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*Working Group 3 – Accounting for Change: Evaluation and Integrated Development in  
the Project State*

# Success and Constraints of multi-level Evaluation Systems

The Pilot Programme “Regionen Aktiv“ (Germany)

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## - Outline -

- The evaluation system of the pilot programme "Regionen Aktiv"
- Failure and success of multi-level evaluation within "Regionen Aktiv"
- Explanations for failure and success
- Final conclusions and recommendations

- The evaluation system of the pilot programme “Regionen Aktiv”

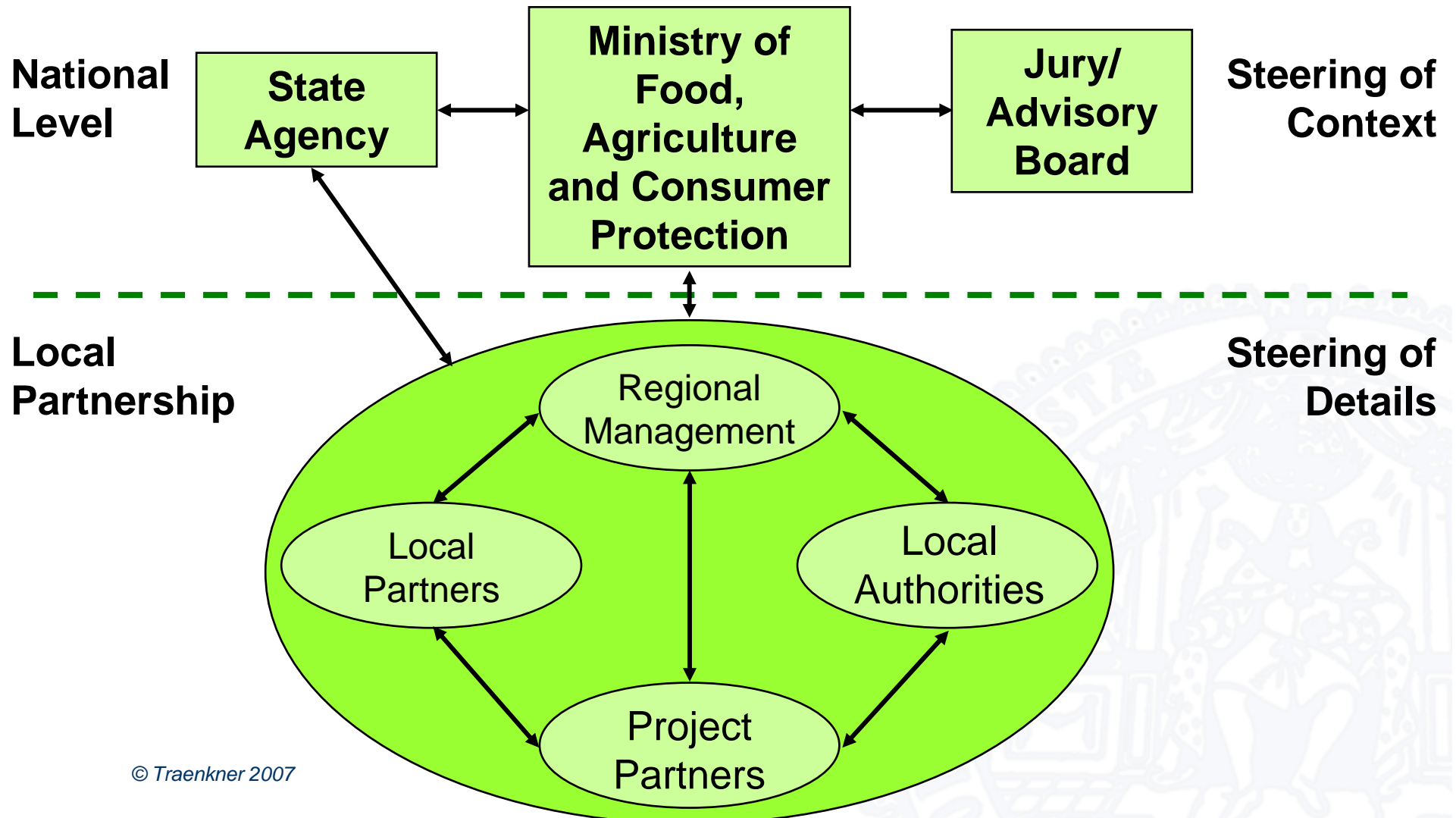


## The pilot programme “Regionen Aktiv“



Source: [www.modellregionen.de](http://www.modellregionen.de)

- Re-orientation of the consumer and agricultural policy
- Discourse about integrated rural development and BSE-Crisis
- Runtime 2001-2007
- Multi-stage competition, 55 Mio.€
- 18 local partnerships
- Multi-level design without the federal states

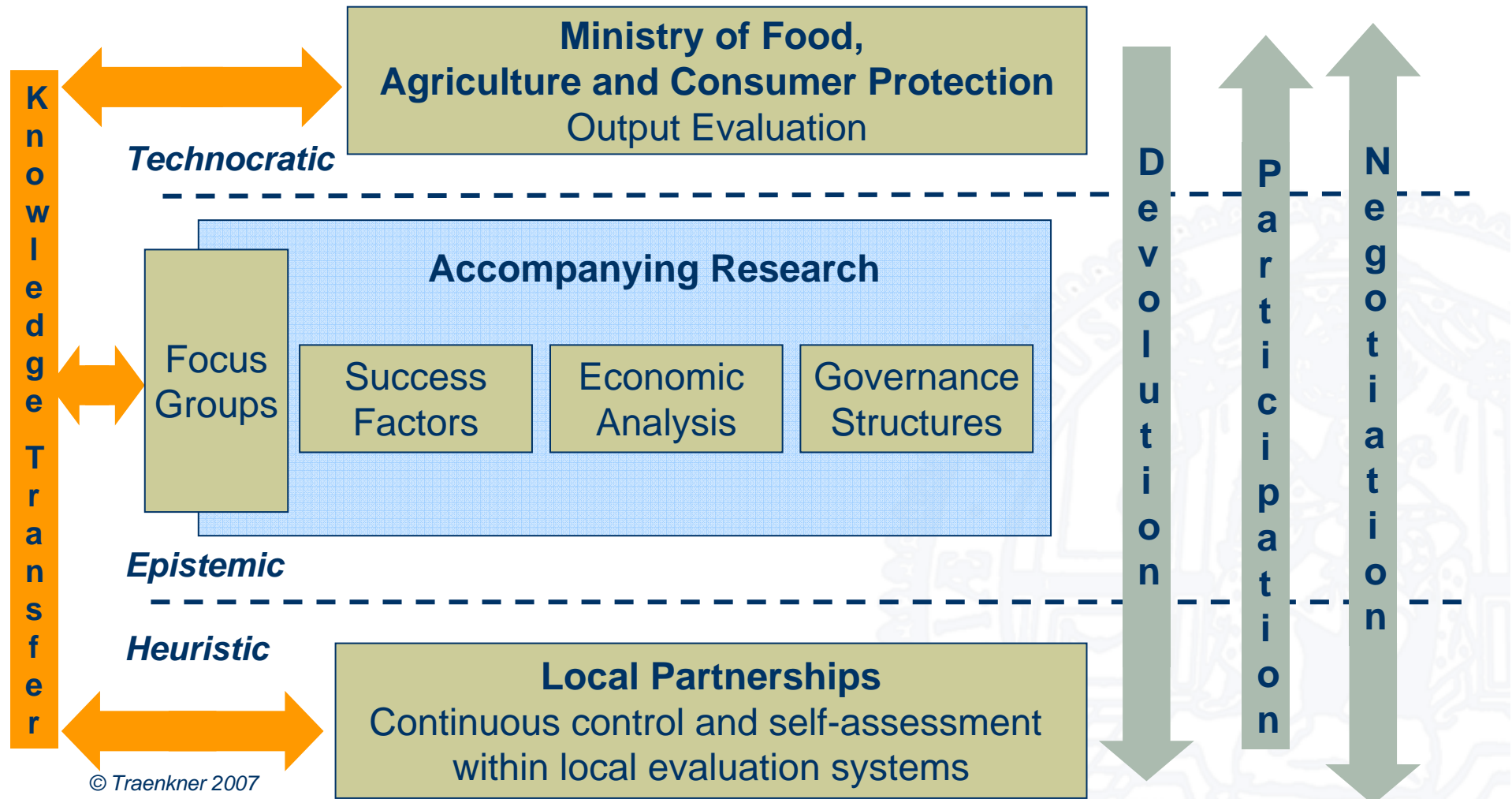


Depiction translated and changed. Source: Schubert, D. (2004):Regionen Aktiv –Land gestaltet Zukunft. Effiziente Instrumente und Strategien erfolgreich implementiert. Presentation held on 28/10/2004, EUREGIA congress Leipzig.

## The pilot programme “Regionen Aktiv“

- Philosophy
  - Local self-governance and control within a frame given by the ministry
- Steering principles similar to LEADER+
  - Partnership, Reflexivity, Regionality, Integration, Competition
- Steering elements beyond LEADER+ in Germany
  - Local budget
  - Local chosen financial completion partner
  - Local selected projects
  - Full-time partnership management

## Multi-level Evaluation within “Regionen Aktiv“



## Interim Conclusion – Towards Hybrid Evaluation

### Exogenous evaluation by the state

- Technocratic/quantitative
- Output oriented
- Non-sensitive for specific contexts of programs, projects and partnerships

### Endogenous Evaluation by partnership

- Socially constructed values by various stakeholders within power relations
- Emergent social and situated learning embedded in social networks

*“Only good endogenous evaluation feeds good exogenous evaluation.” (High/Nemes 2007:115)*

### Hybrid Evaluation by state and partnerships

- Combination of exogenous and endogenous evaluation elements
- Production of hybrid/inter-institutional knowledge through negotiation in a multi-level environment
- Mediated through brokers and boundary objects

Own depiction. Source: High, Ch./Nemes, G. (2007): Social Learning and Rural Development. In: Sociologica Ruralis 2/2007, pp. 103-119

## Main Questions

- How do the logics of the managerialist state and the process oriented partnerships fit together?
- How to cope with the tensions between formal exogenous institutional settings and emergent endogenous evaluations?
- How can hybrid knowledge be produced and used in a multi-level environment?

## ➤ Examples of failure and success of multi-level evaluation within “Regionen Aktiv”

### **1. Local self-evaluation systems**

– implementation failed

### **2. Top-down evaluation within Management by Objectives**

– missing coordination of interests

### **3. Focus groups on local and state level**

– successful production of hybrid knowledge

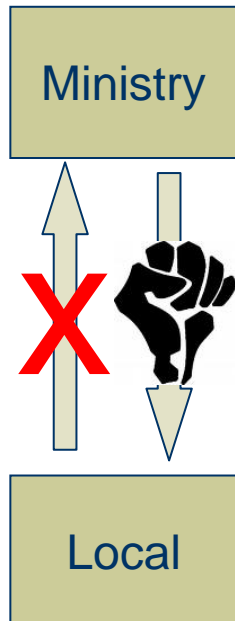
*Source of examples 1 & 2: Elbe, S. (2006): Regionen Aktiv –Land gestaltet Zukunft. Begleitforschung 2004-2006. Abschlussbericht des Moduls 2. Einordnung des Steuerungsansatzes von Regionen Aktiv. Darmstadt.*

*Source of example 3: Lukesch, R./Rabenau, J./Payer, H. (forthcoming): Wissen von innen – regionale Fokusgruppen in der Begleitforschung von Regionen Aktiv. In: Krott, M./Böcher, M./Tränkner, S.: Regional Governance und integrierte ländliche Entwicklung - Ergebnisse der Begleitforschung von Regionen Aktiv.*

# 1. Regional self-evaluation systems - Implementation failed -

Failure of implementation at half time of the programme

- Unsatisfying goal systems, objectives and indicators
- Only two local evaluation systems proposed and implemented



Reaction of the ministry

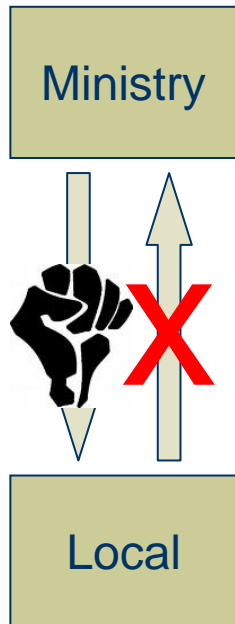
- Centralization of binding monitoring and evaluation standards
- Formulation of binding goals (management by objectives)
- Uniform annual reports based on self-evaluation
- External/central assessment of the quality and achievement of objectives

Consequences

- Evaluation philosophy was supplemented by top-down elements
- Negation of the potential of local specific knowledge
- Frustration in partnerships with already existing own evaluation systems

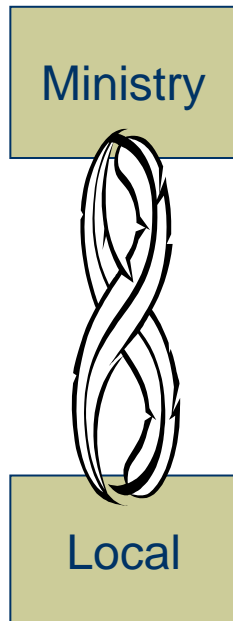
## 2. Top-down evaluation within MbO - Missing coordination of interests -

### Competition for the best quality of objectives



- Formulation of objectives led to
  - Improved processes and projects
  - Learning processes and increased know-how
  
- But objectives are only technocratic and formal criteria
  - No discussion regarding the content of objectives
  - No coordination of different interpretation frames of the ministry and the partnerships
  
- Evaluated by state agency and external evaluators
  - Interest conflict – State agency = Central actor for consultation
  - Extern evaluators – no consideration of specific local contexts

### 3. Regional focus groups - Successful production of hybrid knowledge -



- 9 x 3 local focus groups and 2 national-level focus groups
- Goals
  - Production and exploration of collective knowledge and experiences
  - Translation of different logics of action within the multi-level system
  - Linking of knowledge of different actors involved
  - Reciprocal learning processes and feedback loops across levels
- Translators → Process manager with multiple functions and high demands

### 3. Regional focus groups

#### - Successful production of hybrid knowledge -

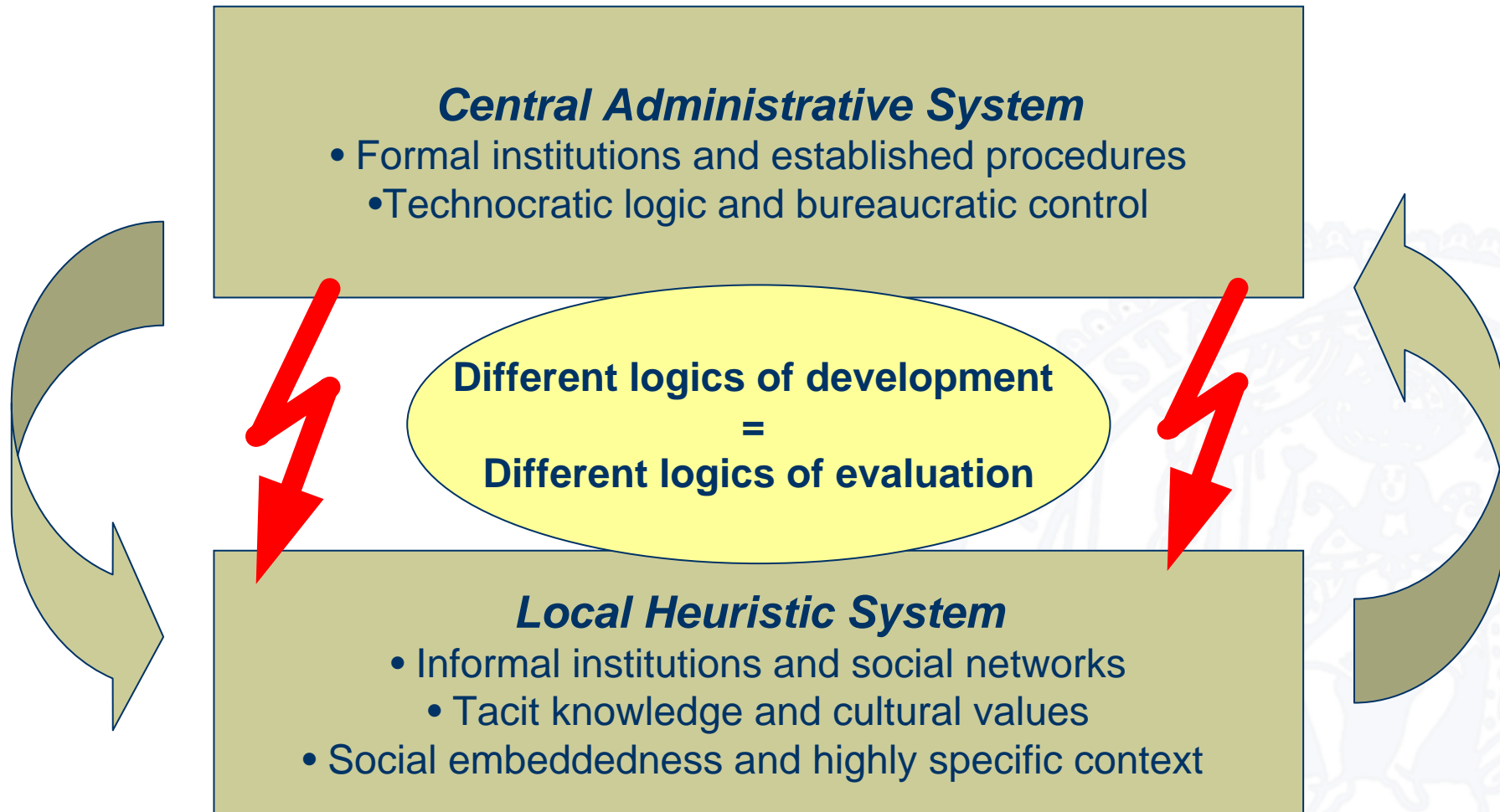
- **Benefit 1 - Production of feedback loops**
  - Local partnerships  $\leftrightarrow$  Accomp. research  $\leftrightarrow$  Programme level
  - Direct benefits for local partnerships
    - Strategic reflection of common activities and structures
    - Chance to contribute to the formulation of further programme architecture
- **Benefit 2 - Linking of knowledge**
  - Expert knowledge  $\leftrightarrow$  Practical knowledge
  - Programme level  $\leftrightarrow$  Partnership level
  - Partnership  $\leftrightarrow$  Partnership
- **Benefit 3 – Production of hybrid knowledge**
  - Horizontal and vertical production of shared/hybrid knowledge



## ➤ Explanations for failure and success



## Different logics of development and evaluation



Own depiction. Source: High, Ch./Nemes, G. (2007): *Social Learning and Rural Development*. In: *Sociologica Ruralis* 2/2007, pp. 103-119

# Competing Interests Explaining Failure of Evaluation





➤ Final conclusions and recommendations



## Conclusions

- “Trust is good, control is better” → Hybrid evaluation systems have to be implemented within the shadow of hierarchy
- Main constraints for implementing voluntary self-evaluation systems
  - Learning in partnerships = negotiate public good = problem of collective action
  - Logic of politics of regional partnerships similar to macro-political units
- Voluntary self-evaluation by partnerships depends on specific cultural and political prerequisites (social capital)

## Conclusions

- “Management by Objectives” is dominated by bureaucratic logic
- “Lost in translation”? → Focus groups are successful in producing and using shared knowledge and activating horizontal/vertical multi-level learning processes → avoidance of translation problems
- Opposed interests of actors involved explain failure of multi-level-evaluation
- Collective learning as a public good has to be accepted as a value by itself

## Recommendations

- Not only incentives but also tangible benefits are needed to implement effective self-evaluation realised by partnerships:
  - Improved know-how and organizational structures
  - Increase of reputation through competition elements
  - Early participation while formulating new programmes
- “Translators” and boundary objects are needed to organize the production of shared/inter-institutional knowledge and to link different logics of action:
  - Institutions and methods for social learning and knowledge transfer → focus groups on different levels, network meetings, high competent mediators, intervision (collective consultation)
  - Intermediate organizational elements → partnership management, state agency