local partnership in both case study areas runs from the start of the year 1992 to the end of the year 1998. However the study being concerned also with setting the development of the practice in context, the decision was made to give attention to any background history or elements relevant to the understanding of the development of the practice of local rural development partnership in each study area. As noted in section 4.3.3 and later discussed in the present section, the investigation of the outcomes of local partnership practice left as late as possible (spring 2001). The investigation of the outcomes of the local partnership practice will concern those outcomes emerging from the practice running within 1992 to 1998.

ii) A thematic framework

In the light of pre-established findings drawn from previous research (see chapter 2), a thematic framework was designed to help with the collection and analysis of the data. This thematic framework was designed around a process of partnership evolution: formation and operation, and comprised a number of issues to help the exploration to throw light on the mechanisms, processes and outcomes of this practice. The framework is presented in Appendix 1.

iii) Two Phases of Fieldwork

For practical reasons and focus, this author made the decision to divide the empirical investigation into two formal and defined phases of fieldwork. A first phase of fieldwork was organised to focus on the mechanisms employed and processes involved in the practice of local partnership in rural development through the different phase of partnership development (formation and operation) during a defined period. A second phase of fieldwork investigation was planned to be undertaken later in the research to allow the effects of the partnership practice to become more apparent, exploring the

partners' views on the outcomes of the local partnership practice. The first phase of fieldwork was undertaken in both case studies during summer and autumn 1998. The second phase of fieldwork was undertaken in spring 2001.

iv) Phase 1: Unravelling the Process of the Local Partnership Within the Context of Rural Development

Examination of Documents

"They (documents) can tell us a great deal about the way in which events were constructed at the time, the reasons employed as well as providing material upon which to base further research investigations" (May, 1997, p. 57)

A review of documents available for each research area was first carried out. The documents comprised minutes of meetings, correspondence, working reports, application bid, and other written material existing in relation to the studied partnership. The list of documents and the system used for referencing documents in the text is described in Appendix 2. The purpose of examining written material was:

- to provide evidence on the origins and the historical evolution of the partnership, through its different phases of formation and operation (May, 1997);
- to become familiar with titles and names, spellings, and the partnership general practice before carrying out interviews (Quivy and Campenhoudt, 1995);
- to identify the participants who played any role in the local partnership practice (May, 1997);
- to help with corroborating and augmenting evidence from other sources (Yin, 1994).

The exploration of the documents helped the researcher to gain a broad understanding of the main processes that were involved in the development of each local partnership and to identify the initial aim and objectives of the partnership. It also provided unexpected material, such as official and less official correspondence, which presented the views of the community and an indication of the partners at the time of the partnership formation and through its construction and operation. Minutes of meetings helped to identify broadly the attendance and representation at the different 'local partnership' meetings, and sometimes gave some indication of the interactions taking place.

Semi-structured Interviews

“Key informants are often critical to the success of a case study. Such persons not only provide the case study investigator with insight into the matter but also can suggest sources of corroboratory evidence and initiate the access to such sources” (Yin, 1994, p84)

The selection of the interviewees was influenced by the exploration of the documents, but also by the advice of one of Newent Town Councillors (ex-mayor) and the President of the ‘Communauté de Commune of the Pays de Sault’. Representatives from the different organisations that had taken and were still taking an active part in each local partnership practice were therefore selected. The selected interviewees were:

in Newent,

- a Town Councillor, previously Mayor of Newent;
- a Town Councillor, previously Chair of the Newent Civic Society;
- a Town Councillor, Chair of the Newent Environment and Planning Committee;
- the Chairman of Newent Chamber of Trade and Commerce;
- the Environment Agency Planning Manager, resident of Newent;
- the Director of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, Secretary of the County’s Parish and Town Councils Association;
- the Forest of Dean Rural Development Programme Project Manager;
- the Director of Planning and Leisure Services, Forest of Dean District Council;
- the Principal Economic Development Officer, Gloucestershire County Council;
- the Economic Development Officer, Gloucestershire County Council;

and in Sault,

- the Vice Chairman (Commune of Sault) and President of the Communauté de Commune;
- the Mayor of Sault;
- the Vice Chairman (Commune of Sault) and President of the Hunting Federation;
- the President of the Association of Local Businesses and Trade;
- the President of the Agriculture Association;
- the President of Information and Tourism Centre of the ‘Pays of Sault’;
- the Director of the ‘House of Environment’;
- the Director of the ‘Comité de Bassin d’Emploi’ of the ‘Pays of Sault’;

- the Maire of 'St Christol' (Commune member of the Communauté of Communes of the Pays of Sault) and President of the SIVU d'Albion⁶;
- the SIVU d'Albion Project Manager;
- Development Officer of the Région Provence Alpes Côtes d'Azur (representing the Regional Commission for development and planning).

It will be clear from the above listing that very few private sector partnership representatives were interviewed. This was, first, because only a few has been drawn into the local partnerships and private interests were often represented through one representative (for example the chairman of the Chamber of Trade and Commerce in Newent), secondly, because a number of the interviewees often played a combined role representing both public and private interests. This matter is returned to in section 6.2, which explores further the involvement of partners in a local partnership.

The interviews gathered information in relation to the interviewee's:

- personal background;
- previous experience (local management/rural development/partnership working);
- general opinion on the local partnership approach for rural development;
- personal motivation and expectations in working in partnership.

The interviews also gathered information in relation to the interviewee's views on the partnership working under consideration and at the different phase of its development.

Hence, the author asked about:

- the expectations and perceptions on partnership working at the time of the initiation;
- the (pre)-conditions, factors and reasons attributed to the initiation of the practice of local partnership;
- the methods used to initiate the practice; advantage and limits of the methods used;
- individuals or organisations involved in the practice
- the step in defining the rural development aim(s) and objectives in partnership;
- the structuring/organisation of the partnership arrangement(s);
- the level of representation expected and achieved;
- the role expected and played as partner;
- the conditions and scope for interaction between the different organisations, sectors and levels involved;

⁶ Syndicat Intercommunal à Vocation Unique

- the conditions for administration and management;
- the strategy used for implementing the objectives and projects;
- the place and scale of local partnership operation
- the evolution of the partnership (scale, objectives, representations);
- the difficulties and barriers attached to this practice;
- the benefits and achievements perceived at the time of the interview;
- opinion on local partnership working after few years of practice

At the end of each interview, the interviewee was given some time for any further comments. Each interview lasted between 60 to 90 minutes. Each interview was tape-recorded and fully transcribed. The system used for referencing evidence and quotations is described in Appendix 3.

Observation at Meetings

The objective in attending partnership meetings was to observe aspects of local partnership operation, particularly the interaction between partners, partners' roles and the decision-making processes. Only few partnership meetings occurred at the time of the first phase of the fieldwork in either case study.

In the Newent Case Study, the researcher attended four partnership meetings held under the aegis of the Town Council on the 8th, 17th, 22nd June and 21st July 1998. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss of the future of the regeneration strategy for Newent and the future of the local partnership. In the early part of 1999, an opportunity arose to attend a meeting involving the four rural market towns of the Forest of Dean on 19th January. During this meeting, representatives of the four rural towns of Newent, Coleford, Cinderford and Lidney discussed their experience of working in partnership but also investigated the possibility of creating a partnership arrangement between them with the particular aim of developing and managing tourism in the area.

In the Case of Sault, the researcher attended one meeting of the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault⁷ on 20th of August 1998. The researcher also attended two meetings on the 15th and 22nd of September 1998. These meetings were organised by the SIVU of Albion⁸ and consisted of a two-fold general assembly in which a variety of

⁷ See Section 4.8.2 *ii*)

⁸ Syndicat Intercommunal à Vocation Unique d' Albion (see Section 4.8.2 *iii*))

interests, public, private and voluntary were represented. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the different aspects of the development strategy across the territory of 13 communes, assess the work accomplished after two years and prepare for further actions. An opportunity arose for the researcher to attend another meeting on the 16 December 1998. The focus of this meeting was the creation of a 'Pays'⁹.

Attendance at meetings consisted of semi-structured observation. Semi-structured observation involved the establishment of observation categories. The main observation categories were level of representation; level of communication; level of interaction; decision-making mechanisms; role played by the participants during the meeting.

Two diaries were kept for each meeting. One reported reflective thoughts and personal comments and interpretations. The other reported what was believed to be 'objectively observable', describing the events observed and the issues discussed (Yin, 1994; Garwitz, 1996; May, 1997; Sarentakos, 1998).

v) Phase 2: Exploring the outcomes of local Partnership Practice within the context of Rural Development

In order to bring a second perspective to the practice of local partnership, a decision was made to return to the case study areas to explore the outcomes of such a practice. As mentioned above (see 4.2), such an assessment does not attempt a real impact analysis. Such techniques would suggest that it is possible to establish a direct link between the partnership practice and the local development outputs (job creation, increase in tourism etc.), or would require comparison of a non-partnership situation with a partnership situation. Considering the main focus of this research, an assessment of the outcomes of local partnership is considered, only as far as it can throw light on the operation and role of the partnership practice. This requires an identification of the nature of the outcomes/benefits attributed to the local partnership practice and also an examination of the extent to which the aims of partnership working were attained, both aims that were specific to the partnership studied and also the expected aims as described in academic and applied literature. Two main techniques were selected for this purpose.

⁹ See Section 4.8.2 v)

Documentary Research

The literature review and the initial documentary research undertaken throughout the first phase of enquiry provided substantial information on the expected aims of partnership working. However, further documentary research was concerned with the identification of the perceived outcomes of the practice. The documents comprised essentially evaluation reports, correspondence and where appropriate press cuttings.

Semi-structured Interviews

Although the first set of interviews comprised specific questions relating to the benefits and achievement of partnership working and had already provided substantial information, further interviews were considered necessary, to focus the interviewee on the particular issue of outcomes of local partnership working. For practical reasons, some interviews had to be undertaken on the phone. Three interviewees in each case were selected. The selection was established in terms of representation and level and duration of involvement in the practice of local partnership. The selected interviewees were thus:

in Newent,

- the Chairman of Newent Chamber of Trade and Commerce;
- the Chairman of the Newent Millennium Trust, (Town Councillor during the first round of interviews);
- the Market Town Project Manager previously the Forest of Dean Rural Development Programme Project Manager;

and in Sault,

- the Mayor of Sault;
- the Director of the Comité de Bassin d'Emploi of the Pays of the Ventoux ;
- the Project Manager of the SIVU d'Albion.

The interviews were designed to allow the local partners to share their views on the outcomes/ achievements/ benefits that they attributed to local partnership working.

The author did not wish to influence the interviewees in any way. However her experience of the first set of interviews, and also feedback received from some interviewees including one who argued that "it was difficult to think just like that about the benefits and achievements of the partnership practice" (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b), led the researcher to include some directive questions providing both a checklist for the researcher and assistance for the interviewee.

The questions were as follow,

- What were the outcomes/ achievements/ benefits that you expected from the partnership practice at the time of its formation?
- What are the outcomes/ achievements/ benefits that you would attribute today to local partnership working in rural development?
 - personal outcomes/ achievements/ benefits? (for example: communication/self-confidence/participation/learning to work with others, optimism in taking action);
 - Outcomes/ achievements/ benefits for the local area? (For example: better linkages between local actors, levels and sectors; better coherence and consistency in the strategy; growing awareness and interest of the community);
 - What were the outcomes/ achievements/ benefits experienced by the interviewee in relation to partnership working? (For example development of trust and credibility between partners, development of consensus).
- What constitutes effective partnership working in rural development and what are the limits to the effectiveness of local partnership practice to attain its aims?
- other outcomes/ achievements/ benefits ?

4.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Analysis and interpretation was undertaken at the end of each phase of fieldwork.

4.6.1 Phase 1

“Manual processing is usually employed when qualitative methods are used, when a small sample is used, when the questionnaires or interviews employed are not very long and when the instruments employ many open-questions” (Sarentakos, 1998, p. 333).

In order to assist the researcher with the analysis and interpretation of empirical evidence drawn from the first phase of fieldwork, a decision was made to organise the data collected from each case study into separate descriptive reports. When considering the strategy to write these reports, the use of a computerized database (NUDIST) was considered. However, after a few hours of training, this method was judged too time-consuming to be worthwhile for this particular research. Instead the researcher used manual processing.

Data were reported in the form of a narrative description and were organised around the two phases of the partnership evolution: formation and operation. The data collected, whether written or oral, were all treated as written material and were analysed using content analysis techniques (Waddock, 1989; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994 and 1998, May, 1997). These, with the help of the thematic framework (see section 4.6.3 *i*), involved examining, categorising, combining and connecting the evidence drawn from the written and oral sources through adequate citation (Yin, 1994, Garwitz, 1996; Sarentakos, 1998). Emergent and recurrent variables and issues were identified and helped in building the structure of the reports. The majority of emerging variables and issues were found to be common to both case studies. The analysis resulted in the identification of a set of mechanisms, processes and issues that were seen to characterise the process of local partnership in rural development.

4.6.2 Phase 2

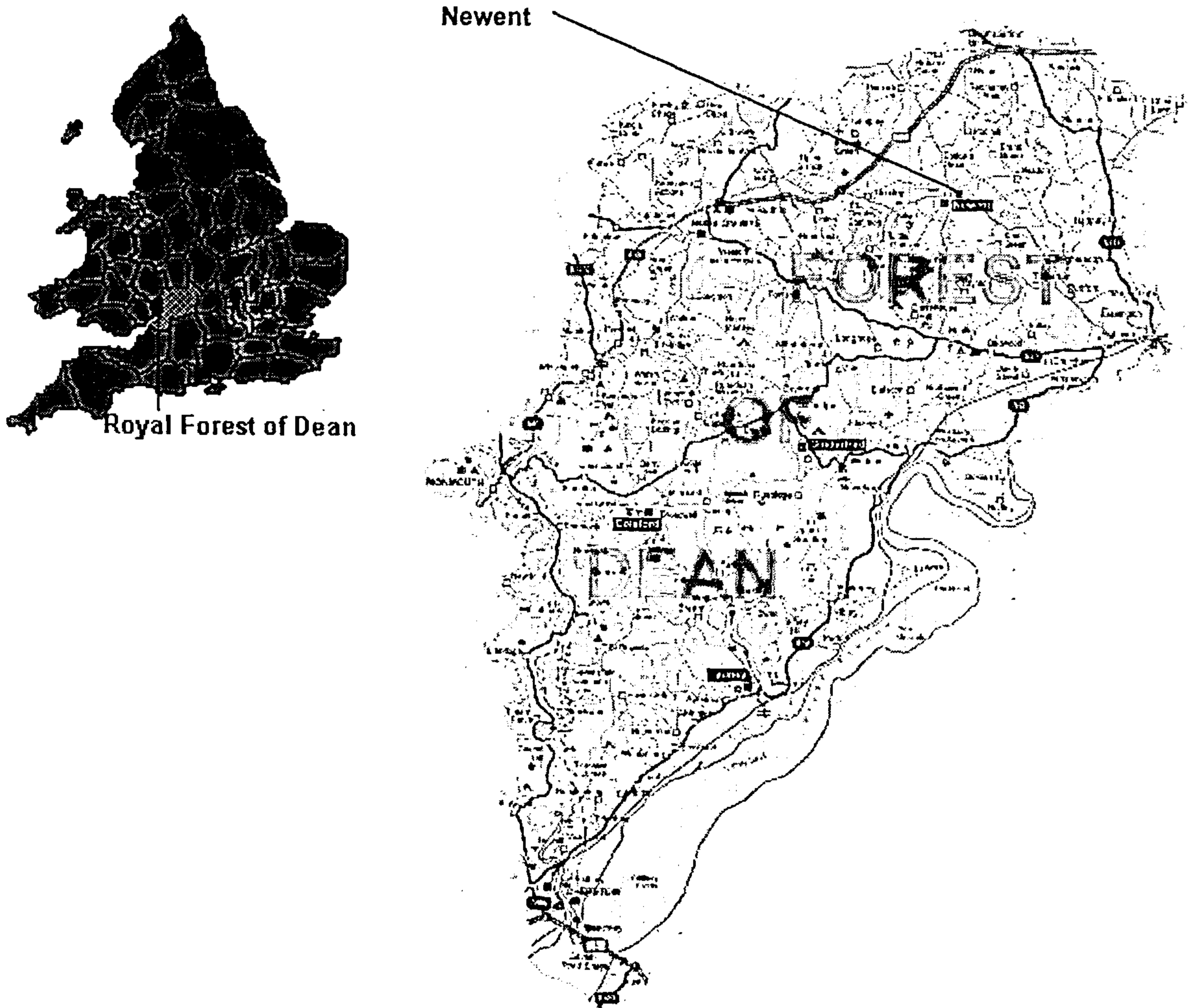
The data collected from the documents and interviews were again treated as written material and were analysed using content analysis techniques. The analysis therefore followed the same process of examination and categorisation as in the research for Phase 1.

The two case studies forming the basis of this investigation are now introduced.

4.7 Case Study 1: Newent in the District of Forest of Dean (County of Gloucestershire, UK)

4.7.1 The Study Area

Figure 4 - 2 NEWENT Case Study Area



i) General Context

Located in the north of the Forest of Dean District (NorthWest Gloucestershire), the parish of Newent is a predominantly rural parish comprising the market town of Newent, the village of Clifford's Mesne and several little hamlets. The parish of Newent is situated in a very attractive agricultural setting with open landscape characterised by small areas of woodlands, very productive arable and pasture fields, still very protected from development. Newent market town benefits from a particularly attractive built environment of historical and architectural interest. Newent is situated twenty minutes drive from the City of Gloucester, and within minutes of the main motorways (M50 and M5). The proximity of Newent to the main urban centres and the main roads enables a large number of the population to commute to work from Newent.

Newent became part of the Forest of Dean District area in 1972. Yet, evidence shows that this administrative decision has never persuaded the parish of Newent and its community "to ever consider being truly part of the Forest either geographically or traditionally" (Newent Regeneration Plan, 1995, Summary)¹⁰. The research evidence would indeed suggest that, until the implementation of the various partnership efforts for the regeneration of the area, the parish has retained a rather inward-looking attitude mainly based on "the strong belief that it was always neglected to the benefit of the other rural towns of the Forest" (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a). This has been often described as the cause of regular friction with the District Council (Dir. PLS FoD-DC, 1998). The evidence also suggests that, within the parish of Newent itself, cohesion, between the town and the different hamlets and villages, has always been perceived as fairly limited (FOD-DC Local Plan, 1992, p. 18; Newent Town Councillor, 1998b).

ii) The Socio-Economic Context of Newent

The total number of the population of Newent at the time of this investigation was 5,369 inhabitants (1991 census). Despite the 'commuting issue', the general local consensus was that that "Newent has always retained a sense of community" (Newent Rural Challenge Bid, 1996, p. 2; Town Councillor, 1998b), with an active community characterised by the activities of a least 68 community voluntary groups in 1996 (Newent Rural Challenge Bid, 1996, pp. 7-8).

¹⁰ See Appendix 4 and 5 for detail of the system of referencing of quoted documents and interviews

The written evidence shows that the parish of Newent had serviced the needs of the surrounding agricultural areas and the villages of the North Forest for a long time (FOD-DC Local Plan, 1992). However, from the 1980s, the parish was said to have witnessed a significant decrease in this central role, “delivering a smaller range and number of local services than the other rural town of the Forest”(FOD-DC Local Plan, 1992, p. 17), mainly due to its proximity with Gloucester. However at the time of this research Newent provided good service health, education facilities. For example, Newent schools provided education from pre-school up to high school including facilities for children with special needs. Facilities were also available for the elderly and people with disabilities. A Memorial Hall and a Community Centre were available to the local community. Newent also had good shopping, business, leisure, and recreation facilities in the local catchment area. However, over the years, the parish has increasingly been witnessing some signs of decline given the fact that members of the community are more and more drawn to the larger towns such as Ross-on Wye and Gloucester, for work, businesses, and leisure purposes (FOD-DC-Regeneration Strategy, 1995; Newent Rural Challenge Bid, June 1996).

In the early 1990s, the unemployment rate in the parish was consistently 1 or 2 % lower than in the Forest of Dean as a whole (Census, 1991). The decline of agriculture and horticulture (the main sources of local employment in earlier years) left Newent’s employment base increasingly dependent on retail, services, education, some industrial activities and tourism (Newent Regeneration Plan, 1995, pp. 5-6). In the early 1990s, Newent’s economic activity was described as ‘diverse’, with no particular predominant activities (FOD-DC, 1992, p. 18). In the mid 1990s, the economic situation was looking less and less bright and was depicted as “lacking of strong foundation and financial base” (Newent Regeneration Plan, 1995, p. 5) and as “clearly struggling” FOD-DC-Regeneration Strategy, 1995, p. 34).

Newent was described as disadvantaged by the existence of a poor road pattern, a burden to the increasing traffic in the area, and also by the insufficiency of parking facilities, discouraging people from coming to Newent for shopping and limiting the potential for the development of tourism for example (FOD-DC-Regeneration Strategy, 1995, pp. 34-35, Newent-Our- Future, 1995, p. 9). At the time of the fieldwork, the evidence shows that tourism was becoming an increasing and highly promoted activity benefiting from the area’s characteristics, including the high quality of the setting, landscape and townscape. It also benefited from several tourist attractions, including the ‘Shambles

Museum', the 'National Birds of Prey Centre', and 'Three Choirs Vineyard' (Newent Rural Challenge Bid, 1996).

iii) Newent and Rural Development

For some time, the level of disadvantage experienced within the north Forest, including Newent, had not been perceived to be as severe as the other rural towns of the Forest area by the District and County Councils. This meant restrictions in public expenditure for the Newent, as "Newent was not seen to be facing such profound socio-economic deprivation as other local areas nor was the needs seen to be as fundamental" (Dir. PLS FoD-DC, 1998).

The research evidence suggests that the development of the North Forest had been an important matter to the Forest of Dean District Council since its creation in the 1970s (Dir. PLS FoD-DC, Interview 1998). Within the District council's development plans, Newent was regarded as an essential pole for the development of the north Forest. The main objective of this development was to lessen Newent's dependency on Gloucester and Ross-on-Wye (FOD-DC Local Plan, 1992).

In 1994, the district-wide Forest of Dean Regeneration Partnership (FDRP) brought together representatives of the District Council and County Council, Members of Parliament (European and National), private sector interests including Trades Unions, Gloucestershire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the Rural Development Area, Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, the health and education sectors and the Forestry Commission. The District Council, as the founding member of this group, recognised the need for the partnership to sponsor new rural development approaches, policies and action programmes.

The purpose of FDRP was "to examine the physical, social, and economic regeneration of the Forest of Dean, and consider the issues posed, the range of solutions required, and the array of actions necessary to redress the area's on-going decline, to attract new investment and to achieve a new viability for the Forest" (FDRP Regeneration Strategy, 1995, p.1). The district wide partnership's intention was "to integrate the differences of views and to establish a compromise between the different ideas and priorities drawn from the Forest of Dean's different communities" (FDRP Regeneration Strategy, 1995, p.1). The FDRP expressed the need for consulting the community directly affected by the findings of the strategic report considering that: "the validity of submitting a regeneration

strategy depended ultimately on those communities directly affected assuming ownership of these proposals” (FDRP Regeneration Strategy, 1995, p.2).

The conclusions of the Forest Regeneration Partnership report applicable to Newent called for a drastic answer:

“ Newent is the most exasperating of the Forest Towns. It is famed for ‘The Shambles’. In the nicest possible way the Town itself is a ‘shamble’ in the town working sense. The note of exasperation is generated by the constant contradiction between its strong points and the context in which they are forced to be enjoyed; in the apparent absence of any attempt through major new development to make any sense out of the original road structure; the failure to take full advantage of the spaces created by new buildings on the main through road. There appears to be no intent to find the drastic answer that Newent appears to need – depending on the aspiration held for Newent” (FDRP Regeneration Strategy, 1995, p. 30).

Further conclusions of the report suggested that there was a need to reduce the rather peripheral positioning of Newent within the Forest, and a need to establish a better ‘community pattern’ and ‘commercial pattern’ relationship to the main Royal Forest or South Forest area”. The authors of the report called for a re-consideration of the road structure, involving a comprehensive re-positioning of the town as a means of developing new activities and realising simple incremental improvements of existing assets (FDRP Regeneration Strategy, 1995).

The views at the parish level differed. Newent Town Council did not welcome the conclusions of the Forest Regeneration Partnership development strategy in relation to Newent. The Council felt that there had not been “sufficient consultation at parish level and major transformations would be imposed on the parish without a true appraisal of the needs of the area” (Extract from Correspondence to FDRP, August 1995).

Consequently, Newent’s Mayor persuaded the other councillors to prepare a regeneration plan for Newent. He decided to rally all Newent councillors and a number of key community representatives, as well as representatives from the Forest of Dean District Council, of the Gloucestershire County Council and the rural development area project area within a ‘Community Development Committee’ in June 1995. This committee went on to conclude that “the parish was gently stagnating. The area lacked vitality, and, was not truly viable, economically” (Newent Regeneration Plan, 1995, p. 1). According to this programming document, produced by the committee, this situation was the result of change from the parish’s historic agricultural base to a commuter parish. The expressed

concern was that “Newent was far too reliant on other towns or cities for work, shopping, and even entertainment, and this dependency would grow as the other communities were expanding” (Newent Regeneration Plan, 1995, pp. 1-2).

The conclusion of the committee was that there was a need to develop a number of initiatives to promote tourism and trade and that there was no immediate need for ‘drastic answers’, as proposed by the Forest Regeneration Partnership, just for a local strategy, result of a partnership between local representatives and competent experts.

The committee anticipated that some members of Newent community would be dismissive of the idea of preparing and implementing a local regeneration strategy. The research evidence has indicated that the committee was right, in part:

“In the same week that the Director of Planning and Leisure Services has announced Newent had had enough development and should be left alone for few years, this Regeneration Plan was thrown at the community” (Extract from Correspondence to NTC, 25 July 1995).

For others, the lack of development action in the local area was the subject of serious concern:

“This action was more than necessary and unless Newent is reactivated, Newent will progressively weaken as an economic unit” (Extract from correspondence to NTC 15 July 1995).

The history of local partnership practice in Newent is now presented.

4.7.2 History of the Practice of Local Partnership in Newent

Table 4-1: NEWENT: CHRONOLOGICAL CHART OF THE KEY EVENTS

1992 - The RDC carries out a comprehensive review of its priority areas, based on a set of socio-economic indicators and local information not captured by the indicators. Within this review the northern part of the Forest of Dean District was identified as needing to be included into the Forest of Dean RDA.

1994 - North of the Forest of Dean included in Rural Development Area (RDA)

1994 - Creation of the Forest of Dean Regeneration Partnership

1995 - Forest of Dean Regeneration Partnership produces its Regeneration Strategy Report

1995- 'Newent our future, a step towards the regeneration strategy', the first community development strategy document is prepared by the 'Community Development Committee' (Town Council sub-committee) as a proposal for adoption as council policy and action. Its elaboration is the result of partnership working between town councillors, co-opted members and advisors.

1995- 'Newent Partnership and County Rural Challenge Bid', this submission by 'Newent Community Partnership' constitutes the Newent's bid to Rural Challenge for assistance for funding to revitalise Newent. The bid fails in June 1996. The local partnership practice is on hold.

1996 - Mayor of Newent encourages the other Councillors to pursue action

1997 - The Rural Development Programme Partnership (RDPP) was invited to join and integrate with the Forest of Dean Regeneration Partnership to avoid fragmentation.

1997- 'Newent Tourism Stage 1': Strengthened by the Rural Challenge Bid experience, and the initial work with Newent-Our-Future, the partnership practice moves forward again. This time it is to focus on a strategy of improvement of local assets. The project is developed into a detailed short-term action plan with the support of the Rural Development Commission (now Countryside Agency) as part of the Rural Development Programme.

1997 - The Mayor of Newent adopts the role of project manager for 'Newent Tourism Stage 1'

1998- (May) The mayor of Newent, initiator of the partnership process in 1995, ceases to be a Mayor. He remains a town councillor and the project manager of 'Newent Tourism Stage 1'.

1998- (May) A local resident suggested the celebration the new Millennium through a series of projects enhancing the attractiveness of Newent and providing a sustainable and environmental gain to the community.

1998 - (June) The project Manager of 'Newent Tourism Stage 1' also Town Councillor' decides to stop attending meetings from the FoD Regeneration Partnership meetings

1998 - (Nov.) Creation of the Newent Millennium Trust, Local Community Partnership.

1999- The 'Four Forest Town Alliance'. Under the aegis of the Forest of Dean District Council, a selection of elected representatives from Newent, Cinderford, Coleford and Lydney agree to meet in order to share good practice derived from their experience in local partnership working for rural regeneration. The possibility to develop some forms of partnership between these towns is considered. The Four Towns decide to join the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum.

This section outlines the evolution of the local partnership practice in the area of Newent.

As will be observed, the practice of local partnership rested initially on a set of rather

informal local partnership efforts and actions and gradually evolved to become a broadly accepted method of working at parish level and also beyond.

This investigation has chosen the date of 1992 as a starting point for the study period. Just around that time the research evidence indicates that two specific local initiatives, the restoration of the Market House and the improvement of sport facilities, were undertaken both involving partnership working between a number of key players in the area. One of Newent's Town Councillor argued that "the use of co-operation in implementing local projects in Newent was always encouraged when possible even before external funding was made available that is" (Newent Town Councillor, 1998c). He recalled, during his interview, that in the year 1991-1992 he, "and a lot of other local people, united around a project related to the restoration of the Market House. It was the first job done by the community, bringing all the expertise to form a team to develop a facility which probably was worth £150,000 and cost £ 30,000 in the end, a saving worth cooperating for". He also recalled that another example of local partnership effort in Newent happened soon after the restoration of the Market House when it was decided to create sport facilities and when the local school was still owned by the County Council. He argued that "if this initiative had not integrated all sort of individuals, institutions, and interest groups together, it would not have been possible to create these facilities".

In 1995, in reaction to the FDRP conclusions, the Mayor of Newent persuaded the Council to prepare a local regeneration strategy for Newent rallying a number of representatives within a 'Community Development Committee' (July 1995) to reflect upon such a strategy. These efforts have been described by all interviewees to constitute a significant change in the development of the practice of local partnership, in Newent, to address local rural development.

i) 'Newent-Our-future' (July-August 1995)

The work undertaken by the Community Development Committee was synthesised into a strategic document: 'Newent-Our-future - A Step Towards a Regeneration Strategy' (August 1995). This document provided a preliminary agenda for development of the area giving explicit encouragement to the promotion of local partnership working. Considering the nature of the regeneration strategy, the Community Development Committee expressed its concern about limiting such an action to a limited number of participants and therefore to a restricted range of expertise and resources. Instead,

influenced by the different experiences and practices occurring at a wider level and aware of the wider requirements of rural regeneration and development policies and approaches, the Committee suggested the creation of a regeneration partnership:

“It is considered wise to prepare a Regeneration Plan for the Town and Parish. The Plan will be the result of a partnership between the County, District and Town Councils, Rural Development Commissions, Training and Education Council together with the input of such organisations as the Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Newent Society, the schools and others representing the views of the community” (Newent Regeneration Plan, 1995, p. 1).

The regeneration plan proposal was adopted by Newent Town Council, as the council’s policy, but with a number of amendments in relation to the structure and operation of the partnership. Four months after the initiation and preparation of this plan, and following the advice of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council and the District Council, Newent Town Council decided to pursue the work by entering the County Rural Challenge Bid in November 1995.

ii) The County Rural Challenge Bid (November - June 1996)

Rural Challenge was one of the Rural Development Commission’s rural development initiatives for which Counties within the commission’s Rural Development Areas could bid for six prizes of up to one million pounds, prizes were awarded annually. The first round of bidding was introduced in 1994. It aimed to encourage local communities to devise rural regeneration initiatives that would foster economic and social development and improve the quality of life in the local area. It was a scheme that placed, ‘partnership working’ as a central requirement, firstly, for entering the bid and second, for implementing the initiative once funded.

Newent Town Council entered the County Rural Challenge Bid with the expressed ambition following up the work that had been initiated with Newent-Our-Future. In order to meet the requirements of the bid, the Town Council solicited the participation of the wider community through various consultation processes as well as the involvement of a wide range of co-opted members drawn from various sectors, levels of government and levels of expertise. The bid, which was prepared within six months, was unsuccessful.

The feedback from Gloucestershire County Council regarding Newent’s bid suggested that “Newent had opted for a too inward-looking approach and did not focus enough on

the issue of employment whereas the winner was presenting a project that focused mainly on economic development and employment” (Extract from correspondence, 21 June 1996). During the first round of interviews, the Director of Planning and Leisure Services of the Forest of Dean District admitted that whereas the winning area “was regarded as a place needing help, Newent wasn’t, because it did not have as much social deprivation. The winning area was top of the pile. Newent was a more settled community with fewer problems”(Dir. PLS, FoD-DC, 1998).

iii) Newent Tourism Stage 1 (1997)

Although the evolution of local partnership efforts as well as the progress of Newent’s local regeneration strategy could have been undermined by this set back, the research evidence suggests that the key participants in these efforts remained keen to pursue local development action (extract from Correspondence, 21 June 1996). Consequently, contacts were made with the RDP project manager and the council resolved to move development action forward in Newent and set up a short-term action plan: ‘Newent Tourism Stage 1’ action plan, to be progressed in the context of the wider Rural Development Programme (RDP).

Focusing specifically on the character and attractiveness of the area, the Newent Tourism Stage 1 (NTS1) action plan presented a comprehensive programme combining the enhancement of the local environment and the improvement of tourism infrastructure. This action was described as a fundamental step in strengthening the vitality and viability of Newent. The added impetus of RDP support allowed the project team, led by the Mayor of Newent, to pursue the regeneration initiative and the local partnership efforts to evolve, albeit informally and under the strong leadership the Town Council. Helped considerably by the success of NTS1, the research evidence suggested that “local partnership working became a more accustomed mode of working by then” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a) that “ a lot of people in Newent came round to the idea that it could work that way” (EA Planning Manager, 1998).

iv) The Newent Millennium Trust (1998)

The creation of the Newent Millennium Trust (November 1998) originated from a local resident’s suggestion (April 1998) to celebrate the new Millennium through a series of projects enhancing the attractiveness of Newent and providing a sustainable and environmental gain to the community. The research evidence has suggested that the idea

was well received by the Town Council as well as by the wider community. The objectives and the projects of the Millennium Trust were presented to the community through a public meeting and postal information. Interestingly, “the response from the wider community was good and considerable interest was shown” (Newent Millennium Proposals, 21st May 1998, p1) and “a variety of local residents agreed to take an active part in this initiative” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a). At that stage, Newent Town Council decided, whilst maintaining an active role, to give to the ‘people of Newent’ the symbolic lead of this Millennium Project (Minutes of NMT meeting, 5/11/1998).

v) Conclusion

The evolution of local partnership practice in Newent, during the study period, shows that what was initially set up as a rather informal, independent and self-sufficient partnership effort gradually evolved to become a broadly accepted practice at community level and also beyond.

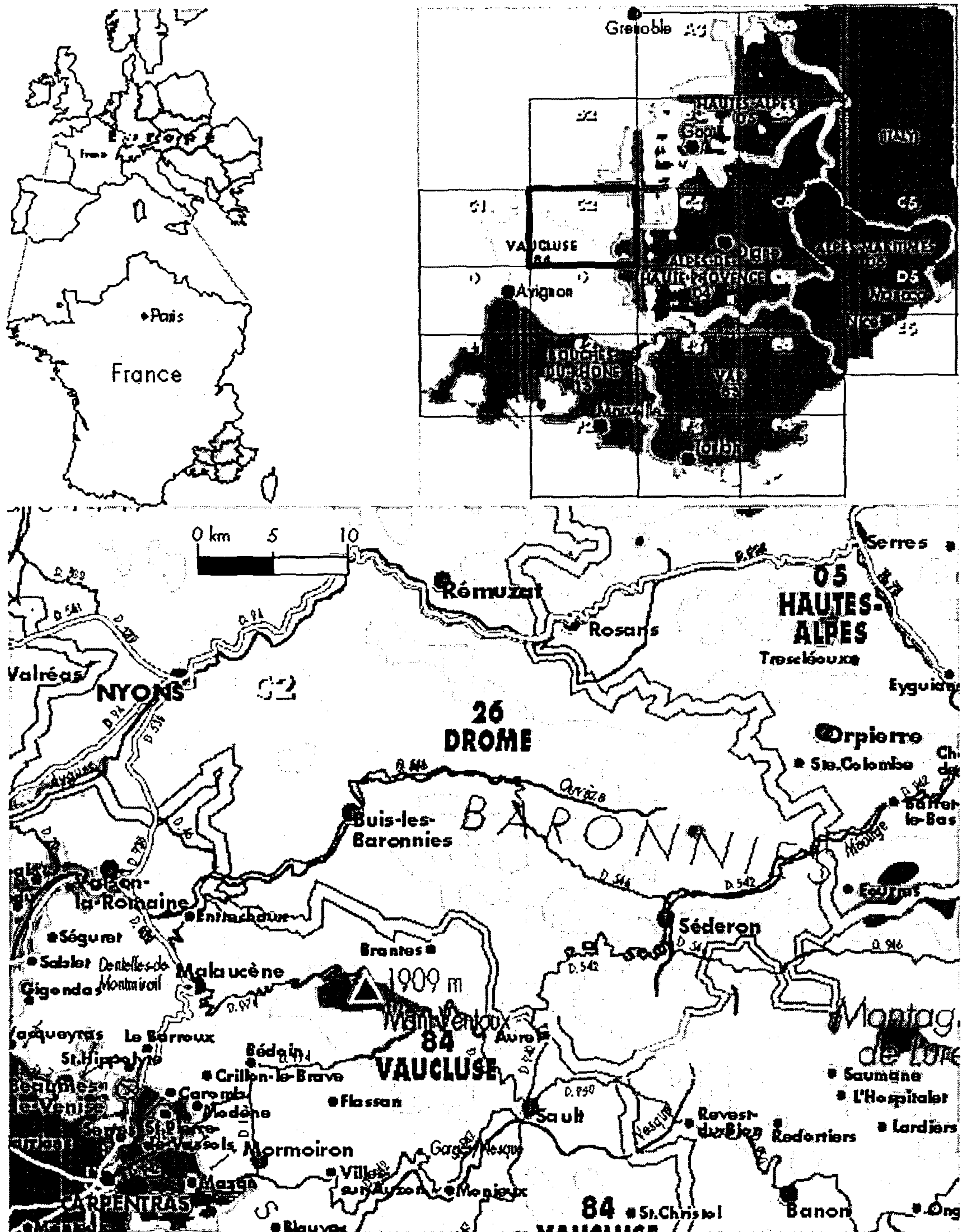
Indeed at the close of the study period, late 1998 and early 1999, the research evidence indicates that the practice of local partnership and rural development action was gradually evolving beyond the boundaries of the parish of Newent. Local partnership working was also increasingly perceived as an effective method of working to tackle rural development action in other local areas of the Forest of Dean District.

Consequently, the Forest of Dean District Council invited representatives of Newent, Coleford, Lidney and Cinderford, all involved in partnership at the local community level, to meet and share their experience of local partnership working in rural development action. During the meeting these representative explored the possibility and the potential to develop a partnership between these four Forest towns to promote and develop tourism in the Forest of Dean area (Meeting, 19th January 1999).

4.8 Case Study 2: Sault en Provence in the Departement of Vaucluse (Région Provence-Alpes-Cotes D'Azur, France)

4.8.1 The Study Area

Figure 4 - 3 SAULT Case Study Area



i) General context

Situated in the east of the Department of Vaucluse, and located in a semi-mountainous area (Mont Ventoux) the commune¹¹ of Sault is predominantly rural. 'Chief town' of the canton¹² of Sault, this commune is situated 43 km from Carpentras and 67 km from Avignon. Dominating the valley that takes its name, and facing Mount Ventoux, the village of Sault is renowned for its specific climate (arid, dry and airy). It is also known for its characteristic agricultural activities, including the cultivation of lavender and cereals, defining a highly valued landscape characterised by large areas of woodlands, dispersed hamlets and dwellings.

This commune is in the centre of what has been commonly called for decades the 'Pays de Sault'. The 'Pays de Sault' has been for more than 400 years the area outlined by the communes of Aurel, Monieux, St Trinit, Saint-Christol d'Albion and Sault. The commune of Sault is positioned at the intersection of different territories and strategies, at the frontier zone of three departments (Drome, Alpes de Haute Provence, and Vaucluse), between plateau, valley and mountains (Ventoux, Lure, Vaucluse and Luberon). Despite or maybe caused by the crossroad situation, the research evidence suggests that the commune of Sault has always been characterised by a very 'individualistic', 'reserved', and an 'inward looking attitude' (Mayor of Sault; Dir. CBE-P-V; SIVU, Proj. Man; Dir. House of Env., 1998).

ii) The Socio-economic context of Sault

The total population of Sault at the time of this investigation was 1200 inhabitants (1991 census). It had increased significantly in the 1970s with the establishment of the military base of Albion nearby. However since the 1980s the commune has been experiencing depopulation, particularly of those aged between 18 and 45.

At the time of this investigation, the research evidence shows that the village provided the whole commune with good shopping and service facilities, including a post-office, a medical centre, a police station (gendarmerie), and school facilities up to high school

¹¹ The term 'commune' can have different meanings in French. Commune refers to a geographical administrative unit or the elected body of that runs this geographical administrative unit. To avoid any confusion, the term 'municipality' will refer to the elected body throughout this research.

¹² Canton: instituted in 1789, it is the administratively defined electoral area for the election of the Département representatives (roughly equivalent to District Councillor).

level. The voluntary action fabric (81 associations) and the general consensus amongst interviewees indicated that the commune of Sault enjoyed a relatively active community life.

The economic activities of Sault were centred predominantly around agriculture, with an emphasis on the production of lavender, cereals, honey, truffles, and sheep. The industrial sector depended mainly on agriculture related activities (agro-industry, distillery, abattoir) while local commerce, craft and trade were essentially directed to the needs of the local community and to tourism. The commune of Sault's second main economic activity after agriculture was, since the mid-eighties, tourism. In the context of an increasing interest in rural tourism, the area of Sault provided a protected rural environment, an attractive landscape, and a 'healthy' climate together with a diversity of tourism activities.

Although the tourist season is very limited (50 days per year at the most), the municipality of Sault and the Tourism and Information Centre as well as other community organisations concentrated a lot of their efforts into the promotion of tourism in the commune and in the wider area. The commune Sault provided good tourism facilities, with a tourism information centre, a communal campsite and swimming pool, three main hotels, three café-restaurants, the Museum of Nougat, the 'House of Environment and Hunting' and a yearly event such as *'Lavandes en Fête'*. In the wider area, Sault local representatives worked in partnership with other communes in order to co-ordinate the different activities existing in the area and avoid competition between the different attractions (Sault en Provence, 1998, pp.3-5).

iii) Sault and Rural Development

As observed in the above section, the commune of Sault and its surrounding area, has rested on a series of distinctive strengths and assets, including a privileged location, an active and specialised agricultural industry, a developing commercial business infrastructure, a very active craft sector and a rapidly increasing seasonal tourism industry (from 2500 visitors in 1985 to over 22000 visitors in 1998).

The area also has faced a number of difficulties that provided real obstacles to rural development. These included remoteness from main urban and economic centres; poor quality of roads and very limited transport facilities; decreasing and ageing population;

low financial resources due to small population; absence of manufacturing industries, small and medium size enterprises or small and medium size industry (SME-SMI); a very poorly diversified economy and finally hard winters which limited the tourism season.

The research evidence indicates that in the mid-eighties, the municipality of Sault launched preliminary discussions about a development strategy for the commune. Following a series of formal and informal public meetings and consultations under the leadership of the municipality, a number of issues began to emerge. The discussions resulted in a local strategy of development. This strategy focused essentially on maintaining existing local assets including the promotion of traditional activities in agriculture, the encouragement of small-scale craft production and commerce, and the promotion of environment and tourism (Extract of Correspondence to SIVU, 25 August 1997; Mayor of Sault, 1998).

In the early 1990s rural development action in Sault underwent considerable change. This must be understood first within the wider evolution of the national and European policy framework. The commune of Sault and the surrounding area, because of its classification as a mountainous zone ('Loi Montagne', 9/01/1985), was situated in an administrative area eligible for a variety of European structural funds (FEDER¹³, FSE¹⁴, FEOGA¹⁵), as well as national funds (FIDAR¹⁶). The commune of Sault was also eligible under a number of different programmes and policies set up by the Région PACA¹⁷ (including the PLAC¹⁸ and Contrat de Territoire/Plan Etat Région¹⁹).

The area was later recognised by the Law of 4th Feb. 1995, as a 'Territoire de Développement Prioritaire'²⁰ (TDP) and to be a 'Zone de Revitalisation Rurale'²¹ (ZRR)

¹³ ERDF: European Regional Development Fund

¹⁴ ESF: European Social Fund

¹⁵ EAGGF: European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund

¹⁶ FIDAR: Programme, funded by the State, focussing on fragile rural and mountainous area. Its role was to support financially any initiatives able to develop economic activities, create employment, promote local resources

¹⁷ Région PACA : the Région Provence Alpes Cotes D'Azur

¹⁸ Programme Local de Développement Concerté: Local Program for Concerted Planning, were promoting dialogue between the different communes of an area for any matter related to planning, in order to avoid competition and redundancy between neighbouring communes and to organise strategically the funding of local action.

¹⁹ 'Contrat de Territoire' or 'Contrat de Plan' is a reciprocal engagement made by the state and local government authorities (Region, Department, communes), for a defined period of time. This contract contributes to the realisation of specific objectives, compatible with the national orientations, and defines the conditions in which the State participates to this action.

²⁰ Area of Priority Development

²¹ Area for Rural Revitalising

(Loi No95-115, JO 5/02/1995, p. 1973), thereby entitling the commune of Sault to benefit from various national and regional funding and fiscal alleviation.

Change in rural development action must be also understood through the institutional framework. Several structures and organisations have been involved in rural development action in Sault. These are now examined.

The Municipality of Sault

As with any municipality, Sault played an essential role in the local rural development process. Democratically elected, the French municipality is the central actor in local life (Vital Durand, 1994). It is also the principal actor within local government, due to the legitimacy of its mayor, the size of its budgets, staffing, responsibilities and powers (Blanc and Rémond, 1993).

A municipality is elected every 6 years, and comprises a municipal council that holds a 'power of deliberation', in other words has decision-making responsibilities about the commune and a mayor with a 'power of execution' in other words he has the mandate to execute the decisions taken by the municipal council. Since their creation (1789), and more so since 1982 with the 'Laws on Decentralisation', there have been important increases in the role, responsibilities and powers of the French municipality, increases that have made the task of the commune impossible to be managed alone. In the constantly and rapidly changing socio-economic context, the commune, individually, has had to deal with the lack of economies of scale, with the diversification and/or maintenance of primary services, depopulation and the growing demand for creating the conditions for sustainable development (Vital Durand, 1994, Logié, 1992).

In this context, alongside planning responsibilities, and responsibilities in relation to the provision of social housing and business estates, the Municipality of Sault also had increasingly to intervene in local economic development acting as one of the main 'animators' within the local area, 'contracting out', or even becoming a 'shareholder' (Teisserenc, 1994). Alongside its action at the level of the commune the municipality of Sault has acted as part of supra-communal groupings referred as the 'Intercommunal Structures'.

Intercommunal structures

In the last 30 years, in a context of demographic evolution, the superimposition of levels of administration and the necessary rationalisation of public investments, co-operation between communes has been an essential condition of local management and development in France (Caillosse, 1994). Intercommunal working occurs through the establishment of supra-communal arrangements. In rural areas, these arrangements can involve varying legal forms and levels of commitment. They can be single purpose or multi-purpose groupings, respectively named as *SIVU*²² (since 1890) and *SIVOM*²³ (since 1959), and *Syndicat Mixte* which can involve actors other than elected representatives. They can take the form of a District of Communes (since 1959) or a Community of Communes (since 1992).

Until 1992, the Municipality of Sault had developed intercommunal working with neighbouring municipalities mainly through the creation of intercommunal syndicates for the purposes of water supply (1964), electricity (1965), planning and equipment (Syndicat Mixte du Pays du Ventoux, 1965) waste management (1977), and forestry management (1980). Therefore, until the early 1990s co-operative working experience in the study area revolved mainly around municipal-led actions for primary service delivery. In 1992, with the creation of the community of communes of the Pays of Sault (CdC-PS), local co-operation turned towards new ways of working and new objectives for operation with particular emphasis on 'local economic development'.

'Communauté de Communes du Pays de Sault' (CdC-PS)

Whilst already working within a SIVOM, the municipality of Sault and the municipalities of Aurel, Monnieux, St Christol d'Albion, St Trinit (forming the Pays of Sault), decided to create the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault, "to work towards and provide the conditions for sustainable development and planning of the area thereby formed" (Order of the Prefect, 30 December 1992 article 1).

The '*Communauté de Communes of the Pays de Sault*' was established in December 1992, "representing a new territory of solidarity and of intercommunal co-operation" (Bulletin of the Community of Communes, 1996, p.1).

²² Syndicat à Vocation Unique

²³ Syndicat à Vocation Multiple

'Comité de Bassin d'Emploi des Pays du Ventoux' (CBE-PV)

The *'Comité de Bassin d'Emploi des Pays du Ventoux'* (CBE-PV) was formed in 1991, covering the area of 18 communes and a population of 9700 habitants. This organisation²⁴ unites “locally elected representatives of the different municipalities, local entrepreneurs and union representatives, to work in partnership through local development initiatives in order to improve employment in the local area” (Decret No 84.606 12th July 1984).

The main aim of this structure is “to maintain the existing resources and ‘vocations’ of the local area and develop new actions to contribute to local economic development and to the dynamism of the territory” (CBE-PV, Status and Programme, October 1991, p.1). The main part of the mission of the CBE-PV supports the creation and development of new businesses acting as “‘a middleman’ between entrepreneurs and business men, local authorities and funding organisations” (Dir. of CBE-PV, 1998).

The history of the local partnership practice in Sault is now presented.

²⁴ Governed by the Law of the 1st July 1901 on the status of non profit making associations

4.8.2 History of the Local Partnership Practice

Table 4-2: SAULT: CHRONOLOGICAL CHART OF THE KEY EVENTS

1965 Creation of the '*Syndicat Mixte d'Équipement et d'Aménagement des Pays du Ventoux*', a supra communal grouping in charge of the delivery of equipment and planning for its 28 communes members)

1985 (June) Re-organisation of the functions and management boards of the Tourism and Information Office. The Tourism Office has a management board of 52 members drawn from different sectors, who works in partnership towards the promotion and development of tourism for the 16 communes members.

1985 (August) '*Fete de la Lavande*', a new three days event in the Commune of Sault which promotes local produces and particular lavender. This fête is the result of partnership between farmers, elected members of the commune, and local businesses.

1991 (Oct) Creation of the '*Comité de Bassin D'emploi des Pays du Ventoux*' (CBE-PV). This organisation's principal aim is to work, observe and diagnose the employment patterns within the area, to prepare and implement economic development and employment strategies and action for the area.

1992 (Dec) Creation of the '*Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault*'. This structure involves five municipalities including that of Sault. Its principal aim is to provide and implement a local rural development strategy for the area formed by the perimeter of all 5 communes. This new intercommunal structure replaces the 'SIVOM of the Canton of Sault'.

1993 (May) Creation of the '*Maison de l'Environnement, du patrimoine et de la Chasse*' (House of Environment, Heritage and Hunting'). This is a partnership association, uniting the main representatives of the Conseil general of Vaucluse, the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault, the National Forestry Office, the Syndicat Mixte of the Ventoux, Regional Education Academy, the CBE-PV, and the Grouping for Agrarian Development.

1995 (Sept) The Community of Communes adhered to the CBE-PV and employs the services of a development agent to prepare the regeneration strategy of the area formed by the Community of Communes.

1995 (Oct) The management committee of the Syndicat Mixte d'Amenagement et de Development' votes the creation of a '*Pays of the Ventoux*' within the limits of the territory formed by the syndicat, including Sault as well as the communes of the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault. Twenty-eight Communes choose to follow the technical, administrative and legal procedures attached to the establishment of the Pays.

1996 (Feb) The President of the Republic announces of the *dismantling of the Military Base of the 'Plateau D'Albion'*. This decision leads to the departure of 4000 people (14% of the total population of three cantons) affecting therefore 40 communes, including Sault.

1996 (April) In response to the closing down of the military Base, local elected representatives of the communes affected by this decision decide to institute the '*SIVU: Syndicat Intercommunal à Vocation Unique d' Albion*'. Supra Communal grouping with the principal vocation of preparing and implementing a redevelopment strategy for whole of the area affected with this dismantling. This syndicat involves the Community de Communes of the Pays of Sault and the Community of Communes of the Pays of Apt, as well as the Comités de Bassin d'Emploi of the Pays of the Ventoux and of the Pays of Apt.

1997 (Feb) '*Programme de Développement Economique du Pays Sault*' (Economic Development Programme for the Pays of Sault). This document is produced by the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault in collaboration with the CBE-PV and provides an outline for 'intercommunal strategy of development'. It identifies clearly defined axis of interventions for the development of the Pays de Sault.

1997 (July) The SIVU is legally recognised by order of the Prefect

1997 (Sept) The SIVU presents its first Strategic Report to the financing institutions of the Region and the State.

1997 (Oct.) Creation of Apt- Initiative- Albion

This section outlines the evolution of the practice of local partnership in the area of Sault. As will be observed, the institution and creation of specific organisations and a variety of challenging circumstances has led the practice of local partnership to develop very rapidly at different and wider levels than that of the commune of Sault. Although this investigation has chosen the date of the creation of *the 'Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault'* (1992) as a starting point for the study period, it is important to consider the history to the creation of the CdC-PS and the different local partnership efforts characterising the local partnership practice in the area of Sault.

In reaction to economic challenges in the 1980's different sectors in the area got organised and started to develop co-operative working (i.e. groupings for agrarian development, local business and trade associations etc.), but "no one at the time thought yet about grouping everyone's individual or sectoral efforts into a rescue strategy for the area"(Pres. Tourism Centre, 1998). The first attempt to rally different local interests into a 'rescue strategy' happened in the mid 1980s, when Sault's elected representatives approached key players in the area including farmers, local businesses and tourism representatives at large for the purpose of the definition of a large tourism strategy. As a result of this work a three-day event was organised, 'Lavande en Fête', and a local association was created to carry out the work. Another consequence of this work was the reorganisation of the administration, management and objectives of Sault Tourism Office. A new board was set up uniting 52 members, including representatives of 16 surrounding communes from diverse local activities to facilitate the development of a general strategy of tourism (Pres. Tourism Centre, 1998). Since its reorganisation the Tourism Office became an important partnership structure, which was described by most interviewees as having contributed significantly to the improvements of relationships between the various local sectors concerned and also of strategic thinking in addressing tourism in the local area.

In the early 1990s the limitations of a communal approach to sustain local economic activities forced the municipality of Sault and its community to adopt a broader perspective and to accept that:

"The future and progression of Sault was intrinsically attached to the progression of the neighbouring villages and communities and that any action for development had to be conceived constantly in relation and co-ordination with others and with the wider area" (Pres.CdC, 1998).

The acknowledgement and growing awareness of the need to co-operate with other people, institutions and local territories for the development of the local area, certainly influenced the municipality of Sault and the neighbouring municipalities (St Trinit, St Christol d'Albion, Monnieux and Aurel) in their decision to establish a Community of Communes (See Section 4.8.1 iv)).

i) Local Partnership Practice within the area of the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault

The challenge for the commune of Sault and the other communes of the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault was to find the ways and means to change what was perceived as ineffective, individualistic, and often too superficial local rural development actions in the areas as clearly expressed by the Director of the CBE-PV:

“The commune of Sault is in a very privileged area for potential funding (LEADER 5b, PDR, KONVER, Mountainous Zone etc). It is a highly valued and attractive area (landscape, environment, and climate). However, until the creation of the Community of Communes, there had been numerous studies and numerous local actors trying to intervene with no co-ordination whatsoever, apart maybe the different efforts around tourism. We were confronted then with very ineffective and inefficient practices, where development meant to pile up layers of uncoordinated actions, without any analytical and strategic thinking” (Dir. CBE, 1998).

Evidence derived from both documentary and interview material shows that, from its creation, the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault (CdC-PS) enabled the development of strong collaboration between the five constituting municipalities (Pres. SIVU, 1998). According to the President of the CdC-PS (1998), the first objective was “before all to learn to work in partnership and to act as one, as one ‘partner’ of development in the area instead of five partners when taking an active involvement in the various development initiatives in the area”.

This involvement was clearly visible at the time of the creation of the ‘Maison de l’Environnement, du patrimoine et de la chasse’ (The House of Environment, Heritage and Hunting), in 1993, in which the CdC-PS became an active partner. The creation of this association was viewed by some as “another very valuable example of local partnership working” (Pres. CdC-PS, 1998). Created in 1993, the vocation of this association was both ‘cultural and educational’ and its objective was to promote heritage and tourism as well as to raise awareness of environmental and ecological issues. Beyond these objectives, the mission was also “to develop dialogue between the members of the

association; to allow for reciprocal information exchange prior to any decision relative to the organisation; to study the different modes and methods that encourage development within the limits of association's objectives; and finally, to accommodate the individual and collective interests of its members" (extract from Deliberation CdC-PS, 6 May 1993).

Alongside this involvement, members of CdC-PS agreed to initiate discussions about the elaboration of an integrated and sustainable development programme for the whole area within the perimeter of the Community of Communes. Members of the CdC-PS were "quick to acknowledge the limits of their expertise and knowledge about undertaking the elaboration of such a programme" (Pres. CdC-PS, 1998). A first step was therefore to employ the services of the Comité de Bassin d'Emploi du Pays du Ventoux (CBE-PV). Until 1995, the different municipalities composing the Community of Communes each reported individually to the CBE-PV. In September 1995, the Community of Communes decided to become a member in its own right of the CBE-PV (Extract from Délibération CdC-PS, 13 September 1995). Some interviewees argued that the CBE-PV "provided considerable support for the CdC-PS from the start when the CBE-PV took on the whole supervision of the elaboration of the Programme of Development of the Pays of Sault"(Pres. CdC-PS, 1998). The elaboration of this programme of development turned out to be happening just in time with the announcement of the closing down of the military Base of Albion.

Indeed, in 1996, the French President made a special announcement ordering the dismantling of the military Base of Albion. Galvanised by this news, the CdC-PS and the CBE-PV instituted three local development commissions in order to prepare the programme of development initially planned and also to prepare the necessary socio-economic restructuring needed following the closure of the military Base of Albion (restructuring commonly referred as the 'Reconversion d'Albion'²⁵). The three instituted local development commissions rallied a variety of local actors and were given the responsibility of identifying local problems and issues, existing or emerging. They were also invited to select the different projects and activities that would contribute to the development of the area. The work concluded in February 1997 with the production of a programming document entitled the 'Economic Development Programme of the Pays of Sault'.

²⁵ The 'Reconversion d'Albion' will be referred in this research as 'Albion re-development'

Alongside the elaboration and the production of a local development programme, the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault, agreed to become a member of the 'Syndicat Intercommunal à Vocation Unique' (*SIVU d'Albion*), a single purpose grouping of municipalities, gathering thirteen communes, formed in April 1996. Indeed, the *SIVU d'Albion* was formed immediately in reaction to the French president's announcement to address the problem of socio-economic restructuring caused by the dismantling of the military base of Albion and to prepare and implement a strategy common to the territory comprising the thirteen commune members.

ii) The SIVU d' Albion

Substantial financial compensation was available at the European (KONVER), national and Regional (Contract of Territory) levels to help addressing the socio-economic problems caused by the dismantling of the military base. However given that the geographical area defined by the European Union was vast there was a concern that the financial compensation available would be so scattered as to leave limited resources for any real structural and strategic action at local level. The communes directly affected by the dismantling of the military base decided therefore "to get organised in order to become credible and defend their right to benefit collectively from the compensation that was available" (Pres. SIVU, 1998). The *SIVU d'Albion* was established principally "to provide and implement a socio-economic restructuring strategy for the development of the areas directly affected" (Extract from the 'Lettre du SIVU d'Albion', Jan. 1998, p.1). As noted earlier it united thirteen communes meaning two Community of Communes, that of the Pays of Sault and that of Pays of Apt, as well as the CBE-PV and the CBE-PA (Comité de Bassin d'Emploi du Pays D'Apt). Although the SIVU d'Albion was formed in April 1996, it took more than a year for this structure to be legally recognised (Order of the Prefect 9 July 1997).

Later in the process the national government announced that a transitory regiment of 1000 soldiers would occupy the base from spring 1999. The SIVU d'Albion considered nonetheless that in the light of the events caused by the dismantling, there was "a need to recognise that the development of the area could not only and durably rely on temporary activities such as the ones provided by national defence "(extract of the 'Lettre du SIVU d' Albion', No 1, Jan 1998, p 1).

Alongside the work of the two Communities of Communes and the two CBE, other groups were organised to reflect upon the issue of Albion Redevelopment. For example the different representatives of the local associations of the area affected by the dismantling of the military base, established themselves into an association, the ADDPPA (Association pour le Development et la Defence des Pays du Plateau D'Albion). A delegation from this association regularly presented their views to the SIVU d'Albion and even agreed to become a member of the SIVU for "a trial period to reflect upon Albion re-development in partnership with the existing members"(Extract from the 'Lettre du SIVU d'Albion', Jan. 1998, p. 3).

At the SIVU's request a group of independent experts, drawn from various backgrounds, and local to the area, agreed to bring their expertise and knowledge into a 'Prospective Committee' to help the members of the SIVU d'Albion in their decision about socio economic restructuring. This committee rallied the experience of a retired Ambassador, a sociologist, an town planner, and a retired director of the Chamber of Trade and Commerce of Vaucluse.

The work of the SIVU d'Albion, culminated in the production of a 'Note of Orientation' for the development of the area (Note of Orientation, SIVU d'Albion, 28 Jan.1997). In early September 1997, the note was elaborated further into a synthesis report to be submitted to Europe, the State and the Region for the preparation and ratification of a '*Contrat de Territoire*' (Contract of Territory), as part of the 'Contrat de Plan Etat-Region'. As explained in the next section the aim of such ratification was to define and establish the engagement and participation of Europe, the State, the Region and the Departments concerned with Albion Redevelopment.

iii) Contrat deTerritoire/Contrat Etat-Region

The State, Europe, the Region PACA, the Departments of Vaucluse and Alpes de Haute Provence, committed to help the area affected by the dismantling of the military base of Albion, through the procedure of a 'Contrat of Territory'. As an additional clause to the normal procedure of the Contrat de Plan Etat-Region, the 'Contract of Territory' was specifically constituted to obtain financial compensation that matched the exceptional circumstances affecting the area (i.e. the closure of the military base). This differed from the normal funding attached to the general '*Contrat de Plan Etat-Region*'. The SIVU d'Albion took on the responsibility to prepare this contract, working closely with the

communes, Community of Communes, CBEs, the Prefecture and Sous-Prefecture of Vaucluse²⁶, different representatives from the Départements concerned, the Région PACA, Europe, and also different experts from other relevant organisations. Thirty months of mobilisation, of dialogue and conciliation culminated on the 16 July 1998 with the signature of the 'Contract of Territory'. This Contract sealed the engagement by Europe, the State, the Région PACA, and the départements involved, to contribute up to 100 millions Francs (10 Million Pounds) for the period 1997-1999 (Les Petites Affiches de Vaucluse, 21/07/98: Reconversion du Plateau d'Albion: Le contrat de Territoire, p.1).

Convinced by the necessity to continue the re-development of the area within a perspective of long term development, the SIVU d'Albion launched a second phase of work to prepare a new 'Contract of Territory' as part of the Contrat de plan Etat-Region for the period 2000-2006. This contract had the objective "to further the strategy for Albion re-development and to prepare the necessary foundations for a sustainable development of the area" (Lettre du SIVU d'Albion, No 4, Jan.1999, p. 2).

iv) The 'Pays of the Ventoux' (1995-1998)

" We (CdC) have decided to go further in our perspectives of development and we have engaged a new approach, that in time, will help us to create a 'PAYS' (...), this new territory will give to the local collectivities the necessary means for their economic development, the State will become a direct associate of this new scheme for sustainable development and planning of our territory." (Communate de Communes du Pays de Sault, Bulletin No 3, Dec 1998, p1)

As early as 1995, the Municipality of Sault as well as the other communes member of the CdC- PS envisaged new perspectives for tackling development in the area. The 'Syndicat Mixte D'Aménagement et d'Equipement'²⁷, voted in October 1995 in favour of the creation of the 'Pays of the Ventoux' including Sault as well as the communes of the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault. Twenty-eight Communes in total decided to enter the technical, administrative and legal procedures attached to the creation of the 'Pays'. Under the circumstances of socio-economic restructuring caused by the dismantling of the military base, the work on the 'Pays' was temporarily put to one side, until 1998, when the Community of Communes started to inform the population of its intention to pursue the work initiated in 1995. A commonly held view was that the work that had been achieved through the SIVU d'Albion and the 'Contract of Territory'

²⁶ Prefecture and Sous-Prefecture are two institutions that are the result of the decentralisation of the State to the level of the French Département (District). These were instituted in 1852.

²⁷ The 'Syndicat Mixte for Planning and Equipment' is an intercommunal structure See Section (4.8.1 iv)

constituted an important spur, encouraging further reflection about the creation of a 'Pays'²⁸ (Lettre du SIVU d'Albion, 1998, pp. 2-3). Different meetings (28th January and 16th April 1998) were organised between different municipalities and the CBE-PV to "discuss the challenge of delimiting a pertinent area that would support development action and would define and organise the new conditions for partnership working" (Extract from the 'Bulletin CdC-PS', 1998, p 2-3).

The concept of the 'Pays' was reintroduced by the French planning law of 4/02/1995 (see Section 3.5.3 *iii*). It does not represent a structure but a territorial entity, and is defined in the Law as "*Territory of projects based on a search for geographic, economic, cultural and social cohesion*" (Law 4/02/1995, article 22). Indeed, the concept of the 'Pays' was reintroduced to reinforce coherence of public choice and the capacity of local territories to give concrete form their own initiatives (Houée). It differs significantly from intercommunal groupings such as the Community of Communes, in that it neither raises taxes and nor does it have its own tax system. The territory of the Pays must encapsulate a community of socio-economic interests and local elected representatives and other actors concerned must establish a global project, referred as a '*charter of the territory*'. This charter is a 10-year project. A pilot committee including local elected representatives and other key local socio-economic actors runs this charter. The idea is that the territory of the Pays unites a significant number of communes and inhabitants to allow a sufficiently important space for conceiving really strategic action with regards to service delivery and development (Communaute de Communes du Pays de Sault, Bulletin No3, December 1998, pp. 2-3).

v) Conclusion

As it has been observed, over a period of 6 years (1992-1998), the practice of local partnership in the Sault case study area developed rather rapidly at different local levels and scales. Predominantly characterised by a local authority-led approach, it is nonetheless an example of local partnership practice that gradually opened up to include broader participation and the development of relationships and modes of functioning between a variety of local development actors. The dismantling of the local military Base of Albion can clearly be seen to have been the trigger and the origin of many of the positive partnership developments in the area. A commonly held view amongst interviewees is that this temporary event has forced local partnership working to become

²⁸ For further detail about the Pays see Section 3.5.3 *iii*)

“a true and more permanent ‘culture’ in undertaking local action, leading towards the development of increasingly strategic arrangements and the willingness to consolidate the partnerships” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). The partnership work undertaken would appear to have engendered a sufficient level of awareness and confidence in the the local partnership approach so as to encourage the various local actors to further this approach and redefine their relationships and the geographic and administrative boundaries of local development implementation within their area.

The context of each study area and the unfolding history of the practice of local partnership in each location now presented, the following chapters report the evidence relating to local partnership building and local partnership working and the outcomes of local partnership practice in turn.

CHAPTER 5. LOCAL PARTNERSHIP BUILDING IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT: THE EXAMPLES OF NEWENT AND SAULT

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 is the first of three chapters in which the author presents the emerging evidence derived from the empirical investigation. As explained in chapter 4 this investigation was concerned with exploring both mechanisms and processes involved in the practice of local partnership. To help with this investigation the author decided at an early stage to split this process into two phases, the phase of partnership formation and the phase of partnership operation, and the chapter structure reflects that. Thus while in many respects the processes of local partnership formation and local partnership operation emerge as two mutually dependent processes, the phase of local partnership formation (or local partnership building) is considered separately from the phase of local partnership operation (or local partnership working), a phase that is explored specifically in chapter 6.

Therefore, in this chapter the author focuses specifically on the process of local partnership building. In both study areas, the process of local partnership building emerged as a key and iterative process, and was described by most respondents as influencing strongly the way that partnership practice subsequently evolved. In both study areas, all interviewees presented local partnership building as a long and arduous process, many commenting about the ‘frustrations’ and the ‘difficulties’, the ‘lack of goodwill and vision’, despite the expressed need for opting for such an approach. This is best illustrated by a comment of the Director of the Comité de Bassin d’Emploi:

“if in principle everyone agrees to work in partnership and see the benefits of partnership working to address rural development issues, in practice, working in partnership is not a spontaneous or easy thing to do. Local partnerships are really difficult to initiate, to set up and organise” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998).

The evidence derived from both case studies verifies, in many respects, early research findings in relation to the practice of local partnership. It confirms the strong influence of the local context over the practice of local partnership and allows the identification of a number of contextual factors that shape the environment in which the practice of local partnership is taking place. It confirms the existence of trigger elements, referred to here as catalysts, at the origin of local/rural development actors’ rallying around the issue of rural development. The empirical evidence also presents a variety of mechanisms and processes that are iterative throughout the process of partnership development. Indeed, in

many respects the processes of local partnership formation and local partnership operation (a phase that is explored specifically in chapter 6) emerge as two mutually dependent processes. Although these processes coexist, they merit individual consideration. The evidence derived from both case studies indicates that the process of local partnership building relies on the mobilisation of a wide range of interests; of a flexible local space; of local resources, ideas and projects; as well as of existing structures and organisations. It also suggests that it is a process that requires an endogenous approach. The empirical evidence also emphasises that essential to local partnership building is the involvement of local/rural development actors, the determination of a collective strategy and the structuring of the practice. These different issues are now explored in turn.

5.2 The Strong Influence of the local Context over the Practice of Local Partnership

The evidence derived from the two case studies stresses the predominance of the local context over the practice of local partnership. It has suggested that the practice of local partnership is a process that emerges from a chain of circumstances and a sequences of events that are intrinsic to the local area as well as a process highly controlled by the local area's idiosyncrasies.

The analysis of interviewees' accounts and available documents has revealed a number- perhaps seven- of local contextual variables that shape the practice of local partnership. These are the sense of local collective identity and local ownership; local/rural conceptions and values; local/rural governance; local networks; local conflicts; local activism and finally conceptions and experience of local partnership working. These are now examined in turn.

These variables must be distinguished from the factors that act as catalysts for local partnership initiation and which are later considered in section 5.3.

5.2.1 Local Collective Identity and Local Ownership

The sense of local collective identity (being part of the same locality) and the sense of local ownership have appeared to have a significant influence on the practice of local partnership in both case studies.

In the Newent case study, for example, at the centre of the strategy for Newent's regeneration, and central to the development of local partnership, was the need to "strengthen Newent's identity" and the need for "the sense of place to be kept in focus" (Newent-Our-Future, 1995, p. 6). Moreover, the unsuccessful attempt of the District Council to draw Newent into the district wide Regeneration Partnership was justified, in part, as "a number of the community believed that Newent was not part of the Forest, either geographically or traditionally" (Newent-Our-Future, 1995, p.1). The sense of local collective identity also emerged as highly significant in the Sault case study. For example, the Mayor of Sault declared that "the decision to establish the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault rested on a traditional local collective identity between the communes involved and their inhabitants" (Interview, 1998).

A number of remarks made during the interviews, and identified in some of the documents, suggest that local collective identity rests on geographical, socio-economic, and cultural foundations, or is defined by administrative boundaries. Some interviewees, however, have argued that the latter often proved to be a less relevant landmark, as illustrated by the statement of the President of the CdC-PS (1998):

"The local catchment area is geographical, cultural, socio-economic and rests on the local ways of life... today's administrative boundaries do not correspond to anything anymore...economically, socially or whatever".

In both case studies, most interviewees have admitted that there was a tendency for the sense of local collective identity, particularly in rural areas, to be associated with the very local level, meaning the commune or the parish. However, some have argued that, in their experience, the sense of local collective identity varied considerably depending on local circumstances, local people, the issues to be tackled and the interests involved. They also have argued that the challenge of rural development action was forcing this 'identity' to evolve over the years from the narrow limit of a commune or the parish to the wider 'locality':

“ Local actors are increasingly led to accept that there is a difference between a locality of place and a locality of purpose” (Econ.Dev. Off. GCC, 1998a)

“Tackling development in partnership does not mean only to get together to get some funding to mend what does not work within the narrow limits of the commune. It means for the commune to position itself within its a wider environment, to feel ‘part’ or ‘partner’ of a wider territory. And I think that although it is taking time, local people are increasingly aware of this” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998).

Alongside the sense of local collective identity, the sense of local ownership has emerged, in both case studies, to have an influence on the practice of local partnership. In the case of Sault most interviewees admitted that the practice of local partnership was, in part, born out of the decision of local actors to get organised in reaction to a number of ‘top down’ decisions, which were not perceived as either applicable or useful:

“a lot of the ‘top-down’ decisions do not correspond to anything in the eyes of local actors, and certainly not to the identity and vocation of the area. Take for example the case of Albion redevelopment. The boundaries defined by Europe were too large. That is why the SIVU was created” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998).

In the case of Newent, the initiation of the partnership practice was founded on similar arguments. There was a belief that the parish of Newent needed some regeneration work and although problems were identified at district and county level, “the general feeling was that nothing was being done and Newent was losing against the other rural towns” (Newent-Our- Future, 1995, p. 1). Hence, local partnership working was initiated as a way “to develop Newent’s own development strategy and local community objectives” (Extract of Correspondence, ‘Newent shows its Mettle’, 21st June 1996).

5.2.2 Local/Rural Conceptions and Values

“Whatever the reasons are for working collectively, local partnerships are established and operate in a context characterised by local actors working in very different ways, having different interests, different expectations and are, generally, worlds apart” (SIVU Proj. Man. 1998)

The empirical evidence indicates that local partnership building does not take place in a neutral and prejudice-free context and that “local conceptions, values, attitudes and mentalities should never be ignored in this process” (SIVU Proj. Man., 1998). These local conceptions and values reflect local traditions, rooted modes of thinking and attitudes, and were described by respondents as influencing considerably the development of the local partnership practice, particularly as these conceptions diverge significantly:

“Getting local actors to work in partnership means rallying diverging conceptions” (Pres. Assoc. Loc. Businesses, 1998).

“There is a need to handle the diversity of mentalities of the different individuals involved in partnership” (Econ.Dev.Off. GCC, 1998b).

In both case studies, the practice of local partnership emerged in a context characterised by a tradition of strong individualism. All interviewees stressed explicitly that this attitude not only shaped the way the local partnership practice was established but also undermined its development significantly. Individualism was described as one of the major impediments to partnership building and working in rural areas:

“Traditionally there is, in rural areas, little incentive to work collectively and rural people have a tendency to withdraw into themselves at the first opportunity. So, partnership working does not happen like that.” (Pres. Agric. Assoc. 1998):

“You have to appreciate that in rural area, everyone tends to live traditionally and naturally in isolation. The born and bred are protecting themselves from the ‘strangers’ and want to keep things the way there were before and incomers come to rural area as a retreat, as a place to hide” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998).

This last statement introduces another common argument, that of the rural environment being set in an inflexible environment. The rural environment was indeed described as “having great difficulties in terms of moving on and regenerating” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998), due to “distinctive mentalities that have a tendency often to keep things at a standstill” (Mayor of Sault, 1998). Most interviewees also acknowledged that the particular issue of development was generally perceived, in rural areas, as a threatening word:

“There are always pockets of resistance, thinking they can manage without development, usually because they are worried about what the actual word means” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998c).

By ‘conceptions and values’ must also be understood the ‘opinions’ that local actors and local people may have of each other. A number of remarks gathered during the interviews have revealed the significance of the underlying opinions that local actors may have of each other. Elected members, whilst believed to be holding an essential role, were perceived as not always being close to the reality on the ground (Pres. Agric. Assoc. 1998, EA Planning Manager, 1998). Associations/voluntary groups were described as having a tendency to position themselves as lobbyists and having no sense of funding realities (SIVU Proj. Man. 1998, Newent Town Councillor, 1998b). Tradesmen and farmers were often accused of working in their own corner (Dir. House of Env.1998).

Finally local people were described as having neither the means nor the ideas to make decisions or take action, and were considered to be often too remote from local management and development realities (Dir. Sault Tourism Centre, 1998; Newent Town Councillor, 1998a).

5.2.3 Local/Rural Governance

The practice of local partnership emerges within the context of locally established governance where the 'common rule' coexists with local ways and modes of operation. Some interviewees have argued that this local governance depends strongly on people and personalities and on who effectively has the leading authority in the area. The PACA Development Officer (1998), in the Sault case, and the Gloucestershire County Council Economic Development Officer (1998a), in the Newent case, suggested that it was possible to find local areas where the authority was concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or even one single individual. They have also suggested that in other areas mechanisms exist whereby decision and responsibility is shared between local actors. In the experience of these two interviewees the practice of local partnership very much reflected the characteristics of local governance. However, both maintained that local elected representatives, by tradition and function, generally retained this authority, even if it was confined to only a few responsibilities, as was the case in the Newent case study.

In both case studies, many interviewees described local elected representatives as the natural and accountable actors of the management and administration of the local area. Therefore, looking after rural areas' interests and development was presented as "no exception to local elected representatives duties" (Mayor of Sault, 1998). However, in this respect the Mayor of Sault (1998) admitted that local elected representatives were increasingly "led to open dialogue and work in concert with a wide range of local actors, representatives of different sectors of society as well as with the myriad of rural development officer and experts". The situation described by the Mayor of Sault was echoed by the director of the CBE-PV who asserted that "the challenge of rural development today involves a collection of actors, institutions and agencies, the public, private and voluntary sectors together, gathered into an industrious and complex local governance"(Dir.CBE-PV, 1998).

In both case studies, various interviewees observed resurgence in the willingness of local people, as individuals, to become involved in local/rural development initiatives.

However there was a feeling that the opportunities were often restricted for those individuals to become and take part in local action, as illustrated by the Environment Agency Planning Manager, also resident of Newent:

“People feel uneasy about standing for an election, for professional reasons and time mostly, and there aren’t many other ways to get involved” (EA Planning Manager, 1998).

5.2.4 Local Networks

The evidence derived from both case studies suggests that the practice of local partnership takes place in a context characterised “by well established local networks in which people invariably interact formally and/or informally” (Mayor of Sault, 1998). These local networks are organised to varying degrees, and have been argued to “rest generally on personal, cultural, social or professional, and sectoral interests” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). Some are formal, endowed with organisations, clear objectives and modes of functioning; whilst others are informal and simply consist of inter-personal relationships. In any case, “those likely to take part in the practice of local partnership already have their own networking skills and experience” (Dir. GRCC, 1998).

5.2.5 Local Conflicts

The evidence also suggested that the practice of local partnership takes place in an environment within which personal prejudices, the defence of personal interests and differences of opinion exist. Personal prejudices at the local level often “take their origins in old family quarrels” (SIVU Proj. Man. 1998) and/or in “frictions between the ‘local born and bred’ and the newcomers” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b). In the particular case of Sault, the predominance of ‘old family quarrels’ was commonly mentioned, during the interviews, as being the on-going context for action in the local area (Mayor of Sault, 1998, SIVU Proj. Man. 1998, Dir. House of Env.1998):

“ A few years ago we tried to set up an association to gather the different associations and bring some uniformity into local voluntary action. Although most people agreed with the idea, it happens that it was unworkable for very personal reason; too many families fall out. You can not do anything without having to deal with it” (Pres. Assoc. of Local Businesses, 1998).

Alongside individual rivalries lie different antagonisms between local groups and/or between local actors often caused by diverging conceptions of collective interests and actions to be undertaken in the area. In both case studies, local groups were described as having “the tendency to hold prejudiced views and to be over-critical” (SIVU Proj. Man. 1998) “positioning themselves spontaneously as a ‘thorn in the flesh’” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b). It was also commonly argued “that political opinions tend to exacerbate local antagonisms” (Dir. House of Env.1998).

In addition, the experience of the interviewees suggested that another underlying form of conflict was the on-going competition between neighbouring local areas. Interviewees argued that competition was “increased by the growing pressure on local communities to fight for funding” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b) and funding “often positioned local areas against each other where they should be collaborating and realise that they all share very common issues and problems” (Mayor of Sault, 1998). In the case of Newent, interviewees suggested that the local government authorities’ decisions and choices at County and District levels had to a certain extent nurtured competition. Many decisions and choices were described as having a tendency to be supportive of some communities’ efforts and dismissive of others (Newent Town Councillor, 1998 a and b; Dir. GRCC, 1998).

A further emerging form of conflict commonly mentioned by interviewees was that of the usual oppositions between the commune or parish level and the other levels of local government. Interviewees in both case studies have suggested that the relationships between the different levels of local government could sometimes be conflictual, a situation that they described as a predicament to the development of the practice of local partnership.

5.2.6 Local Activism

The two case studies indicated that the practice of local partnership takes place in an active environment within which on-going initiatives are being undertaken in various domains, at different levels, involving a variety of actors, and hence demonstrating clear local activism.

Intrinsic to local activism is the sense of civic responsibility, the sense of being committed to and getting involved in the local area. A number of statements made during

the interviews illustrated the significance of this sense of commitment. For some interviewees this commitment rested on “the personal inclination to bring time, experience and support to the area in which they were born” (Sault Vice Chairman, 1998), “a question of personal glory and a deep attachment to the good development of the area” (Pres. Agric. Assoc. 1998). For others it is a means of showing a willingness to become part of a community in which they have chosen to live and to take action (Town Councillor, 1998b). In any event, it consists of “the natural inclination personally to do something for the local area at its own level” (Dir. House of Env.1998):

“My mission is much broader than being the Director of a Tourism Centre and promoting the area by distributing leaflets. I see my mission as a way to contribute also to the enhancement of my territory, to help guard its identity, integrity and respect its vocation whilst accepting its progression” (Pres. Sault Tourism Centre, 1998).

“I am taking a part in most actions. Any meetings which concern the development and the survival of this area, I am there. Having my business here, I consider myself as an actor of development. Anything that represents a threat or else for the local area will affect me. If something happens I don't want to think it is because I did not do anything for it” (Pres. Assoc. of Sault Local Businesses, 1998).

A commonly held view amongst interviewees was that local activism “depends strongly on an individual's personality, vision and dynamism” (Dir. GRCC, 1998) and on “strong personalities who always pull the others, the followers” (Pres. Assoc. of Local Businesses, 1998). There was a consensus around the pragmatic view that it was always the same individuals and organisations who got involved in local actions, and also it was often the same people and organisations who saw the need and were prepared to work in partnership (Dir.CBE-PV, 1998; Newent Town Councillor, 1998c):

“It is more than likely to find that people who are on the parish council are probably the same on the parochial church council that governs the church, are possibly part of the same people who are in the Women's Institute, are the same people who are on the Village Hall Management Committee” (Dir. GRCC, 1998).

“ I am president of the Agricultural Association, of ‘Lavandes en Fête’, Vice-Chairman of the Lavender and the Cereals Co-operative. As such I am very much involved in any initiatives or debate that concern the development of the area. I attend all the different commission meetings. I attend some SIVU meetings when I can ” (Pres. Agric. Assoc. 1998).

In both case studies, various interviewees have argued that whilst numerous initiatives were being undertaken, the common approach to tackle rural development action too often has rested on “individual projects, towards individual issues and problems”

(Newent Town Councillor, 1998c), and on “one-off initiatives fixing temporarily what does not work” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). Interviewees have also argued that most development actions were “terribly lacking in co-ordination, only layers and layers of initiatives with no strategic benefit” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998), initiatives that “follow a seasonal approach where a vision of permanence and durability should be introduced” (Pres. Sault Tourism Centre, 1998). This approach to action was “really difficult to transform even when working in partnership” (Econ.Dev.Off. GCC, 1998b).

5.2.7 Conceptions and Experience of Local Partnership

i) Conceptions of Local Partnership Working

“Well, the way I see partnership is that it is down to a sociological miracle, and no doubt we need this sociological miracle” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998c)

“The partnership approach...well it is obvious really, if we work together we move forward. It is essential. Anyway, working alone does not exist anymore, I tell you!” (Pres. Assoc. of Local Businesses, 1998)

In continuing this exploration of the influence of the local context on partnership working, it must also be stressed that local actors’ conceptions of local partnership have appeared to play an important role in the emergence of the practice.

The ‘partnership approach’ has been widely advocated in the whole of Europe for the last 10-15 years, if not imposed as a bidding requirement for funding. The term ‘partnership’ is present in most programming documents and good practice handbooks promoting and supporting local initiatives for rural development. Locally, the ideas and the pros and cons of partnership have been diffused through the press and the term is recurrent in any public meetings and political debates. None of the interviewees denied the importance of the on-going discourse about partnership working on the emergence of the practice in each study area, a discourse from which local actors have inevitably formed opinions and expectations.

Various interviewees have suggested that alongside the discourse on partnership working, the views of the local leaders about partnership working had a definite impact on the enthusiasm or the reservations expressed by the other local actors:

“If you have a dynamic, forward thinking, strategically oriented parish council, you would then find, and there are examples where it has happened, that those people who are on the parochial church council, or the village hall management committee, or the local wild life trust local group or whatever, would actually respond far more positively to that parish council because they picked up the feeling and belief that the parish council can do something therefore it is worthwhile” (Dir. GRCC, 1998).

In the Sault case study, many interviewees have proposed that the role of local elected representatives had been crucial to the evolution of the partnership practice in the area. Their efforts in promoting inter-communal co-operation was commonly described as having given “a real example and incentive to the other local actors to get organised at their level and to accept that collaboration and dialogue was possible” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998).

The examination of both documentary evidence and interviewees’ accounts has revealed that, in both case studies, there were very similar and consistent views on local partnership working in rural development. The commonly held view about partnership working was that it was an indispensable method of working, irrespective of whether the objective was rural development:

“Any local actors and organisations could not isolate themselves from the rest of the local society. They have to relate and interrelate on a day-to-day basis with others, and the more they do that, the more effective they will be in delivering their particular interest” (Pres. CdC-PS, 1998),

“Organisations will not exist for very long if they try to isolate themselves, it is a known fact” (Town Councillor, Newent, 1998c).

The vice chairman of the commune of Sault (1998) supported the same argument observing that “we live in a society that evolves so rapidly that working alone means working at a loss and drowning very quickly”. The development of the local partnership practice he believed implied “opening new exchanges in the local area, developing new means, and above all accessing information”. Partnership working in rural development was for all interviewees no exception. One interviewee, admitted she had never thought about working in partnership before (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b), however all the other interviewees, in both case studies, described local partnership working in rural development as ‘indispensable’, ‘inevitable’, ‘imperative’, ‘fundamental’ and even ‘obvious’. The emerging view was that partnership working was not only a manifest form of organisation and action in society today, but was an approach that was finally bringing some coherence to the development challenges in rural areas:

“No agency or one group of people can successfully deal on its own or put up with all the development opportunities, and basically it is a case of so many is better than one” (EA Planning Manager, 1998).

“The partnership practice is a pre-requisite to rural development, of any development in fact. We can’t envisage the development of a territory, if there is no exchange between the different actors of development, today the partners of development really. In rural areas, when action is envisaged it is impossible to happen without involving for example the agricultural and the tourism profession” (PACA Dev. Off. Interview, 1998)

In both case studies, various interviewees admitted that there were still pockets of resistance, in the local area, in respect to working in partnership. Interviewees commonly attributed such resistance to lack of knowledge and/or the fear of change on some people’s part. However, all argued that in their experience the partnership approach was generally perceived and understood in the local area as a good and relevant approach to address rural development and tackle initiatives.

The local partnership approach was commonly described as “a necessary approach to addressing the growing need for holistic and integrated rural development strategies” (Development Programme of the Pays of Sault, 1997, p. 2). There was a consensus amongst interviewees that this approach provided the means of preparing and implementing an ‘all embracing development programme’ for the local area and to rally the views, expertise, and the funding necessary to address rural development in the local area:

“Any local development strategy, today, requires taking account of the multidimensional nature of development and the interdependence between these different dimensions. This situation explains why local actors are increasingly led to work in partnership. Everyone needs everyone basically. In the same way that the other actors of the area can’t work without us (elected representative), the political force, we can’t work without them” (Pres. SIVU, Sault, 1998).

“ It started off with the simple view that the regeneration of Newent had to encompass all aspects of life, and that the preparation of a workable regeneration strategy required a partnership with various bodies” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a).

Local partnership working also emerged as a means to “ensure involvement for those individuals and organisations that are most motivated to see things happen” and to “encourage the ownership and involvement of local individuals and groups in the regeneration strategy ”(Newent-Our- Future, 1995, p. 17). Another common view was that it provided the means to coherently organise the existing local networks and the

different local actions/initiatives undertaken for rural development in the local area (Dir. GRCC, Newent 1998; Dir. CBE-PV, Sault, 1998). Interviewees, in both case studies, suggested that the various institutions and agencies involved in the rural development process were, in the majority of cases, 'single minded' and operating too often without interacting with each other (Dir. CBE-PV, Sault, 1998). From a similar perspective, various interviewees viewed local partnership working as a means "to organise coherently both organisations and actions scattered in the local area" (Pres. CDC-PS, Sault, 1998). Some interviewees also suggested that partnership offered "a real potential to reduce some of the frictions between people, local groups, rural organisations and levels of government" (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b).

Another commonly held view about local partnership working was that it provided a response to the increasing inter-dependency between some rural activities, as illustrated for example by a statement of the President of Sault Tourism Centre (1998):

We cannot envisage rural development in an area without considering its vocation. The Pays of Sault has a double vocation, agriculture and tourism. Since the two industries have realised they could benefit from each other and that it was not a matter of favouring one activity more than the other but treating them as complementary and developing some co-ordination between them through partnership, we have started to make progress...and profit".

In both case studies, interviewees trusted local partnership working to offer real potential in providing local actors and local people with the possibility to have a 'say' (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a) and "most of all gain a certain 'capacity' in the development of their local area" (Sault Vice Chairman, 1998). The commonly held view amongst interviewees was that to gain this capacity there was a need to be coherently organised and credible, and consequently to present a united front, and plan of action in the local area:

"If you go to the potential funding bodies saying we have got a joint good idea between the council and the other groups in the community, we have been working together to put it together, will you fund me, then there is chance they are going to listen. If it is cohesive, it works and the broader base you have the better it is" (Newent Town Councillor, 1998c)

Another frequent argument supporting local partnership working was the potential of such an approach to allow communication of information, and therefore understanding, between local rural development actors, and also to allow the regulation of the differing agendas, bringing greater confidence and trust (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998):

“The development and the well-being of an area happens through communication, communication between neighbours, between actors, between partners. If you are not understood or not heard, then that is where the problems start. Communication is fundamental. The community of Sault has always been quite withdrawn, and very individualistic. The first stage of the development strategy in Sault has been to install communication through partnership” (Sault Vice Chairman, 1998).

Working in partnership was seen therefore to offer a real potential “to increase familiarity between the different local people and organisations” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b), “to allow transparency and trust” (Pres. Sault Tourism Centre, 1998). It was also suggested that:

“Partnership working provides a means to listen to others and be heard, to integrate well and more rapidly into the local area, and into the local dynamic, just by showing that we want to give but also want to receive and gradually gain the experience to work with others and to work together” (Pres. Shopkeepers Assoc., Interview, Sept. 1998)

ii) Experience in Local Partnership/co-operation

“ Partnerships enable people who have done this sort of thing before” (EA Planning Manager, 1998).

It has emerged from this investigation that previous experience of partnership working, and the relationships previously maintained between the different local development actors, provided those actors with a certain knowledge and understanding, a certain familiarity about partnership working. It has also emerged that local actors are more likely to accept getting involved in partnership when they have prior knowledge about the ‘ins and outs’ of such a practice. This knowledge may have been acquired within the limits of the local actor’s activities or sector or through one-off initiatives. Apart from a couple of exceptions, most interviewees admitted having had experience of co-operation within their own sphere of activity:

“ Personally, and I believe it is the case of most farmers around here, I have gained my partnership experience through my involvement in the different association and co-operatives” (Pres. Agric.Assoc., 1998)

“The development of tourism in the area has consisted in developing relationships, not only with the local actors, farmers, town councillors, the local businesses and craftsmen but with all the tourism centres of the department and neighbouring department. I have been led to work with a variety of people” (Pres. Sault Tourism Centre, 1998)

In the case of Sault, the local elected representatives interviewed admitted that intercommunal experience had been a bonus. They argued that whilst their experience essentially concerned partnership with other elected representatives from other communes, and whilst co-operation was mainly technical, allowing the different municipalities to share their resources for the realisation and the management of public equipment and services, this initial work brought awareness of the virtue of partnership working and constituted an essential foundation of the practice of local partnership in the area:

“If we take the example of some communes that have never given the time or the interest to build a common approach with other communes, or with their local actors, and make the effort to build the structures for it, you realise how difficult it is for them to tackle Albion redevelopment as a group and feel strong and confident about it. But most of all, they really don't know what integration, common agreement, and compromise is all about.” (Pres. CdC-PS, 1998)

Various interviewees in Sault suggested that the creation of the SIVU d'Albion for example has to be seen as “the result a long intercommunal practice, and partnership experiences that had developed between people and territories”(Dir. CBE-PV, 1998).

Alongside the experience gained within each sector, various interviewees argued that the nature of certain early local partnership initiatives also contributed to the development of local actor's knowledge and experience in working in partnership. In the case of Newent, for example, one of the interviewees suggested that the partnership experience gained through the work undertaken for the restoration of the Newent Market House and the creation of sport facilities (see Section 4.7.2) had “constituted a valuable preparation to the following partnership efforts in Newent” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998c).

Similarly, in the case of Sault, the organisation of “*Lavandes en Fête*”, was presented as having constituted, from the outset, “true and valuable partnership experience between local elected representatives, the tourism centre, the farmers, local businesses and craftsmen”(Pres. Sault Tourism Centre, 1998). Moreover, it was believed that the experience gained through the organisation of the fete “certainly gave a good idea to those involved about the pros and cons of such an approach” (Pres. Agric. Assoc., 1998)

Conceptions, opinions, modes of organisation and action, visions and initiatives, knowledge and experiences, very own to the local area, ineluctably form the foundation of the local partnership practice, the way the practice takes place and is likely to operate on the ground. Having considered the significance of the local context, the author now

turns to the exploration of different mechanism and processes involved in local partnership building from the initiation to the structuring of the practice, as identified in the two case studies.

5.3 Catalysts for Initiation

Local socio-economic difficulties, or even the threat of such difficulties, have emerged as an important catalyst in the initiation of partnership and, according to those interviewed the greater the difficulties the stronger the need for partnership. The recourse to local partnership was described as being, in a context of local difficulties, the inevitable recourse for action based on the old saying 'unity is strength', as prompted frequently during the interviews. Without exception, interviewees suggested that local difficulties clearly federate:

"It is, at the same time, sad and reassuring to say this, but problems are the cement of local mobilisation and partnership development. Problems bring a sense of solidarity I suppose" (Pres. SIVU, 1998).

In the case of Sault, local difficulties acted as a real catalyst to local mobilisation and local partnership development. The perspective of the closure of the military base of Albion, for example, "obliged people and actors to get together and work in a completely different way from what had been done before" (Pres. Agric. Assoc. 1998). This 'local crisis', as it was commonly described, emerged as a real trigger for a new way of thinking in the local area. All interviewees argued that difficulties helped people to realise and accept that there was a need for change in local action, that there was a need to take responsibility for development action at local level, and to contribute directly, even modestly, to the future of the local area:

"The challenge of the Albion Redevelopment was to take responsibility for the future of our territory. Without this trigger, I don't think this partnership dynamic would have happened" (Sault Vice Chairman, 1998).

It has also emerged from the case studies that local partnership initiation depends on the dynamism and vision of an individual or several individuals, "gathering around him, her, or them other individuals who have the potential to have that vision but haven't latched on to it at this stage" (Dir. GRCC, 1998). This individual "acts as an engine, an initiator" (Pres. Sault Tourism Centre, 1998), "an initiator who makes the others realise what the group can do" (Newent Town Councillor, 1998c). Hence, in the Newent case, alongside

local problems, acting as a catalyst for partnership, was the vision of one individual, the Mayor of Newent at the time. Indeed, it was often argued that the practice of partnership in Newent “hinged around one individual who wanted this process to work by any means” (Dir. PLS FoD-DC, 1998) and who, by gaining the support of a few other parish councillors, community representatives and external advisors, strongly drove the whole initiative and the partnership practice to develop (RDP Review 1996/97):

“ J. (the mayor of Newent at the time) decided to convince us (parish councillors) and the local community, that we had to work that way. Without him, we would not have entered the process, and would not be where we are now.” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b)

“I wonder if the partnership would have happened without the Mayor’s wider view of the world, that the others did not have. There are a lot of people who put a lot into it but it would not have happened without him “(Eco. Dev. Off. GCC, 1998).

Similar remarks were made in the case of Sault, and some individuals such as the president of the Community of Communes was commonly presented as having played an important and sustained role in bringing about local mobilisation and partnership working.

The individual who acts as a catalyst in the initiation of partnership takes on a rather awkward position. His or her role is the one of a middleman but also a networker, developing links between the different local groups and organisations, making contact with higher level of government, and not taking the risk of missing anyone out. He or she is someone “who proposes, informs and convinces, orients and sometimes even decides, and must be ready to take on the criticisms” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a). His or her role depends strongly on personality and the level of recognition by the other local actors.

Alongside these main catalysts, mainly inherent to the local area, it is possible to find some external catalysts. Amongst these are enabling rural policies and programmes, as well as potential funding (Dir. GRCC, 1998). Hence in the view of some interviewees “the practice of local partnership would not have occurred if it was not for suiting the policy requirements” (Dir. PLS FoD-DC, 1998). It is difficult to assess the extent to which such a statement is verified, but it has emerged that in both case studies policy and programmes acted as a clear catalyst for local partnership development.

Although some interviewees suggested that local partnerships “were being driven by outside forces where they should be organically grown” (Dir. GRCC, 1998) a number of these ‘top down’ programmes, schemes and policy prescriptions proved to be extremely useful in both case study areas. In the case of Newent, for example, there was a consensus around the pragmatic view that the Rural Development Programme and the Rural Challenge scheme had been instruments of tremendous change. The emerging view was that these programmes encouraged the strategic level to weave relationships with local communities:

“Without the Rural Development Programme we (the District) would not have started anything and part of it has been working with the local communities.” (Dir. PLS, FoD, Interview, June 1998)

In addition some programmes gave to local initiatives and local communities the right to and possibility for action, and also provided the technical and the financial incentive. In the case of Newent, the existence of these programmes, schemes and formulas was certainly considered to be very useful:

“In fact participation in the Rural Challenge bidding process has provided us with a very effective means of developing our own community objectives over a whole range of supporting opportunities.” (Extract of correspondence, Newent Mayor, 21st June 1996)

“The RDP certainly encouraged us, for all sort of reasons. The fact that the RDA finally included Newent was a good thing. We can’t dispute the contribution of the RDP in the development of the partnership practice” (Parish Councillor 1, Interview June 1998)

In both Sault and Newent, a commonly held view was that grants and other financial provisions also acted as a primary incentive to partnership development. Forming partnership was a primary condition for entering the Rural Challenge bid in the Newent case study, for example. In the views of Newent’s representatives, the financial reward on this occasion acted as the driving force behind partnership development there:

“I am sure no one would have played the game if it was not to get the money for the different projects, a million pounds...it is very attractive” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b).

Thus, whether a local crisis or local difficulties, the vision and determination of an individual or individuals, top down measures or financial motivations, the evidence suggests that there is a need for a decisive issue to initiate local partnership working.

5.4 Local Partnership Building in Rural Development: an Endogenous Process and a Flexible Local Space

“We have got to produce a climatic condition, within which county, district, town or parish wide, and community partnerships, not only will be encouraged but will be justified and allowed to flourish. Now, if the views of the community aren't listened to, it will fail. From the grass roots, always” (Dir. GRCC, 1998)

“The local partnership practice in rural development defines an action which rests on a variety of partnership initiatives, it is not limited to a specific structure, specific people, or a specific initiative, or even a confined local space. This practice must be set up at the very local level (within the commune), and also at the intercommunal and regional level, and, most importantly, between these different levels. Now if you don't make sure that the practice is grounded at the very local level you are likely to provoke antagonism, opposition and sometimes competition and that is not development” (PACA Dev. Off., Sault, 1998).

These two interview statements illustrate and summarise at one and the same time the commonly held view, in the two case studies, of how local/rural development partnership building and working should to be approached. In the experience of the interviewees, any local partnership efforts with a main purpose to address rural development have to involve the very local level and most of all must be built from there. Any partnership arrangement which does not take account of this, in the light of the evidence, is to likely lack support:

“...a top down partnership, a top-down strategy, a top down vision and approach that no one, at the local level, will really sign up to, that is not local partnership working, it is the work of bureaucracy” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a).

Indeed, the Newent case study provided a clear illustration of this through the particular experience of the Forest of Dean Regeneration Partnership (see section 4.7.2). The aim of this strategic partnership, as stated in the induction report, was “to integrate the different views and establish a compromise between the different ideas and priorities of local communities” (FDRP Regeneration Strategy, 1995, p.1). The experience of those interviewed suggested that this district wide partnership did not have the results that were expected. The Environment Agency Planning Manager, one of the partners, perceived it as an effort reduced to “a lot of talking and not a very productive action on the ground”(EA Planning Manager, 1998). Newent local leaders expressed very eager reactions towards the Forest of Dean Regeneration Partnership, as illustrated by the statement one of Newent Town Councillors:

“ I ought to be fair with the Forest of Dean. They have made a quite successful effort to regenerate the whole area, particularly helping us with funding, but their supposedly strategic partnership decided nothing, was asked to decide nothing, and did nothing. This big partnership was for me a total waste of time” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a).

This district level partnership was accused, by Newent’s representatives, of lacking credibility at the community level and of causing a lot of frustration, particularly when the district wide partnership presented its conclusions about the regeneration plan affecting of Newent. These conclusions created generally a feeling of disagreement and dismissal towards the partnership organisation:

“The author(s) of the section of the partnership regeneration strategy have entered the ring with both fists flailing ‘shambles’, ‘drastic’, ‘dramatic’, ‘pull towards’ and the like which constitute the jargon of the expert leaving the layman frustrated by the rhetoric, and curious as to its intent.”(Extract from correspondence to FRDP, August 1995)

In defence of the Forest of Dean Regeneration Partnership, the Director of Planning and Leisure Services in the Forest of Dean District Council argued that the problem encountered by this district wide partnership organisation was that local actors and people found it difficult to envisage and discuss problems at a strategic level. He proposed that people tended to lose interest very easily, particularly when they do not see things happening on the ground. He also explained that “when the partnership started everybody was invited, and local communities came to the partnership with the attitude that they were there to talk about things that the District Council was or was not doing”(Dir. PLS FoD-DC, 1998). He also recalled that in parallel with the district wide partnership, the Forest of Dean District Council attempted to generate, in the district, four area groups based on the local market towns. The idea was to create an opportunity for the small parishes and the market town to work cohesively and develop a certain impact. The Newent Town Council turned the idea down, at the time.

A commonly held view was that Newent Town Council and community representatives, at the time of the Forest of Dean Regeneration strategy partnership ,“did not present a united front or possess a united strategy, which it was possible to share and represent within the district level partnership” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b). In addition, the creation of a regeneration partnership at district level happened “maybe too early for Newent and the lack of support from Newent was mainly due to a lack of experience and misunderstanding” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a). In a meeting held between the four market towns of the Forest, early 1999, the different town representatives expressed

a strong preference for a bottom up approach to local partnership development. This preference was founded on the belief that the local community has the best understanding of their local area and should take direct responsibility for their affairs and must be organised to carry out local schemes. Another commonly held view was that top-down inputs should consist of support, including funding and expert guidance. Top-down support and expertise should not be imposed but should enable development actors to act upon the development of their area (Meeting 19th January 1998).

Similar remarks were made in the Sault case study, defending the importance of grass-root partnership arrangements instead of 'out of reach' ones. However interviewees in the Sault case suggested that another scenario to avoid is to limit the partnership practice to the very local level/community level:

There is a need to think further. If not it results in an "en famille" partnership practice and that defeats the object. Setting up a development strategy does not mean getting together to get some funding to mend what does not work within the narrow limit of a commune. It means for the commune to position itself within its wider environment, and work in partnership with this wider environment" (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998).

It is within this perspective that in Sault the local partnership practice was led to develop at different levels: the communal level, the intercommunal level, the local catchment area level, and the supra communal level (for example the SIVU of Albion). Echoing most interviewees' remarks, the Sault Vice Chairman suggested that "for more coherence and effectiveness, rural development and development in general requires the creation of a 'community zone' in which the partnership develops. This zone varies depending on what needs to be tackled. Hence, this 'community zone' can be communal or supra communal, departmental, regional, inter-territorial, it all depends on the sort of development that is needed" (Sault Vice Chairman, 1998).

In the Newent case, the local partnership practice remained confined within the boundaries of the parish until the end of the study period, when various contacts were made with the other market towns of the Forest to work on the issue of tourism. Only then, and with a commonly identified purpose, Newent representatives started to see the advantage of broadening the practice to more flexible territorial space.

Therefore, the two local partnership experiences under scrutiny suggest that local partnership practice in rural development needs to be built from the very local level. They also suggest that, the purpose of rural development ultimately led the practice to

broaden and evolve within a flexible local space, involving various territorial levels. In this respect this section concludes with the following statement:

“The most important thing is to create a structure that bring partners together, and to which everyone can identify and that is pertinent with the scale on which the strategy is or needs to be undertaken” (Pres. SIVU, 1998)

The practice of local partnership has therefore emerged in the two study areas as a practice that rests on a variety of structures and is likely to evolve at different territorial levels, but requires building from the local community upwards.

It has also emerged that local partnership building is a process that requires a broad mobilisation of local/rural development actors and stakeholders.

5.5 A Comprehensive Mobilisation of Local/Rural Development actors/stakeholders

“Development in rural areas requires advanced planning and a comprehensive mobilisation and involvement of all local actors” (Mayor of Sault, 1998)

The principal idea behind the promotion of the local partnership practice for addressing rural development lay, in both case study areas, on the need to integrate the whole of the various dimensions and variables tied to development action. The principal aim was to accommodate diversity and to trigger a sense of action and responsibility. In both case studies this required the mobilisation of a wide range of individuals and/or organisations. Thus this emerged, in both case studies, as a fundamental issue. In the experience of the interviewees this issue had to be carefully considered throughout local partnership development, and required regular re-examination throughout the local partnership evolution.

In answer to a question enquiring about which individuals and/or organisations were concerned by such mobilisation, the common response from interviewees was that it depended greatly on the issue and on the initiative. Consequently, interviewees argued that those most likely to be concerned were those who were directly affected by a particular issue, as well as those who potentially offered the necessary expertise and support (technical or financial).

A common claim, however, was that the issue of development must be regarded as an issue in which everyone has a stake and which consequently calls for a comprehensive mobilisation of local actors to join forces, as illustrated by the following comments:

“I can see the necessity in working in partnership as I feel that I own a little bit of the community and its future and so does everybody else” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a).

“Tackling development is recognising that every one of us has an impact on the development of our area, that every one of us is an actor of the development that we want and that we need. But not every one of us individually, every one of us inter-dependently. Development in rural areas requires the use of all the available expertise in the area, around and outside this area... and I can't see it happening without getting the whole of the actors to work in partnership” (Pres.CdC-PS, 1998).

The call for a comprehensive mobilisation of all sectors and group of interests was identified in most strategic reports in relation to local/rural development initiatives, actions and other development plans, as for example:

“... the research, investigation and preparation of a workable proposal for a local regeneration strategy requires a partnership with various bodies that are able to provide (or secure provision of) competent experts” (Newent Regeneration Plan, 1995; summary)

In the view of most interviewees the justification for the promotion of a comprehensive mobilisation lies essentially “in the need to develop local actors responsibility in relation to the different initiatives and actions affecting the present and future of the local area” (PACA Dev. Off., 1998). This does not ultimately imply the assignment of formal and permanent roles. Rather, it implies giving an equal opportunity to all local/rural development actors, including local people, to be aware and take part in the discussions and the decisions in relation to the development of the local area, even if indirectly:

“If you make the effort to inform people, to make them feel involved, even indirectly, then you can be nearly sure that at least your message and your action will be understood and well perceived, sometimes even supported”. (Sault Vice Chairman, 1998)

“The whole idea is to make people feel part of and responsible for local action, to create real adhesion around the issue of development” (SIVU Proj. Man. 1998).

Another common argument given in respect of a comprehensive mobilisation was the need to avoid reactions that might hinder development. In the experience of those interviewed “the local partnership practice must not be used as a means to exclusion”

(PACA Dev. Off., 1998) as “anyone that is not included will react against” (Pres. SIVU, 1998).

In the experience of the interviewees, it is generally the key ‘local leaders’ that call for such mobilisation, including democratically elected representatives and key representatives of local groups and organisations. However, the evidence derived from both case studies indicates that local authority officers as well as development experts also played an important part in the practice

Efforts of mobilisation in both case studies consisted of the use of methods of consultation. These methods, in both cases, comprised public meetings, community workshops, and questionnaires. In the case of Sault, for example, after a relatively well orchestrated campaign of information through the local papers and through postal information, regular public meetings were held to allow local actors and local people to share their views. These meetings were set up in each of the communes of the Community of Communes (Extract from the ‘Bulletin CdC-PS’, 1996):

“We decided to appraise the views of the community, to define the common needs and evaluate the potential projects before deciding which projects would become part of the development programme for the area” (Mayor of Sault, Interview, Sept. 1998).

During these initial meetings some main axes of development were identified and further work was undertaken through thematic local development commissions. These thematic commissions were organised under the aegis of each individual municipality and the Community of Communes. Meetings were convened to open up discussions between local elected representatives and key local actors including local groups' representatives and members of the general public. As part of the work on Albion Redevelopment the SIVU d'Albion set up 'Economic and Social Conferences'. Again these conferences were open to various active associations and groups, the general public and the local elected representatives. They were organised to inform and to open the debate on the restructuring of the local economy and the issue of local development in general towards the preparation of the 'Contract of Territory' (Extract from ‘Lettre du SIVU d'Albion, June 1998, p. 5).

In the Newent case, documentary evidence shows that at the outset of the practice, at the time of ‘Newent-Our-Future’ and ‘the Rural Challenge Bid’, public meetings were held.

Very little transpired from the available files about these meetings; however one of the town councillors interviewed shared her experience about it:

“We had several meetings. One very good meeting though, with a big turn out, was when we divided people into groups, and each group had to discuss the various elements of what was wanted or suggested. One group was not particularly showing much interest because it was chaired by a councillor who was inclined to be not the sort the person listening to anybody but himself. Therefore we had different benefits from different groups, depending on how good the chair was really” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b).

Documentary evidence has indicated that at the time of the Newent Rural Challenge Bid, postal questionnaires were sent to the main local groups and organisations in order to define what the different expectations and comments regarding the development of the local area were, and how they intended to work towards them. Out of 68 organisations 24 replied, providing comment about their expectations.

All interviewees from both case studies have suggested that the best means of comprehensive mobilisation and local partnership building is the provision and sharing of ‘information’. Repeatedly, interviewees have emphasised the importance to “make the general public aware and make the objectives and scope of any development issues and initiatives clear” (SIVU Proj. Man.1998) - a view echoed by the Economic Development Officer of the Gloucestershire County Council during her interview in the summer 1998:

“In 1994, when we designated the RDA, the county council gave me the responsibility for publicising the extension of the area, and the money available etc... Then we thought we would have a series of public meetings in the evenings, across two weeks, geographically spread out, in five places, a very short presentation of key people and then a general discussion. The amount of people who came (we just put an advert in the local paper), was absolutely phenomenal. What we were saying was, you are part of the rural development area, there is money available, community groups come along and meet all the relevant people, and what it did is it raised awareness and more talking in a very friendly atmosphere”.

In the case of Sault, information on the different actions undertaken and to be undertaken in the area were communicated on a regular basis through the 'Bulletin de la Communauté de Communes du Pays de Sault' and the 'Letter du SIVU d' Albion' as well as through the local paper. In the case of Newent, although a newsletter had been considered, the lack of time and resources made it impossible. However “regular updates were given to the public and the other actors through the newspaper and a few talks in the Parish magazines” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a).

Various interviewees, in both case studies, suggested that the difficulties in getting local actors to 'join forces' around rural development action were, in part, due to insufficient information being made available and, hence, a lack of understanding about the issues, the possibilities and the conditions of such an action. SIVU d'Albion Project Manager comments:

"The problem is that efforts of mobilisation are too often sporadic. The efforts of consultation are neither sufficient, nor persevering enough. Plus there is not enough information about all this. For example, I am not sure that the elected representatives as they are the key leaders really, have found the means to explain, justify the action, and most of all keep everyone mobilised. The elected representatives know why some procedures are slow, why it can be frustrating sometimes, but some local actors don't most of the time. The whole approach is never explained, and not surprisingly this creates tension, and slows things down." (SIVU, Proj. Man., Interview, Sept.1998).

However, others interviewees shared a rather pessimistic outlook on the scope for comprehensive mobilisation. They expressed concern about the capacity of some local actors and people to get interested for any other reasons than to stop a process, or once mobilised, for those actors to persist in taking part in local action:

"The problem is that in the majority of cases, local actors and citizens only feel responsible to a certain extent and yes, of course, it is the elected representatives that end up leading the show, mainly because there are those who end up dealing with the problems". (...) Most local actors come up with ideas and projects but don't want to know about the different procedures and negotiations that these projects have to go through. You know it is easier to complain than to keep motivated" (PACA Dev. Off. Interview, 1998).

"You must understand that for most people taking action means to receive and not to give" (Newent Town Councillor, 1998c)

"Some people get involved without being asked, some need to be solicited. From my experience, in Sault, the level of mobilisation remains insufficient, and too often implicit. If you don't clearly say 'we need you, we are going to do this or that, what is your opinion? People do not think about taking action or getting involved". (Dir. Tourism Off., Interview, Sept. 1998)

A common reaction among interviewees was that the mobilisation of local/rural development actors and stakeholders ultimately depended on an idea, a project or a plan capable of crystallising a wide range of interests. In their experience some people have difficulty to work from scratch, they need a plan to comment on or sign up to and a plan they are ready to pursue:

“You’ve got to win people over, and show them, give them a representation of what it implies, and what it is going to look like, what it is going to be like” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a)

However, as presented in the next section, central to local partnership building and partnership working is preparing ‘the plan’ together. This requires the mobilisation of local ideas, projects and expertise with a view to reaching consensus and defining a collective strategy of development for the local area.

5.6 The Definition of a Collective Strategy of Development

“The whole practice of local/rural development partnership depends on the strategy, on the common ‘plan’ for the local area. It is this very plan that defines, what to do and where to do it, who is likely to be involved and who to involve, and ultimately how to get organised, how the local partnership has to be organised. What is interesting about the partnership approach is that local actors in accepting to take part in rural development action, in becoming therefore partners of this action, take a responsibility, first to define a plan for the area and second to achieve it. They can’t go complaining about what should be done or not, they have no other choice but to take a direct action and address what needs to be addressed. What is also interesting about partnership is that there are some actors, some people and territories that have absolutely no idea about what their plan might be” (Pres. SIVU, 1998).

The examination of documentary and interview evidence has revealed that one of the principal aims in calling for the development of partnership working in the two case studies was that of producing a set of commonly agreed development goals and defining a series of actions/initiatives in keeping with such goals. Both the strategy and the ensuing actions were described by interviewees as the ‘cornerstone of mobilisation’, mobilisation of actors and stakeholders, and also mobilisation of funding. Indeed, a common remark was that “the strategy and the initiatives are what are going to be recognised, and are likely to determine which actors are to be involved” (Mayor of Sault, 1998). It was also, in the experience of those interviewed, the strategy and initiatives that are important in the eyes of the funding bodies.

Various interviewees have warned against “pursuing unachievable purpose and goals” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). In their experience, the partnership’s strategy and initiatives should “be realisable in the eyes of the population and the different actors involved” (Dir. GRCC, 1998). They should be “possible to manage” (EA Planning Manager, 1998) and, to avoid any worries and damage to coalition building, “the strategy should not be too ‘up front’” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b):

“ You have to be careful not to raise more than you can manage, as well as being too up front. People want to follow and change can be worrying” (EA Planning Manager, 1998).

In the experience of those interviewed, the determination of a collective strategy requires the mobilisation of local/rural development actors and stakeholders' ideas and views about the future of the local area, as well as their expertise in the implementation of such ideas. All interviewees, in both case studies, argued that, in this perspective, the first step should be “to establish a dialogue between local actors, to discuss the different difficulties and problems, to make a diagnosis of the local needs” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). Interviewees have argued that during discussion amongst local actors consideration should be given to how the replication of actions can be avoided, and how to address the future of the local area ‘strategically’. Thinking strategically is certainly one of the biggest challenges, and an issue often presented as “one of the biggest negators of real partnership working” mainly because “the priorities never accord universally across the whole of the local area” (Dir. GRCC, 1998).

Therefore “the whole point in defining a local rural development strategy in partnership is not piling up individual partners' projects expecting it will please everybody” (PACA Dev. Off. Interview, 1998), but “to get the ideas, the good ideas that all people can sign up to, before you start defining what is going to be done” (EA Planning Manager, 1998):

“It might start with clearing the village pond, and then comes the realisation that it is a great facility. How can this best be used, tourism, why not tourism...If we have more tourists, it is money in our shops, restaurants, hotels. It is important to start with something.” (Dir. GRCC, 1998).

In the Newent case study, at the time of ‘Newent-our-Future’ focus was essentially on examining the different aspects of development that needed to be considered in a potential regeneration strategy. The Community Development Committee provided a first plan of action and a series of potential projects. The document reporting the work of this committee indicated that the different members of the committee, in designing the strategy, debated a number of issues related to the local economy, employment, education, social welfare, housing, environment, crime, infrastructure and tourism. It also indicated that it was particularly on tourism that consensus was achieved, an issue that seemed to unite a wide number of interests. The consensus was based on the perception that tourism would bring direct benefits to the retail sector, and hence employment, as the town already had the foundation of tourist attraction and therefore implementation could be relatively quick. Indeed, the promotion of tourism was not considered as detrimental

to the local environment, and in some respects environmental benefits were envisaged (Newent-Our- Future, 1995; summary and pp. 9-11).

The experience of many interviewees has indicated that central to local partnership building and working is the need to build consensus. Interviewees considered consensus building as a long process, and some argued that it “happens only when the people involved have the same concerns, share the same reality, and are ready to agree on the same strategy” (Dir. House of Env.,1998):

“Development requires a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of an area, working in partnership therefore implies the different partners working on the basis of the same knowledge, knowledge that each of us is ready to receive and to contribute.”(Pres.CdC-PS, 1998).

Some interviewees have argued that the issue of ‘rural development’ performed a unifying function, which clearly helped in developing partnership. However in the view of the President of the SIVU d’Albion, “there remains the need to find ‘the’ kind of development that is going to unite”(Pres. SIVU, 1998). Indeed whilst ‘rural development’ is a unifying issue, learning to work in concert and to commonly agree or make decisions upon rural development action remained a tremendous task:

“ the difficulty starts as early as deciding the place for organising a demonstration, I remember, at the beginning we could not even find a common agreement on that.” (Pres. SIVU, 1998)

In the experience of most interviewees, one of the main difficulties in trying to develop consensus was that “people expect to have their own problems solved before anyone else’s and are not concerned with what concerns the area as a whole. People have a natural tendency to stick to their own conceptions of what development means for them. And that is the defence of personal interests” (Pres. Agric. Assoc. 1998). Consensus building, therefore, involves assembly of the different perceptions and opinions, to assess the different needs and expectations, to choose amongst new and ‘dusted off’ projects and from all this establish an agreed strategy (Dir. GRCC and Newent Town Councillor, 1998a):

“There are always the projects that have been waiting in the drawer, the unrealisable project, which does not fit in with any strategy, but coming out of the drawer is sometimes the project that the community always waited for” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998)

It emerged from the two case studies that a lack of experience and time, over indulgence, or even attempts to accommodate all parties, has distracted focus from the action to be undertaken and culminated in the production of objectives that are either too broad or too narrow. In Newent, for example, at the time of the Rural Challenge Bid, the attraction of the potential funding of a million pounds culminated, for some interviewees, in a strategy proposing a variety of actions that were not complementary enough:

“It was a bit bitty, there was no feeling of wholeness to it. We did not manage to define our grand plan” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b)

In the experience of the interviewees building consensus required the co-ordination and integration of varying views and ideas. Interviewees felt that differing conceptions must be harmonised and, amongst personal interests, the collective interests that help to define a collective strategy must be found:

“When there are too many people involved, it is difficult to reach consensus, and therefore any coherent and pragmatic decision and solution. You need a balance. It is important to establish a system where you always allow people to share their point of view and objectives bearing in mind that the decision will only be a compromise between the different ambitions. (Dir. Tourism Off., Interview, Sept. 1998)

In the case of Sault, building consensus was described as “having gradually become more complex as the scale of local partnership was expanding and the diversity of actors and conceptions grew” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). However “numerous attempts were made to co-ordinate and integrate personal interests into collective objectives” (Pres.CdC-PS, 1998). The creation of the thematic local development commissions, for example, “helped in defining a common vision between the different actors involved for the future of the area and in bringing out concrete proposals and orientations on the basis of which actions in each commune could be defined” (extract from the ‘Bulletin CdC-PS’, 1996, p. 2). Similar methods were used at the time of Albion redevelopment, “a series of main orientations were defined and, from there, each commune and the Community of Communes part of the coalition had to come with projects matching these orientations”(SIVU Proj. Man.1998).

Finally, alongside the need to build consensus, in the views of the interviewees the definition of a collective strategy of development requires the establishment of orientations and actions to be undertaken in the short term, the medium term and the long term:

“ I think that one of the problems is short time planning. I think that local partnerships should work in trying to get together a 3 to 5 year plan, where people have got projects, can talk them through, gather the funding. Now if by chance there is funding available...bingo, and you keep looking forward always focussing on what can be done next” (EA Planning Manager, 1998).

5.7 Structuring the Practice of Local Partnership

“Local partnerships rest on temporary structures from which everyone is gaining a permanent culture” (Sault Vice Chairman, 1998).

The research has indicated that the establishment of the local partnership practice invariably happened through a set of both formal and informal interactions between different local organisations and actors. It was partly the result of an implicit agreement between local organisations and actors, as was the case in Newent, until the creation of the Newent Millennium Trust:

“ To be fair, local partnership working, in Newent, has consisted, mainly, of an agglomeration of groups and structures already working at their level on various development issues in the local area, very much informal though, and short term experiences” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998c)

In the Sault case study, the practice of local partnership rested on a variety of partnership structures, for example the House of Environment and Hunting, the CBE, the Community of Communes, the SIVU, APT-initiative-ALBION.

Whether informal or structured, amongst the interviewees there was a consensus around the view that the practice of local partnership requires a minimum of organisation, or structuring, to “order, arrange, the whole of the existing structures, organisations and actors within the same dynamic” (Sault Vice Chairman, 1998). Various interviewees have suggested that a good means to organise partnership is the creation of one or several structures. However, they argued that the creation of a structure should always be considered very carefully as “a new structure might appear as a threat or a constraint” (Dir. GRCC, 1998).

The President of the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault claimed that “when the creation of a partnership structure is considered it is important to know that a structure does not create the coalition, quite the opposite. In fact it is the coalition that creates the structure, things can’t be forced, particularly people. The structure will

emerge if it is necessary”(Pres. CdC-PS, 1998). Supporting similar views, the Sault Vice-Chairman (1998) insisted that “local partnership working is a dynamic, a culture, before being a structure, and the structure comes last”. In the Newent case study, the Director of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (1998) supported this view, arguing that “before considering the creation of a specific structure, it is important to create an environment within which collaborative working is allowed to take place”.

In the view and experience of the interviewees, when considering the creation of a structure, “there should be some guarantee that the structure means something in the eyes of the public sector, of the local actors, and of local people. In this structure the sense of solidarity must be very strong. If a decision is taken this decision must be mutual” (Pres. SIVU, 1998). Moreover it has also been suggested that “the partnership structure should be recognised and act as a representative structure, a sort of a spokesperson for the local area, and there should not be too many of these structures” (PACA Dev. Off., 1998).

In the case of Newent, the organisation of the partnership practice happened through different phases and appeared as a long and obstructed process. The practice emerged first as a set of informal arrangements. At the time of Newent-Our-Future, the creation of partnership structure had been considered with the intention to establish a Community Development Trust:

‘ A best means of bringing together organisations (or partners) to develop a broad regeneration strategy is a Community Development Trust. This can be a Company Limited by Guarantee with Charitable status and will determine the strategy. ’ (Newent-Our-Future, 1995; summary)

Although the Newent Town Council accepted the idea of some partnership arrangement to serve the purpose of the regeneration strategy, it refused the creation, and even the idea, of a Development Trust, but the idea emerged again at the time of the County Rural Challenge Bid:

“The partnership has determined that, to carry out the work of this programme, the Newent Community Trust will be established.” (Newent Partnership County Rural Challenge Bid, June 1996, p. 1)

The Forest of Dean District Council discouraged the creation of such a structure. The advice of the District was that:

“the practice in other areas throughout the country has shown that it takes some time to establish a Community Development Trust and that in the interim it may be appropriate

to develop a more informal partnership to progress the strategy” (FoD-DC comments, 9/05/1996, p. 2).

When the Rural Challenge Bid failed, Newent Town Council again rejected the idea of a Community Development Trust. The partnership practice remained confined to a minimum arrangement, and was strongly led by the Town Council. During the period between the Rural Challenge Bid and the funding application presented to the Rural Development Commission as part of the RDP scheme, the local partnership practice was reduced to the narrowest arrangement. Indeed, the Newent Town Council opted for a light structure, a partnership comprising “a sub-committee composed of seven Councillors and 3 co-opted members, however co-opted when appropriate” (Minutes of NTC Meeting, 24/06/96).

When Newent Tourism Stage 1 was first considered the question relating to the type and structure of the partnership arrangement led to some discussion and the creation of a trust was again proposed. Newent town council was again confronted by the idea of forming a specific arrangement, differing from the Council normal mode of operation. The idea behind the creation of a specific partnership structure was that it satisfied conditions that must be met in order to access various external funding. The continuity of partnership working was also considered as an important issue and concerns were raised about opting for an arrangement mainly run by the Newent Town Council, as the practice was likely to be threatened by the end of any term of office.

Despite these efforts the final decision was that the Newent Town Council would run the partnership with the help of co-opted members and other groups considered as appropriate (Minutes of NTC Meeting, 25/07/96). However, although the Council wished to keep a firm hand on developments, the compromise was that the structure of partnership operation would differ from the council’s normal operation:

“The partnership will act on a day to day basis akin to a non profit Trust. It will be instrumental in raising finance for its operations, for management, and administration, for employing consultants, for executing projects, for co-operating with other authorities and organisations. However it will remain accountable to the Council for its actions and financial control within the brief it is given.”(Abstract of Letter to All Councillors, 5 August 1996)

Thus the very first attempt to give a formal structure to the development-based partnership happened with the creation of the Newent Millennium Trust. This Trust, a non profit-making organisation, was established and set up for an indefinite length of

time. The organisation gave a structure for co-ordinating a series of selected projects and others to come later.

In the case of Sault, the development of the local partnership practice rested on different structures at different territorial levels. For example, the structure of the CBE-PV “federated the local elected representatives but also the private sector representatives and trade unionists” (Pres.CdC-PS, 1998). It was described as “a dynamic and attractive structure, mainly managed by young people, which was inviting to entrepreneurs, and did not give that ‘old image’ the local elected representatives seem to give”(Mayor of Sault, 1998). This structure was also considered to have “ the advantage of being available at any time, and to provide a machinery for meetings, to work down on the ground with people, to give rise to new reflection in relation to the area and allow action where elected representatives or entrepreneurs did not have much time” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). It was argued that CBE-PV played a significant role in providing a neutral ground for the local elected representatives and entrepreneurs to meet and co-ordinate their ideas and objectives and become partners instead of conflicting actors as was the case before its creation (Mayor of Sault, 1998).

The Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault was also an important partnership structure. This structure “appeared immediately as a coherent and interesting structure, a tool that was perfectly adapted to local needs, in terms of management and development, a structure that was centralising collective projects whilst leaving to each commune member all their individuality” (Mayor of Sault, 1998).

At the time of Albion redevelopment, “although there were already a number of partnership structures in place, all aiming to contribute at their own level to this action, everyone felt that there was a great need to establish co-ordination between these various structures. There was also a need to co-ordinate the different territories concerned, the various actors, ideas, projects and actions. The need for such coordination resulted in the creation of the SIVU” (SIVU Proj. Man.1998). The creation of the SIVU d’Albion, and the methods used by this structure, were immediately welcomed at the local level. Although the Community of Communes and the CBE-PV were strong and reliable structures, the dynamic of Albion redevelopment, affecting a rather large area, “positioned actors and structures in front of orientations and an area that they weren’t prepared and organised for” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). This initiative brought together a diversity of local actors, “all prepared to take action, but often individually” (SIVU Proj.

Man.1998). The challenge was therefore to co-ordinate the different actions and relationships in the area and this could not have happened without an overall structure:

“The problem with all these structures is that they all mean well, but they are ultimately concerned with the maintenance of their existence, and therefore to fight for resources. This means that often we are too many trying to achieve the same thing. With the SIVU we have tried to bring the urgency forward and stopped for a while that kind of attitude, but after that! Ideally the concept of the ‘Pays’ will be to re-install a certain coherence in who does what.” (Pres. SIVU, Sept.1998)

The SIVU d’Albion Project Manager (1998) admitted that for some funding institutions it was often difficult to understand which structure did what in the local area. As a result funding institutions were often confronted with having to refuse funding, “just because the same area was run by a multitude of structures all working towards development, all with their own projects, with hardly any interaction between them”. The creation of the SIVU d’Albion was clearly welcomed at both regional and European levels. The representative of the Region Provence Alpes Côtes d’Azur, for example, argued that both the Region and Europe found in this structure a unique ‘spokesperson’ for the area. He also described the SIVU as a useful structure “able to co-ordinate into a strategic plan of action the different projects that had been prepared by the local actors, a plan that was unanimously agreed before being sent off for funding”. Finally he argued that the SIVU had the “ultimate advantage to have brought coherence to both orientations and objectives of development in the area, giving a credibility to local action” (PACA Dev. Off., 1998). All interviewees put forward a similar argument and suggested that the challenge of the ‘Albion redevelopment’ made the various local/rural actors realise the importance of getting “some clarity and homogeneity into the local institutional and structural framework to avoid fragmentation and division in the area” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998).

As a means of organising further the practice of local partnership, some interviewees believed that the creation of a Pays was “the ultimate hope of bringing this coherence in the area, providing a coherent environment” (Pres. SIVU, 1998). The only concern at the time was the definition of the boundaries of such ‘environment’ to allow flexibility and effectiveness whilst not making it too big and unsuitable. Indeed the negotiation about the creation of a ‘Pays’ caused some concerns as to whether or not, for example, the Pays should be formed around an urban centre or not. Concerns were raised about creating an environment in which rural needs and identity would be ultimately at risk, and where both the identity and vocation of the area of Pays of Sault could be in real danger of

being supplanted by a wider and unsuitable identity and vocation (Bulletin CdC-PS', 1998, pp. 2-3).

5.8 Conclusion

This examination of local partnership building has revealed that the process of local partnership is a process shaped from the outset by the local context. Seven main contextual variables have been identified, each having an influence on the way the practice of local rural development partnership is initiated and progresses. These include the sense of local collective identity and local ownership, local rural conceptions and values, local governance, local networks, local conflicts, local activism and local conceptions of partnership working as well as past experience in cooperative working. The evidence derived from the two case studies has also suggested that the initiation of the practice of local partnership depends on a number of catalysts. Catalysts that have been identified in this investigation include local difficulties, the vision of one individual, the policy framework and available funding.

The empirical evidence emphasises that essential to local partnership building is a true local mobilisation: the mobilisation of individuals and organisations; of a flexible local space; of local resources, ideas and projects; as well as of existing structures and organisations. The evidence further suggests that the process of local partnership building requires an endogenous approach and the definition of a collective strategy. Such definition requires the establishment of a diagnosis of local problems and needs, and consensus building. Finally the process of local partnership building involves a minimum of organisation and structuring of the partnership practice. In this respect, when the creation of a partnership structure is considered, such consideration must appreciate that structure *per se* does not create the coalition.

In the next chapter the author shifts the focus to local partnership operation. As explained in section 5.1, this is because the phase of local partnership formation and local partnership operation may strongly coexist, but each phase nevertheless covers a set of issues, which merits separate consideration.

CHAPTER 6. LOCAL PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT: THE EXAMPLES OF NEWENT AND SAULT

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with local partnership operation. In that regards, the author's empirical examination of the practice of local partnership in both study areas revealed a number of important issues characterising local partnership working. Hence, the evidence derived from both case studies indicates that the operation of local partnership involves a change from 'actor' to 'partner', and thereby raises issues of representation and role as considered in section 6.2. The empirical evidence also emphasises that essential to local partnership operation are meetings between partners (section 6.3), a variety of management activities (section 6.4), the agreement on a set of projects and actions (section 6.5) and the securing of funding (section 6.6). Finally the evidence reveals a number of constraints and difficulties associated with local partnership operation (section 6.7). These issues are now explored in turn.

6.2 Being a Partner

"The successful partnerships seem to be the ones that recognise that everyone, every actor has a role to play. This can be expertise, knowledge, money, decision, ideas, there are lots of ways to how you can be a partner" (Econ. Dev. Off. GCC, 1998a)

Beyond the various efforts of mobilisation, aimed at raising awareness and prompting involvement, is the clear engagement of a number of local rural actors to become partners in the same action: the development of the local area. There was a consensus amongst interviewees around the pragmatic view that the enrolment of partners into the practice of local partnership, "stands to reason" (Pres. CdC-PS, 1998), "relies on the existing networks of actors" (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998) and most of all "depends on availability and goodwill" (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a):

"Well, I would not say we are spoiled for choice, so anyone that shows interest is welcome in the process, lets say that at the local level we kind of know who is likely to be concerned and therefore we know who to involve" (Mayor of Sault, 1998)

In the Newent case for example, various interviewees admitted that the enrolment of some partners into the practice partly happened by chance. For example, the Environment Agency Planning Manager, also a resident of Newent, got to know that part

of Newent's regeneration strategy were a number of environmental enhancement actions including the regeneration of the lake. Believing that he could help through the Environmental Agency, he decided to take an active part in the partnership.

In both case studies, various interviewees have suggested that the nature and extent of partner involvement depend primarily on the issue and the initiative, as well as on the openness of the partnership arrangement. Interviewees have also suggested that the extent of partner enrolment and involvement was highly dependent on the benefits that partners hoped to derive from such a venture. If the expected benefits do not materialise, or the efforts spent remain unrewarded, some partner involvement is put at risk, as illustrated, for example, by the comment of the President of the Association of Sault Local Businesses (1998):

“ As far as I am concerned the SIVU d'Albion is a farce. We all played the game for this Albion redevelopment, we got organised, and we all came out with really good projects, admirable work, as far as I am concerned, but we are still waiting for the money, and the SIVU included. The creation of that structure did not make the slightest bit of difference. I feel that I have wasted my time, we have all wasted our time. So I am not going to the meetings again, what is the point!”

As for the membership of the Newent and Sault partnerships, the author found it very difficult to draw up an exhaustive and clear list of the partners involved. This was due to the often informal character of the partnership relationship, to the different levels of contribution of the partners involved and to the plural interests held by some of the partners. Indeed it was possible to find that a local councillor, directly associated with the public sector and expected to represent this sector, was also a local entrepreneur willing to support the private sector view. Therefore it is difficult to make a clear distinction between the interests represented by individual partners. The examination of minutes from meetings, strategy reports and the accounts of the interviewees suggested that primarily it is representatives of key local and rural organisations that were the active partners in each of the case studies. Yet the interviewees indicated that these only represented some of the actors drawn into the partnership. Consequently, the table provided below is not a complete and unambiguous account of the partners involved in the two case studies and should be seen only as an attempt to illustrate the range of interests that were represented or at least present in the local partnerships under consideration in the empirical research.

Table 6-1 A possible categorisation of the partners involved in the local partnerships in Newent (N) and Sault (S)

Public Interests	Regional and Local Government Agencies	N	Countryside Agency and Environment Agency, Forestry Commission	
		S	Chambre de L'agriculture, la Chambre des Metiers, Délégation à l'Aménagement du Territoire, Le Parc du Luberon	
	Regional and Local Government Authorities	N	Gloucestershire County Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Newent Town Council	
		S	Région PACA; Département du Vaucluse, de la Drôme et des Alpes de Hautes Provence, Communauté de Communes du Pays de Sault, du Pays d'Apt; Sous-Préfecture D'Apt et de Carpentras, Syndicats intercommunaux.	
	Public Services	N	Local Schools and University, Health Service, Gloucestershire County Highway, Youth and Community Services, Constabulary, Library, art and museum services; Cheltenham and District Housing association;	
		S	Direction Departementale de l'Equipement, Comité Departemental du Tourism de Vaucluse; Programme Local de l'Habitat, Comité Departemental de l'Habitat Rural	
	Political Figures	N	Members of Parliament	
		S	Députés du Parlement, Ministre de l'Interieur, Ministre aux Affaires Europeenes, Ministre de la Justice.	
	Private Interests	Agricultural Sector	N/S	Farmers and local Cooperatives
		Private Companies	N/S	Local Businesses, Local Radio and Newspaper
Financial Sector		N/S	Banks and agricultural mutual saving banks	
Private Sector Associations		N	Chamber of Trade and Commerce	
		S	Association des commerçants du Pays de Sault, Comité de Bassin d'Emploi, Apt Initiative Albion, Groupement Commercial D'Apt;	
Voluntary, Community and Individual Interests	Regional and Local Associations	N	Gloucestershire Rural Community Council; Civic Society, Memorial Halls, Allotment Association; Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust; Rotary Club, Sport Centre	
		S	La Maison de L'Environnement et de la Chasse, L'office du Tourisme du Pays de Sault	
	Pressure or Interests Groups	N	Sport Union, St Mary Anglican Methodist Church	
		S	Federation de la Chasse, Association des Jeunes Agriculteurs, Association Agricole, L'association de Défence	
	Individual people or informal Groups	N	Nuclear waste consultant, driving instructor, baker, ex RAF, senior executive Whitbread, teachers, journalist, solicitor, accountant, engineering executive etc...	
		S	Professeurs d'Ecole et de College, notaire, restaurateur etc...	

Whilst this table suggests, and interviewees acknowledged, the involvement of a wide variety of partners in the local partnerships, concerns were still raised by interviewees about the level of representation thereby achieved as considered in the following section.

6.2.1 A Representative Partnership

A commonly held view amongst interviewees was that aiming for a representative practice poses a number of challenges. The first challenge is “to achieve a balance between the different representatives, particularly when this problem is ‘development’” (Dir. GRCC, 1998). A second challenge is to make sure that it is a sufficiently representative partnership without making an overly big, and therefore an unreal, partnership practice:

“I tend to take an active view on partnership, they have to be small and fast and not too heavy. I think it is more a matter of creating the right balance (...), but I think, after some practice, and if I was to start again I would think about a greater number of people, allowing a broader representation” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a).

In the two case studies local elected representatives have emerged as the partners ‘par excellence’, possibly because of their official representative role in the local community and indeed outside the local community. Some interviewees felt that the central involvement of local elected representatives was based on the attitude that “in the local community, the needs and interests are clear and known, ones’ interests are the other’s interests, and therefore elected members are well placed to know what it is necessary to be done” (Mayor of Sault, 1998). For most interviewees the central involvement of local councillors was not disputed, however the commonly held view was that “local councillors have great difficulties to let go” (SIVU Proj. Man. 1998), preventing a broader representation of local views in the partnership.

From the Newent case study, for example, a letter illustrates this:

“While understanding the wishes of Council members to be at the centre of any regeneration proposals, we feel that the wide representation from all ages and interests, which we are sure was much valued by the Town Council, should continue to be held together. In this context we await the council’s further future action and express willingness to serve in any future capacity” (Chairman of the Newent Civic Society, extract from correspondence, 31st August 1996).

All interviewees from the Newent case commented that the decision of Newent town councillors to keep the partnership under the exclusive authority of the Council substantially limited the breadth of representation of the practice for some time. Until the creation of the Newent Millennium Trust, the partnership practice was predominantly a local authority led-partnership. Evidence has shown that although various efforts were undertaken to allow a wide representation of views, either through consultation processes or through the co-opting of key local rural representatives, a wider representation of local views could “only happened when this was judged appropriate by the town council” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b). It is only later in the process, at the time of the creation of the Newent Millennium Trust, that Newent Town Council agreed to let the partnership evolve to allow a broader representation of views and, indeed, positioned itself as a partner rather than a leader. However, despite the creation of the Newent Millennium Trust, the issue of representation was still the subject of concerns:

“My personal feeling is that this partnership arrangement, even if the practice has progressed, improved, has still not broadcasted a wide enough public. There are still pockets of community out there who aren’t aware, who would like to take part, and are going to end up resenting it. We always need to think further in allowing representation to address what has been and is being done. And say we are now ready to carry on with other projects, and be open about it. I think we need even more openness.” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998c)

However, in the experience of some interviewees more openness does not guarantee a representative partnership. Many interviewees argued that the task of achieving comprehensive representation was made very difficult by the lack of clarity and organisation of local views, and the sense that local people were not always ready, or prepared, to take part in discussions and decisions, or even share their views (Pres. Sault Tourism Centre, 1998; Newent Town Councillor, 1998a).

There was a consensus amongst interviewees that the biggest challenge was to get those who are not already involved in local action to move themselves into the position of local partners of development:

“When everything is done to involve local actors and local people in general to take action, and when these are given the opportunity to take part in the various discussions or decisions in relation to the development of local area, most of the time if there are some signs of involvement it unfortunately never lasts long. It is almost as though as soon as they have shared their views, if they have cared to do so, they expect that someone is going to do something about it, but that it does not involve them.” (Mayor of Sault, 1998)

“I have the feeling that people would always like to have a bigger say, but they would not like to have a bigger work” (Town Councillor, 1998a).

Another commonly held view amongst interviewees was that it was difficult to achieve a representative partnership when what seems to happen is that these arrangements generally seem to attract and draw together people of the same age, class and professional backgrounds:

“You don't find the farm labourer, the lorry driver. They haven't got time to spend, because they are working for most of the day and in charge of a family for the rest of it. Therefore you get only people who have a background which makes them think they can play a role and there, you only find certain types of professional or age groups” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a).

For some interviewees, the greater the organisation of local views and interests the easier it is to achieve representation of these views and interests in the partnership. In the experience of those interviewed, organisation of local views and interests requires regular communication between the local groups, from which interviewees felt that co-ordination and unity can develop as a result of the realisation that the various views and interests often tally. This is illustrated by an interview statement from the President of the Association of Local Businesses in Sault (1998):

“I think that central to this idea of a representative partnership practice is a minimum of organisation on the local actors' part. Not every single one of us can take an individual part in the practice of partnership. For example, I believe that until we set up an association which rallies local associations and voluntary groups as a whole in the local area to become one single voice, we will not make ourselves heard and we won't be able to play an effective part into development action. We can not be a hundred representing our own little things. That ultimately results in a messy development partnership practice not in a representative one”.

6.2.2 The Role of the Partners

Many interviewees, from both case studies, described the distribution of roles between partners as 'disproportionate', and argued that it was difficult in practice for the different partners to share the same power and responsibility over decisions in relation to rural development action in the local area. Although the strategy documents examined promoted local partnership working and called for cross-sectoral involvement and expertise, none made special mention of specific or expected roles that any partner may play in the practice.

Public sector representatives emerged as the leading partners in the practice. Being the biggest funding resource, the public sector stood as the principal decision-maker. Leading representatives of the public sector are the locally elected councillors. The

power of local councillors is substantially different in France and in the UK, however in both case studies local councillors have been described as “the indispensable political figure of the local partnership practice” (Pres. Agric. Assoc., 1998; Newent Town Councillor, 1998c). Local councillors have also been presented as “the link to central government and ultimately Europe” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998) and “the accountable driver of any local/rural development action” (Dir. GRCC, 1998).

The experience of the interviewees, particularly in the Sault case study, has suggested that no decisions were taken without local councillors’ agreement:

“ They conduct, co-ordinate, and look over the different projects. They act as a spokesperson outside the partnership and as an intermediary between the various sectors and territorial levels involved in the practice” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998)

Clearly, the leading role of the public sector has not appeared to be a problem for the other partners. The challenge of organising and co-ordinating rural development initiatives was described as “resting naturally on the responsibility of the public sector and local elected representatives” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). One of the main reasons advanced for this was that they represented a responsible figurehead, a reference, to which local people, voluntary and private actors and organisations can naturally relate, from the community to the regional level. Their role was presented as one of “conciliating everyone and making the link between everyone” (Mayor of Sault, 1998).

The role played by the other sectors’ representatives emerged in both case studies to vary depending on the initiative and the level of expertise and support required by such an initiatives. Interviewees often stressed that the role of the different partners depended on their expertise, knowledge and how affected by the action they felt, and, most of all, on their level of activism. They also stressed that private and voluntary sector representatives had the tendency to play an advisory roles more than a decision-making role.

Some interviewees have suggested that the partners’ lack of experience and confidence in speaking and bringing forward their views often hindered some partners from playing an active role and influencing, for example, the different decisions on the various initiatives (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b). When asked if this was a result of the absence of organised rules for the roles and responsibilities of the different partners, interviewees generally claimed that imposing specific roles was not always the solution. Most argued

that in their experience the attribution of roles did not ultimately result in the fulfilment of these roles (SIVU Proj. Man. 1998). They also argued that “local partnership practice needs time for the different partners to define their role in such action” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). Another argument was that partnership had to be seen as “a means to bring together a variety of roles and responsibilities” (Pres. SIVU, 1998):

“ Local actors, in a partnership, act as a representative and therefore play that role of representative, he or she represents a view, a certain expertise, the sum of these views and expertises makes the partnership, the rest is down to partners’ tenacity and vision, and money” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998c).

In both case studies, experience has shown that with the help of an appropriate structure and a minimum of openness and organisation in the partnership arrangement(s), the voluntary and private sectors are likely to play a more active role particularly in the decision making process. For example, in Sault, the creation of the four thematic development commissions was commonly described as useful. Interviewees commonly believed that in bringing together the various interests through thematic grouping, the different sector representatives found it “easier to take part in the discussion, without being overwhelmed by the differences between everyone views on everything”(Pres. Agric. Assoc. 1998). Whilst the role of the different actors involved in these groups were simply advisory, their views and advice were ultimately considered in the definition of local needs:

“ Although our different points were not all taken account of, they were acknowledged in the report, the need for diversity and integration was finally accepted, and that is more than had ever been achieved before, I don’t expect a different role than that of defending the businesses interests. If I wanted to play a different role I would go for the next election, don’t you think”(Assoc. of Local Businesses, 1998).

The private sector found in the setting up of the Comité de Bassin D’Emploi of the Pays of the Ventoux and APT-initiative ALBION two very helpful structures. Indeed in 1997, as part of the Albion redevelopment, the perimeter of intervention of the APT-initiative was widened to the plateau of Albion and the Canton of Sault. In 1998, APT-initiative was renamed as APT-Initiative-ALBION. APT-initiative was created in 1989, and was the result of an early reflection on the economic development weaknesses in the area of Apt, a neighbouring town. APT-initiative was an association with the principal objective to promote different initiatives with the potential to create employment, aiding new entrepreneurs in the area financially (via a tax-free loan). Run by the CBE of the Pays of Apt, this partnership structure, united different members drawn from local enterprises,

local banks, local authorities, all contributing at their level to the financial capital, capital completed with some help from the State, the Region and the Department. On the board committee, sat five representatives from the Pays of Sault, including two democratically elected representatives representing the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault, two entrepreneurs and a local banker:

“ This is a great structure, it is part of the big scheme to get the private sector to take responsibility in relation to the local territory and play an active role in the decision making processes with regard to economic action. I haven't met one soul who thought it was not useful” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998).

In the Newent case, the evidence has indicated that until the creation of the Newent Millennium Trust the private and voluntary sector representatives, apart from a sporadic consultative role, did not have a tangible input as partner. The partnership arrangement was relatively informal and for this particular reason it was difficult to identify who was playing what role. The Town Council wished to play a key role in the partnership practice. It kept its power of decision relating to development in the local area and “ruled the partnership very close to town council practice” (Minutes of Meeting, 16/08/1996). However, throughout the practice, the voluntary and private sector representatives remained available. For example, the Chamber of Trade and Commerce, through regular correspondence to the Town Council, re-affirmed its “desire to carry forward and play a role in the practice” (Abstract of correspondence, Chamber of Trade and Commerce; 5th July 1996). With the creation of the Newent Millennium Trust the nature of the structure forced a clear definition of the roles and inputs of partners. These roles were divided between managers, project leaders and advisors (Newent Millennium Proposals, 21st May 1998).

Meetings have been an important means of allowing partners to express their opinions, give their advice and ultimately have a role in the decision making process, and at the same time one of the central mechanisms of local partnership working, has been meetings. These warrant specific consideration.

6.3 Meetings between Partners

The operation of the local partnership consists, for a large part, of various meetings between partners, in order to discuss, set orientations, and make decisions on the different issues to be considered and actions to be undertaken.

It will be recalled that for the present investigation four meetings were attended for each case study. The author expected to attend a larger number of meetings, however these were the only meetings held during the fieldwork period. Partnership meetings appeared to vary in their nature, form, focus and frequency. However they were commonly described by interviewees as a core instrument of partnership working and of great assistance “in informing, telling, balancing different views” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a) and providing partners with “the possibility to present their expectations and projects, to be heard and understood” (Sault Vice Chairman, 1998). Meetings were also described as “a place to hear and understand” (Pres. Sault Tourism Centre, 1998), “clarify and sometimes discover what other actors’ interests are, what they are trying to achieve and also what their intentions are” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b). There was also consensus amongst interviewees that meetings were an occasion to share problems, even if partners did not share exactly the same ones. Interviewees commonly described meetings as a useful means to communicate and to realise that their partners’ problems are not so far apart and that some common solutions might be found.

However, whilst meetings were seen by those interviewed to provide partners with the possibility to resolve some of their misunderstanding, “it is important not to get into the ‘meeting mania’” (Pres. CdC, 1998). Indeed, several interviewees pointed out that local partnership working often resulted in “some people’s addiction to meetings, meetings which never end or achieve much”(Dir. House of Env.1998). Interviewees in both case studies argued that meetings could be extremely frustrating, due to their slowness, and sometimes their superficial nature. Another commonly held view was that in meetings participants tended to raise issues that they felt should be addressed, however often failed to propose any action.

The exploration of the various minutes from meetings, and the researcher’s personal observation at a few meetings, has provided evidence to support the above views. This research has also suggested that meetings between partners could be the place for personal attacks and unproductive debates. In both case studies, undermining conflicts between partners appeared to play an important role in meetings, resulting sometimes in personal settling of scores. Distrust and suspicion could also be observed in some cases, particularly for example when discussions concerned a project which was considered as benefiting some partners more than others, or that was not in keeping with their vision of development in the local area. Another common observation was that some partners could overtly criticise different projects with no real willingness to offer constructive

comment. It has also emerged from the observation at partnership meetings that the partner's expectations of development action were not always clear, and hence their input was often limited to agreement or disagreement with those projects and decisions forwarded by the leading partners. Moreover it was observed that often the same individuals actively intervened in all meetings, irrespective of the interest they represented.

Evidence from minutes of meeting and the author's observation notes has suggested that a great difficulty for partners is to manage the divergence of ideas. Indeed, the author detected a sense of frustration from various attending partners, as each appeared to defend their personal interests whilst not being able to either recognise the interaction between the diversity of interests or integrate them into a collective debate.

Attendance at meetings has not provided the author with an entirely cynical impression of partnership meetings, however. It was observed that despite the divergence of ideas and the existence of undermining conflicts, interaction between partners did result in a number of decisions, and the definition of initiatives that received explicit common agreement and support. Despite the on-going criticism, a number of supportive interventions were observed. The variety of questions, and the general attitude of those involved in meetings, suggested a true willingness of partners to understand, and to contribute at their own level, to discussions and decisions and to move debates forward.

Later in the research, informal discussion with some of the partners from each case study suggested that the initial suspicious and conflicting attitudes in meetings had faded significantly, and stubborn positions attenuated as time passed. The emerging view of interviewees on this progression was that links had been established between partners, and indeed partners often began to realise that they actually shared common difficulties and causes. Moreover, another commonly held view was that as experience of partnership working developed then meetings became more focussed and structured, and partners gradually learnt to compromise on their expectations and to consider collective action as a beneficial approach and mode of functioning.

6.4 The Management of the Local Partnership

The practice observed in the two case studies has indicated that local partnerships require management. For some partners this work is in keeping with their profession, for others it is down to personal investment:

“It is the work of the Comité de Bassin d’Emploi really, particularly since the community of communes of the pays of Sault has officially made the Comité de Bassin d’Emploi the manager of the action. Since the SIVU however we have been able to share the work load but there is still plenty to do” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998).

“It is essentially a voluntary investment, I don’t get a centime, personally, just the reward of achieving some of the projects I work hard for ” (Pres. Sault Tourism Centre, 1998).

The experience of the interviewees has suggested that various tasks are required for the management of local partnerships. For example, these may be associated with promoting partnership working, networking, supervising the different partnership efforts and initiatives, or organising and convening meetings. Management tasks may further include the writing and circulating of progress reports, minuting meetings, applying for funding, selecting projects, carrying out programmes, distributing funding, etc... The management of the local partnerships is clearly an on-going process, which appears to “rely mostly on those individuals or organisations that are ready to take responsibility” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a).

In the case of Sault the management of the practice came under the responsibility of local elected representatives and some specific liaison structures. The Community of Communes, the CBE-PV and later the SIVU, in particular acted as managing and co-ordinating structures. In the case of Newent, the work of management and administration was, for quite a long time, virtually entirely in the hands of the Town Council, not to say in the hands of two of its representatives:

“ I have to be fair, the bulk of management and control was done by me and another town councillor” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a)

However gradually, through the evolution of the partnership practice and initiatives, the management of the partnership became more ordered and formal. At the time of Newent Tourism stage 1 a project team was created. The post of project manager was advertised, albeit as a voluntary post due to funding constraints. No applications were received and hence it was the mayor of Newent who took managerial control. At the time of the

Newent Millennium Trust, the management of the partnership was committee-based, with a board of managers and advisors.

Those involved in the management of the partnership described partnership management as requiring 'patience, understanding, communication and compromise' (Pres. CdC, 1998), 'stubbornness and persuasion' (Newent Town Councillor, 1998c). It was described as work that "implies dealing with individuals (Pres. Sault Tourism Centre, 1998) and that "requires being quick, opportunist and aware of the different funding schemes, the potential programmes, knowing everyone, being aware of everyone, and pushing things forward" (SIVU Proj. Man. 1998).

6.5 Projects and Actions

In the Newent case study, particularly at the time of Newent-Our-Future and the Rural Challenge Bid initiatives, a variety of projects were selected to serve the strategy's main orientations. The examination of the strategic reports from each of these initiatives has indicated that the partnership agreed on a series of wide ranging projects that were concerned with the economy, housing, sport, recreation, leisure, employment, the environment and heritage. Many of these projects were presented by the partnership as complementary, and taken together, (were to) enable the objectives of the overall strategy of the partnership to be achieved. The credibility of each initiative was established via a cost benefit analysis that was presented in the strategic report for each initiative. Each initiative involved both short and long term projects. Short-term projects mainly consisted of improving facilities and tourism. Longer-term projects focussed on agriculture and horticulture, planning and economic trends (Newent Rural Challenge Bid, 1996, pp. 4-9).

At the time of the Newent Tourism stage 1 initiative, the partnership worked towards a more detailed short-term action plan. Focussing specifically on the character and attractiveness of the area, which was already attracting tourists, short-term actions specifically involved environmental enhancement and improvements in the tourism infrastructure (RDP Review 1996/97). The actions were orientated around the improvement of the town centre area and the regeneration of the lake. The success of this project encouraged further action and, in the view of interviewees, certainly provided an impetus to the founding of the Newent Millennium Trust. The partnership activities focussed on the celebration of the Millennium and on giving an active role in the

definition of action projects to the community. The Newent Millennium action projects mainly focussed on cultural, tourism and environmental issues.

In the case of Sault, local partnership activities consisted of defining a framework for rural development actions in the area of the Pays of Sault, and organising these actions into a structured development programme (Development Programme, Pays of Sault, 1997). In this programme, rural development action was structured around four main objectives. These comprised of lessening the local area's hemmed-in position, the maintenance of public services, the development of the economic fabric and the maintenance of traditional economic activities, and finally the development of tourism.

With the challenge of Albion redevelopment, and the creation of the SIVU of Albion, the local partnership practice and activities were forced to evolve. The objectives of development adopted by the SIVU were in keeping with those adopted by the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault. However, whilst still local, rural development action had to be envisaged at a more strategic scale. The local partnership practice "progressed to a level which had never been considered before" (Pres.CdC-PS, 1998). The partnership efforts between the SIVU partners resulted in the identification of six main objectives of development. These were civil/military restructuring, the opening up of the road network, the promotion and valorisation of tourism, culture and heritage, the promotion of agricultural identity, the development of economic supporting methods and support for SMI-SME, and the maintenance and reinforcement of public services ('Réussir la Reconversion d'Albion', 1997). On the basis of the defined objectives of development more than 70 projects were selected. A review of the selected projects indicated that they primarily related to the maintenance of existing activities, as confirmed by the director of the Comité de Bassin d'Emploi; "the partnership work did not really manage to come up with any really innovative and integrated actions" (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). However in the views of most interviewees from Sault, the fact that the public, private and voluntary sectors' representatives of 13 communes managed to agree on and produce, in less than a year, a programme of development and to agree on 70 projects had to be considered as a significant partnership achievement:

"Projects are mainly oriented towards the maintenance of existing resources, adhering to the vocation of the area and the region in general. These projects are not all 'structuring' or 'strategic' or 'innovative' to be in keeping with the jargon of funding organisations, but at least, they have the merit to exist. And we are ready to prove they will work" (extract from 'Lettre of the SIVU d' Albion, Jan 1998, p. 4).

6.6 Funding Local Partnership Actions

In both case studies, the funding of partnership actions emerged as a central issue. As noted in chapter 5, one of the main incentives for setting up local partnerships was to mobilise the appropriate resources and/or benefit from various sources to pay for the different development initiatives. An examination of the various funding allocations attached to the different partnership initiatives in the two case studies indicated that funding might come from various sources. Funding may come from the local community, generally in the form of donations or subscriptions, the voluntary and private sector, in the form of a contribution, and the public sector, in the form of grant or subsidy.

In the Newent case study, at the time of the Newent-Our-Future partnership initiative, the various projects ensuing from the Newent regeneration strategy at the outset did not benefit from financial resources beyond those of the Newent Town Council. Central to the decision of local actors to initiate partnership working in Newent was clearly the generation of funds “from a number of different sources - from private sources, including benefiting businesses, charities, and from public sources including the parish, district and county Councils; the lottery; the Single Regeneration Budget and the Rural Development Commission” (Newent-our-Future, 1995, p. 6). Indeed, funding from the district and county Council, or any other source, at the time was difficult to obtain. Public expenditure had over the years been somewhat limited towards Newent (RDP Review 1996/97) and very little funding opportunities existed, possibly because “Newent has always seemed to be a relatively affluent town within the Forest area and has never been actually allocated significant amounts of funding” (Econ.Dev. Off. GCC, 1998b). The initial expectation that partnership efforts would encourage funding support from a range of sources remained an idealistic hope at the outset of the partnership. The initiators of the partnership wanted to create a Trust to permit benefit from wider funding opportunities, particularly those for which the local authority was not able to apply. However, in refusing to create a Trust as a structure for the partnership, the Town Council effectively closed-off any further opportunity for funding for the various development projects.

When the hope of receiving one million pounds vanished with the failure of the Newent Rural Challenge bid, the mayor of Newent proposed to open negotiations with other potential funding organisations immediately. Meanwhile, on the basis of the work already carried out, the plan was to “proceed with those projects within the partnership’s

own financial capability” (Abstract of Correspondence, ‘Newent shows its Mettle’, Mayor of Newent, 21st June 1996). It was at the time of Newent Tourism Stage 1, that a variety of organisations, mainly drawn from the public sector, agreed to become the financial partners of Newent’s regeneration initiatives. Newent Tourism Stage 1 was a project costing at £357,000 of which Newent Town Council contributed the majority, with the remainder provided by the Forest of Dean District Council, the Rural Development Commission, Gloucestershire County Council, the Environment Agency and finally the local community through private donations. With the creation of the Newent Millennium Trust, the development initiatives were finally able to benefit from broader funding opportunities. At the close of the study period the support of the Countryside Agency that took over from the Rural Development Commission was again requested.

In contrast to the Newent case study, the various partnership initiatives in the Sault case study benefited from the start from various funding opportunities. An important objective of partnership working in this case was to use the available funding coherently in the local area. Sault and the surrounding area had been recognised since the Law of 4/02/1995 as a ‘*Territoire de Développement Prioritaire*’ (TDP) and a ‘*Zone de Revitalisation Rurale*’ (ZRR) (Loi No95-115, JO 5/02/1995, p.1973), entitling it to benefit from various national and regional funding and fiscal alleviations. The Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault benefited from various sources of funding including the possibility of raising its own tax, ‘*taxe communautaire*’, the right to various subsidies, the VAT compensation funds, and also contributions from the Département of Vaucluse. As for the SIVU, it received a percentage of tax raised by each commune member of the SIVU. It also obtained, through the signature of the ‘contract of territory’, an allowance of 100 million francs for the economic restructuring of the area affected by the dismantling of the military base of Albion. Sixty percent of partnership projects received a promise of funding.

Such financial support was described by interviewees as providing a real impetus to the development of the local partnership. However, they raised concerns about the survival of the practice when the money for Albion redevelopment has gone. However, interviewees and documentary research also suggested that a number of funding alternatives were being considered and contact was made with various potential funding organisations to prepare a financial plan for the medium to long-term (‘Lettre du SIVU d’Albion’, Jan 1999, pp. 1-7).

Finally, it is important to mention that the urban ideal, which identifies the private sector as a prime funding partner in the local regeneration initiatives in urban areas, does not appear to offer the same potential in rural areas, as illustrated by the statement of the director of the GRCC:

“One of the arguments behind the Government’s ideas of promoting partnership is that it brings in private sector money. If you haven’t got the private sector infrastructure within the small rural communities, then you haven’t got private sector money either.” (Dir. GRCC, 1998)

However, in the Sault experience, the efforts of APT- Initiative-ALBION (see section 5.2.5) suggest that some private investment can be secured providing that the necessary infrastructure is in place.

6.7 Constraints and Difficulties of the Local Partnership Practice

“In theory, partnership is the solution. You avoid duplication, you encourage complementarity, and you work towards economies of scale. What can I say? It is the panacea. But, in practice, it does not work like that. You have to work with what exists, on the top of what exists, where it would be better to get rid of almost everything and start from the beginning. Partnership implies establishing a real mode of functioning. It is a state of mind, a culture even. But in practice what partnership is today is still very limited. It is a practice that requires accommodating everyone’s own vision, own expectation of what that partnership should be and should achieve. The thing is when you start working in partnership, you realise how important the differences are, and diversity is so important that it is hardly manageable. Everyone, even the most convinced, knows it is going to take a long time before the addition of all these differences will produce a homogeneous ‘whole’” (SIVU, Project manager, 1998).

Clearly local partnership working is not devoid of difficulties and constraints. In the light of this investigation it could be argued that the difficulties mainly concern the constraints of time, individual personalities, the lack of experience in working in partnership, the environment within which the partnership is evolving and funding.

Without exception, local partnership working was described by interviewees as “torn by the paradox of time” (PACA Dev. Off., 1998). All have emphasised that local partnership working requires time, time to mobilise partners, time to conciliate and co-ordinate the differences, time to develop communication and agreement and therefore “time to gradually establish a new mode of functioning, a ‘new culture’ between actors, that is marked by a long tradition of individualism” (Sault Vice Chairman, 1998). In the view of

interviewees, the practice of local partnership must be developed over the long term, yet to construct and maintain this practice in the long term requires short-term actions so as to justify the alliance and maintain the incentive. "Without quick wins demobilisation is inevitable and the partnership as well as the actions undertaken are then threatened" (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). There is therefore a need for regular and concrete achievements in order "to abate the frustration of those partners who are constantly seeking evidence that things are happening"(Dir. PLS, FOD-DC, 1998). Interviewees echoed this view often:

"You need to show it works, and for that you need quick concrete achievements. People don't have time to lose time, they need to know their investment is going to be useful" (Dir. Tourism Off., Interview, Sept 1998).

"To sustain the partnership you need some quick wins, so everyone involved is encouraged to continue that way"(Eco. Econ.Dev. Off. GCC, 1998a).

Therefore, it is clear that the local partnership needs to operate quickly to bring forward projects, strategies and, first and foremost, to secure funding. However, interviewees suggested that difficulties arise because the process depends greatly on the investment of partner's time, an investment that is not always feasible:

"But when you are working full time, as I was, and try to run this thing, you haven't got time to get involved in everything" (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a).

The progression of the partnership's operation is also highly restricted by bureaucracy, and constrained by deadlines and external funding:

"It takes a lot of time, especially to get things submitted in time. Projects have to be accepted, accepted by all the local people and all the people and levels involved and also people get annoyed by the bureaucracy. At the moment if the project is not granted, you have to start the project all over again the next time"(Planning Manager, EA, 1998).

Alongside the problem of time, the evidence suggests that the practice of partnership is constrained by the traditional 'culture of action' and 'mode of functioning', characterised by profound individualism and driven by highly personal interests:

"With the partnership approach it is important to understand that each actor gets involved for very personal reasons, only a few understand that they will benefit from this approach. Initially everyone agrees to work in partnership, and then you get two attitudes. Some play the game, work in partnership and when the problem is solved they go back to their daily routine. Others can't even put it into practice. Which means at the end everyone goes back to his or her old individual habits" (Pres. House of Env., 1998)

It is emerged from this investigation that whilst some of the local actors and people welcomed partnership working, others found great difficulties to integrate this mode of

operation into their behaviour. It was indeed argued that “everyone agrees in principle; partnership seems very simple in theory, particularly for people who are living in the same area and share similar views. However, in practice people find it extremely difficult” (Dir. House of Env.1998). This was mainly explained by actors’ lack of experience in co-operation and to some extent by the doubt that surrounds such an approach.

Particular to the case of Newent, it was suggested by interviewees that “one of the biggest negators or impediments to local partnership operation was the feeling of absolute powerlessness at community level. The belief and philosophy that the parish council were powerless stopped the people of small communities from thinking that they could play a role at their level” (Dir. GRCC, 1998).

However even where there is power at the local level, difficulties remain. Indeed in the case of Sault, the Director of the CBE-PV (1998) explained that it was very difficult to get local actors to sign up to real partnership working, even when there are all the ingredients and reasons for partnership to exist. She explained that the main reason was that “people are too absorbed by their day-to-day problems to get involved and take part”. She recalled a very interesting project, which aimed at getting the different local actors in the building trade to get together. The main reason for organising this initiative was that a lot of building contracts were lost to the benefit of neighbouring builders and craftsmen mainly by a lack of communication and adequate promotion of the local traders. The first step in the project was to produce a brochure and the second step to create a place where the trade could promote know-how and competencies. She explained that “the discussions and thinking behind the project were unbelievably long and despite the need, people balked at getting involved”. Consequently “it was extremely hard work for those who had the vision that it would work, to convince the others, assemble and co-ordinate the diversity of approaches and visions, please everyone” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998).

Finally, representatives of the regional level, in both cases, expressed concern about “the risk of illegibility and the unintelligibility of structures and actions for wider levels to define who is doing what at the local level” (PACA Dev. Off., 1998). The main worry was that considering the diversity in approaches, the variety of arrangements, the layers of structures and organisations, it was becoming increasingly complex for people to understand how things operate, and who is accountable for what. Consequently the

management of the partnership process was regarded as difficult and a source of serious risk.

Finally, this investigation has indicated that another important difficulty to local partnership operation is funding. Particular to the case of Newent was the constraint of competitive bidding. The majority of interviewees from the Newent Case Study perceived competitive bidding as extremely challenging. The argument presented was that competitive bidding created a feeling of resentment and division between the different communities within the district, “particularly when certain district representatives positioned themselves more towards one local community than another” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b). Various interviewees commented that the bidding requirements constituted an impediment to the definition of suitable objectives, forcing the partnership team to come together and develop detailed proposals very much more rapidly than might otherwise have been the case. Finally some interviewees argued that when the bid failed and left the partnership efforts unrewarded, the only impression left from the whole experience was that of frustration and concern about the appropriateness of competitive bidding in addressing pressing local problems:

“Newent’s bid failed in favouring an approach which was establishing a balance between economic revival, environmental gain and quality of life which was following what had been clearly expressed in the public consultation” (Abstract of Correspondence, ‘Newent shows its Mettle’, Mayor of Newent, 21st June 1996).

“ You work really hard, you put all these things together and you lose. It was really depressing” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b)

“Well, take the Rural Challenge. The County says we will give a million pounds to any community who is ready to develop something. We all sat down, including bringing all the people and organisations in the area together. We all talked, put forward ideas, put forward a package, a complete document, saying this is the way we think a small parish should move forward. Result: they did not like it. Mind you the government found an easy way to get good expertise at no cost” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998c).

External funding depends very much on the projects and actions to be undertaken, and these are generally thoroughly scrutinised by the funding organisations. Not all projects and actions are likely to receive funding, including those meeting the pre-requirements of partnership working. The SIVU project manager suggested that there is very little chance for some actions to receive funding, even resulting from a partnership, if in the eyes of the funding bodies this action is risky and might not be viable:

“ Look at the example of the House of Environment and Hunting. Perfect example of partnership between local actors. It involves the commune, the community of communes, the federation of hunting, and everyone involved in the business of tourism they are all putting money into it, they all like it, it is a strong idea, perfect for tourism, but external funders said no, no money for that! And the main reason is that it has the status of an association, it has not got a ‘strong back’” (SIVU Proj. Man. 1998)

In both case studies interviewees observed that funding availability strongly influenced the actions undertaken by the partnership. A commonly held view, in both case studies, was that the majority of local partnership projects were too often limited by the available funding:

“The funding should be adapted to the project and not the other way around” (PACA Dev. Off., 1998).

“the regeneration strategy has been constrained to what could be achieved within the community’s own resources, limiting the scope of activity” (FoD-DC comments, 9/05/1996).

6.8 Conclusion

Local partnership operation therefore raises a number of issues. Representation and the underlying challenge of ensuring that the partnership is representative of all local interests whilst maintaining manageability is a significant issue. According to those involved, partnership should not be seen as the gathering of all local individual interest, rather partnership operation requires the organisation of local interests such that the diversity of views can be represented through a unique voice. Also important is the issue of the role of the partner. It has emerged from this investigation that roles played by the different partners vary, and are not necessarily of an equal nature. However, partnership working may be considered as a means to rally and harmonise the variety of roles and responsibilities.

Local partnership operation also raises issues of management and funding. The management of the local partnership in the cases studied was highly dependent on the voluntary contribution of a few individuals, and often made significant time demands on those individuals. The management and operation of partnership via meetings between partners appears to be essential. Meetings can be the source of much frustration and fruitless discussion, however they appear to remain an essential method for partners to connect and confront their views, present their projects, and are also the occasion when decisions are taken and projects to be implemented identified. Central to the implementation of local rural development partnership operation in general, and project

actions specifically, is the issue of funding availability. Funding mechanisms differed significantly between the two case studies, however in both cases the funding of actions was strongly reliant on public sources.

Various constraints and difficulties associated with local partnership working have been identified in the cases studied. These include the constraints of time, bureaucratic contingencies, traditional individualistic culture of action, difficulties in obtaining funding and the challenge of maintaining partners' involvement.

Nevertheless, despite the numerous difficulties, constraints and uncertainties attached to local partnership working, this investigation has revealed that from the practice of local partnership a number of very encouraging outcomes result. These outcomes are considered in the next chapter, in a way which throws some further light on the practice of local partnership in rural development.

CHAPTER 7. THE OUTCOMES OF LOCAL PARTNERSHIP PRACTICE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT: THE EXAMPLE OF NEWENT AND SAULT

“Strangely enough, I have difficulties with the way people generally approach and measure outcomes, when you are given a spread sheet and you have to tick boxes which represent pre-established benefits. And I wonder if this semi-technical approach is not a defence-mechanism, which stops people from making real decisions and taking real actions. In some case because there is a bit of paper where all the boxes are ticked, “look at that” they’ll say, “they have passed it!” And you get another case where only one outcome has been achieved, and they’ll say, “this is not good enough, we can’t pass this!” Well, in my opinion the one that has only one strong outcome ticked is far more important in certain situations than the one that has 5 or 10. Sometimes we have to accept that when we talk about partnership working and development action, mathematical formulas turn out to be absolute rubbish. This method of ticking boxes by the dozen reduces, psychologically, good attitudes to uplifting the community, may be one millimetre, it does not matter. Instead of being asked to tick boxes we want to be asked about how some actions have helped the community at large. I tell you what we’ll do, when you leave, I’ll show you the outcomes, you’ll just have to stand there and look, you don’t have to be told. And what you’ll see is a tremendous addition to the town and the local community, and what you’ll see is what partnership is about, and what it achieves” (Newent Millennium Trust, Chairman, Interview 2001).

This chapter concludes the empirical investigation by presenting the evolving outcomes of local partnership practice as observed in the two case studies. Section 7.1 recalls the rationale for and process of identification of local partnership outcomes before introducing the eight overarching outcomes identified from the empirical investigation. Sections 7.2 to 7.9 describes and examines each identified outcomes individually.

7.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the empirical investigation by presenting the evolving outcomes of local partnership practice as observed in the two case studies.

When the decision was made to undertake an exploration of the outcomes of local partnership practice the intention was never to perform an impact study or any other form of evaluation. Instead the intention was to throw some further light on the practice of local partnership in rural development as well as on key issues such as the assessment of ‘partnership potential’ or ‘partnership effectiveness’.

As observed in chapter 2 and 3, whilst there is strong enthusiasm for the possible benefits of the partnership approach there is not yet a consistent knowledge in the literature about how to assess the real potential of this approach and about the nature of such potential

since views vary on how to approach partnership achievements. Various authors, when considering such issue have made a distinction between the outputs and outcomes of the partnership practice. Hence, outputs are presented as those tangible products or services provided by the partnership whereas the outcomes are described as those wider or abstract achievements which relate to the partnership process itself (Wilcox and Charlton, 1997). However the emerging view in the literature is that any investigation of partnership outcomes should not uniquely focus on tangible outputs and thereby dismiss the importance of process outcomes as the quality of partnership action should be seen as affecting the partnership ability to deliver a given issue (Waddock, 1989; LEADER Observatory, 1997). Hence the argument is that the 'quality' of partnership action should be assessed at a variety of levels such as, for example, the capacity of the partnership to rally a wide range of local interest and to allow dialogue and decision-sharing. In this respect, such consideration must take account of the fact that the partnership practice is something that it is highly context-dependent, tied to local conceptions and culture (Edwards et al, 2000).

For these very reasons this investigation has sought to explore the outcomes of the partnership practice through an examination of the views and attitudes of those involved. The author believed that a description and discussion of the views and attitudes of those involved would provide an indicator of how to develop criteria to benchmark effective local partnership working as well as of the likely success of the partnership in rural development. Information on the outcomes of partnership has been retrieved from the evaluative material produced in each study area, when available, and also from the interviews carried out with a sample of key actors involved throughout the practice. The main approaches to this investigation were therefore documentary research and one-to-one interviews (see chapter 4 for more details and justification). The documents examined, included available strategic and progress reports, annual reviews, correspondences, newsletter and press articles. The examination of these different documents first allowed the identification of what were some of the targets and the expected outcomes of partnership working at the outset of the practice, and how these expectations evolved later in the process.

In addition the documents provided some indication of the general criteria used to appraise local partnership practice. As it emerges, and this pertains in both case studies, at the outset of the practice the recurrent criteria used concerned predominantly the strategy of the partnership, project delivery and financial leverage. Later in the process,

the criteria mentioned took into consideration wider issues such as the management of conflict, awareness raising, consensus and capacity building, and comprehensive local participation. The information obtained from the written material was relatively scarce. However it was possible to retrieve such information from the available annual and progress reports, and correspondence, and a few comments from various sources, reflecting on the outcomes of the practice in each case study.

More information was gleaned from the interviews with key actors involved in the practice. Indeed, during the first round of 24 interviews, carried out between March and October 1998, interviewees were asked, as a last question, to react and elaborate on the outcomes of local partnership practice in the context of rural development action. A second round of six interviews was carried out later in the process with three selected practitioners in each case study area (February-March 2001). During the second round of interviews, as detailed in chapter 4, interviewees were asked to share their views on what they believed to be the outcomes of the local partnership practice. The questions allowed interviewees to reflect upon any personal, practice, and locality-related outcomes.

It was interesting to find that between the two rounds of interview, the opinions and attitudes changed, or to be more exact, evolved and strengthened with regards to the perceived outcomes of local partnership practice. For example, in 1998, all interviewees supported the view that 'a lot had been achieved' through local partnership working. However, all interviewees without exception insisted that it was still early to appreciate the results and benefits and to be too affirmative about the outcomes of the practice. They felt that they needed more time to reflect upon the achievements, the impact of such practice. This confirmed the researcher's idea that partnership outcomes needed studying over a longer period of time, which because of the development of her research happened to be early in the year 2001. This aim was to provide interviewees with the opportunity to further elaborate on the outcomes of the practice of local partnership.

Between the first and the second round of interview one strong opinion remained the same – namely the difficulty for practitioners of appraising the achievements of local partnership practice particularly in quantitative terms. Time and time again, interviewees suggested that the temptation to consider partnership outcomes through focussing on whether or not the partnership arrangement or initiative had met its stated objectives or looking for measurable outputs fails to appreciate the nature and extent partnership achievements.

Hence, in 1998 for example, the director of the Comite de Bassin d'Emploi argued that "in many respects some of the outcomes of local partnership working are too intangible to be measured" (1998). In 2001, the mayor of Sault made an echoing remark and claimed that "the achievement of partnership working could not be easily quantified". The Gloucestershire Market Town (GMT) Project Manager (who was the RDP Project Manager when the research was first launched), suggested that "some of the achievements of partnership working can be difficult to describe in words" (2001). As for the SIVU project manager (2001) she believed that "only those involved from the beginning could appreciate, in depth, the progress made, and that for a large part it was a question of person and processes". This view confirmed the researcher in her wish to investigate local actors' perception of partnership outcomes.

In the experience of those involved, the achievement of the partnership practice in tackling rural development should be considered at several levels. All interviewees, and rather categorically in the second round of interviews, maintained explicitly that when considering partnership outcomes strong emphasis should be put on the quality of the process:

"I suppose that, initially, as I came from a strong top-down approach background, I was very much looking for tangible and measurable outputs: however I quickly came to realise that we need to value a process, and focus on issues such as mobilisation and empowerment, capacity and communication." (GMT Project Manager, 2001)

An exploration of the perceived outcomes of local partnership revealed a variety of outcomes, the nature of which reflect the above statement. The outcomes most commonly proposed by the interviewees, and in progress reports and other reviews, have been grouped by the author into eight overarching outcomes, as follows:

- a means of achieving broader participation;
- a forum for communication and problem-sharing;
- a means of bringing together people, sectors, institutions, and local territories;
- Collective Commitment, Coordination and Consensus building;
- a more integrated diagnosis and strategy of development for the local area;
- the establishment of structural instruments for addressing development;
- an established credibility of local action and a new local capacity;
- long term motivation, dynamics and actions.

These overarching outcomes pertain to the process of partnership operation. The choice of the author in focussing entirely on process outcomes rather than on tangible outputs (for example the number jobs created, the number of business saved or created) is based on two main reasons. The first reason, as observed earlier in this introduction, is that the studying of outcomes aimed throwing some further light on the operation and role of the practice of local partnership, including on such issues as 'partnership effectiveness'. The second reason is that the author did not believe that a focus on tangible outputs would provide such information and also that the link between tangible outputs and the local partnership practice would be difficult not to say hardly possible to achieve, given the external factors that may influence such outputs. These have been therefore only mentioned for information.

These identified overarching outcomes are now described and examined throughout the sections 7.2 to 7.9.

7.2 A means of Achieving Broader Participation in Rural Development Action

One strong argument for developing local partnership working, in both study areas, lay in the new conceptions for tackling rural development, considering development through a context-dependent, multi-sectoral perspective and as the result of a broad and multi sectoral mobilisation and participation, drawn from within and outside the local community. As observed in chapter 5 and 6, various efforts were deployed deliberately to encourage the different actors concerned, key local representatives as well as representatives from wider organisations and institutions to take an active part in the reflection on the management of rural change and development and to share their views and expertise to prepare and implement a development strategy for the local area.

The experience of the interviewees, in both case studies, has revealed that, to a degree, the local partnership met such ambition. In both case studies, a number of interviewees have suggested that much to everyone's surprise, the practice resulted generally in an encouraging level of participation, particularly considering the tradition of individualism and fragmentation that had characterised development action in both study areas before. Moreover, another commonly held view was that the practice of partnership contributed not only to increasing the number but also broadening the origins of actors associated with the different reflections over the development of the local area.

Hence, in the case of Newent, a 'Letter to all Councillors' (5/08/1996), reported that in the preparation of 'Newent-Our-Future' and the 'Rural Challenge Bid', 41 people assisted the town council at various stages. Of these 41 people, 19 were from Newent and all contributed to the partnership initiative with a constructive outlook. Although the Rural Challenge bid failed, this encouraging level of participation emerged as a strong achievement:

"Whilst disappointed that Newent Challenge Bid did not get further than the initial stage, we were impressed by the enthusiasm shown by representatives of the community and the willingness to become involved." (Chairman of the Newent Civic Society, Abstract of correspondence, 31/07/1996)

The willingness of the community to participate was reiterated at the time of the creation of the Millennium Trust (NMT), where "considerable interest and some 20 residents advocated moving to a formative stage" (NMT Meeting, 05/07/1998).

When asked to reflect on the outcomes of local partnership practice, in the first round of interviews, all respondents suggested that partnership working opened the debate on rural development to much wider views and expertise. It witnessed also diffuse and supportive participation. Alongside the active mobilisation of local actors, interviewees in both Newent and Sault, praised the progressive mobilisation of the state services and agencies and the involvement of local and central government representatives.

In the case of Newent, one of the town councillors pointed out that the partnership practice not only allowed broader participation but it had emerged as "a very useful tool to assess who is really interested in playing a part in and for the local area". Similarly she believed it helped in "identifying those who are going to act against, and those who are not interested at all" (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b). In the case of Sault, the President of the CdC-PS (1998) and the Director of the CBE-PV (1998) both stated that local partnership practice revealed that local actors were far more willing to take part in the development debate than expected and that, when asked, many made themselves actively available. However for some respondents, this enthusiasm, was not unconditional. As observed in chapter 5, concerns were raised about how to sustain an active, durable and comprehensive participation.

The evidence derived from the second phase of fieldwork confirmed early findings. Interviewees, in the second round of interviews, argued that whilst the partnership

working undeniably provided the means to a more comprehensive participation of a wide range of actors in rural development action, participation was still too sporadic, and a lot of work remained.

In the case of Sault, the SIVU Project Manager and the Director of the CBE-PV (2001) acknowledged that whilst at the start of the different partnership initiatives, a wide number of partners, representatives from all sectors, were taking part, active and sustained participation was difficult to achieve. The Mayor of Sault in 2001 (who was President of the CdC-PS in 1998) however insisted that it was important “not to accept defeat too soon”. In his opinion, comprehensive participation was neither always applicable nor relevant. Furthermore he claimed that whilst there was still a lot to do to reach comprehensive participation in development actions convincing local actors to cooperate was not an ordeal anymore. He believed that the development of the partnership dynamic and consequently the attainment of comprehensive participation in the rural development process imposed different steps, and also necessitated a framework for relationships. Hence he explained that the work that has been achieved throughout the Community of Communes thematic commissions, and around the Albion redevelopment gave a good indication to the various local actors involved that no one was likely to lose identity through working as a group:

“It showed we could work towards the same directions whilst keeping our inherent characteristics. In the first instance local authorities, local elected representatives had to learn and show to other actors it was possible, to sit around the same table and come to an agreement about common principles. So far we have managed to convince them that it works. Now we need to go further than consultation and commissions, we need to develop this mode of functioning with all of the different actors, public, private and voluntary sector together (Mayor of Sault, 2001).”

The Mayor of Sault agreed that he himself thought initially that there was a real partnership practice in the area, with an encouraging level of participation, but he came to realise that it was not really the case, and actors as a whole were far from being fully cooperative. He claimed, however, that the approach of the ‘Pays’ should provide the solution to ‘real partnership working’ in the area, associating the whole of these actors, into a dynamic that responded to people’s cultural and economic trends and mode of functioning:

“ I think that all of the different actors are now ready to be associated with development action, and ready to participate actively. For example our young farmers have clearly understood that they need to be part and take part, to overcome problems in working in partnership with others. This would not have happened 20 years ago. You can always find explanations in the recent agricultural difficulties, but when I listen to them, I

strongly believe that they just understand the process. Last week they expressed their wish to inscribe the label of quality within the perimeter of the Pays. (Mayor of Sault, 2001)”

In the Newent case, the chairman of the Newent Millennium Trust (2001) admitted that the level of participation was still too far from the initial hopes, despite the different actions, and the various bits of evidence that a lot could be achieved through partnership. However he was adamant that after long years of work there were strong signs that the various local groups and actors were willing to participate more actively in the area, that participation was far better than it was and a number of bodies were taking an active role. This is illustrated by a comment of the Chairman of the Chamber of Trade and Commerce’ comment (2001):

“ All the members from this organisation all earn a living from Newent, and I think they are duty bound to put something back. It is a pride and an identity thing. There is also the growing realisation in Newent that rather than working in our little environment, we have to work together to achieve more of what is the same thing really. For example, the town council is now willing to participate actively in what we are trying to do. Two councillors are now appointed and will be sitting in our meeting so they can see what we are trying to achieve and vice versa. The only hurdle we need to surmount is to get the general public to participate.”

Therefore feelings were mixed about the level of participation achieved and whether it was a convincing outcome of local partnership working. Nevertheless one certainty about local partnership working was that even sporadic, relationships clearly started to develop, between development actors, within and outside the community, as well as between local territories, and provided a real forum for communication, dialogue and problem-sharing as it now examined.

7.3 A forum for Communication and Problem-sharing

As observed in chapter 5, communication and dialogue between development actors was indicated by all respondents, and described in the various strategic plans, as one of the strong motives for establishing partnership practice. In both study areas, the lack of communication and dialogue was presented as significantly limiting rural development action (see 5.2.6). All interviewees, in both case studies, clearly felt that working in partnership proved to be a significant instrument of communication and dialogue between all development actors.

When asked to reflect on achievements of local partnership working, the Gloucestershire Market Town Project Manager (2001), previously the RDP project officer, observed that the practice “has given a chance to development actors to communicate ideas and share problems, to get people to know each other better, to trust each other, to be more confident, to open up and be frank”. The same outcomes were, as early as the first round of interviews, emphasised by the different respondents. All three Newent town councillors, for example, interviewed at the outset of this research, insisted on how the development of partnership working allowed the developing of personal skills and the suppression of some of the concerns or worries. One of the councillors, for example, who was involved in the practice first as the chairman of the Newent Civic Society, before being elected as a town councillor, admitted that she had never ever considered working in partnership before and the whole idea initially worried her a lot. However she argued that she gained a lot of confidence through the process, and overtly claimed:

“ I am now defending the idea very strongly in the community, I am ready to be very convincing, and force people into working together, with their differences of opinion, in order to create the dialogue and keep development action together” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b).

For the Ex-Mayor of Newent, project manager of Newent Tourism stage 1, and later the Newent Millennium Chairman, the bigger benefit was his as he learnt to work with others, to confront others and as result he felt he had changed a lot:

“I have benefited enormously from working in partnership, I have met a lot of people. I understand what makes them tick. They understand what makes me tick” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a)

Interviewed again on the subject of partnership outcomes, he confirmed his initial views:

“ Initially I was impatient, now I have learnt to be more patient, to let people have their say. I have learnt that any individual can be right in the desire to take action for the local community, but it is no good if this individual is alone. You need to work with others, or rather to get others to work with you” (NMT Chairman, 2001)

The chairman of the Chamber of Trade and Commerce (2001) during the second round of interviews also reported very similar benefits:

“I have personally always liked to deal with people on a one to one basis. But I have always been nervous and self-conscious when I have to address a larger group. Being the chairman of the Chamber of Trade and Commerce seems to have helped me to overcome it to a degree. But meeting people on a regular basis and having to work with others has helped me a lot to go beyond this apprehension. Having to meet with different local actors, on a regular basis I have gained self-confidence, a confidence that comes from knowing the ropes really”.

All three town councillors also advanced the view that the practice helped significantly the town council to get to know better the various actors in the community, to listen and to appreciate the difference in points of view and the different actions that were undertaken in the area. The chairman of the Chamber of Trade and Commerce (2001) reported a similar outcome:

“Well you understand people and local actors more. For example you don’t realise how the council work until you are sitting at a council meeting and realise how slow it works and the procedure it has to go through. It is not like in the private sector where you make a decision the following morning if you chose to. Self-confidence and awareness are certainly two strong achievements that I associate with partnership”.

Partnership working also helped in developing better communications and relationships with development actors and organisations outside of Newent, with neighbouring areas, with the wider levels of local government, including the Forest of Dean District Council and Gloucestershire County Council. The Director of Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (1998) for example noted, in the first round of interviews, that although it had taken time it was possible to witness, in recent years, through partnership practice, the emergence of a feeling of confidence and trust between the three levels. This opinion was shared by the Director of Planning and Leisure services who advanced the view that there were strong reasons to believe that relationships has strengthened, and communication improved between the Forest of Dean District Council and Newent. He explained:

It is all part of the development process. You end up working with people you might not otherwise have worked with, and you get a better understanding of their views. And you work from there.” (Dir. PLS FoD-DC, Interview 1998)

All three town councillors reported the same, insisting that much better communication and relationships had been established with the higher level of local government and with wider agencies and organisations. All argued that that the Town benefited very much from the different contacts with for example the Rural Development Commission, the Gloucestershire County Council, the Forest of Dean District, and the Environment Agency. They argued that it was “this kind of achievement which makes partnership desirable” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a). The evidence also shows the establishment of communication between Newent and other Forest Towns. The second phase of fieldwork, revealed that the work had progressed:

“The partnership work between the four Forest towns has given to the representatives a forum within which ideas are developed, problems are shared. Collective projects will come later, I can see it coming though” (NMT Chairman, 2001)

In the case of Sault, very similar achievements were reported. For example, the president of the CdC-PS (1998) claimed that partnership working helped significantly in respect of "going over the traditional intrigues, clarifying the boundaries of everyone's ambitions, but also balancing the dominances existing in the area and developing fruitful contacts", an opinion often shared in the views of the director of the CBE-PV and the comments of a group of independent experts analysing the result of the work achieved as part of the Albion redevelopment:

"What really developed well through this practice is communication as well as knowing who does what, and what actors' intentions are, a strong knowledge which means that the message is being given between actors, down or up, and obviously this has helped to develop our contacts" (Dir. CBE-PV, 2001).

"It is important to point out that after some vigorous and heated debates, partners to the action, elected and voluntary representatives, have learnt to leave their oppositions aside and even to work together towards the materialisation of sustainable projects" (Beyond the Albion redevelopment, 2001, p2).

Interviewees also commonly argued that working in partnership helped local actors to recognise that they are facing very similar problems although the actors' agendas and modes of functioning differed. It provided also "a forum for sharing problems even if everyone has slightly different ones" (Pres. SIVU, 1998) and helped "in realising progressively that the difficulties and the fears are the same for most of the local actors and that, on the whole, the objectives were the same" (Mayor of Sault, 1998).

Hence, in the light of this information, it appears that the practice of local partnership has achieved, in both study areas, better communication and dialogue between development actors, providing better awareness and understanding of each actor's agendas, mode of functioning and problems. As a result it has been possible to witness a significant reciprocity between levels of government, sectors, territories, local actors and organisations.

7.4 A Means of Bringing Together People, Sectors, Local Territories and Levels of Government

“Each time we meet, and whether we want it or not, links are reinforced. Today I can confidently assert that partnership working has constructed those necessary bridges between people, territories, and agendas. It has had the merit of bringing closer together local elected representatives, despite the political divides, to bring the public, private and voluntary sector to interact despite their difference in views and objectives, to bring also the members of the local community, despite the old quarrels. Finally it has consolidated our connections with the Department and the Region, and other funding organisations, despite our difference in development perspectives” (Mayor of Sault, 2001).

Rather unexpectedly, according to those involved, another important outcome of working in partnership was the elaboration of solid links between the different levels of local government, the different sectors of activities in the local area, between local actors and organisations as well as local territories. Although development actors immediately saw the benefit in partnership working for using expertise, drawing out resources and diminishing conflict where it was in the way of action, such reciprocity was not really sought. However, in developing broader participation, better communication, dialogue, and awareness, partnership working “has led progressively the breaking down of some of the traditional barriers”(GMT Project Manager, 2001) and “has abolished some of the territorial, institutional, sectoral and political ruts” (Mayor of Sault, 2001). Interviewees in both case studies argued that although unity was not instantaneous, it had gradually been established and has been maintained without any important breaks.

At the time of the first phase of fieldwork, the evidence derived from the two case studies indicated the development of strong connections between local actors, individuals or groups as well as between institutions, sectors and local territories. Whilst supporting this evidence, the majority of respondents were unsure about the future of such development as well as the sustainability of these links, particularly once objectives had been met. The second phase of fieldwork indicates that these different connections had been sustained and were constantly developing.

Hence in the case of Newent, there was the common belief that the traditional divide between the different local organisations in Newent had decreased through developing partnership working through the experience of the Rural Challenge bid and Newent Tourism Stage 1:

“The members of Newent community having started to work together, this will eventually create better links” (Newent Town Councillor, 1998b).

The Chairman of the Newent Millennium Trust and of Newent Chamber of Trade and Commerce confirmed in 2001 that the local partnership practice did create better links. They both claimed that various local organisations were working closely together, that there was a lot of interplay between sectors and that conscious efforts were carried out to intensify these links:

Well, now, we have four local organisations, including the Town Council, the Civic Society, the Chamber of Trade and Commerce, and the Millennium Trust, who I really believe, will soon be working actively together. That would not have happened even three or four years ago. What is important is that each of these organisations has learnt to position itself differently from its usual lobbying role towards a slightly more cooperative one” (Chairman of NMT, 2001)

In the case of Sault, at the time of the first stage of fieldwork, there was a belief that connections between the public, private and voluntary sectors had improved significantly through partnership practice. However in the second round of interviews, all three respondents argued that these connections were not as well established as initially expected. The Mayor of Sault (2001) argued that the main difficulty was that the three sectors shared very different short-term agendas. The public sector was functioning on a medium to long-term perspective where the other sectors were concerned with short to medium term actions. He claimed that the reinforcement of links between the different sectors of activities lay in the nature and the frame for action:

“ It is around themes such as tourism for example, that links can be established. Tourism is an extremely cohesive subject. You can't expect the different sectors to work hand in hand just like that because it is a good idea. Plus we need to go beyond the idea that the future of an area relies on the elected representatives. I accept that the commune or the Community of Communes is a ground exclusively driven by elected representatives. Well with the Pays, I hope it will be a common ground for every sector to work closely.” (Mayor of Sault, 2001)

The SIVU Project manager and the Director of the CBE-PV, confirmed that the reciprocity between sectors was only just satisfactory. Both believed that the nature and frame of action were two important factors to develop stronger connections. However they argued that there was the need for a ‘*local animateur*’, an individual who could ensure transverse thinking for any development action, whatever the nature of the action, and sustain permanent links between the different local sectors.

Partnership working appeared to have contributed also to the development of clear connections with wider levels of local government and organisations. The evidence derived from the Sault case study indicates that strong links were also developed with the wider levels of local government, as for example with the Region (Lettre du SIVU, January 1998). These took an even more important dimension with the signature of the two 'Contracts of Territory'.

As observed in Chapter 4 and 5, in Newent, at the outset, the practice of partnership rested on a very inward approach. The philosophy behind the approach was that Newent was losing against the other Forest Towns (Newent-Our- Future, 1995) and that the higher tier of local government had been viewing Newent as an awkward town for a long time (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a). Consequently, Newent Town Council along with other local representatives did not really see partnership working as a means to weave links with anyone outside of the community, but as a 'forum' for expertise and funding. However, despite this initial positioning, the relationship with the higher tier was to develop:

"We had no expectations to create links with higher level of local government or any other organisations initially, but when we got in the process, we began to see the advantages and the possibilities. And also we began to understand how the system works" (NMT Chairman, 2001).

During the second round of interviews, the Chairman of the Newent Millennium Trust and the Chamber of Trade and Commerce both admitted that the relationship with the County and the District Councils as well as with other organisations serving a wider area were well established and on-going.

Finally reciprocity operated between local territories through partnership working. In Newent for example, Newent representatives commented that stronger links and relationships operated with the other Forest towns. The Gloucestershire Market Towns project manager reported similar outcomes. She confirmed that a lot of bridges and connections now existed between neighbouring territories, due to better awareness and the realisation that most of their concerns and frustrations about local management and development were shared. She also confirmed that the connections with the District and County Councils and wider organisations were well established. However she believed that there were still tensions and frustrations on both sides and that those links were still limited by the traditional issues of power and trust.

In the case of Sault, respondents all attested that one of the strong outcomes of partnership working was that of “the consolidation of links between local territories” (Pres. CdC, 1998). At the centre of partnership working characterising the case of Sault were indeed two strong dynamics, the development of intercommunality and the management of the ‘Albion redevelopment’ after the dismantling of the military site of Albion. This involved the development of a solid alliance between local territories seeking to provide the basis of socio-economic restructuring as well as to tackle rural development on what they believed was a more appropriate space.

Traditional links already existed between the communes which were part of the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault, and the creation of the Community of Communes only consolidated these links. However the problem of Albion redevelopment led the commune of Sault, and the other communes of the Community, to develop links with a much wider local territory, that of the territory of the SIVU d’Albion. All respondents admitted that the financial expedient significantly helped the development of links between local territories (SIVU Proj. Man. 1998; Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). However they also argued that these links also lay in “the recognition of the need to unite around what represented an alarming and collective problem” (Pres. CdC, 1998). As commented by Sault vice chairman (1998), although the problems were shared and the issues were mostly the same for each of the communes involved, “the whole idea of working and agreeing with other communes on the other side of the hill, was overwhelming. Half of the communes believed that the big would eat the small. Despite the initial reluctance, all respondents testified, “that the alliance that developed could not be stronger”. At the time of the first round of interviews, all respondents insisted that it was important to understand that only the alliance formed through the SIVU had the mandate to prepare and manage the ‘Albion redevelopment’. Once this had been achieved this territorial alliance would not have grounds to survive. However there was a strong belief amongst interviewees that the rather unexpected unity and solidarity between local territories had set a precedent. Hence for example the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault and another neighbouring Community decided in 1998 to work in partnership around the issue of social housing (Programme PLH²⁹). Another arrangement was set up to allow the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault and the intercommunal syndicate of Planning and Equipment and the C.AU.E (Council for Architecture Urbanism and Environment), to work towards an Environmental Charter for

²⁹ Programme having as its objectives the coordination of the planning and development of social housing on the area constituted by 3 communities of Communes (10 communes in total), including Sault.

the area of the Ventoux (Bulletin CdC-PS, No 3, 1998). The second phase of fieldwork confirmed that the reciprocity between local territories had become durable and was assessed as extremely positive, as noted by the Director of the CBE-PV (2001):

“ Whoever you ask and any report you may come across will attest that the whole partnership experience has established strong connections between the communes concerned, everyone has been forced to get on, and they are getting on. Some may argue that the result looks like a catalogue of actions, however a lot of hard work has been put into this catalogue, how you get 13 communes to agree on which actions should be carried out for the whole area, is a big, big achievement ”.

7.5 Collective Commitment, Coordination and Consensus Building

Another emerging outcomes of local partnership working, according to those involved, was the development of the sense of collective commitment (GMT Proj Man., 2001, Mayor of Sault, 2001). There was a general feeling that in bringing together the collectivity of interests in the local area, the practice of local partnership has led the different local actors to appreciate the wide range of actions taking place in the area, and the breadth of issues and difficulties:

“ Partnership working is very important because it has revealed that there are groups trying to achieve similar action, unaware of each other existence ” (Chairman of NMT, 2001)

In both case studies, interviewees have argued that whilst there were still actors that were reticent and non-committed, the common view was that partnership working has stimulated local actors to take an active part and to consider the development of the local area as a shared issue and a collective mission. According to the Mayor of Sault (2001), “once local actors realised that were sharing the same problems, they showed a real willingness to work together, and accepted it as a shared responsibility”.

The acceptance of development as a collective responsibility and the need for a shared approach stimulated and improved the level of co-ordination at the community level as well as at the wider territorial level. In the case of Sault for example, “the different members of the voluntary sector got organised into one association, the Association of the Economic and Cultural Activities of Sault. The reason for this is that they felt that they needed to get organised so that their ideas could be more coherent and taken account of, if they had one strong voice (Dir. CBE-PV, 2001).

It was also commonly argued that the increase in communication and the on-going work that had been achieved trying to integrate the various local needs into a widely accepted local plan encouraged the different actors to compromise more. Building consensus was

presented as probably one of the most difficult challenges in partnership working, as the general reaction from the various actors was to defend their personal projects and agendas. The chairman of the Newent Millennium Trust (2001) on the particular issue of consensus building insisted:

“It is wrong to think that partnership working contributes magically to a common agreement. Consensus on everything is impossible. There is a need to draw a line. Once you have outlined the general needs of the local area and what people want, it is necessary to come up with a project, to define very quickly what to do. Then again don’t expect a general consensus. If people want to stop it badly enough they will.”

The President of the SIVU, in 1998, shared a similar view, but claimed that it would be important to ‘break even’ in any decisions that are made about the development of an area. The reason he gave was that it avoided the loss of time in permanent confrontations (Pres. SIVU, 1998).

7.6 A More Integrated Diagnosis and Strategy of Development for the Local Area

In both case studies, all respondents stressed that the practice of local partnership, as the meeting of different local interests and views, contributed significantly to the establishment of an integrated diagnosis for rural development in the local area. All argued that partnership working provided an extensive overview of the various local needs and difficulties, and of the strengths and weaknesses for development. For the president of the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault (1998) “some needs and difficulties would not have been acknowledged if it wasn’t for actors getting together and sharing their views on the viability of their activities and on the future of the local area”. Newent’s local representatives made similar remarks, in both rounds of interviews, arguing that working in partnership approach from the outset “contributed to appraise the views of the community about development and identify the problems and possibilities for improvement in the local area” (Chairman of NMT, 2001). Second, it was suggested that partnership working “made it possible to lay open the local actors’ ideas and projects, the sum of which provides a reservoir of possibilities for action” (Dir. CBE-PV, 1998). Finally partnership working “obliged local actors to agree on the common directions to give to the development of their area and to define those actions and projects, which will respond to the identified needs” (SIVU Proj. Man. 2001).

The fact that local partnership working provided local actors with an integrated diagnosis and a better understanding of the various local needs, does not however mean that this

always resulted in an integrated strategy and the definition of complementary projects. Respondents did not deny that there is a tendency and sometimes a danger, when working in partnership, of coming up against a strategy that consists of a catalogue of projects and initiatives, which, in an attempt to please, is not integrated at all. Whilst there was a consensus among actors on the key issues and directions to tackle development, the scale and complexity of needs and the range of issues to be accommodated was presented as a difficult task. Moreover, the choice and negotiation of the different development projects were described as providing complex and laborious challenge.

7.7 The Establishment of Structural Instruments for Rural Development

“The outcomes of the partnership approach are more positive than we want to believe, even if I am the first one to criticise it. The fact is that despite the hardship, the practice is already worth almost 100 millions Francs, and that is just the quantifiable part of it. This achievement is a result of a whole approach, constructed on a mosaic of collaborative arrangements, the result of the efforts of every single individual involved in this approach that was ready to contribute and co-operate. The practice is not perfect, we need more, more participation from the private and voluntary sectors for example, but at least it has the merit to exist. Let’s say that the foundations exist.” (SIVU Proj. Man. 1998).

The laying of these ‘foundations’ consisted of the establishment of some structural instruments for addressing rural development problems and issues. These were regarded as significant outcomes of the local partnership practice. In the case of both Newent and Sault, the first useful instrument was the production of a strategic and integrated programme of development and the determination of a variety of projects reaching across a wide range of development issues. In the case of Newent, the definition of the regeneration strategy in 1995-96 culminated in the implementation of a comprehensive programme of environmental enhancements and tourism infrastructure improvements, as well as heritage promotion including for example the rehabilitation of the lake and the park, the accommodation of a central car park, the creation of the police museum. The Chairman of the Newent Chamber of Trade and Commerce also mentioned that the Chamber had been working for some time on the project to bring the market back to life. This project was involving the Town Council, the Forest of Dean Council but was also trying to incorporate actively the local farmers in the project so that everyone shared ownership of it.

In Sault, the main lines of development in 1997 were defined from the outset as part of the Community of Communes, itself described as a useful structural instrument for development. The strategy urged, initially, to invest in the maintenance of existing structures, such as the Tourism Information Centre and the Abattoir of the Pays of Sault, as well as the House of Environment. At the initiative of the CBE-PV, a small structure was set up, the EREF (Espace Rural Emploi Formation), helping local people in terms of professional training and employment. Alongside the Community of Communes and the CBE-PV, this structure brought together a number of partners, including social services, the chamber of commerce, and employment services. Three years later, the Community of Communes worked towards the achievement of two new projects, a rural constabulary and a multimedia centre, and at the close of this investigation these two projects were being implemented.

The other instruments that were established were specific to each case and warrant separate consideration.

In the case of Newent, a second significant instrument for which the key actors really fought, was the creation of a Development Trust. Although the promoters of this idea never succeeded entirely, the creation of the Newent Millennium Trust served as the closest substitute. As described in chapter 4, the Millennium Trust was formed in 1998, following a public meeting to discuss what Newent should be doing for the Millennium. A group of five interested people was chosen to form the Trust Council of Management. Observers from the Town Council and other bodies were invited to attend all meetings. Since its creation, and at the close of this investigation, the membership had doubled, involving, as trustees, the chairman of Newent Civic Society and of the Chamber of Commerce and Trade, and “providing excellent interchange of information and ideas with other groups in the town” (Newent Millennium Trust Business Plan, 2001, p. 2). The Trust headed two main projects, ‘Newent Arboretum’ and ‘Townscape Newent’. The Arboretum was a well-received project. The Trust generated for three years various additional resources, donations and contributions from different origins, including £15,000 from the Town Council, £2, 250 from the public through the Sponsor-a-Tree promotion, £6,500 from the Forestry Commission, and a local nursery donated 4000 trees.

Outside Newent, Newent local representatives found, in the Forest Town Alliance and the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum, two very useful tools. Both were described as

“giving an opportunity to learn about what is happening elsewhere and benefit from other experiences” (Chairman of NMT, 2001). What started off as a loose association for sharing knowledge and good practice had evolved into “a fully constituted organisation recognised by regional government and other policy making agencies as a reputable mouthpiece for market towns and their hinterlands” (Market Towns Forum Meeting, Chipping Camden, 24/05/2001).

In the case of Sault, alongside the institution of the Community of Communes, itself described as a very important structural instrument for development (see above), was the creation of the SIVU d’Albion, through which four more structural instruments were established. First was the setting up the Economic and Social Conferences, a meeting point between elected representatives, diverse voluntary groups, and any other members of the local community interested in participation. Three conferences were held between 1998 and 2000. Second was the setting up of a monitoring committee, composed of a variety of academics and retired senior civil servants periodically analysing the work accomplished in partnership. Three main reports were produced recalling and assessing the efforts undertaken and guiding local actors on the future steps to be taken (Prospective Notes, 1998, 1999, 2001). Third, was the Public Services Observatory, which requires each commune involved in the area to watch the use made of the different services and to identify those that were likely to be threatened and requiring appropriate measures. The fourth instrument, but not the least according, to those involved was the signature of the ‘contract of territory’- of two contracts in fact (see 4.8.2).

The First contract (1996-1999) helped in mobilising the necessary resources to alleviate the immediate loss incurred by the closure of the military base of Albion. Each commune concerned presented a number of projects and the work carried out through the Community of Communes of the Pays of Sault helped significantly in ensuring that these proposed projects were accepted by the different actors. The SIVU operated a selection and out of the 55 projects proposed by the 13 communes, 29 received funding, among which 14 were concerned with rural tourism and recreation, 12 were concerned with the economy, and only 4 were concerned with agriculture. The SIVU mobilised 70,9M Francs from Europe, the Region, the State, and the three Départements. However because of the nature of certain funds only part of the funding could be used. At the end of the first phase of ‘Albion redevelopment’, there was a consensus in the local area that the different financial compensations and the ‘contract of territory’ did not entirely meet the needs of rural development, particularly in terms of agricultural development, and the

SIVU d'Albion communes' members decided to work towards the signature of a second contract. The objective was "to mobilise the necessary resources for the needs of rural areas, focussing more on agricultural projects, enhancement of the heritage, and the creation of businesses" (An Assessment of the Albion redevelopment, 1996-1999, p. 5). At the close of this investigation the SIVU was reconsidering the new axis of development for the period of 2000-2003, by which time the SIVU was due to be dissolved. Rural development action for Sault would then happen entirely within the perspective of the 'Pays'.

7.8 An Established Credibility of Local Action and A New Local Capacity

"Newent discovered two important facts a few years ago. First, that the people of an ordinary rural town, leading ordinary lives with ordinary skills and ambitions can, when they make an effort in partnership with others, do extraordinary things. Newent's Onion Fayre now has national recognition and it is a perfect example" (Newent Millennium Trust, Strategic Plan, 2001, p. 1)

As observed in Chapter 5, another strong expectation placed on local partnership working was the development of a stronger local capacity in rural development through credible actions, in the eyes of local actors and funding organisations. According to the key actors and external observers, local partnership working met to a large extent this expectation.

As early as the first phase of fieldwork and reiterated in the second phase, respondents commonly suggested that by drawing from different strands of the local community, by synthesising different views into one commonly accepted vision for development action, by showing a united front to funding bodies, working in partnership allowed the establishment of greater credibility regarding local action in rural development.

In both case studies, interviewees suggested that greater credibility had been established between local actors. The key to winning support and recognition from local actors was generally a clear explanation of what was being undertaken plus associated reassurance, as:

"People are very receptive as long as they are made aware of what is being done, and that they realise that there is no ulterior motive" (NCTC Chairman, 2001).

In the case of Newent, there was a consensus that the level of credibility with local actors and the local community was probably the most difficult challenge. The chairman of the

Newent Millennium Trust for example argued that throughout the practice he learnt that “ the credit generally comes right at the end of a project, a credit which gets dissipated very easily, and generally falls apart when a new project starts” (Chairman of NMT, 2001). However, the chairman of the Chamber of Trade and Commerce (2001) shared a more positive view about the level of support and credibility that developed throughout working in partnership:

“ When you speak to people about what has been achieved through the different partnership experience, and more recently the Millennium Trust, people from the community think it is all a good idea, that it is wonderful”.

He also argued that throughout the practice of partnership, and despite the occasional sceptics, the majority of active members of Newent generally showed strong support, and overtly recognised not only the value of the local partnership approach but also what was being achieved through it. The initial interviews carried out with Newent local representatives as well as the various comments made from different local groups and individuals via correspondence, in response to the partnership actions, generally verified this statement. Comments commonly reflected open enthusiasm and a willingness to pursue local partnership action.

Similarly, in the case of Sault, the increased support from the various individuals and groups has indicated that local partnership working established a wider credibility between local actors.

The evidence also suggested that local partnership working helped in developing credibility from wider levels of government towards local action. In the case of Sault, for example, the evidence has indicated that the different partnership efforts that had been undertaken at the level of the Community of Communes or as part of the SIVU d’Albion were recognised and strongly supported. Sault local representatives were convinced that partnership working gave to local action the credibility that had been expected for a long time from the wider level (Sault Vice Chairman, 1998). The Region Development Officer, interviewed in 1998, confirmed these views. He argued he was enthused by the different efforts and actions undertaken, and that “local actors, in choosing to work in partnership, provided the Region with a clear action representative of local needs, and this was highly welcomed ”. His opinion was not isolated considering the observation of the President of the Regional Council during the Regional Plenary Assembly, on 11th November 1998, who openly argued that the action undertaken by the SIVU of Albion, presented an “exemplary partnership not only between funding organisations and the

SIVU but also local territories and local actors”. The signature of two successive Contracts of Territory and the funding made available were another indication of the increased credibility given to the partnership action undertaken.

In the Newent Case study, the chairman of the Newent Millennium Trust felt that local partnership working had contributed to the significant recognition obtained from outside the local area. He maintained that he was pleased to see that:

“There is a greater consciousness about how to present ourselves to the world, in a more organised and coherent way. Newent has become a reference, and when I represent Newent, people are very keen to listen to what I have to say and what has been achieved in Newent. The ‘top-down’ accepts us leading today, and tends to work with us rather than alongside us. And also there is praise for what we are trying to achieve” (NMT Chairman, 2001).

The different comments made in interviews and emerging from progress reports and correspondence certainly corroborate his point. As early as the first phase of fieldwork the Gloucestershire Rural Development Programme annual review for example reports in July 1997, “Newent has moved itself forward, through partnership, albeit rather informal, with clear evidence that investment is now taking place” (RDP Annual Review 1996/97). The reactions from County and District representatives and other wider organisations, similarly, were very positive. The Principal Economic Development officer of the Gloucestershire County for example, asserted in the first round of interviews:

“Newent is a very interesting example, maybe the best so far. Although it has happened through the direction of one strong individual leader, they have achieved an awful lot of work together with good support from local groups, public, private and voluntary sector together, and that in the face of real adversity, and through their own efforts” (Princ. Econ.Dev. Off. GCC, 1998b)

During the second phase of fieldwork, the Gloucestershire Market Town project manager confirmed that Newent was now recognised as a positive force in the Forest. The partnership work undertaken in Newent, particularly as part of the Millennium Trust was particularly congratulated and appreciated. The Gloucestershire County principal economic development officer, quoted above, expressed in a letter address to the Millennium Trust that he “was impressed yet again with the vision that the committee has shown for Newent” (extract from letter to NMT 2/02/2001). This view was shared by the Forest of Dean MP, who gave her complete support to a project yet to come that she believed was an “exciting and innovative project as it incorporated all the best in community activity, partnership with other bodies, provision to the whole community” (extract from Letter to NMT 06/04/2001).

In both case studies it was suggested also that partnership working offered an increased ability to identify shared problems, to develop plans and programmes to address them, to mobilise appropriate resources and support and also contributed to the development of a new capacity and this at different territorial level. There was a consensus amongst interviewees that local capacity had been enhanced. In their opinion working in partnership provided crosswise learning experience for the actors involved and the enhanced ability to address development in the local area.

7.9 Long Term Dynamic, Motivation and Action

“ Generally speaking the partnership approach has proved to be satisfactory, it has opened a lot of doors, it has contributed to the evolution of the different frames of mind. Obviously nothing is ever perfect but the proof is that we are moving forward, all together, there is now a real momentum. Ten years ago we were still in the past holding on to our traditional and individual ways. Today we are not worried to step out of this past, and stepping out of our personal boundaries. The key, with partnership is not to consider it as something established. It is a dynamic, not a structure, the structure must follow, be flexible, and respond to this dynamic” (Mayor of Sault, 2001).

One main concern at the time of the first phase of fieldwork was that of the future of the partnership approach and what it could achieve. There was the feeling that the practice experienced too many observers and not enough actors, and the projects were not strategic and integrated enough (Newent Town Councillor, 1998a, Pres. Agric. Assoc. 1998). Three years later, at the close of the second phase of fieldwork, comments on this matter were more optimistic. In both case studies, a wide number of projects had been funded and implemented, the work was generally recognised as successful and new projects were already being planned with the assurance of wide support. Local activities and living conditions had been maintained or improved. The partnership had implemented action across a wide range of issues reaching over a variety of beneficiaries. In both case studies, the practice was evolving strongly within and outside the community.

However all respondents hinted at the fragility of the practice of partnership. They argued that the success of the partnership approach relies entirely on a few individuals' activism and vision for their local area, their determination to bring an improvement to socio-economic life, and the way these individuals establish links with others and encourage interaction within and outside the local community. The lack of these ingredients they believed makes any local partnership extremely fragile. Another concern was the frustration, experienced in both cases, but most particularly in the case of

Newent, about the great difficulties to keep the momentum going and to justify the partnership efforts, when these efforts are constantly confronted by the hurdle of the grant application system. This frustration can be best illustrated by what may appear rather controversial statements by the chairman of the Newent Millennium Trust but which summarise rather well however the views of those involved in local partnership working:

“ Today I feel frustrated and slightly downcast by the bureaucratic world of the Government Agencies and Local Authorities controlling project grant submissions. (...) at intervals, the government cunningly changes the organisational structure (...) The agencies have developed a speak of their own (...) the standards and requirement for presentation of projects for approval have become so onerous that therein lies competition, have you got the resources, the time, constructive help, a grasp of accounting cash flows - no problem, heard of risk analysis, know how to manage and direct consultants? (...) Suppose a project has 5 potential funders; 2 Agencies, County District and the Town Councils and the proposer can provide some finance. You would imagine the 5 get together to approve the final agreement to proceed, including their individual inputs, any special terms to be lay down.(...) the offers and conditions may differ within the same project by the components funders.(...) The biggest single frustration for grant applicant is the time it takes to give agreement to a grant, not the final, with bows and wrapping paper, but confirmation in a series of checks that the jobs looks healthy in steps.” (J.W., in The Gloucestershire Rural Voice, Spring 2001).

Nevertheless, the fragilities and frustrations, ‘the constant work of preaching’, ‘the vociferous objectors’, were all described as being part and parcel of the approach. In the views of those involved and generally in the light of the evolution of the practice, the local partnership approach, in both study areas, has become a well-established and successful mode of operation. It was described by all as having developing trust, confidence and sense of commitment, leading to a significantly increased level of activity and “the development of transverse and lateral thinking” (Dir. CBE-PV, 2001). In the cases of both Sault and Newent, the practice was described as ‘a tremendous instrument of change’ in the local area, favouring the emergence of a real dynamic of local co-operation and action:

“The experience of partnership working has enabled the creation of a certain momentum. There is reason to believe that local actors are now taking part and feel collectively responsible at the local level, the approach is constructive. It has contributed to the establishment of a real coherence in terms of action. It has also helped, to a certain extent, in balancing the traditional local dominance and powers. It has brought actors closer together very positively and created a hopeful climate.” (Dir. CBE-PV, 2001)

“ the only thing I’d like to say to conclude is that it is an on-going practice, we have broken new grounds, we have lifted the local spirit, we have gained maturity on how to approach development action, we have come up with the goods so far, let’s hope we can keep the momentum going” (NMT Chairman, 2001)

7.10 Conclusion

In order to conclude this chapter it is possible to say that studying the perceived outcomes of local partnership practice has been useful in many respects. It has shown how practitioners in both Sault and Newent case studies, whilst witnessing very different experiences in the practice of local partnership, have shared very similar views on the nature of partnership outcomes and the way partnership working should be assessed. These findings suggest that any assessment of the role and success of the practice of local partnership in rural development should never dismiss the consideration of qualitative outcomes. Indeed, as observed throughout this chapter, those involved in the local partnership practice support the view that local partnership working provides the means of achieving broader and diversified participation in rural development action and provides a good diagnosis of local activism. It provides better communication and circulation of information, which result in the creation of alliances and better reciprocity between local actors, sectors, territories and levels governments. Reciprocity which, in their opinion, accounts for the resolution of conflict and misunderstanding between actors and institutions, for the decrease of competition between local territories, and consequently for increased stability in the relationships between actors, sectors, territories and levels of government.

The experience of those involved also suggests that partnership working provides local actors with a more integrated vision of development problems and issues due to a wider diagnosis of local needs. It aids the establishment of more adapted tools of development. It enhances and/or consolidates local capacity in undertaking rural development action, through collective know-how and solidarity. It enhances also recognition, internal and external to the local area, and particularly from funding bodies, through the realisation of a more coherent and strategic action and in certain case through the setting up of a structure, which brings more clarity to this action and those who represent such action. Finally practitioners believed that local partnership working has prompted to long term dynamism in the face of on-going changes and needs in the local area through the increasing confidence, trust and knowledge gained by local actors in their role in the rural development process.

Therefore it can be argued that the author's examination of these emerging outcomes, in reflecting essentially on partnership as a process has been useful in throwing some further light on the practice and role of local partnership in rural development. These

findings are discussed and elaborated further in the next chapter alongside the other findings in relation to local partnership practice.

CHAPTER 8. DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The presentation of the empirical analysis, and of the evidence emerging from it, now completed, the purpose of this chapter is to reflect upon this evidence in an attempt to respond to the key questions underlying the research. Set out in chapter 1, four questions formed the foundation of this research:

1. What are the reasons for the recent increase in the practice of local partnership in rural development?
2. What are the key characteristics of local partnership working mechanisms employed to address rural development?
3. What, in practice, are the processes involved in and the outcomes associated with local partnership working in rural development?
4. How appropriate and capable is the local partnership approach in rural development?

These four questions are addressed in this chapter under three main sections. The first section answers the first question and elaborates on the rationale for local partnership working in rural development. The second section answers both questions two and three and unravels the local partnership process on the basis of the emerging evidence about local partnership building and local partnership working mechanisms and processes. The third section answers question four and reflects on the local partnership practice as a whole through the issue of ‘appropriateness’ and ‘capability’, in other words ‘appropriate’ for the task of development in rural areas and ‘capable’ of achieving it.

As mentioned on several occasions throughout this work, contemporary to this investigation were a number of studies whose aims were similar, that is to further the understanding of the process of partnership working in rural development. To a large extent, the conclusions emerging from the different studies support the emerging findings of the present research.

It should be noted that further concluding points relating to these findings, notably theoretical, policy and methodological recommendations, are presented in chapter 9.

8.1 The Rationale for Local Partnership Working in Rural Development

8.1.1 Introduction

Various explanations for the recent increase in the practice of local partnership in rural development have emerged from the analysis of the available literature and of the empirical evidence. However these explanations may be broadly categorised into two areas; explanations associated with the underlying context of the rural development process today and explanations associated with the meaning of the partnership concept itself.

8.1.2 The Underlying Context of the Rural Development Process

i) Theoretical Perspectives

The analysis of the rural development literature has suggested that the recent increase in the practice of local partnership in rural development has emerged from a set of interdependent factors related to the context of rural development. Such factors include multidimensional socio-economic change in rural areas; new directions in rural development action; political, institutional and administrative restructuring and the growing concept of partnership as a relevant approach in the domain of development.

In response to a broad range of political, economic, social and environmental factors, during the last 30 years, rural areas have been witnessing important structural change (Ilbery, 1998; Le Roy, 1997). This has profoundly affected the way that these areas are approached, governed and managed (Rogers, 1993; Houée, 1996). The rural world is evolving amongst global economic and political constraints, worldwide competition, general environmental concerns and urgencies, and growing local disparities with demands made by increasingly distinct social groups and the need for specific and adapted treatments (Bryden, 1998; Cork Declaration, 1996).

The countryside is currently, and has been throughout the preceding thirty years, witnessing a diversification of its economy, society and culture, with rural areas no longer tied exclusively to agricultural or recreational functions. Within the general context of socio-economic development, rural change is now considered as a discrete

area of focus, with development policies and approaches undergoing considerable re-evaluation (Saraceno; 1994, Bryden, 1994).

Today the development of rural areas is considered through a perspective that encapsulates individual and collective dynamics; a perspective that embraces the different economic, social and environmental issues of rural life. Although it has been the case in the past, rural development is no longer exclusively concerned with 'the production of goods', 'control' or 'preservation'. The focus of rural development must combine all development issues. In addition to economic concerns, rural development must consider the provision of 'social products' including for example the power of self-determination (Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998). Rural development has become a locally-dependent, multi-dimensional and shared challenge in which international forces, central governments and local authorities, business and community leaders as well as local people, are all influential and are expected to play a collaborative role. In this context, beyond the concerns for the aims and content of a strategy, and where it might be applied, academics and practitioners have turned their attention towards the processes by which the strategy of development could be most comprehensively and effectively implemented (Goodwin, 1998). In conjunction with integrated, participatory and local approaches, the official policies, key rural agencies and local authorities have been increasingly promoting the 'partnership approach' as a pre-requisite for addressing the issues and challenges of development in rural areas (OECD, 1990; Cork Declaration, 1996).

Alongside social and economic change, rural areas have been, throughout the last 30 years, evolving within the context of political, institutional and administrative restructuring. This restructuring has led to the development of new government styles in rural areas that are today referred to as the new rural governance (Marsden and Murdoch, 1998). The new rural governance represents a set of institutions and actors drawn from government and beyond. It reflects the promotion of greater interaction between the public and private sector, and the encouragement of more popular and democratic participation within local and regional governance (Jones and Little, 2000).

ii) Practical Perspectives

The overarching context, and the history, of the experiences of local partnership practice examined in this research, in the areas of Newent and Sault, demonstrate that the

promotion of the local partnership approach by rural development policies and programmes has contributed significantly to the adoption of partnership working in these areas. The importance of the policy framework has been substantiated by those involved in these cases as presented in section 5.3. Furthermore, rural development programmes and policies have increasingly required partnership working as a condition of funding. This can be clearly observed with the Rural Challenge Fund and Rural Development Programmes in the case of Newent (section 4.7.1). It can be also observed in the Sault case study with the influence of European and regional programmes such as for example the programme Konver and the 'Contract of Territory' (section 4.8.1)

Alongside the policy frameworks, the institutional framework also provides a strong influence on the adoption of partnership working. In the particular case of Sault, the existence of institutionalised co-operation through the various inter-communal structures, and the existence of structures such the Comité de Bassin d'Emploi or APT-Initiatives-Albion, has provided a supportive environment for partnership practice (section 4.8.2). In the case of Newent, the institutional framework for rural development has also presented a conducive environment for partnership practice, as observed in section 4.7.2.

When asked about the reasons for the increase in local partnership working, the majority of practitioners believed that partnership working was an inevitable and manifest form of organisation in society today. Practitioners believed that working in isolation is, at best, only feasible in the short-term, and that collaborative working imposes itself as the approach for the future, irrespective of whether or not the objective is rural development (section 5.2.7).

8.1.3 Conceptions of Partnership

i) Theoretical Perspectives

An analysis of the rural development literature has suggested that explanations for the recent increase in the practice of local partnership in rural development may also be found in the meaning of partnership as a concept/notion and a working process. An examination of partnership as a concept and a working process, without regard for the context of its application, indicates that explanations commonly forwarded for the rise of the partnership approach in organisational management, political administration and

development literature are similar to those emerging from the rural development literature.

As observed in chapters 2 and 3, at the core of partnership as a concept, whether considered from an organisational management, political administration or development perspective, lie three main beliefs (Waddock, 1989; Gray and Wood, 1991; Mackintosh, 1992). Firstly, the combination of diverse, and often conflicting, interests can provide an answer to addressing *complex and multidimensional* issues. Secondly, partnerships can allow *cohesion* to resist the socio-economic pressures of globalisation and, thirdly, partnership can be a mechanism for providing the transparency, trust and reciprocity required in the face of increasingly unpredictable and changeable environments. Furthermore, there is conjecture that partnerships can generate *added value* or *synergy*.

Within the specific perspective of local/rural development, the concept of partnership rests on views similar to those held for the generic concept. However, this perspective provides additional considerations. Learning to work collectively may provide an opportunity to foster a *shared sense of direction* at the local level in addressing rural development, and may provide scope for *strategic thinking and planning* for short, medium and long term goals. Further, the involvement of a wide range of local interests injects a certain *local dynamism*, an extra *impetus*, to get ideas off the ground and make things happen. Partnership may also provide a platform for the *sharing of skills* between partners to culminate in a *collective know-how* and endow local actors with a stronger *local capacity*. Cumulatively, these potential benefits may provide economies of scale and avoid duplication of action (Hutchinson, 1994; Teisserenc, 1994; Mannion, 1996; Slee and Snowdon, 1997).

ii) Practical Perspectives

Many of the reasons emerging from the empirical evidence for the increase in partnership practice in rural development lie in a set of opinions that relate to the meaning of partnership as a concept/notion and a working process. The reasons are several, but all make reference to partnership working as a means by which the brakes may be taken off development (section 5.2.7).

Practitioners have seen partnership working as a means of '*opening-up*' the rural development action to all of the actors and stakeholders concerned, including local

people, and allowing these actors to open themselves to involvement in rural development action. This process of *opening-up* also concerns the decompartmentalisation of development actions such that these actions can be opened to a wider and more integrated perspective of development. Opening-up is perceived as a way to challenge the individualistic and sectarian attitudes that have been commonly perceived as putting a brake on development.

Practitioners have also seen partnership working as a means of establishing *local coordination*, to coordinate, and organise more coherently, the various local networks, local/rural development actors and rural development actions, such as to respond to duplication and fragmentation of action. In addition, practitioners have seen partnership working as a means of building *local consensus* in the face of diversity and differences within the local area, and of developing a commonly agreed strategy of development in the local area.

Finally, practitioners have seen partnership working as a means of increasing or reinforcing *local capacity* and *local ownership* in development actions, through the concentration of local resources and the development of a local collective know-how. Partnership working has been seen to provide locally adapted and accepted answers to development. The current dissatisfaction of local actors with the ability of top down decision to correspond to local needs reinforces the importance of such local ownership and capacity. It has been commonly accepted that a demonstration of local capacity is an essential element for approval by funding organisations. Indeed, practitioners have gone so far as suggesting that partnership working itself is a means to secure funding.

Reasons for the initiation of rural development partnerships in practice have also been explored in recent work by other researchers, the findings of which are in keeping with the findings emerging from the empirical evidence from the present study.

Thus it emerges from the transnational 'Pride' Study, for example, that:

"Although securing access to funding is clearly important as a reason for initiating partnerships, involving local communities, addressing common needs, pooling resources, and jointly implementing projects all featured strongly. Most partnerships appear to exist to manage a concrete project or programme which is believed to be addressing common needs, and can mobilise local support" (Esparcia et al., 2000, p.281).

And, emerging from the Edwards *et al.* (2000, p. 11) research:

“ Partnerships are formed for a variety of reasons including intentions of pooling resources, engaging communities and strengthening a ‘regional voice’ ”.

8.2 Unravelling the Local Partnership Process in Rural Development

8.2.1 Introduction

It has emerged from the empirical investigation that, although the rural development process brings together a wide range of individuals and organisations to interact on a regular basis, and although local actors are generally drawn into circumstances and events that lead them to meet regularly, local partnership working is neither a spontaneous nor effortless venture.

Whilst there is a growing recognition that local/rural development requires, and leads to, a collective action, and whilst one may assume that a common local identity would ultimately influence such collective action, local partnership working is the result of a long, slow, and laborious process.

The benefit of investigating local partnership not just as a structure but as a local process lies in the possibility it offers to show that the practice of local partnership in rural development is not ultimately constrained to an individual structure, and does not characterise an action which rests in a narrow interpretation of local actors and or local space.

From this perspective local partnership in rural development emerges as a long-term, progressive, comprehensive and pragmatic process that is organised over time. Its existence and longevity depend primarily on the local context, a set of opportunities, on the issues to be addressed, on a broad mobilisation of local/rural actors, on a flexible local space, on a local re-organisation as well as on regular and concrete achievements. It is a process that ultimately depends on people, people’s views and reasoning, people’s expectations and mode of functioning, people’s determination and vision for the development of their area.

This research indicates that the local partnership process may rest on the management of a specific initiative or programme born of a conjectural or circumstantial opportunity (as, for example, the Newent Rural Challenge bid, or the programme of socio-economic

restructuring in Sault). The local partnership process may also rest on on-going development work in the local area, and on the progress and continuity of the local area's socio-economic well being (as the Newent Tourism stage 1 in Newent and the Development Programmes for the Pays de Sault). Certainly this process is shaped by the context into which it is evolving.

To provide for a structured discussion of the findings in relation to the local partnership process in rural development, the following discussion is organised under four main headings. In the view of this author, and in the light of the evidence derived from the two case studies of the present research, these sections provides the most appropriate division to describe the local partnership process in rural areas.

8.2.2 The Role of the Rural and of the Local Context

The second research question underlying this thesis (see section 1.3) raises the issue of the specificity of local partnership mechanisms employed to address rural development. Clearly one should be wary of an analysis that rests simply on an opposition between town and country (see section 3.3); nevertheless the issue of the potential distinctiveness of 'rural' partnerships as compared with 'urban' merits consideration. Consideration must also be given to the potential specificity of local partnership mechanisms employed to address rural development as opposed to wider partnership arrangements also often categorized as 'strategic partnerships'.

With this in mind sections 2.5 and 3.6.2 have suggested that the characteristics of partnership mechanisms employed in rural development are in many respects analogous to those observed in urban areas. For example, it is possible to observe that the promotion of local partnerships in both urban and rural areas falls within the scope of improving local activism and of tackling the multidimensional nature of development/regeneration. Agriculture and farming aside, local development partnerships in rural and urban areas are concerned with addressing very similar issues such as for example business support, employment, social inclusion and access, insecurity, transport, recreation and tourism. It is also possible to observe that rural and urban contexts experience similar difficulties in building partnership arrangements that crystallize the entirety of the local views and interests, and also in maintaining local actor involvement and in strengthening the role of the community sector in such arrangements. Finally, irrespective of the context, rural or urban, partnership working excites concerns

about the implications that this practice may have for democracy, accountability, balance of powers, and conflict management. The evidence derived from the two case studies, when set against the literature on 'urban' partnership confirms such similarities, but it also reveals some differences. These lie in the origins and the objectives of partnership promotion and initiation, and also in the influence and role of the private sector in such partnership arrangement.

Hence, it has often been suggested that the reasons behind the promotion and creation of urban partnerships has been that of bringing an entrepreneurial spirit into the management of urban regeneration, typically by means of greater involvement of the private sector. The present research suggests that the promotion of local partnership working in rural areas has generally reflected more the growing awareness of a need to unite and draw together a comprehensive range of resources (human and financial) to take greater collective control over imposed and/or intended changes. Another notable difference between rural and urban local partnerships lies in the much weaker role and influence of the private sector in the former, which can be explained mainly by the fact that the private sector is often thin on the ground in rural areas. That said, from the available evidence, it appears that the extent of the emerging differences between local partnerships in rural and urban areas is small when compared with the similarities.

More significant is the specificity of local partnership mechanisms employed to address rural development as opposed to strategic ones. As described by Slee and Snowdon (1997) strategic partnerships cover a large area and involve a variety of 'strategic' partners to address a wide range of rural development issues whereas local partnerships operate over a smaller area at a level closer to local communities. The evidence derived from the two case studies suggests that local partnerships operate at a level not only closer to local communities but also closer to local interests and needs and are more likely to be widely accepted and recognised. Local partnerships not only differ from strategic partnerships in their area of coverage and their proximity to local interests and needs, they also differ in their rationale for initiation and their sphere of activities. Hence, it emerges from this investigation that the rationale for the initiation of local partnerships lies predominantly in the need to draw resources together (human and financial) and to organise coherently the existing local networks of action, and also in the will to develop local ownership and involvement in rural development action. The rationale for initiating strategic partnerships lies rather in the need for setting up broad development strategies generally at district and/or regional level. This explains why strategic partnership

activities revolve generally around the establishment of broad lines of action, the definition of which is influenced by national (or European) guidelines. Also central to strategic partnerships activities is the provision of information and guidance to local areas. Clearly locally focused, local partnerships activities are concentrated around the definition and implementation of a programme of action tailored to the local context, local needs and objectives. However, depending on the local context these activities may vary. Indeed as observed in section 5.2 the local context exerts a strong influence upon local partnerships.

Until the LEADER Observatory research on the organisation of local partnerships (1997), the influence of the context has been investigated, essentially, on the basis of those contextual elements that cause partnership to be initiated (Waddock, 1989; Gray and Wood, 1991). In 1997 the LEADER Observatory introduced the idea that local context had a significant influence on the way the local partnership practice takes shape and is organised. Moreover the Observatory suggested that some contexts required a practice following a 'mobilisation logic' and others that require a 'structuring logic' (section 3.6.2).

Supporting the findings of the LEADER Observatory on the role of the local context in partnership working, the findings of the present research have shown that there is more to the local context in its influence on the practice of local partnership, than a set of specific pressures and factors that generate interaction. Indeed, the local partnership practice has emerged from the empirical research as a process strongly shaped by the local context.

It is highly unlikely that all the elements of context that influence the local partnership practice can be identified and assessed exhaustively, particularly as these elements are often intertwined. However, a number of recurrent contextual elements have emerged, in the empirical research, to play an important part in the way the practice takes shape (Section 5.2). These elements refer to various aspects of local society, and not just to the local institutional context, as appears to be the conclusion of Edwards et al. (2000) in their recent research on 'Partnership Working in Rural Regeneration' in England and Wales. Hence the local partnership practice has been shown, in the present research, to come about and be organised *pro rata* with the local circumstances, the conceptions, opinions, vision and activism of local/rural development actors, local issues and problems, local objectives and projects, current rural policies and programmes, the local

governance mechanisms as well as with available funding and support opportunities and the past experiences of local collective action.

These findings suggest two things. Firstly, a clear knowledge of the local context is likely to provide foresight into the way the practice of local partnership will take shape, and thereby give an opportunity to those involved to build a locally adapted practice. Secondly, the consideration of the local context with hindsight may be useful, for example when the search is on for the reasons behind unsuccessful, or indeed successful, local partnership practice. The need to have a clear knowledge of the local context also emerges as being essential to the understanding of the local situation by local/rural development actors, and, indeed, an understanding of their potential involvement. This, to a certain extent, concurs with the views of the OECD (1990) with regard to the need for assessing *political feasibility* prior to initiating partnership in rural development (section 3.6).

With regards to the influence of the context on the logic of the practice, although the LEADER Observatory's argument is validated by the research findings in many respects, this author believes that such a distinction is too clear-cut. It is clear, from the present case studies, that the Newent case was more strongly allied to the mobilisation logic and the Sault case closer to the structuring logic; however elements of both logics are evident in both cases. Indeed, whether or not the practice is built from scratch, the two logics are organic to the local partnership practice whatever the context.

8.2.3 An Ongoing Local Mobilisation

As mentioned earlier the empirical investigation has shown that the decisions of local/rural actors to become involved in local partnership practice do not rest on a sudden spirit of local cooperation. The review of the history of the local partnership practice in both of the present case studies and the examination of the mechanisms and processes involved in local partnership building and local partnership working suggests that partnership practice necessitates a true local mobilisation. The empirical evidence also strongly indicates that the initiation of the local partnership practice depends strongly on a 'catalyst' capable of bringing about such local mobilisation.

In validation of early research conclusions, several catalysts were identified in this author's research. These concur with many of the 'environmental forces' proposed by

Waddock (1989), and summarised in section 2.6.2. For example, a local crisis has emerged as an important catalyst for the initiation of local partnership practice. Indeed, there is evidence in the Sault case study, through the particular experience of Albion Redevelopment, that the bigger the crisis the stronger the inclination to work in partnership. Other significant catalysts, as observed in section 5.3, are the existing local networks, the pressures exerted by rural policies and programmes, and the availability of funding. Furthermore, the vision of an individual, or a common vision or understanding in the local area about a particular issue, are two other driving forces behind local partnership initiation. Thus, the practice observed from the two case studies indicates that, although the initiation of the practice may be associated with one single dominant catalyst, most of these catalysts have played some part in the initiation of partnership working.

This requirement for a catalyst to stimulate the initiation of partnership working gives to the local partnership practice a *character of opportunity* and, in many respects, an opportunistic character, a trait that can be found throughout the development of partnership practice.

Although the need for a catalyst is essential to initiate the practice of local partnership, the encouragement of local/rural development actors, individuals and organisations to take action in partnership, and work towards the definition and implementation of a common development strategy, also involves persistent and sustained efforts of mobilisation. This mobilisation must include: i) people and organisations; and, importantly ii) a flexible local space, as discussed further in subsequent sections. The two partnership practices examined in the present study also suggest that efforts of mobilisation must embrace openness and flexibility.

It was observed in both case studies, and particularly in the Newent case, that there is a risk in undertaking mobilisation on the basis of a narrow interpretation of local/rural development actors and of the local space. The risk is to confine the vision and strategy for development, and consequently the practice of local partnership, within the narrow limit of a parish or a commune. In the light of the Newent experience, it was clear that such interpretation is likely to lead to an action with very little scope, recognition, and legitimacy.

The suggestion that a broad scope of mobilisation is imperative, however, does not imply that very locally based partnerships are not worthwhile. In fact, the suggestion is quite the opposite. Evidence derived from the case studies indicates that there is a significant need for the process of local partnership to take its roots at this local level. For further discussion, see section 8.2.3.

i) The Mobilisation of Individuals and Organisations

The promotion of the local partnership approach lies in a new interpretation of rural development, viewing development as a multi-sectoral process and the result of negotiation and dialogue between actors drawn from the various sectors concerned. As observed in chapters 2 and 3, the existing literature on partnership suggests that mobilisation sits at the heart of this process. It suggests that mobilisation provides a means by which the 'relevant communities of interests' that may be drawn into the partnership practice can be identified (Selsky, 1991). In this respect, early research on partnership working has suggested that 'relevant interests' should be understood as those which will be affected by the outcomes of the practice and/or those which will be needed as a resource to the practice (Wilcox and Charlton, 1997).

In confirmation of the early research on partnership, the practice observed from the two case studies indicates that mobilisation is an intrinsic part of local partnership building and that the partnership issue and the initiative generally dictates those 'relevant interests' to be drawn into the local partnership arrangement.

However, evidence from the case studies supports the notion that efforts directed to mobilisation must concern all sectors, including the voluntary and community sectors. The evidence is provided by the commonly held view that each of these sectors has a stake in the development of an area, and any local/rural development strategy and initiative is likely to have an impact across the different sectors. Comprehensive mobilisation prevents exclusion and promotes supportive cohesion. As observed in chapter 5 there are likely to be individuals in the local community who are wary of any action from which they are excluded, even if indirectly. A comprehensive mobilisation is required to rally the available ideas, projects and expertise necessary for that which is ultimately at the core of local/rural development partnership working; meaning, the determination of a collective strategy of development for the local area, and the

definition of a number of initiatives in keeping with such a strategy, in order to focus available or potential resources on commonly agreed goals.

As observed in section 5.6, the rallying of ideas, projects and expertise is indispensable to the local partnership practice. This rallying allows for an appraisal of the local situation, and provides local actors with the opportunity to express their views on what is essential to the development of the local area and what they perceive to be the issues and problems there. It raises awareness and facilitates a wider understanding of local issues and problems by local actors. The experience of those involved suggests that this rallying makes clear to local actors that their problems are often shared. Most of all, it allows them to choose their action and to bring out those common issues on which local actors will be likely to find a consensus.

Confirming the suggestions of early research on partnership, the present research has noted that efforts of mobilisation generally consist of consultative and informative methods (public meetings, displays, press releases and questionnaires). The problem, however, in the experience of those involved, is not so much how to mobilise, but how often these efforts should be undertaken throughout the practice.

Indeed although important efforts were made to mobilise individuals and organisations at the outset of the practice, in each of the case studies, some interviewees insisted that these were often too sporadic, and not sufficiently sustained, suggesting that it should be on-going. According to those involved, the lack of sustained efforts of mobilisation is likely to result in loss of interest by local/rural development actors.

This raises the question of who generally instigates and takes charge of such mobilisation. The evidence derived from both case studies shows that in some cases key representatives of the private or voluntary sector play a part in this kind of effort. However, it is commonly the public sector, through elected representatives and local authority officers, which is at the origin of mobilisation. In both case studies it was evident that the public sector takes a leading role throughout the local partnership process.

This is in keeping with other recent research on rural development partnership:

“The public sector remains a key actor in forming partnership” (Jones and Little, 2000, p. 182).

“The state sector at European, national and local levels is perceived to be the main driving force influencing the emergence of the partnership, but key individuals and community groups also play an important role, especially in the development stages” (Esparcia, et al., 2000, p. 281)

ii) Mobilisation of a Flexible Local Space

Very little is said in the literature about the spatial foundation of the partnership practice. However, the two experiences of local partnership under scrutiny reveal that this is an important issue.

Indeed, the empirical findings suggest that in the same way that the local partnership process in rural development rests on an open mobilisation of local/rural individuals and organisations, it rests also on the mobilisation of a flexible local space.

Some rural development issues or problems demand action with a wider foundation than that of a communal or a parochial space, a space which appears to be a common landmark for local people and local actors in their interpretation of the ‘local area’. The issue of tourism, in the case of Newent and Sault, was one good example of action, which forced the local partnership practice to progress at a wider territorial scale than otherwise might have been the case.

In the particular case of Sault, interviewees have used the term ‘community zone’ to refer to the space in which the process of local partnership is led to develop and progress. The extent of this ‘community zone’, in their experience, depends on the issue and on the views partners have about how the issue should be tackled. If this ‘community zone’ sometimes embraced the traditional administrative and territorial boundaries (communal, inter-communal) it has also been shown to go beyond those boundaries, and even sometimes to go beyond what may be considered as the ‘rural’ boundaries. This could be observed, for example, when the creation of a ‘Pays’ was considered, and that the suggestion to extend the community zone to an urban pole was made. As discussed in section 8.2.3, this obviously has repercussion on the way the local partnership practice is organised and operates.

8.2.4 An Inevitable Local (re-) Organisation

Not only does the practice of local partnership necessitate an on-going local mobilisation, in the light of the practice observed from the two case studies, it also implies local organisation, or more exactly local re-organisation. This local re-organisation happens at different levels; indeed it concerns the role of local actors, the space of local/rural development, local structures, and local strategy of development. As a result the organisation of the local partnership practice in rural development develops over time.

i) From the local community upwards

As discussed in section 8.2.2, some local issues and problems have to be addressed through actions that do not lie in the traditional administrative boundaries that generally define the local space, for example the commune or the parish. This has obvious repercussions on the definition of the spatial foundation and of the scale of local/rural development partnership organisation and operation.

The empirical findings suggest that, in order to be successful and a legitimate effort, the practice of local/rural development partnership demands organisation at different territorial and decisional levels and spatial scales, from the community upwards. This means that, before and alongside the setting up of a practice at strategic level, the practice must be organised at the very local level. Moreover the practice must engage the very local level in any partnership action that may concern or affect it.

As observed in section 5.4, under the pretext that rural development issues and problems require strategic action, the common tendency is to set up partnership arrangements at a 'strategic level', meaning generally, at regional or district level. As was the case in the Forest of Dean District partnership, these arrangements rally different sectoral experts and local elected representatives to decide what sort of action would be 'strategically' most appropriate in a targeted area.

Whilst the organisation of local/rural development partnership practice, at the strategic level, may be valuable, in the opinion of those involved it inevitably ignores a wide range of views and expertise, creating an enormous gap between those who conceive rural development action and those who put it into practice locally. This gap ultimately leads to misunderstanding and mistrust, to the lack of relevance of the defined action when it

comes to its application. It also hinders local activism and the dynamism and sense of responsibility in the rural development process of local actors.

As observed in section 5.4, and particularly in the light of the Sault case study, if partnership working is common practice from the local level and is organised at different levels, the perceptual gap gets narrower, and the value of a partnership arrangement at strategic level is more likely to be recognised if ‘the culture of partnership’ is bedded into the local community.

The local partnership practice in rural development therefore raises the question of how should partnership working be organised and structured from the very local level to the regional level. In this respect, recent research has come up with similar questions. Hence, Edwards et al (2000) point out that “the question for policy makers is not so much about at which scales partnerships can operate at most effectively but which types of partnership should be operating at which scales” (p. 45).

ii) From Actor/Stakeholder to Partner of Rural Development

Another common idea behind partnership working is the stimulation of a new dynamic in rural areas, a dynamic which encourages local actors to assume more responsibility in rural development in order to cope with the on-going and multifaceted mutations of rural areas. Partnership working therefore implies a change from the status of ‘actor of development’ to one of ‘partner of development’ (LEADER Observatory, 1997).

The present research shows that, in practice, the transition from one role to the other is not easy to make for local rural development actors. Moreover it shows that, in practice, the sharing of responsibility and the playing of an active role in the preparation and implementation of rural development action does not follow automatically from their new role as ‘partners’.

As observed in chapter 5, and discussed in the previous section of this chapter, early efforts of mobilisation are undertaken to rally the whole of the local actors and stakeholders to take part in rural development action, or at least to raise their awareness about such action. These efforts aim to identify those ‘relevant interests’ that should become involved in the practice, or should we say, to identify those who are interested to get involved. Indeed, in the light of the two partnership experiences, efforts of

mobilisation do not ultimately lead to the devoted involvement/enrolment of local rural actors and stakeholders.

The consensus amongst practitioners, in both case studies, suggests that the identification of partners does not hold particular challenges, in so far as there exists a network of local actors and stakeholders, some key local leaders and other representatives from key organisations from which partners can be drawn. Edwards *et al.* (2000, p.16) present similar findings and report that the number of partners in local partnerships “tends to be fewer and can be more readily identified and enrolled”. Rather, the experience of practitioners reveals that the real challenge is, first, to get partners involved in more than their own personal battles, and second to sustain their involvement in the practice throughout the development process. It also suggests that the difficulty is not so much to convince local actors that working in partnership is a good thing but to get them involved and sustain their involvement. Indeed, local actors’ involvement ultimately lies in the potential personal benefits to be derived from the partnership venture.

If personal benefit does not arise, or is not perceived to have arisen, the involvement of local actors in the partnership practice is inevitably at risk, or at the very least the practice is likely to be highly criticised. (This can be observed in the evidence provided in sections 6.2 and 6.7). The question here is to define the kind of benefit local actors are likely to expect, as different actors hold different opinions on the nature of this benefit. For example, some may want to see that their investment, whether personal or financial, has proved to be useful in the realisation of actions on the ground, or even the realisation of tangible outputs. For others, it may be that the benefit lies in the better coordination of the different actions. For other actors, benefit may be expected through an improvement in relationships, and, hence, reductions in community conflict. This list is by no means exhaustive and many other examples of expected benefit could be illustrated. Moreover, expectations of partnership working may change with the evolution of the partnership practice over time, in the experience of those involved (see evidence provided in section 7.1).

At the outset of the present research, this author anticipated that the expectation of actors would often be influenced by the origin of the interests represented. However, no evidence to substantiate this conjecture was found in the two case studies. Indeed, the views of representatives of the public, private and voluntary sectors, at the very local level, are similar in terms of their expectations of partnership working (section 5.2.7).

The two local partnership experiences under scrutiny in this research have shown that the practice of local partnership brings together a variety of local rural development actors/stakeholders, in which they act as 'partners' of the same action, or do they?

As observed in chapter 2, the literature on partnership suggests that a genuine partnership must allow the sharing of responsibility and power between partners (Waddock, 1989; Slee and Snowdon, 1997). The key issue in this respect is that of equality or balance. Issues of equality and balance have implications for 'representation' and for the 'role of partners' in the practice. These are discussed individually.

A commonly held view in the literature is that a balance must be found within the partnership arrangement so that all the relevant interests are represented. However, the common agreement is that, although the presence or absence of an actor/stakeholder can have some implication for the future of the partnership, a representative partnership is not ultimately synonymous with the direct involvement of the entire 'stakeholding population' (Gray and Wood, 1991). The main difficulty is to strike a balance between a large number of partners, which makes management and decision unwieldy, and small number of partners, which involves the risk of some interests being misrepresented (Slee and Snowdon, 1997; Lowndes et al. 1997).

The practice observed in the two case studies confirms that the issue of representation is, in practice, a challenging one. One of the main challenges is to allow sufficient representation without making local partnership a too big and unmanageable practice. Evidence from the case studies indicates that the level of representation varies between sectors.

The public sector is strongly represented in the local partnership practice, mainly due to its political and financial means. Those involved in partnership, as observed in section 6.2.1 never contested the predominance of public sector representation. Indeed the public sector was presented as a 'natural' and 'traditional' actor in local rural development actions, particularly local elected representatives, described as the political and accountable figure.

Similarly, representation of the private and voluntary sectors in the local partnership practice has not emerged as a problematic issue in the practice observed in the two case studies. Indeed, in both study areas, these two sectors were organised into groups or

organisations, at the head of which is a leader, a chairman, a president or a director who stood as the key and recognised representative in the local area. His or her involvement was implicitly assumed, and his or her legitimacy as representatives rarely contested. They were seen as active local players willing to commit their time, as observed in section 6.2.

However, it has emerged from the practice observed in the two case studies that the issue of representation is more challenging when it concerns the community sector, 'the people'. The emerging consensus amongst practitioners is that often people's views and interests are neither clear nor organised. Nor are the people willing to dedicate time to the clarification and organisation of their views. When local people do take part however, they are generally of the 'same age, class and professional background', which gives them a common basis, and the time to play a role in the local partnership practice, as observed in section 6.2.1.

This provides a link with another important issue, that is the role of partners. The common argument in the literature about the role of partners is that a genuine partnership implies the sharing of power and responsibility. In this respect early research on partnership revealed that, in practice, partnership does not necessarily imply that all partners play an equal role, rather it implies that partners feel that they are involved to an appropriate degree (Bennett and Krebs, 1991; Wilcox, 1994).

Amongst practitioners there seems to be a consensus around the pragmatic view that the whole point of partnership working is to bring together a variety of powers, expertise, and roles. Therefore instead of talking about the 'sharing of responsibility and power', we should talk about the 'association of responsibility and power'. This suggests that the fact that local actors take responsibility and play an active part in rural development action does not imply that all partners are playing the same role. Indeed, as observed in section 6.2.2, for some practitioners it even defeats the objective. Part of the value of partners is in their representation of a spectrum of interests and views and their contribution of diverse expertise.

Public sector representatives, elected representatives or local authority officers, tend to play, naturally, a key role, whereas partners representative of the private and voluntary sectors tend to intervene when it is necessary, and mainly on an advisory basis. Despite the existence of good will from the latter two sectors, all practitioners interviewed made

clear that the political authorities and funding organisations controlled the decision making process. However, in both case studies, the evidence shows that, with the help of appropriate structures and structuring, and a minimum of openness and organisation in the partnership arrangement(s), the voluntary and private sectors are likely to play a more active role in this decision-making process (section 6.2.2).

iii) Structuring and Managing the Local Partnership Practice in Rural Development

Much of the research on partnership and partnership working has been undertaken on the basis of a formal partnership structure. In this context, the study of partnership management has rested on the internal organisation of such partnership structure, for example, the management board, advisory groups, and project manager (Slee and Snowdon, 1997, Walsh et al., 1998).

In preferring to investigate local partnership not just as a structure but as a local process, the present research has revealed that the local partnership practice in rural development may be the result of a temporary arrangement, formal or informal, attached to a specific initiative. This was specifically the case in the Newent study area. In the case of the Sault study area, the local partnership practice was the result of the efforts and actions of a variety of structures and organisations.

Whether the focus is Newent or Sault, there is, amongst practitioners, a consensus around the view that the main purpose in developing the practice of local partnership in rural development is to provide uniformity and complementarity in the rural development action. The practice observed in the two case studies has indicated that such uniformity requires important work of co-ordination and management.

This work consists of various activities associated with the supervision of the different partnership efforts, and the organisation and convening of meetings. It also consists of the writing and circulating of progress reports, applications for funding, the selection of projects, the definition and implementation of programmes, the distribution of funding, etc. For some partners this work is inscribed within the boundaries of their professional work; for others it is down to personal investment. In all cases, however, the required work is reliant on voluntary action and individual drive. The practice observed in the two case studies indicates that the work of management and coordination depends on the

existing structures and arrangements, and on the management rules of these structures or arrangements.

Indeed, when approaching integrated rural development action, as discussed above for specific programmes, the preparation of a general strategy also inevitably demands co-ordination and structuring. Generally, leading local elected representatives, as well as the representatives of key local structures and organisations, provide this co-ordination. These key players liase on a regular basis, both formally and informally.

In the views of practitioners, when the creation of a structure is considered, it is essential that this does not result in an additional structure to the already crowded local rural institutional framework. In the context of local partnership working, the experience of practitioners demonstrates that it is actually the coalition that creates the structure and not the structure that creates the coalition. Indeed, it has emerged from the present research that the practice of local partnership is a matter of culture more than structure. Structure should be seen as an artefact of an environment of cooperation, rather than something that is purposefully created to develop a spirit of cooperation. Structure cannot be imposed (Section 5.7).

iv) Definition of a Collective Strategy and of the Actions of Development

The integrative capacity of partnership working is at the centre of the operational remit of local partnerships (Walsh, et al. 1998). Indeed, one of the main ideas behind partnership working in rural development is that of offering a mechanism for bonding together the multiple interests and perspectives that are seen as necessary to the implementation of integrated policies, policies that are responsive to diverse local socio-economic conditions (OECD, 1990). It has also been suggested that local partnership working provides the means by which available resources can be focussed on commonly agreed goals (Bryden, 1998). This requires the definition of a clear, well-understood and mutually accepted vision for the future of the local area, with the associated objectives and projects of development (OECD, 1990).

The lesson that emerges from the practice observed in the two case studies is that the development of a common vision is a process that needs time and tenacity. The development of a common vision is a confusing process for local rural development actors, who have a tradition of functioning on a relatively individualistic basis (section

5.6). As discussed in section 8.2.2, the development of a common vision requires a broad mobilisation of local ideas, projects and expertise. Such mobilisation consists of dialogue, debate and discussion between partners about the various issues and problems faced by the local area. Practitioners warn that these discussions should be constrained to those issues that can feasibly be addressed, as observed in section 5.6.

The key process between the mobilisation of local ideas, projects and expertise and the determination of a collective strategy for development is that of *consensus building*. The practice observed in the two case studies reveals that thinking strategically is perceived as one of the biggest challenges of local partnership, as priorities, generally, do not accord universally across the local area and sectors. The practice observed in the two case studies reveals that working in partnership inevitably consists of the convergence of customarily diverging interests.

In this context, the definition of an agreed strategy of development and projects requires time. Time for partners to be aware that they share a common reality. Time for partners to be ready to agree on the same strategy. Time for partners to go beyond their own interests and recognise that they are part of wider interest. Time to co-ordinate and integrate the different visions into a strategy. Time for partners to be able to make a choice among the different projects of collective interest.

Practitioners have found that choosing between the various projects put forward by individual partners is very difficult. Compromise is difficult and one common pitfall is to try to accommodate the demands, views and projects of all partners. Moreover consensus becomes increasingly difficult as the scale of the partnership expands. This has been particularly observed through the Sault case study (section 5.6). The common risk, in the experience of those involved, is that discussion and negotiation culminates in an accumulation of ideas and projects instead of an integrated strategy and set of initiatives. Another risk, particularly when there is money available, is to set unachievable goals or to be over-indulgent in the choice of projects that are likely to receive funding.

The evidence of the two case studies suggests that the process of consensus building should rest on a simple and manageable plan, with simple issues, from which a number of short-term initiatives can be defined and implemented. It also suggests that consensus building requires a rallying issue, an issue that is going to interest most partners, including funding partners and organisations. Tourism and environment, for example,

were commonly advanced as a rallying issue in the two areas under the present study. In addition to the exchange and negotiation between partners on a rallying issue, the process of consensus building must also consider a number of external rules and requirements, for example those of the funding organisations. These are often imposed and are rarely negotiable through the process of partnership working.

The practice observed from the two case studies shows that a number of development actions have emerged, some of which have been implemented successfully, as described in chapter 7. These actions have focussed, primarily, on the improvement of existing resources and, generally, were not innovative and integrated. The evidence suggests that these actions are ultimately constrained by the availability of funding. As observed in section 6.7, the availability of funding clearly defines the action to be undertaken.

v) Funding Local Partnership Action

Funding is at the centre of partnership rhetoric. Early research on partnership often emphasised that the financial benefit of a pooling of resources and assets was a real driver in the initiation of partnership working. Further research on partnership has suggested that this benefit lay more in the potential of partnership working for providing access to government funding than in the aggregation of cross-sectoral financial contributions. Recent research suggests that rural development partnerships follow the same tendency:

“As access to public funds has increasingly been funnelled through competitive programmes, in which partnership is a criterion for eligibility, so partnerships have been created to gain specific public funds, as opposed to being created to draw resources from a wider range of sources across the public the private and voluntary sector” (Edwards et al., 2000, p. 9).

The practice observed in the two case studies supports the claim that funding is a real driver of local partnership working. It also supports the claim that grant chasing largely accounts for the initiation of local partnership working. Indeed the expectation that the public, private and voluntary sector would, overnight, get organised and join their resources, has been slightly hopeful, and perhaps naive.

One may further argue that it was unrealistic to expect that such previously separate groups, that is the public, the private, the voluntary and the community sectors, could

instantly venture jointly, share decisions and ultimately share their resources, on the simple basis that it could be a good thing: they have to get used to working in a manner in which they have little or no experience; they are likely to be wary of investing in a venture from which they may be uncertain of the benefit. Furthermore, and this has proved to be particularly the case for local partnerships in rural development, the financial resources often do not exist. This is clearly evident from the two case studies of the present research.

In fact, even when the possibility of funding is present, the evidence of the two case studies indicates that the release of funding from funding agencies is far from straightforward. In the case of Sault, the 'Contract of Territory', and the associated release of funds, was not due solely to the area presenting a 'good and healthy partnership'. The experience of the practitioners interviewed in this research indicates that the obtaining of funding was attributed to a few determined local actors, particularly local elected representatives, who persisted in convincing all parties involved, including the region, department, central government and the European Union, that the actions to be funded were worthwhile and indispensable. Furthermore, in this particular case, an acknowledgement must be made of the political 'weight' of some actors in the partnership.

In the case of Newent, competitive regimes, for example the 'Rural Challenge' process, have proved to have a net adverse effect on their intention to encourage partnership working. The 'all or nothing' nature of the funding process of Rural Challenge has proved rather unsettling in the case of Newent. Whilst, undeniably, it had the effect of triggering local partnership working, it hurried a process which required time to build consensus and define priorities in the local area. Moreover, the failed bid by Newent to Rural Challenge left local actors rather disillusioned with the bidding process and the expectations and criteria of funding agencies (the reader is referred to section 6.7).

Jones and Little (2000, p.181) confirm the concerns about competitive funding regimes in their recent research on the Rural Challenge funds. Supporting the above findings, they argue that bids "inevitably build around schemes which are seen as likely to win rather than schemes which necessarily address the most pressing problems of an area". Moreover, they point out that the bidding method encourages 'false partnerships'. These partnerships, in their description, are formed 'over the weekend' simply to obtain funds. They rest on a strategy devised by just a few local authority officers, and/or key players,

and a set of declared intentions, which subsequently must be followed because, usually, funds are released on an incremental basis. According to Jones and Little (2000, p.181), these “partnerships of convenience” often experience considerable difficulties when implementation gets underway.

It would be highly unjust to characterise the local partnership practice observed in the two study areas as being practices of convenience, particularly considering the efforts contributed to the practices by the actors involved. However, the evidence certainly indicates that partnership practice rests strongly on opportunities, and available funding is a significant opportunity for any local representatives wishing to undertake action in the local area.

The particular point made by Jones and Little (2000) does, in the view of the present author, raise a question that they do not raise themselves, but is certainly relevant to the practice of any rural partnership. The question is that of criteria for funding release, an issue that has been raised repeatedly by practitioners in both case studies, and most particularly in the Newent case through the experience of the Rural Challenge bid and subsequent experiences. The statement made by the chairman of the Newent Millennium Trust regarding the meanders of grant chasing, as observed in section 7.9, certainly reflects the significance of the issue of funding for local partnership practice. In the experience of practitioners, the success of funding applications is unpredictable due to unclear success criteria and complicated application procedures.

8.2.5 The Outcomes of Local Partnership Practice

Studying the outcomes of local partnership practice, both expected and actual, has been proposed in the literature as being an important way of increasing our understanding of partnership working (Gray and Wood, 1991). In that respect only, they have been considered in this research. Thus, when the decision was made to undertake an exploration of the outcomes of local partnership practice the intention was never to perform an impact study or any other form of evaluation. Instead the intention was to throw some further light on the practice and role of local partnership in rural development.

Much of the initial ‘infatuation’ about local partnership working in rural development lay in the presumed value of this innovative mode of organisation and operation for arousing

a new dynamic in rural areas in the face of profound and multidimensional changes and increasing local diversity (OECD, 1990; Houée, 1996). At the core of this dynamic lay several issues, for example participation, cohesion, integration, strategic thinking, local capacity building etc., issues that are perceived as necessary to ‘take the brakes off’ development (Bryden, 1998; Le Roy, 1997; Teisserenc, 1994). These expected outcomes of partnership concern therefore, less the tangible outputs than the quality of the approach, an approach that will allow such outcomes.

As observed in section 5.2.6, and recalled in section 8.1, in both case studies most of the expected partnership outcomes concerned less the tangible development outputs, for example the creation of jobs, than the resolution of a number of problems and issues that were seen to represent real obstacles to development in each area. These obstacles included, for example, conflicts and misunderstanding, individualism, the inadequacy of top down views on the development of the local area, the inappropriateness of administrative boundaries, the lack of an integrated vision of development, the duplication of action or the lack of it, etc. Hence practitioners saw partnership working as a means of ‘opening up’, local coordination, consensus and local capacity building (the reader is referred to section 8.1 for more details).

It is a fairly common opinion in the literature that any investigation of partnership outcomes should not focus uniquely on tangible outputs and thereby dismiss the importance of process outcomes. This is based on the idea that the quality of partnership action should be seen as affecting the partnership’s ability to deliver on a given issue (Wilcox and Charlton, 1997; LEADER Observatory, 1997; Waddock, 1989). Recent research on rural development partnership supports both the early research on partnership and the evidence of the present study. Indeed, Edwards *et al* (2000, p. 41) claim that when considering partnership achievements attention should be paid to “not only the regeneration product, but also the quality of the process that produces those outcomes”.

Indeed as observed in chapter 7, the most commonly reported outcomes of local partnership working pertain to the process of partnership working more than to the tangible outputs that may have resulted from the practice. Hence, in the views and experience of practitioners in Newent and Sault, local partnership working provides a means to achieving broader participation. It allows wider and better communication and interaction between development actors. It allows the development of alliances and linkages between actors, sectors and territories, alliances that seem to survive initiative

after initiative and to progress through these initiatives. It allows the development of a broader vision of development problems and issues and facilitates the definition of 'commonly agreed' actions, the realisation of which is not only adapted to local needs but also increases the value of collaboration. Finally, the evidence suggests that local partnership working increases local capacity in development action.

Reflecting essentially on the process of partnership operation, these outcomes throw some further light on the practice and role of local partnership working in rural development. The observed outcomes emphasise and confirm the need for the local partnership practice to be as open and flexible as possible in order particularly to welcome those who are ready and interested to play an active part in the process. Indeed, the efforts undertaken to widen the decision-making process in rural development to more diversified audience, whilst maybe too sporadic, have, in both case studies, prompted promising, or at least enthusiastic, reactions in the local area. Not only have these efforts helped to establish a diagnosis/appraisal of local activism, defining who were and were not ready to take part, they have also stimulated the participation of new actors and supporting agencies. This suggests that the more the approach is open and flexible, the greater the chance of actors being aware and taking an active and useful part in the preparation and implementation of development actions. Furthermore, an open and flexible practice is required to avoid creating an isolated and autarchic practice confined to a narrow interpretation of local actors, local/rural development action and local space.

The observed outcomes also emphasise the need for the local partnership practice to be built over time, and the importance of the learning curve in this practice. They confirm the suggestion of Slee and Snowdon (1997) regarding the need for 'an adequate time scale', and support the findings of the present research regarding the importance of time in this practice (section 8.2.3, iv). Time is important for the barriers to be taken down, time for people, organisations and territories to learn to go beyond their initial conflicts and differences, to function in solidarity with each other instead of in competition. Time is important for the practice to build at different levels and between these different levels. Finally, time is important for mutual understanding and, in other words, time for the culture of partnership to settle.

The observed outcomes also suggest that the practice of local partnership rests on people's personal development. Evidence suggests that this personal development is a result of the modification of their attitudes, their role and their mode of action in the

development process. It is also a result of their efforts to go beyond their personal agenda and views and to learn about the agenda of others. Finally the evidence suggests that the personal development of actors is a result of an acceptance to join a wider and more interactive environment.

In reflecting on outcomes the present author prefers to use the term 'development' rather than the term 'transformation' as first put forward by Mackintosh (1992). Indeed, there is no evidence in this research to indicate that local partnership working leads to a 'mutual struggle for transformation' between the public, private and voluntary sectors, as Mackintosh envisaged. In fact quite the opposite has been observed in the various remarks made by practitioners in the two study areas. Practitioners spoke of the defence and/or sharing of their views, of negotiation and compromise, but none gave reasons, even implicitly, to suggest that, as representative of a certain interest, they attempted to move the objectives and culture of others towards those of their own. It is true that practitioners have acknowledged that, as the result of working in partnership, they have broadened their views and understanding about the agenda of other actors, but only as far as accepting differences and modes of working.

Finally, the observed outcomes emphasise the need for the local partnership practice to evolve in a 'conducive and appropriate environment', an environment that legitimises the practice of local partnership in rural development. It has been observed in the present research that the creation of a structure is not a guarantee of coalition, so there is a risk that the incitation to partnership working through funding mechanisms may lead to the creation of 'false partnerships' or 'partnerships of convenience'. This suggests that if policy is to encourage local partnership working, then to promote partnership as a 'good thing', to promote the creation of 'rural development partnership structures' and to impose partnership working as a funding requirement are not necessarily sufficient for partnership practice to develop, and the culture of partnership working to settle.

Alongside the need for personal development, the findings of the present research suggest that the evolution of the local partnership practice requires an institutional and territorial re-organisation, as well as the re-organisation of power between the different territorial levels, to give legitimacy to the local partnership approach.

8.3 The 'Appropriateness' and 'Capability' of Local Partnership Approach in Rural Development?

Two further issues underpinning this research have been expressed in question four:

- how appropriate is the local partnership approach to rural development? and,
- how capable is the local partnership approach for the delivery of rural development?

To provide an answer to the question of 'how appropriate is the local partnership approach to rural development', an assessment is required of the 'suitability' or 'fit' of the partnership approach to the rural development context of the areas studied in the present research. The two case studies suggested that:

Partnership working is appropriate because it:

- is an accepted and welcomed approach by rural development actors or stakeholders;
- endorses existing rural development networks;
- supports and integrates existing organisational and institutional structures in rural areas;
- acknowledges the variety in culture and competence between rural development actors;
- accommodates both endogenous and exogenous perspectives to rural development;
- allows flexibility in the involvement of actors, such that the appropriate actors are mobilised for each specific issue;
- accommodates the territorial perspective of rural development.

However, other evidence from the case studies shows that, in these cases, the appropriateness of local partnership working may be challenged by:

- the slowness of the process in producing local rural development outcomes;
- the maladjustment of the institutional and cultural environment in which the local rural partnership process is forced to evolve;
- insufficient funding from within the local rural area;
- the financial and political dominance of the public sector over the private, voluntary and community sector in rural areas.

In addressing the issue of ‘how capable is the local partnership approach for the delivery of rural development?’, this author divides the assessment into two parts. First, capability can be taken at face value, and as such an assessment of the capability of the partnerships from the case study areas to deliver rural development in the traditional sense can be made. However, this provides a superficial and insufficient assessment. Thus second, the assessment of capability must also focus on assessing the process of partnership in its ability to build capacity within the local rural community for rural development action. The two case studies from the present research provide evidence that contributes towards the assessment of capability, in both these senses, i.e. delivering rural development, and building capacity to act in partnership.

In terms of delivering rural development, the case studies have shown that partnership working:

- helps in the preparation and determination of a programme of rural development in the local area;
- enhances capacity to obtain funding;
- develops an ‘opening-up’ of the rural development responsibility to a greater range of actors, and encourages local actors to become involved.

In terms of building a capacity to act in partnership, the case studies have revealed that the process of local partnership working in rural areas develops:

- local coalitions;
- a greater understanding of individual actors agendas;
- a broader vision of local needs and issues;
- a collective commitment towards the development of the local area;
- local capacity, and therefore a greater credibility of local action from both within the local area and also from the outside;
- strategic thinking within the local area;
- a shared sense of direction;
- greater trust between actors;
- integrated diagnosis, but not necessarily an integrated strategy;
- new impetus for action, and a real dynamic of cooperation, in the local area.

Some broader conclusions on the execution of research and its possible significance in a more general sense are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSIONS

Having summarised the substantive findings of the research, the author reflects now on the adoption of a trans-national perspective and on the methodology of the present research before considering some broader implications of the findings for theory and policy, and making recommendations for further research.

9.1 The Trans-National Perspective

The present research, in resting on trans-national case studies, has been valuable in many respects but most particularly if viewed from a wider European perspective.

At the outset, it was anticipated that parallels between a French case and a UK case could be drawn without ever intending to make the study fully comparative. This was based on early observations that the experience of local partnership working in each country appeared to encounter very similar issues, arguments and expectations. This research has confirmed these early observations in the case study areas, and indeed provided evidence of parallels beyond those anticipated. This research has established that local partnership working in rural development, in both case studies, shares undeniable common issues and similar trajectories of development despite the contextual differences.

The contexts, rural, developmental and institutional within which each of the local partnership studied developed clearly differ. At the risk of oversimplifying, on the one hand there is rural England, green, protected, sought after, increasingly populated, economically and socially diversified. On the other hand there is rural France, vast and partly empty, a collection of very varied environments (physical, climatic), territories, and development contexts. Although increasingly influenced by equivalent European orientations, there exist significant differences between the French and English rural development policy objectives. These differences rest primarily in the way rural areas are considered and approached in each country. Indeed, in England the main concern has been, for some time, the protection of rural areas from the threat of urban growth and housing sprawl, from the socio-cultural implications of ex-urban in-migration, and from the damage of agricultural modernisation. In France, the main preoccupation has been instead the promotion of the development of rural areas, particularly in the most remote regions, which comprise 37 per cent of the national territory with a view to curbing the process of desertification and also to restore a certain balance in the socio-economic and

demographic evolution of rural territories. Moreover while rural development policy in both France and England involves a wide range of actors and institutions at both the national and local level, one important difference between the two countries lies in the role, responsibilities and power of local government structures in the rural development process, particularly that of the French communes, central actors of rural development, increasingly today through the agency of intercommunal groupings.

In spite of those differences it was interesting to observe that the attitudes, motivations and also the frustrations and sense of resignation about the practice of local partnership were almost identical between the two cases. It was informative to find the same kind of characters and personalities in both case studies, and to observe that these people played comparable roles in the process. In addition, the realities of local action were similar and, whether with substantial or little power and resources at the local level, the need to develop local partnership working between various sectors to address development was the same, and the constraints and difficulties attached to the practice to all interests and purposes identical.

The consideration of two case studies from two different countries has therefore been very useful in showing that despite the national, political, organisational, and cultural differences, partnership working raises similar issues and challenges, and as such shows that at least in local partnership working in rural development social behaviour may transcend national and cultural differences.

9.2 A Reflection on the Methodology

For the reasons described in Chapter 4, the adoption of the case study approach as a research strategy in this research has proved to be very useful. Indeed, it has provided the means for an exploration of the overall process of local partnership working *in situ*, without extracting that process from the general context and circumstances of its application. It has also provided the author with the means to establish the links between the various mechanisms and processes involved in the practice. Finally, it has allowed the author to make the links between certain elements of context and certain processes.

The exploratory nature of this study, with its intention to observe and describe the overall process of local partnership working, rather than to attempt generalisation, guided the author to select two case studies as the basis for empirical study. Indeed, as described

earlier, the particular case study areas were chosen to provide the extra dimension that a trans-national perspective gives, rather than an explicit attempt to find commonality. Given the time and resource constraints of such a study, restricting the empirical analysis to just two study areas provided a balance between breadth of partnership experience studied and the possibility of a suitably thorough longitudinal observation.

The adoption of a qualitative approach has proved to be essential in allowing a close, detailed observation of local partnership working and an understanding of the meaning that partnership practitioners give to it. It has allowed an understanding of the logics that underlie the opinions of local/rural development actors on the subject of local partnership working. As observed in the present research, local partnership working is very much a lived experience; it involves interactions, conversations, exchanges of opinions etc., and a set of complex and inaccessible processes, the breadth of which is difficult to discern unless approached qualitatively.

The use of a thematic framework, designed around the process of partnership evolution, has proved to be invaluable in guiding the overall observation of the local partnership practice in both case studies, and in the collection and the analysis of the data.

Amongst the three techniques used to collect data, namely documentary research, attendance at meetings and semi-structured interviews, it is the latter technique that has proved to be the most revealing and useful. Indeed semi-structured interviews allowed issues to be discussed in depth, and hence allowed for better understanding of some of the mechanisms and processes that were not clear from the available documents. For example, it was easier to retrace the history of the partnership practice from interviewees' accounts than from the documents. In both case studies, the majority of the persons contacted for interviews responded very positively. During interviews, interviewees were generally very willing to engage with the interviewer, to devote time and effort responding to questions in a considered and detailed manner. In contrast, documentary research, whilst useful in providing some markers of the origins and historical evolution and general workings of the local partnership practice, and allowing some familiarity with some of the actors involved in the practice, provided very little information or, perhaps, only a very rigid perspective on the reality. As observed in section 4.6.3, attendance at meetings was not as beneficial as initially anticipated. This was primarily because of the scarcity of partnership meetings at the time of the fieldwork. However, the

implementation of all three techniques of enquiry proved useful as a means of corroboration.

If this research were to be repeated, the author would approach the fieldwork from the perspective of a participant observer rather than that of a direct observer. The author feels that the fieldwork, as a participant observer, should involve a six-month period as a minimum. It is expected that this would allow greater insight into the intricacy and everyday nature of the practice.

The analysis of the data proved difficult due to the complexity and entanglement of the processes and issues studied, and the complexities of the translation of the French material into comparable prose in English. As expected, there are very real differences in jargon and interpretation. The author had particular difficulty in representing French colloquial expressions in English without losing the subtleties inherent in the expressions.

9.3 Linking the Findings to Theory

In developing the focus of the present research, in chapter 1 and also in chapters 3 and 4, it was suggested that local rural development partnership working had been largely untheorised thus far. Nevertheless, the present research was framed within the existing knowledge about partnership working and within the wider theoretical context of rural development.

In that regard, the findings of the present research throw some further light on a number of aspects of partnership working and, specifically, local partnership working in rural development. Therefore, with reference to the opening paragraph of the chapter, this author will now summarise the various contributions made by the present research to the body of knowledge about partnership working *per se*, and will outline some additions provided to the body of knowledge about local partnership working in rural development.

9.3.1 Contributions to the Body of Knowledge about Partnership Working *Per Se*

As presented in sections 1.3 and 1.4, the objectives of this study did not include any intention to validate or extend theory about partnership working. However, it was

inevitable that a detailed examination of local partnership working in practice would throw some further light on the reality of partnership working, not in the sense of generalisable findings but in the sense of observations that are worthy of further consideration during the advancement of theory.

Early research had identified that various aspects of the context influence the initiation of partnership working and the way that partnerships develop, including circumstantial, motivational and structural aspects. The present research has provided evidence in support of these previous findings, and has provided evidence of further, previously unreported contextual influences. These are the role of actors' past experience of partnership working, the importance of existing conflicts and the importance of actors' or stakeholders' preconceptions. Because of the many influences on the initiation of partnership working, this study confirms that partnership working has a character of opportunity. Furthermore, the influence of the context suggests that any explanation for the performance of partnership working must consider those contextual elements. Likewise, an understanding of the influences, and their effect, will indeed assist any attempts to predict the possibility of establishing partnership practice, as suggested earlier by OECD (1990).

Research has been divided on the subject of 'equality of role' between partners when working in partnership. Findings from the present research suggest that, rather than attempting to achieve equality of role, partnership working should be seen as a means of agglomerating various roles and areas of expertise. It is more important for partners to contribute appropriately rather than equally.

The present research has demonstrated that coalitions built around partnership working inevitably demand structure and management. It also suggests that care must be taken not to confuse the need for structure and management with structure and management being a pre-requisite for coalition. It suggests that structure and management should evolve, where necessary, out of the motivation and action of the coalition.

It is widely recognised that partnership working must accommodate a 'clash of culture' and varying working practices. In addition, the present study has also identified that the accommodation of customarily diverging interests and motivations is equally challenging and important. It also confirms previous findings that recognise the importance of the 'learning curve' that all partners will travel along, and the time taken on this journey.

Furthermore, a lack of benefit from partnership working, whether perceived or actual, has been clearly identified as a substantial risk to partnership practice. It is critical that actors feel that partnership working is providing direct benefit.

9.3.2 Contributions to the Body of Knowledge about Local Partnership Working in the Field of Rural Development

The extensive examination of local partnership working in rural development, in the two case study areas, provides significant insight into the practicalities of partnership working 'on the ground'. As stated in sections 1.3 and 1.4, the present research has sought to provide practical insight to enrich the current body of knowledge about local partnership working in the area of rural development. Theorisation and generalisation have not been attempted, rather a detailed presentation of findings and the significance of those observations for future theory construction. Furthermore, reference to other contemporary research has been made, to which these findings provide further validation.

Early research had suggested that the following aspects of context have an effect on local partnership working in rural development: the legal administrative system, regulations in force, the role of the public authorities, institutional practice and exercise of citizenship. The present research confirms the influence of these aspects and suggests that this list may be extended to include the sense of local identity and ownership, the degree of local activism, rural conceptions and values and local conflicts.

In the literature, it was suggested that local partnership working relies strongly on the local actors' willingness to cooperate, to negotiate and to share responsibility in rural development action. The present research concurs with this suggestion.

Early research had also concluded that some contexts may require a partnership practice that follows a 'mobilisation logic', and others a practice that follows a 'structuring logic'. The present research does not provide any evidence in support of this. On the contrary, the present evidence suggests that both logics are organic to the practice of local partnership working.

The author's research findings indicate that the practice of local partnership in rural development may require persistent and sustained efforts of mobilisation. The efforts of mobilisation concern people, organisations and space, and require openness and

flexibility. Indeed local partnership practice can not be limited to the narrow interpretation of local actors and local space, and cannot be constrained within the narrow limits of the lower administrative level (for example, the commune or parish). From the outset of the practice, the efforts of mobilisation of people/organisations must aim to be comprehensive in order to prevent exclusion, to promote supportive cohesion, to provide a wider appraisal of local needs and interest, to raise awareness and to facilitate a wider understanding of local issues and problems by local actors. And, efforts of mobilisation must be repeated if interest is not to be lost.

The present study has also identified that partnership working requires flexibility in terms of the scope of the local space. The present author has coined the term 'flexible local space' to indicate that the territorial space considered by the partnership may vary in relation to issues addressed by the partnership. It is the issues, not the structure of the partnership, which defines the scope of the local territorial space. Thus, local partnership working should take place at different levels from the very local level to the regional level.

The literature repeatedly suggested that the value of local partnership lies in its ability to allow equal representation amongst the various local interests. But it has emerged from the case studies of the present research that equal representation is difficult to achieve, particularly in the case of the community sector's interest. Indeed, unlike that of the public, private and voluntary sectors, this interest is rarely organised in the local area.

The present research has demonstrated that coalitions built around partnership working inevitably demand structure and management. It has further established that the establishment of a specific structure must consider and integrate existing organisational and institutional structures, avoiding the creation of unnecessary additions to the already cluttered institutional landscape.

A commonly held view in the literature is that the organisation of the local partnership practice requires the definition of clear, well-understood and mutually accepted aims and objectives. The present research has shown that discussions around the definition of these aims and objectives should be constrained to those issues to which resolution is feasible. Moreover, aims and objectives need to be defined in terms of the short, medium and long term. An easy mistake in the practice of local partnership working is to try to accommodate the demands, views and projects of all partners, which will result in an

accumulation of ideas rather than the definition of an integrated action of development. Indeed, the present research has revealed that it is challenging for local actors to think strategically as priorities do not accord, even at the local level. A temptation to be avoided is to set unachievable goals just because funding is available.

Because of limitations in the financial base of local rural areas, the local partnership practice in rural development relies, primarily, on external funding, normally from public sector sources. Grant chasing, however, has proved to be an unpredictable and complex challenge that, in itself, demands significant cooperation between actors as well as the vital ingredient of determined individuals who persist, often 'against the odds', to obtain grant assisted funding. Nevertheless, it is clear from the case studies that, rather than encouraging partnership working, competitive funding regimes, based on an 'all or nothing' bidding process, can easily result in disillusionment.

To conclude, in the views of those involved, the local partnership approach has appeared indeed to provide those initial expected benefits from such a practice; namely broader participation, greater reciprocity between rural development actors, and an increase in local capacity for development action. In addition to those expected outcomes the present research has also revealed that the local partnership practice was a useful means of providing a diagnosis of local activism, and therefore a stimulus to the participation of new and supporting actors. Additionally, it has been interesting to observe that, although during the initiation of partnership working the actors involved were unsure of whether the practice would continue after the catalytic action, in both case studies the practice has settled into the local area and continues to operate.

9.4 Some Implications for Policy and Practice

Many policy and practical implications have already been alluded to. Therefore, at this point all that will be attempted is a short summary of some key suggestions for the rural development policy maker and practitioner:

- The practice of local partnership does not rest on a narrow interpretation of local actors and local space; the practice of local partnership obliges the local territory to be flexible.

- Efforts to mobilise local actors to take action in partnership must be constantly repeated. It is important that involvement is suggested through the publication of pertinent information rather than forced. A variety of publicity media is needed to reach all potential actors, including those that are generally excluded from rural development action. It is critical that those actors who will decide to become involved will find a partnership arrangement that is open to their involvement.
- In defining the local partnership objectives short, medium and long-term goals should always be established.
- Local partnership is above all a process not a structure. When the creation of a specific partnership structure is considered it is essential to recognise that it is not the structure that creates the coalition but the coalition that creates the structure.
- The provision of funding should be considered on the basis of negotiated contracts rather than competition, such that funding agencies can establish locally adapted and appropriate funding criteria, which can be clearly understood and followed by local actors.

9.5 Some Recommendations for Further Research

This author makes various recommendations for further research:

- The identification of the means to integrate what can be learned about a local context into a prescription for good practice for local partnership working in a specific area provides significant scope for further research, and potentially significant benefit in the field.
- Local partnership working in rural development is strongly dominated by the public sector, mainly because it is seen as a traditional provider. Future research could be directed towards understanding how the private sector could be encouraged to take greater responsibility in the rural development process, and how to achieve greater involvement of the private sector in local rural development partnerships.
- Further research could explore the processes of consensus building in partnership, with the aim of providing recommendations for good practice in achieving consensus.

- Finally, as observed in the Sault case study there are situations in which local partnerships are formed as a result of a crisis, and these partnerships may differ from those that are operating to address rural development on a day-to-day basis. Rural areas are constantly under the threat of a crisis, and therefore how partnerships form and operate in a crisis situation provides significant scope for further research.

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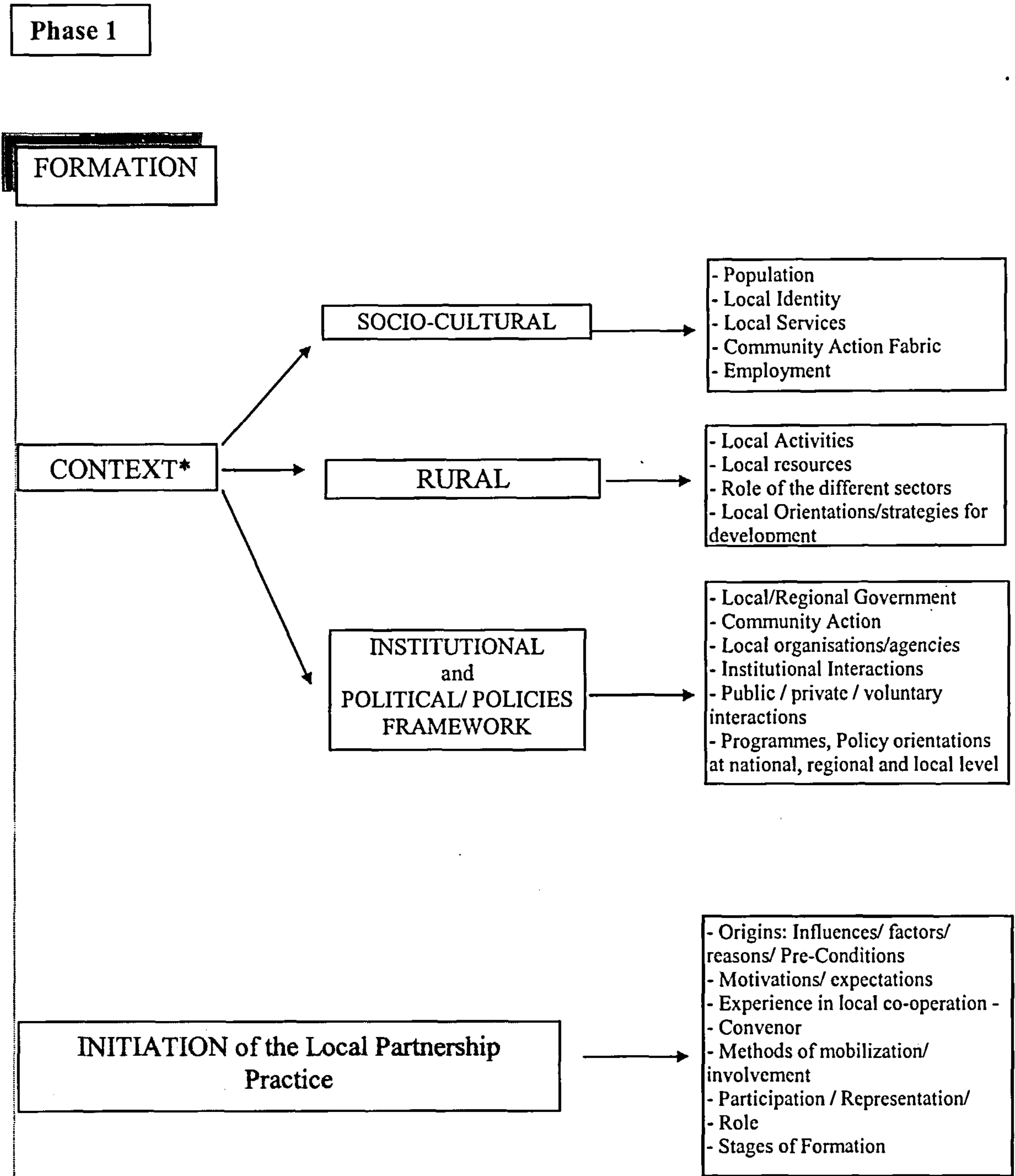
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: THEMATIC FRAMEWORK: The Practice of Local Partnership through the Process of Partnership Evolution



* **CONTEXT:** Background context in which the local partnership practice came about and was developed.

OPERATION

TYPE/Form of the Partnership Arrangements

STRUCTURING, ADMINISTRATION,

PARTNERS

Preparation of Development STRATEGY and OBJECTIVES

Preparation and implementation
Development INITIATIVES, ACTIVITIES

PLACE and SCALE of the Local Partnership

DIFFICULTIES/
LIMITS

- Organization
- Composition
- Existence of Committees/board
- Staff
- Procedures
- Resources
- Methods

- Origins/sectors/type/Level
- Partners Inputs:
Expertise/time/financial
- Networking or collaboration
experience
- Role/ Scope for participation
and decision making
- Equal opportunity
- Expectations from the Practice
- Relation with other partners
- Existence of competition/
conflicts
- Confidence/ communication
and trust between partners
- Co-ordination/Articulation
between partners
- Expected and resultant Benefits
of being a partner
- Evolution

- Consensus Building
- Stages of strategic design
- Partnership Purpose/ issues/
Objectives
- Evolution of objectives

PHASE 2

ACHIEVEMENTS/
OUTCOMES
of the practice

PARTNERSHIP

Expected benefits
Perceived achievements

Evaluation/ monitoring methods
Progress Review

Appendix 2: LIST OF DOCUMENTS AND SYSTEM OF REFERENCING

NEWENT

Types of document	Title of document quoted	Reference in the text as:
<i>Minutes of meetings:</i>		
	Minutes of Newent Town and Parish Council Meeting, held on 24/06/1996	Minutes of NTC Meeting, 24/06/96
	Minutes of an extraordinary Meeting of Newent Town and Parish Council held on Monday the 25/07/1996	Minutes of NTC Meeting, 25/07/96
	Minutes of Millennium Trust Council Management Meeting, 5 th November 1998	Minutes of NMT Meeting, 5/11/1998
<i>Strategic Reports:</i>		
	Forest of Dean Strategic Local Plan, 1992	FOD-DC Local Plan, 1992
	Forest of Dean Regeneration Partnership: Regeneration Strategy -A Total Approach (Extract applicable to Newent), June 1995.	FDRP Regeneration Strategy, 1995
	Newent-Our-Future, The First Step Toward a Regeneration Plan, 1995	Newent Regeneration Plan, 1995
	Newent Millennium Trust Proposals	Newent <i>et al.</i> 1998
<i>Bid Reports</i>		
	Newent Partnership County Rural Challenge Bid Report, June 1996	Newent Rural Challenge Bid, 1996
<i>Progress Reports</i>		
	Gloucestershire Rural Development Programme, Annual Review 1996/97 (Extract applicable to Newent)	RDP Review 1996/97
<i>Correspondence</i>		
	Newent Town Council, 'Response to the Forest Regeneration Strategy for Newent'	Extract from Correspondence To FDRP, August 1995
	Letter to all Councillors 'Newent shows its Mettle', 21st June 1996	Extract from Correspondence, 21/06/1996
	Letter to all Councillors from the Mayor of Newent, 5/08/1996	Letter to all Councillors, 5/08/1996
	Parishioner's comments on Newent Regeneration Strategy 15 July 1995	Extract from correspondence to NTC, 15/07/1995
	Cleeve Mill Neighbourhood watch, Comment on Newent Regeneration strategy, 25 July 1995	Extract from correspondence to NTC, 25/07/1995
	Policy and Resources Committee answer to Newent Regeneration Consultation, committee held on the 9 May 1996, Letter dated 24 May 1996	FoD-DC comments, 9/05/1996

SAULT

Types of document	Title of document	Reference in the text as:
<i>Minutes of meetings:</i>		
	Deliberation No 9/1993 - 6 May 1993, <i>in Cahiers des Délibérations de la Communauté de Communes, 1993</i>	Extract from Délibération CdC-PS, 6 May 1993
	Deliberation No 25/1995 - 13 Sept. 1995, <i>in Cahiers des Délibérations de la Communauté de Communes, 1995</i>	Extract from Délibération CdC-PS, 13 September 1995
<i>Strategic Reports:</i>		
	Programme de Développement Economique durable du Pays de Sault, 1997	Development Programme, Pays of Sault, 1997
	CBE des Pays du Ventoux, Raports d' Activities 1995 1996 1997 1998	CBE-PV, 1995 CBE-PV, 1996 CBE-PV, 1997 CBE-PV, 1998
	CBE des Pays du Ventoux, Statuts and Programme d' Action, October 1991	CBE-PV Status and Programme, 1991
	Note d' Orientation Générale sur la Reconversion d'Albion , SIVU of Albion, 28 January 1997	Note of Orientation, SIVU d'Albion, 1997
	Réussir la Reconversion D'albion, SIVU of Albion, 19 November 1997	Reussir la Reconversion d'Albion, 1997
	Notes de Prospectives Comité de Prospective 1997, 1999, 2001	Prospective Notes, 1997 Prospective Notes, 1999 Prospective Notes, 2001
<i>Bid Reports:</i>		
	Contract de Territoire , Juillet 1998	Contract of Territory , July 1998
<i>Progress Reports:</i>		
	Sault en Provence, 1998 Rapport de l'Office du Tourism	Sault en Provence, 1998
<i>Correspondence:</i>		
	Présentation de la stratégie de Développement de Sault au SIVU, Mayor of Sault, 25 August 1997	Extract from Correspondence to the SIVU, 25 August 1997
<i>Others:</i>		
	Arrêté du 30 Décembre 1992, Prefecture du Vaucluse	Order of the Prefect, 30 December 1992
	Arrêté du 9 Juillet 1997, Prefecture du Vaucluse	Order of the Prefect 9 July 1997
	Lettre du SIVU pour la reconversion d'Albion, No 1, Janvier 1998	Extract from the 'Lettre du SIVU d'Albion', Jan. 1998
	Lettre du SIVU pour la reconversion d'Albion, No 2, June 1998	Extract from the 'Lettre du SIVU d'Albion', June. 1998
	Lettre du SIVU pour la reconversion d'Albion, No 4, Jan 1999	Extract from the 'Lettre du SIVU d'Albion', Jan. 1999
	Bulletin of the Community of Communes, 1996, No 1	Extract from the 'Bulletin CdC-PS', 1996
	Bulletin of the Community of Communes, 1997, No 2	Extract from the 'Bulletin CdC-PS', 1997
	Bulletin of the Community of Communes, 1998, No 3	Extract from the 'Bulletin CdC-PS', 1998
	'Loi Montagne', 9/01/1985	'Loi Montagne', 9/01/1985

Appendix 3: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES AND SYSTEM OF REFERENCING

NEWENT

Title	Referenced in the text as:
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Phase 1

Town councillor, (Previously Major of Newent, Newent Tourism Stage 1 Project Manager	Town Councillor, 1998a
Town Councillor, previously Chair of the Newent Civic Society	Town Councillor, 1998b
Town Councillor, chair of the environment and planning committee	Town Councillor, 1998c
Chairman of Newent Chamber of Trade and Commerce	Chairman NCTC, 1998
Environment Agency Planning Manager, also resident of Newent	EA Planning Manager, 1998
Director of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, Secretary of the County's Parish and Town Council Association	Dir. GRCC, 1998
Rural Development Programme Project Manager	RDP Project Manager, 1998
Director of Planning and Leisure Services, Forest of Dean District Council	Dir. PLS FOD-D, 1998
Principal Economic Development Officer, Gloucestershire County Council	Econ.Dev.Off. GCC, 1998a
Economic Development Officer, Gloucestershire County Council	Econ. Dev. Off. GCC, 1998b

Phase 2

Chairman of Newent Chamber of Trade and Commerce	NCTC Chairman, 2001
Chairman of the Newent Millennium Trust, (Town Councillor during the first round of interview)	NMT Chairman, 2001
Gloucestershire Market Town Project Manager (Previously the Forest of Dean Rural Development Programme Project Manager	GMT Project Manager, 2001

SAULT

Title	Referenced in the text as:
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<i>Phase 1</i>

Vice Chairman of the Commune of Sault and President of the Communauté of Communes of the Pays of Sault;	Pres.CdC-PS, 1998
Mayor de Sault;	Mayor of Sault, 1998
2 nd Vice Chairman of the Commune of Sault and President the Hunting Federation;	Sault Vice Chairman, 1998
President of the Association of Local Businesses and Trade;	Pres. Assoc. of Local Businesses, 1998
President of the Agriculture Association;	Pres. Agric. Assoc., 1998
President of Information and Tourism Centre of the 'Pays of Sault' ;	Pres. Tourism Centre, 1998
Director of the 'House of Environment';	Dir. House of Env., 1998
Director of the 'Comité de Bassin d'Emploi' of the 'Pays of Ventoux';	Dir. CBE-PV, 1998
Maire of 'St Christol' (Commune member of the Communauté of Communes of the Pays of Sault) and President of the SIVU;	Pres. SIVU, 1998
The SIVU Project Manager;	SIVU Proj. Man., 1998
Development Officer of the Region Provence Alpes Côtes d' Azur's (representing the Regional Commission for development and planning).	PACA Dev. Off., 1998

<i>Phase 2</i>

Mayor of Sault	Mayor of Sault, 2001
Director of the Comité de Bassin d'Emploi du Pays du Ventoux	Dir. CBE-PV, 2001
Project Manager of the SIVU d'Albion	SIVU Proj. Man. 2001