

Regional Learning and Rural Development: Case Study Area – BMW Region/West of Ireland

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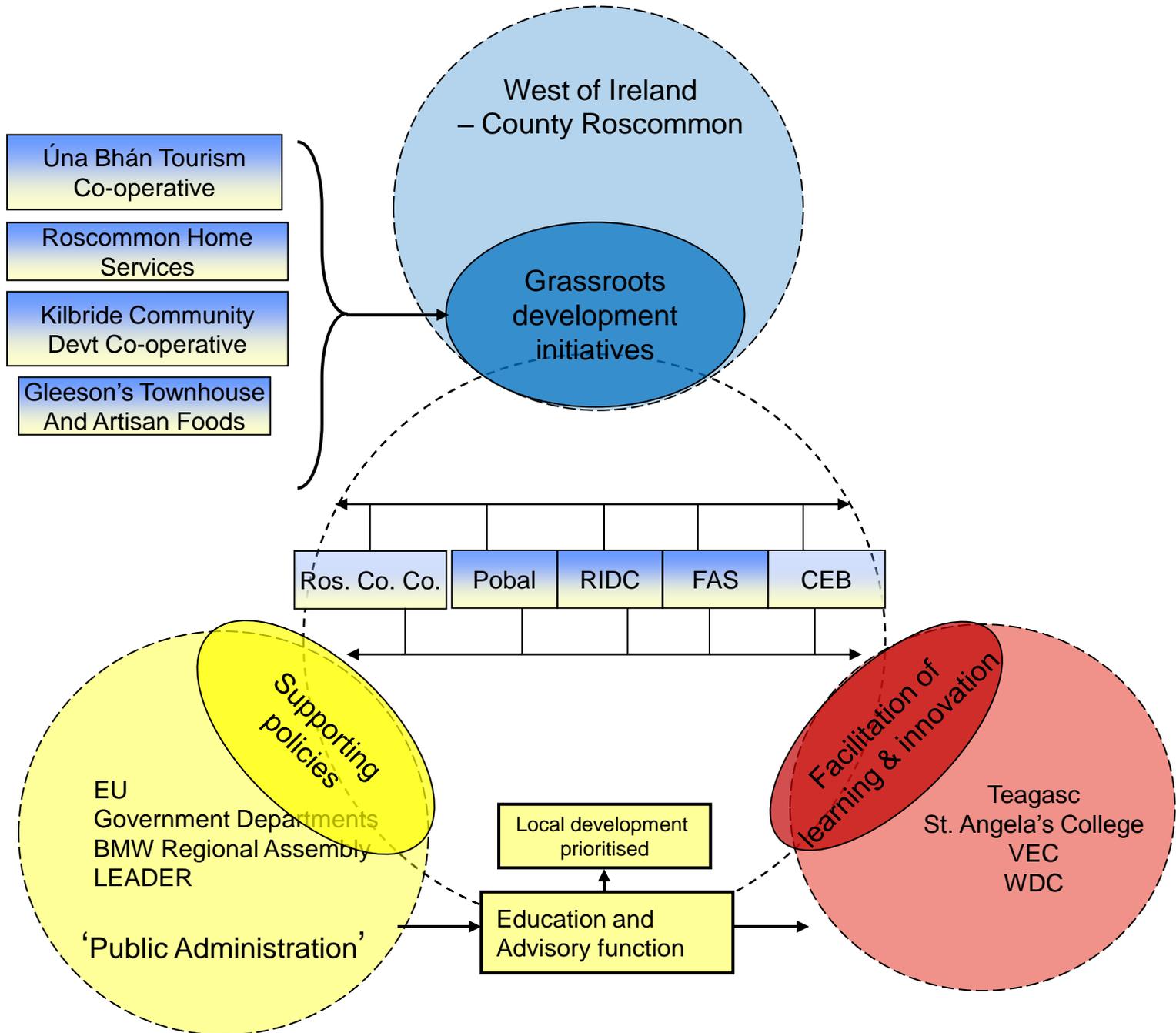
Paper presented at DERREG Final Conference
Globalization and Rural Regions in Europe: Impacts, Challenges and
Lessons

Murska Sobota, Slovenia, October 2011



Introduction

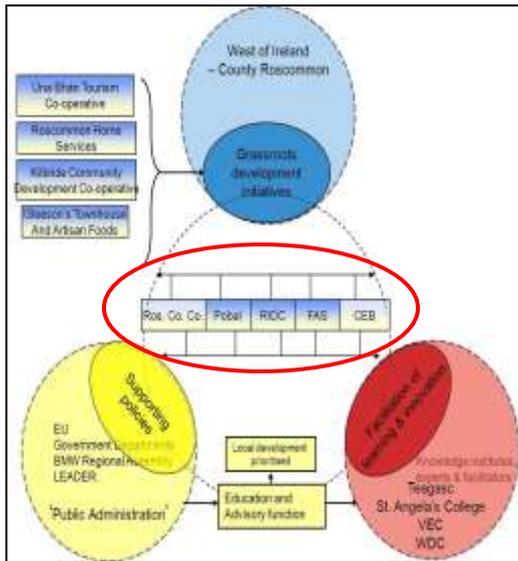
- Examples of specific interfaces
- Illustrate diversity of arrangements and interfaces
- Reveal extent of existing and potential learning and innovation capacity in a rural context
- Highlight nature of blockages and constraints
- Reflect on current and changing context for rural support structures (incl. policy, programmes, impacts)
- Need/scope for alternatives/scope to challenge?
- Danger of fragmentation/competition/consolidation of successful interfaces around a smaller number of strong initiatives.



Interface examples:

- Example 1: Local 'agency' collective interfacing
 - a) Nature of board membership (formal and informal dimensions);
 - b) Collaboration on local audit of training needs
- Example 2: Pobal;
 - Nature of interface with government and grassroots (formal and informal)
- Example 3: Gleeson's Town House and Artisan Foods:
 - Nature of interface with agencies and local organisations (initiative's local rootedness and international reach).

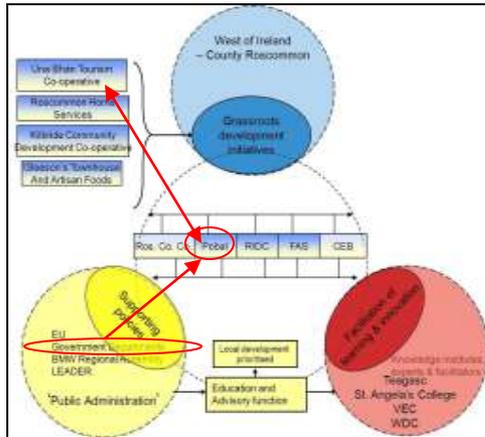
Local 'agency' collective interfacing



- Strong inter-agency co-operation
- Shared committee membership
- Good overview of development needs
- Example: Training needs analysis of 2,000 micro-enterprises
- Stimulating innovation/creativity at local level not the main issue
- Constrained operational and funding remits (set at national level)
- 'subcontractors' of government? (Jones, 2001)
- Informal collaboration as effort to set locally-relevant development agenda



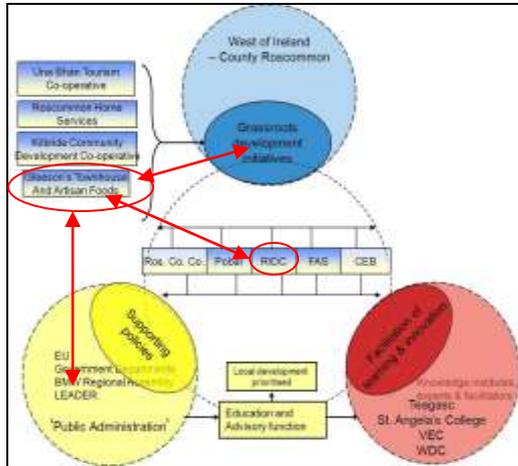
Pobal (agency) interfaces



- Delivery agency for government NDP programmes
- Social inclusion/equality focus
- Parameters clearly set
- One-to-one project support via local area case officer (CO)
- A process-based approach
- Familiarity with project context
- Nature of project/CO relations
- Key to maximising project benefits within set parameters



Gleeson's Townhouse and Artisan Foods (grassroots initiative/agency) interfaces



- From 1996 - Townhouse, Restaurant
- 2007 - Artisan Food Shop - consolidating locally-based food connection
- Place-based identity with high quality local food production
- Informal networks with local producers
- BMW Voucher Innovation Scheme (marketing local produce in shop)
- RIDC's "Roscommon Food Showcase" initiative – assistance with project planning
- Gleeson's as RIDC main promoters on this project
- Catalyst for drawing in other producers
- Membership of Good Food Ireland Network (i.e. accessing international network)
- International (global) dimension essential to marketing
- But, local agencies vital in consolidating **local** base

Summary/Conclusions

- Well-working interfaces evident at grassroots and agency levels
- ‘Context-specific’ interfaces, ‘close’ to development activity, seem most effective to develop capacity
- Not *‘localness’* per se but capitalising on the local
- Degree of ‘institutional learning’ evident within agencies to direct local development agenda

Summary/Conclusions (contd.)

- Problem of scale re. central control and regulation undermining agency interfaces – need for flexibility
- Seeming endorsement of power of ‘meso-level’ interactions to bring about development
- Lack real territorial or relational power (Marsden, 2009)
- Future of formal institutional structures – fit for purpose, or room for alternatives? (e.g. Gleeson’s, Una Bhan)



THANK YOU

