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Is LEADER Elitist or Inclusive?

-Composition of Danish LAG boards within the Rural Development and Fisheries Programmes 2007-2013

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Abstract

The literature on local action groups (LAGs) offers various reflections on whether the LEADER initiative is elitist or inclusive (Böcher 2008; Shortall 2008; Shucksmith 2000). As one of seven key concepts behind the LEADER method, the bottom-up concept spurs an expectation that LEADER is more able to involve the average citizen than other programmes. Until now, however, only scarce information on the composition of the LEADER boards has been available to tell us if this is really so at the decision-making level. A survey from 2008 examining the composition of the 55 local action groups established in the Danish Rural Development and Fisheries Programmes 2007-2013 shows that the majority of the board members are extremely well educated older men holding many other posts in society. This lopsided representation is discussed for its problems and potentials from two opposing theoretical angles: from a perspective of post-liberal theories of inclusive democracy (Young 2000) and the relative autonomy of elites and sub-elites (Etzioni-Halevy 1993).
1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to analyse the composition of the Danish LEADER LAG boards and assess the democratic problems and potentials related to their composition. Partnership organising in local action groups (LAGs) has become a central element in the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. From 2000-2006, about 900 partnerships were working to create development in the European rural areas through the community initiative LEADER+ (Contact Point 2007). This number will increase dramatically in the new programming period. For example, in the Nordic EU countries, Denmark has raised the number of LAGs from 12 to 56, Sweden is about to increase the number from 12 to about 60 and Finland is going to keep its high number of LAGs (55). In all three countries, almost all of the territory will be covered and considerable funds will be distributed through the LAGs. Interestingly, however, only scarce information (often in the form of case studies) exists on the socio-economic composition of the LAG boards. Since public money is distributed through the LAGs and the board members decide on and implement strategic development plans, it is important to examine who the board members are: First, in order to make it possible for the politicians and the administration to be able to carry out the right type of meta-governing (Sørensen 2006) in relation to the LAGs. Meta-governance can be translated as the governance of selfgovernance and consists of ways of influencing, coordinating or framing the actions of the LAGs both politically and financially. Second, to make the board member composition more visible to the public as part of the overall democratic anchorage (Sørensen and Torfing 2005a) of the LAGs.

The literature on LAGs offers quite different reflections as to whether the LEADER initiative is elitist or inclusive and almost no generalised information on the actual
composition of LAGs is given. Böcher (2008), however, slightly touches the question in a recent article about rural governance and its implementation in Germany. He writes:

“It seems that ‘weaker’ interest groups like women, the young or nature protection groups (...) get a better chance to be involved, due in part to the EU guidelines that prescribe the broad participation of all regional actors” (2008, pp. 383-384).

Böcher’s point corresponds well with the fact that one of the seven key concepts behind the LEADER method is the bottom-up concept. Shortall (2008), however, states that some groups (Protestants, women and agricultural families) do not participate in different types of official partnerships, among others LEADER partnerships. However, she does not name these groups socially excluded since this can lead to a situation where the activities that they are actually involved in, are overlooked. She writes that “Non-participation can represent a valid and legitimate choice, and often one made from a position of power” (2008, p. 3). This point relates to the work by Davies (2007). Davies states that the voluntary members of a partnership will be better off if they choose an Exit-Action strategy and leave partnerships or abstain from entering partnerships where there is no room for the voluntary members to act since non-communication and creeping managerialism exist. Also Scott (2004) concludes that inclusion of the most marginalized remains a key challenge for LEADER partnerships. A point that is further underlined by Geddes (2000) in a study on 89 partnerships including LEADER partnerships across the EU. Additionally, Derkzen and Bock (2007) speak about professionalism in partnerships and state that individuals or voluntary representatives can lack both institutional, economic and knowledge resources in order to participate fully in the partnerships. Concerning the previous LEADER I and
LEADER II periods in Spain, Perez (2000) provides some generalised information saying that local government authorities dominate LAGs. Finally, also related to the LEADER initiative, Shucksmith (2000) questions whether collective capacity building through territorially-based endogenous development is consistent with capacity building of excluded individuals and redistribution of power towards the less powerful. He concludes that there is a tendency:

“…for endogenous development initiatives to favour those who are already powerful and articulate, and who already enjoy a greater capacity to act and to engage with the initiative. This may even lead to a capturing of the initiative by elites or sectional interests, in extreme cases. More marginalised groups are less able to participate or engage with the programme, and are less likely to be empowered unless explicit attention is given to their inclusion” (2000, p. 215).

One could ask whether it is a problem if only white middleclass men (Young 2000) participate on the LAG boards. The literature states that from a steering perspective this may not be a problem. Governance networks can help tackle wicked problems in the creation of efficient governance because competent network actors are able to identify innovative solutions to policy problems early in the process. At the same time, governance networks are able to reduce the risk of opposition to the implementation of new initiatives as well as create a framework for the taming of conflicts between stakeholders (Sørensen and Torfing 2007, p. 13). Realisation of the potential gains will obviously be most successful in well-functioning governance networks (Huxham and Vangen 2004; Sørensen and Torfing 2007, p. 13). If, for example, key stakeholders with valuable resources and ideas are missing, there is a risk that it will hamper effective
governance. However, from a democratic perspective, important aspects might also be lost if participation patterns become too lopsided. The ability to increase the democratic capacities of local people in general has a risk of decreasing. So has the opportunity for the LEADER initiative to increase the feeling of community and make room for different life styles in the governance process (Sørensen 2006)). Finally according to Putnam (2000), lopsided participation reduces the creation of bridging social capital and thus in the end becomes a condition for success or failure in the economic development of the local areas, too.

As one of seven key concepts of the LEADER method, the bottom-up approach spurs an expectation of LEADER as being more able to involve the average citizen than other programmes. Still, no information on the composition of the LEADER boards has been available to tell us if this is so at the decision-making level, and the above-mentioned works do not provide clear answers since the main parts of the articles originate from case studies and no survey data exists. Therefore, this article intends to fill this gap by presenting a recent study on the composition of Danish LAGs and discussing it in relation to post liberal theories of democracy.

The article is structured in six sections. In section 2, I introduce the Danish Rural Development and Fisheries Programmes 2007-2013. Section 3 presents the survey method and section 4 treats the survey results. Section 5 contains a discussion of the democratic problems and potentials related to the empirical findings and it will bring in the theoretical perspectives of inclusive democracy (Young 2000) and the relative autonomy of elites and sub-elites (Etzioni-Halevy 1993). Finally, section 6 concludes.
2. LEADER in Denmark 2007-2013

Since 1991, LEADER has worked as a laboratory in the form of a community initiative. The aim of the LEADER initiative has been to encourage the emergence and testing of new approaches to integrated and sustainable rural development in the countries involved. This means that local rural actors have been encouraged to think about the longer-term potential of their area (CEC 2000). Thus, besides the bottom-up concept, six other key concepts have formed the LEADER method (implementation of area-based development strategies, partnership organising, cross-sector/integrated approach, innovation, cooperation and networking) which has been the common denominator in the implementation of the initiative in the European countries. Today LEADER has been mainstreamed into the Rural Development and Fisheries programmes 2007-2013 (CEC 2005).

There have been three noteworthy shifts concerning LAGs in Denmark in the new programming period 2007-2013. First and as already mentioned, the number of LAGs in Denmark has risen considerably. Second, the use of the LAG method has expanded, so that LAGs are now also implementing parts of the fisheries programme. In the third place, a huge shift has taken place in securing the input legitimacy of the Danish LAGs. During the LEADER+ period, the members of the LAGs were appointed not elected, and there were no clear entry standards that applied to the Danish LAGs. This meant that for an outsider it could be hard to obtain influence on the decision-making processes in the LAGs. In the programming period 2007-2013, it is now compulsory for LAGs to be organised as associations with open and free membership. All people over 15 years and living in the LAG area can become members of the LAG association as well as participate in the annual election of the board, so formally Danish LAGs can be
characterised as open networks. The board members - who must be over 18 years - are elected for two years at annual general assembly meetings in the spring. They are to represent four groups: 1) local citizens, 2) local enterprises and trade organisations, 3) local nature, environmental, cultural, citizen, and leisure associations and 4) public authorities (DFFE 2007a; DFFE 2007b). The Danish LAGs mainly work on area-based development within axis three of the Rural Development Programme concerning diversification of the rural economy and improvement of living conditions in rural areas. LAGs active in the Fisheries Programme seek to create area-based sustainable development of coastal areas. Because of the recent local government reform and the amalgamation of the Danish municipalities, most Danish LAGs receiving funding from the Rural Development Programme only cover one municipality. LAGs active in the Fisheries Programme are on the other hand often larger.

The concrete activities of the Danish LAGs are:

- To promote local development through cooperation with voluntary players in the local community, local and regional authorities, organisations etc, including recommendation of projects for support
- To participate actively in the overall development efforts in the area
- To initiate independent projects and processes (FVM 2007a; FVM 2007b)

It is reasonable to characterise LAGs as governance networks (Sørensen and Torfing 2005), established both in order to provide efficient problem solving and improvement of citizen involvement and local democracy (Thuesen and Thomsen 2008, pp. 19-29; Böcher 2008). Formally, Danish LAGs exploit the association as legal term and thus use elections by the members of the association as the method for the renewal of the board.
Using the governance network concept to describe LAGs provides a wider understanding of their role as providers of public purpose “in the shadow of hierarchy” (Scharpf 1994, p. 41) as well as it underlines the outward-looking character of LAGs aiming not only to serve members but also the wider community (Young 2000). A governance network is defined as:

“A relative stable horizontal articulation of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors, who interact through negotiations which take place within a regulative, normative, cognitive and imaginary framework, that is self-regulating within limits set by external agencies and which contributes to the production of public purpose” (Sørensen and Torfing 2007, p. 9).

Danish LAG associations meet these criteria. The private, public and voluntary members of a LAG board are depending on each other in order to implement the development plan, so relations between the board members live up to the definition of being horizontal, even though from project-to-project the board members will have differing knowledge and political resources. Decision-making in LAGs is also characterised by a high degree of consensus building and negotiation between the board members. In addition, LAGs are self-regulating within limits set by the ministry and within a certain institutionalised framework that as part of its regulative aspect has made the use of the association as legal form compulsory. As to the last point of reference, which is the public purpose, in relation to the Rural Development and Fisheries Programmes this is concerned with the economic and social/cultural development of rural and coastal areas.
I now turn to the research on the Danish LAGs to see how the composition of a concrete type of governance networks that has been object for open elections appears.

3. Survey method

The article draws on the findings of a survey undertaken for the Danish Food Industry Agency and the National Network Unit in 2008 where one of the objectives was to uncover who the members on the LAG boards were (their socio-economic composition) and how they perceived their role as board members. An electronic questionnaire was sent by e-mail to the whole population of 704 LAG board members using a web-based questionnaire programme called Quest. 454 board members responded, constituting a response rate of 65 percent. The response rate differed between LAGs related to rural development (68 percent), LAGs of fisheries, that is LAGs related to development of coastal areas (50 percent) and integrated LAGs related to both coastal areas and rural development (60 percent). It also differed between regions and different types of rural municipalities (those of the outskirts or areas more centrally placed).

The material was tested in order to find out to what degree it was biased. Nothing indicated that this was the case regarding the variables gender, role on the board, LAG type, municipality type and region. Even so, it is not possible to ignore the fact that non-respondents might have had a less positive view of the role of the LAGs and maybe a lower attendance at the board meetings etc.

Table 1: Test for bias between estimation and population

4. Results
In the following, I will present the concrete empirical findings that can lead to an assessment of the level of inclusion/exclusion in relation to the Danish LAG boards. I will present data on the distribution between the four socio-economic groups on the LAG boards, the gender and age distribution of the board members, their educational background as well as their main occupation and their country of birth.

No public predominance

As mentioned, board members must represent four groups: 1) local citizens, 2) local enterprises and trade organisations, 3) local associations, and 4) public authorities. According to rules from the ministry, maximum 30 percent of the board members are to represent public authorities. The results of the questionnaire show that only 14 percent of the board members represent public authorities, 24 percent represent enterprises and trade organisations, 35 percent represent local associations, and 27 percent represent local citizens. These numbers indicate that public authorities do not dominate Danish LAGs when it comes to representation on the board.

Table 2: Socio-economic group representation (N=454)

A calculation of the working hours spent by the board members and the attendance levels of the four groups reflect the same situation. Representatives from public authorities have spent less time on work on the LAG boards than the other three socio-economic groups. Besides, they have a lower attendance level at the meetings. Furthermore, representatives from public authorities hold the post as chairperson only in very few occasions.

Small proportion of women and young people
One of the guidelines from the ministry for the composition of the LAG boards in Denmark has been to aim at an equal distribution as to gender and age on the LAG boards. As the reason why she was engaged, a respondent in fact states, “There should be more than one woman on the board”. In spite of the formal guidelines, only 29 percent of the Danish LAG board members are women and the average age is 53 years. Broken down by LAG type the share of women shows a downward tendency the more the LAGs have to do with fisheries.

Table 3: Gender distribution of LAG board Members (N=454)

The same situation exists as to average age, where the average age of board members in LAGs only related to fisheries is 55 years and in LAGs related to both fisheries and rural development is 54 years. If the age distribution of LAG board members is calculated by gender, it appears that women have distributions over average in the age groups less than 50 years and men have distributions over average in the age groups over 50 years. This indicates that the lopsided gender representation might slowly be about to change.

High educational level

There are no requirements concerning the educational background of the LAG board members. However, compared with the Danish population in general the board members are very well educated. 33 percent of the board members have a medium-cycle higher education and 27 percent have a long-cycle higher education. In comparison, in 2007, 13 percent of the Danish population between 20-64 years had a medium-cycle higher education and 6 percent had a long-cycle higher education.

Table 4: Educational background of LAG board members (N=454)
Calculated by LAGs belonging to different types of rural municipalities it is remarkable that the highest share of respondents with a long-cycle higher education are found in LAGs in outskirt municipalities where normally a smaller proportion of the population has a long-cycle higher education.

It is also relevant to emphasise that even among the well-educated board members many find laws and departmental orders difficult to understand, the programmes complicated to work with and expert assistance necessary. A respondent writes “Some of the regulations are (even for experienced legalists like me) pretty difficult to work with”. Another respondent asks for greater freedom to experiment: “How about giving people a bit more latitude and allowing free initiative to flourish. Let people deeply interested in a certain subject be allowed to experiment without insisting on results. Maybe this will lead nowhere in many cases, but just a few projects that are truly innovative can change the whole way we are and think”.

High proportion of self-employed

The main occupation of the largest single group of board members is self-employed, i.e. one third, which is very high compared to the rest of the Danish population. In 2007, for the age group 20-66 this figure was 4.9 percent.

Table 5: Main occupation of LAG board members (N=454)

Only Danes

With regard to the country of birth of the LAG board members, practically all board members (99 percent) were born in Denmark.

Little involvement of members and the local population
The Danish LAGs are associations with a membership basis. However, the members are not very much involved except from the general assembly meetings once a year. Only 9 percent of the board members answer that their LAG board involves the members of the association to a wide extent and 39 percent answer that it happens to some extent.

To sum up, the results show that Danish LAGs are characterised by a biased representation in relation to gender, age, education, main occupation, and native country. However, no domination from the part of the representatives for public authorities on the boards exists.

5. Discussion involving two opposing theoretical perspectives

Having presented the empirical findings relevant for an assessment of whether Danish LAG boards are inclusive or exclusive I now turn to the discussion of these findings. I discuss the empirical findings in relation to Young’s theory on external and internal exclusion and Etziony-Halevy’s theory on the importance of relative autonomous elites. It will appear that the problems and potential for democracy of the lopsided representation look different from the two mentioned viewpoints.

*From traditional liberal theories of democracy to post-liberal theories*

Discussing whether the composition of Danish LAGs is democratic from a governance network perspective involves that we look at representative democracy and the parliamentary chain of government as perspectives that fail to account for what is actually happening in society. This applies even though both perspectives still exist as organising myths in the minds of many citizens. The widespread use of LAGs, partnerships and other types of governance networks involving more and more
individuals and organisations in the production of public purpose and the related decision-making means that importance has to be attached to the democratic implications of governance networks like the Danish LAGs.

The point of departure of Young (2000) and Etzioni-Halevy (1993) is post-liberal theories of democracy. Thus, they go beyond the realm of traditional liberal theories of democracy in both the aggregative and the integrative version (March and Olsen 1989, chapter 7). Aggregative theories see democracy as a process of aggregating the preferences of free and equal citizens in choosing public officials and policies. In opposition to this, integrative theories are concerned with the common good and the establishment of capabilities to act. However, both strands of democratic theory tend to look at governance networks as undemocratic due to the delegation of decision-making power to both public, private and civic partners and hence their insufficiency to maintain the separation between state and society (Sørensen and Torfing 2007, p. 246). From the viewpoint of aggregative theory governance networks like the Danish LAGs thus provide influence to privileged interests at the expense of the interests achieved through parliamentary representative democracy. From the viewpoint of integrative theory, governance networks lead to a situation where civil society is infused with state power. Instead of rejecting Danish LAGs as undemocratic, post-liberal theories of democracy look at partnerships, governance networks and the like as something that will remain and as examples of new institutions of democracy and they therefore deal with the enhancement of the potentials and reduction of the problems of such networks in relation to democracy. It is in this light that both Young and Etzioni-Halevy appear, yet with Young building more on the integrative version and Etziony-Halevy structuring her arguments more on the aggregative version.
**Inclusive democracy**

Young is concerned with the inequalities in society that leads to the exclusion of people from political processes. Either because they form small minorities, are socially or economically disadvantaged or because the political discourse is dominated by other perspectives (Young 2000, p. 149). She argues for a procedural democratic justice:

“If all significantly affected by problems and their solutions are included in the discussion and decision-making on the basis of equality and non-domination, and if they interact reasonably and constitute a public where people are accountable to one another, then the results of their discussion is likely to be the most wise and just” (Young 2000, pp. 29-30).

However, many people are excluded from the decision-making process, and this happens, according to Young, both in the form of external exclusion and internal exclusion. External exclusion is the kind of exclusion which “...keep some individuals or groups out of the fora of debate or processes of decision-making, or which allow some individuals or groups dominative control over what happens in them” (2000, p. 52). So external exclusion appears when the ones who should participate in the decision-making processes are not present at the regulation table, so to speak. In contrast to this, internal exclusion involves “...those forms of exclusion that sometimes occur even when individuals and groups are nominally included in the discussion and decision-making process...” (2000, p. 53). It is about “...ways that people lack effective opportunity to influence the thinking of others even when they have access to fora and procedures of decision-making” (2000, p. 55).
The survey data tells us that Danish LAGs are very clear illustrations of external exclusion, which according to Young appears because of structural inequalities in society. It is not possible to conclude that internal exclusion exists too even though the difficult communication about the programme could be one indication of a possible internal exclusion. The participation patterns on the Danish LAG boards are identical to participation patterns in other areas of the Danish society. For example, Sørensen and Torfing describe the people participating in governance networks in the municipality of Skanderborg as novices only in exceptional cases. They are rather people with good educations and occupations and flexible working hours (Sørensen and Torfing 2003, p. 626). The gender distribution in Danish municipal councils is also identical, since 27 percent of these politicians are women. Still, it seems quite paradoxical that an initiative like LEADER surrounded by a bottom-up ethos shows such lopsided participation. From the point of view of Young, the composition of the Danish LAG boards is a result of procedural injustice and external exclusion that according to Young is problematic in relation to achieving the best outcomes and being democratic. She states “To be democratic, deliberation must be widely inclusive of the major interests, opinions, and social perspectives of differently situated groups” (Young in Fung 2004, p. 50). Setting up small boards of people who are equal in rank and influence and have a shared set of interests can be efficient, but it is not democratic according to Young (Young in Fung 2004).

*The relative autonomy of elites and sub-elites*

Taken from the point of view of Etzioni-Halevy, the lopsided participation on the LAG boards that very well meets the conditions of the *white middleclass men* described by
Young, is not problematic as long as the board members do not develop too close relations and as long as they stay in contact with the people. According to Etzioni-Halevy (1993), democracy is about the relative autonomy of elites and sub-elites, that is elite competition. She states that elites and their relations and fights are of decisive importance in the shaping, threatening and change of democracy. It is the circulation of the public and the existence of social protest movements with their own elites and sub-elites that makes democracy progress. In this respect, the Danish LAGs can be quite democratic if they are an expression of a gathering of relative autonomous elites and sub-elites that compete to achieve their respective aims. However, there can be situations where elites develop relations that are too close to maintain competition and where elites start to redistribute material resources, advancements etc. internally and thereby remove their relative autonomy and establish elite-connections that are too close (Etzioni-Halevy 2003, p. 6). In a LEADER context, such situations are touched upon by Kovách (2000, p. 188; 2006; 2009, p. 210) who states that a strengthening of civil society is fundamental when introducing an intervention like LEADER in order to enable civil society to monitor the appearing project class. Nevertheless, on Danish LAG boards, people from the categories ‘local associations’ and ‘local citizens’ make up more than 60 percent of the board members, so ‘newcomers’ without predefined networks as well as civic associations seem to be able to enter the boards. Still, no research has been undertaken as to what degree LAG board members are themselves recipients of LEADER funds and thereby reinforce their own position. To hold the elites responsible, Etzioni-Halevy (2003, p. 6) sees it as important to uphold connections/links between elites and the public, in order to both strengthen and weaken the elites and maintain their mediatory role (Kovách 2009, p. 209). Thus, establishment of connections/links between elites and the public is a prerequisite for achieving the
democratic potentials. The fact that board members in Danish LAGs come up for reelection every second year is an example of how connections between the board members and the public are upheld. However, the question is whether decision-making on Danish LAG boards is as marked by competition as Etzioni-Halevy emphasizes, or to some extent rather expressions of consensus building as presented by Fung and Wright (2003).

Not only Young but also Etzioni-Halevy attaches importance to the viewpoints of the disadvantaged groups in society who according to Etzioni-Halevy must as well have elites to represent them, but often appear underrepresented. She writes:

“The advantaged parts of the public, by definition have their interests over-represented in the political and policy-making arena. Hence it is especially important for democracy that the disadvantaged parts of the public have elites with which they are linked up, and which, thereby, represent their interests in the political and policy arena” (Etzioni-Halevy 2003, p.7).

Thus, in relation to Danish LAGs not only strong groups shall be represented on the LAG boards, but also other groups. This is where Etzioni-Halevy meets some of the prerequisites established by Youngs concern for a just democracy.

All in all both Young and Etzioni-Halevy have a message for whether the composition of the Danish LAGs is democratically problematic. According to Young, it is problematic that only individuals with very similar socio-economic characteristics are represented since it will weaken the outcome of the process. According to Etzioni-
Halevy, this depends on whether the elites represent different interests in society and work in competition.

Elections

Whereas theories of democratic network governance often see members of governance networks as non-elected, the members of the LAG associations in fact elect Danish LAG boards at annual general meetings. As mentioned, all people over 15 years living in the LAG area can become members of the LAG association as well as participate at the annual election of the board. The number of members of the LAG associations differs from about 30 members to about 330 members and the average number of members is 120. In comparison to the situation in the LEADER+ period 2000-2006 where most Danish LAGs had no membership basis and board members were appointed to hold their seats, the situation today has the potential to become more democratic. However, still only a small proportion of the population in the LAG areas are members of the LAG associations and only a small proportion of the members are present at the annual general meetings. Accordingly, elite-public linkages are relatively weak only involving small parts of the public despite the electoral procedures. This is problematic, since it reduces the potential for local capacity building and weakens the opportunity to increase the feeling of community in the LAG area. Still, no groups are actively excluded from the LEADER LAG process today. What makes the LEADER LAGs more democratic than before is thus the fact that procedures for access and influence are now formalised and written down, so everyone interested can relate to them when necessary. From the point of view of Young this is not enough in order to make them more democratic. In relation to external exclusion, lopsided representation because of structural inequalities must be equalised for LAGs to be democratic and until now, the
election procedures rather seem to mirror these structural inequalities than remove them. Increased or alternative media coverage (in relation to success stories and announcement of the yearly general meetings), establishment of preparatory election committees with the goal to actively include more persons, introduction of more flexible meeting times and less traditional meeting styles could be doable first steps towards broadened participation to comply with both external and possible internal exclusion. Yet, it is important to remember that much LEADER activity goes on at the project level among local project holders be they entrepreneurs or village enthusiasts who may well be satisfied and have made active choices to participate at this level instead of at the decision-making level. From the point of view of Etzioni-Halevy, relative autonomous sub-elites are a plus for democracy. However, this depends on whether they uphold their competition and whether the circulation of the public is possible. If LAG boards are to a much higher degree aiming for consensus than for competition, then the time of the election is the only moment competition clearly exists.

6. Conclusion

This article has uncovered the composition of the LAG boards in the Danish Rural Development and Fisheries Programmes 2007-2013 as well as assessed the democratic problems and potentials of their composition in relation to theory on inclusive democracy and democratic elite theory. Until now, only case studies related to the composition of LAG boards in Europe exist. As such, the article forms the basis for a closer look at the composition of LAG boards in other European countries in the years to come.
Even though LEADER is often connoted to bottom-up development, the composition of the Danish LAG boards is very one-sided and they do not mirror the polity at all. The democratic problems and potentials of the lopsidedness are assessed differently from the point of view of Young’s theory on inclusive democracy and Etzioni-Halevy’s democratic elite theory emphasising the relative autonomy of elites. According to Young, exclusion because of structural inequalities must be equalised for LAGs to be democratic since democracy demands that people are actually involved and participating. If this is not the case, it will not be the most just democracy. From the point of view of Etzioni-Halevy, however, the one-sided representation can be a plus since relative autonomous sub-elites are a plus for democracy if they uphold their competition and the circulation of the public stays possible. From both perspectives accordingly, election procedures can secure democracy to some extent, but there seems to be a need for further inclusion in order to anchor the boards better but also in order to increase competition around the boards. Thus, the perspectives of both Young and Etzioni-Halevy call for at least two questions to be addressed in the future research related to the LAGs:

1. How can we rethink innovative methods of inclusive deliberation in relation to the LAGs?

2. How can we rethink innovative ways of establishing further linkages between the public and the board members?

These questions must also be dealt with by the LAGs themselves as well as by the central meta-governing institutions, which have the possibility to influence, coordinate
and frame the actions of the LAGs and thereby make them more democratic in relation to both democratic elite theory and theories of inclusive democracy.

Notes

1 LEADER is an acronym for the French: Liaisons Entre Action de Développement de l’Economie Rurale (links between actions for the development of the rural economy). The LEADER method consists of seven key concepts: partnership organising, bottom-up, area-based development strategies, cross-sector/integrated approach, innovation, cooperation and networking. The LEADER method has been the common denominator in the implementation of the initiative in the European countries.

2 At the time of the survey in 2008, 55 LAGs existed but the final number of LAGs in Denmark is 56.

3 The Danish Food Industry Agency is part of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. It works as the managing authority as well as the network unit for the Rural Development Programme in Denmark.

4 The data collected was cleared of errors using Excel and all changes were registered in a logbook. Subsequently, the data was transferred to SPSS, where frequencies and cross tabulations were made.
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DFFE (2007b) Vejledning om oprettelse af og tilskud til drift af lokale aktionsgrupper i fiskeriområderne. Ministeriet for Fødevarer, Landbrug og Fiskeri/

Direktoratet for FødevareErhverv


FVM (2007a) Bekendtgørelse om oprettelse og drift af lokale aktionsgrupper under landdistriktsprogrammet for perioden 2007-2013. BEK 490 of 30/05/2007


Tables

Table 1: Test for bias between estimation and population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimation (N=454)</th>
<th>Population (N=704)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairmen</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy chairmen</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretaries</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary board members</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAG type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAGs of fisheries</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAGs of rural development</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAGs of fisheries and rural development</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outskirt municipalities</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural municipalities</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate municipalities</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAGs crossing municipality types</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zealand</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The capital region</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Denmark</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle Jutland</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Jutland</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAGs crossing regions</td>
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<td>7</td>
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</table>

Table 2: Socio-economic group representation (N=454)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public authorities</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprises and trade organisations</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local associations</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local citizens</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Gender distribution of LAG board Members (N=454)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All LAGs</th>
<th>LAGs of fisheries</th>
<th>LAGs of fisheries and rural development</th>
<th>LAGs of rural development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Educational background of LAG board members (N=454)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary and lower secondary school</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary school</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-cycle higher education</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-cycle higher education</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-cycle higher education</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 5: Main occupation of LAG board members (N=454)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wage earner (public sector)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage earner (private sector)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior citizen</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working at home</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Under education</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>