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National University of Ireland, Cork

Exploring Irish Rural Social Enterprises as Neoendogenous Development Actors

Thesis presented by

Lucas Olmedo

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University College Cork

Cork University Business School
Department of Food Business and Development

Head of School: Prof Thia Hennessy
Head of Department: Prof Joe Bogue

Supervisors: Dr. Mary O'Shaughnessy
Department of Food Business and Development, Cork University Business School, University College Cork

Prof Thia Hennessy
Department of Food Business and Development, Cork University Business School, University College Cork

2020

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Declaration of Originality

This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism.

An abridged version of the literature review presented in Chapter 2 has been published as an article in the journal *Local Economy*. This is detailed in the Research Dissemination section.

A working paper based on the analysis of interviews carried out during the preparatory phase of the fieldwork has been published in the *United Nations Social and Solidarity Economy Knowledge Hub for the Sustainable Development Goals (online).* This is detailed in the Research Dissemination section

An abridged version of the findings presented in Chapter 6, section 6.2.1, has been published as a chapter of a handbook for practitioners in the fields of social enterprises, social innovation and rural development in *Social Enterprises in Structurally Weak Rural Regions: Innovative Troubleshooters in Action. Handbook for Practitioners.* This is detailed in the Research Dissemination section.

An abridged version of the findings presented in Chapter 7 has been submitted as an article to the Journal of Rural Studies. This article is currently under review.

Signature: Lucas Olmedo

Lucas Olmedo

Date: 29 November 2020

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Research Dissemination

Peer-Reviewed Publications

- Olmedo, L., van Twuijver, M. and O'Shaughnessy, M. (2019) 'Community-Based Social Enterprises Fostering Inclusive Development in Peripheral European Rural Areas', *United Nations Social and Solidarity Economy Knowledge Hub for the Sustainable Development Goals* (online). Available at: https://knowledgehub.unsse.org/knowledge-hub/community-based-social-enterprises-fostering-inclusive-development-in-peripheral-european-rural-areas/

- van Twuijver, M., Olmedo, L., O'Shaughnessy, M. and Hennessy, T. (2020) 'Rural Social Enterprises in Europe: a Systematic Literature Review', *Local Economy*, 35(2), pp. 121–142. https://doi.org/10.1177/0269094220907024

- van Twuijver, M., Olmedo, L. and Kovanen, S. (2020) 'On a mission for the region. How social entrepreneurial actors tackle problems in structurally weak rural regions', in The RurAction Network (eds.) *Social Enterprises in Structurally Weak Rural Regions: Innovative Troubleshooters in Action. Handbook for Practitioners.* Erkner, Germany: IRS Dialog, pp. 14 – 32. Available at: https://leibniz-irs.de/wissenstransfer/transferpublikationen/irs-dialog/the-ruraction-network-social-enterprises-in-structurally-weak-rural-regions-innovative-troubleshooters-in-action

Conference/Symposiums (oral) Presentations

- van Twuijver, M., Olmedo, L. and O'Shaughnessy, M. (2018) 'Empirical evidence from Rural Social Enterprises in a European Context. A Systematic Literature Review', *50th Conference of Irish Geographers*. 12th May 2018, Maynooth (Ireland).

- Olmedo, L., van Twuijver, M. and O'Shaughnessy, M. (2019) 'Empirical evidence from rural social enterprises in a European context – A systematic literature review and case study', *Cork University Business School Postgraduate Research Symposium*. 13th May 2019, Cork (Ireland). [Awarded Best Research Paper]

- Olmedo, L., van Twuijver, M. and O'Shaughnessy, M. (2019) 'Community-Based Social Enterprises and Inclusive Development in Peripheral European Rural Areas', *7th EUGEO Congress*. 15-19th May 2019, Galway (Ireland).

- Olmedo, L. and O'Shaughnessy, M. (2019) 'Rural Community Based Social Enterprises and Inclusive Development. Towards a Conceptual Framework', *7th EMES International conference*. 24-7th June 2019, Sheffield (UK).

- Olmedo, L., van Twuijver, M. and O'Shaughnessy, M. (2020) 'Rurality as context for innovative responses to social challenges – the role of rural social enterprises', *Cork University Business School Postgraduate Research Symposium*. 30th July 2020, Cork (Ireland) [online].

- Olmedo, L. and O'Shaughnessy, M. (2020) 'Collective Resourcefulness through Placial Embeddedness: Exploring how Irish Rural Social Enterprises Foster Local Development', *7th International Social Innovation Research Conference (ISIRC*).1st – 3rd September 2020, Sheffield (UK) [online].

- van Twuijver, M., Kovanen, S. and Olmedo, L. (2020) 'Plurality of socio-economic relations and long-term sustainability in rural social enterprises – results from the RurAction project', *International conference on Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovations in Rural Regions*. 21-22nd September 2020, Erkner (Germany) [online].

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Policy Round Tables (oral) Presentations

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List of Abbreviations

AGM	Annual General Meeting
ALMP	Activation Labour Market Programme
CE Scheme	Community Employment Scheme
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CEDRA	Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas
CEIS	Community Enterprise in Scotland
CLG	Company Limited by Guarantee
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development
DSP	Department of Social Protection
ENP	Entrepreneurial Non-Profit
EMES	EMergence de l'Entreprise Sociale en Europe
EU	European Union
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
ICSEM	International Comparative Social Enterprise Models
LAGs	Local Action Groups
LEADER	Liaisons Entre Actions de Developpement de l'Economie Rurale
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSE	Public-sector Social Enterprise
RDC	Regional Development Company
SB	Social Business
SC	Social Cooperative
SE	Social Enterprise
SFF	Social Finance Foundation
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
SMEs	Small and/or Medium Enterprises
WISE	Working Integration Social Enterprise

Abstract

Since the 1990s social enterprises have gained growing attention from academics and policymakers as significant actors to address some of the complex challenges faced by our societies due to their aim of combining social, economic and/or environmental goals using entrepreneurial/innovative means. Rural areas have demonstrated to be a fertile ground for social enterprises. Diverse factors such as a tradition of mutual self-help, a great density of social networks, the often unattractiveness for private investors looking to maximise profits or the consequences of neoliberal policies that have left some rural areas without adequate (basic) services have contributed to the presence of social enterprises within rural areas.

The main characteristics of social enterprises operating within European rural areas, i.e. strong local focus, development of networks with external actors, ability to mobilise a wide range of resources, intrinsic relation with the rural context and contribution to different dimensions of development, concur with the principles of neoendogenous rural development. This perspective of rural development advocates for an integrated development of rural localities/areas based on the utilisation of local assets, while recognising the importance of linking local with external actors for attracting those resources not available at the local level and the influence of exogenous-structural (global) factors in local/regional development. Despite this link between rural social enterprises and neoendogenous development, established through a (systematic) literature review of previous research, how rural social enterprises work to contribute to a neoendogenous rural development has not been explored to date, constituting the main aim of this thesis.

To pursue this aim, the phenomenon researched has been conceptualised drawing on a 'substantive' view of the economy as proposed by Polanyi. According to this view, economic actors and relations are embedded within society and nature, and the economy is formed by three 'forms of economic integration', i.e. reciprocity, redistribution and market-exchange. This conceptual framework has been complemented with the concepts of 'spatial scale' and 'place' in order to add nuance to the analysis of rural social enterprises as neoendogenous development actors.

The methodology of this study was underpinned by a critical realist perspective which lies in the combination of a realist ontology with a constructivist epistemology. According to critical realism the ultimate goal of social science research is to uncover the mechanisms that can (partially) explain an observed phenomenon. In order to so, two in-depth case studies of social enterprises operating within Irish rural localities were conducted. During 15 months of continuous engagement with the two rural social enterprises, 36 semi-structured interviews with diverse stakeholders, 321 pages of field notes from participant observations and other complementary materials were gathered. These data were thematically analysed through several rounds of coding

performed through an iterative process (of five stages) between data collection, the analysis of empirical data and theoretical reflections. This process allowed for an increasingly focused data collection and for the verification and/or refinement of (preliminary) findings.

The findings from this study explain three interrelated mechanisms used by these rural social enterprises when contributing to the neoendogenous development of their localities. The first mechanism explains how the engagement of rural social enterprises in plural and multi-scalar (socio-)economic relations and their collaborative and collective resourcefulness practices are related with their capacity to contribute to an integrated development of their localities. The second mechanism explains how rural social enterprises act as 'supporting structures' that enhance regular plural (socio-)economic relations among different local actors within their localities. Thus, it explains their contribution to the institutionalisation of substantive 'forms of economic integration' at the local level. The third mechanism explains how the work of rural social enterprises is influenced by the specific features of their rural context and, how these organisations engage with their context as a (integrated) 'place'. Thus, it explains how rural social enterprises harness and (re)valorise locational, institutional, material and identity aspects when contributing to the development of their localities.

In conclusion, this study argues that rural social enterprises (can) act as 'placial embedded structures' which (re)valorise (untapped) local assets and attract external resources based on their ability to enhance collective action and to develop synergies with different stakeholders. Therefore, these organisations present great potential to contribute to neoendogenous rural development. However, this study also poses some notes of caution to this potential. First, this potential lies in their complementarity to other key development stakeholders such as public authorities or for-profit local businesses. Second, to draw a realistic picture of this potential, spatially sensitive research and policies that address the heterogeneity of rural areas are needed. These notes are based on the empirical evidence presented in this study which demonstrate how substantive 'forms of economic integration' and 'place' matter for explaining the work rural social enterprises as neoendogenous rural development actors.

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1. Overview

This thesis aims to explore how Irish rural social enterprises work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities. This chapter provides an introduction to this study by presenting a brief background on the fields of social enterprise and rural development, especially focusing on the links between the characteristics of rural social enterprises and a neoendogenous approach towards the development of rural areas. Moreover, the main elements of the conceptual framework of this study are presented briefly, i.e. a 'substantive' view of the economy, its three 'forms of integration' (market-exchange, redistribution and reciprocity), and the concepts of 'spatial scale' and 'place'. From this conceptual framework, the research questions and objectives that have guided this study are introduced. Furthermore, an overview of the research methodology followed within this study is outlined and the chapter concludes with a presentation to the reader of the overall thesis structure.

1.2. Research Background

Social enterprises (SEs) have gained increasing attention as potential solutions for some of the complex challenges that society is facing nowadays (Government of Ireland, 2019; European Commission, 2020) due to their aim of combining social, economic and/or environmental goals through entrepreneurial means (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001; Nicholls, 2006).

SEs tend to occupy an intermediate position among the private for-profit sector, the state/public sector and the civil society (Nyssens, 2006). Although not clearly fitting within any of these spheres, SEs share some features from the private for-profit sector, e.g. they trade goods/services within the market thus generate some profits; from the public sector, e.g. their goals pursue to provide benefits not only to their members but to other (vulnerable) groups and/or the general population, thus are guided by a general interest principle and; from the civil society, e.g. their capacity to mobilise volunteers and other non-market resources (Defourny and Nyssens, 2017). This intermediate position is usually associated with the third sector/social economy (Defourny, Hulgård and Pestoff, 2014). Hence, SEs represent a subtype of organisations within the wider third sector/social economy (Defourny, 2001; Pearce, 2009). This subgroup varies greatly and can include, among others, business that trade for social purposes such as fair-trade companies; voluntary organisations that have developed complementary

trading businesses to support their mission or; spin-off organisations emerging from the public sector whose main mission is the delivery of public services through contracts with the state (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2011; Defourny and Nyssens, 2017; Young, Searing and Brewer, 2019).

Rural areas have demonstrated to be a fertile ground for SEs, a study carried out by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and Social Finance Foundation (SFF) for mapping SEs within three Irish regions (Waterford, Cavan and Ballyhoura) estimated a greater ratio of rural to urban SEs (DRCD and SFF, 2018, p. 37). This concurs with data from Scotland where a census of SEs is regularly conducted by Community Enterprise in Scotland (CEIS). The data show that 33% of Scottish SEs are located in rural areas, which are inhabited by only 17% of Scottish total population, thus showing a greater proportion of SEs per inhabitant operating in rural areas than in urban areas (CEIS, 2017, 2019).

Different factors have contributed to this density of SEs in rural areas (Steiner and Teasdale, 2019), some can be related to a tradition of mutual self-help or to the great density of social networks within rural areas; while others can be related to the (often) unattractiveness of these locations/populations for private investors looking to maximising their profits or to the consequences of neoliberal policies[1] that have reduced the presence of the state in the pursuit of 'effectiveness' of public investment (Harvey, 2005). In this regard, exogenous-structural forces such as the growth of mobility of capital or the global financial crisis have largely affected an uneven and heterogeneous development of rural areas. Within this uneven development some rural areas have experienced productivity, GDP and population growth and better access to services; while others have lagged behind suffering downward spirals of economic decline, low employment rates, out-migration of the youth and better educated, an ageing population and loss of private and public investment on infrastructure and services (Copus and Hörnström, 2011; European Commission, 2017; Copus *et al.*, 2020).

[1] Neoliberalism, according to Ayo (2012 cited in Roy and Hackett, 2017, p. 89) is "commonly understood as a political and economic approach which favours the expansion and intensification of markets, while at the same time minimizing government intervention".

This uneven development has left many rural areas without adequate public and private services. However, rural areas and their population have not been simply static actors that receive these external trends but rather they have negotiated and reacted in different ways towards the implications of these exogenous-global factors (Woods, 2007; Woods and McDonagh, 2011; Dax, 2020), fostering (on some occasions) alternative ways of addressing their challenges (Bock, 2019).

In countries such as Ireland, third sector/social economy organisations have played a significant role in job creation, service delivery and (rural) local development (Donnelly-Cox, Donoghue and Hayes, 2001; O'Hara, 2001; O'Hara and O'Shaughnessy, 2017). This study deals with a specific type of Irish third sector/social economy organisations, social enterprises, as one of the local rural actors that have contributed to shape and develop, in specific ways, the different rural localities in which they are based, exploring how these actors have worked to do so.

Despite the growing importance of rural SEs as part of the solution to meeting rural needs and a notable increase of research published on rural SEs during the last decade (van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020), the research field of rural SEs remains in its nascent stages with great scope for theoretical contributions based on empirical evidence (Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019).

Studies published on rural SEs have pointed to the capacity of these organisations to deliver a wide range of services and/or products that contribute (concurrently) to different dimensions of the development of rural localities (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Olmedo, van Twuijver and O'Shaughnessy, 2019). Moreover, other studies have shown the intrinsic relation between rural SEs and their rural context (Smith and McColl, 2016) and their ability to draw from a wide range of (untapped) resources through the development of networks, both at local and external levels, in order to achieve their goals (Vestrum, 2014; Richter, 2019). These characteristics of rural SEs concur with the principles advocated by a neoendogenous approach towards rural development, and place-based approaches to local/regional development, which pursue an integrated development of rural localities/areas based on the utilisation of local assets, while at the same time attracting those external resources not available at the local level (Ray, 2006; Barca, McCann and Rodríguez-Pose, 2012; Bentley and Pugalis, 2014; Cejudo and Navarro, 2020).

Furthermore, from a neoendogenous rural development approach the complementary role that, within governance frameworks (Esparcia and Abassi, 2020), different actors including the state, private for-profit companies but also third sector organisations such as rural SEs play towards the development of rural localities/areas it is emphasised (Salemink and Strijker, 2016). Among these actors, are stressed the relevance of those with the capacity to develop networks and leverage resources at different spatial scales, enhance citizen engagement and entrepreneurialism, and who often act as "catalysts for change in their local area through collective, networked action" (Shucksmith, 2012, p. 16; see also Gkartzios and Lowe, 2019). Due to their ability to engage with their local population and with external actors, to their entrepreneurial character and to their aim to contribute concurrently to different dimensions of development, rural SEs present great potential as key actors to contribute to the development of rural areas/localities within these governance frameworks. Hence, they have the potential to contribute to a neoendogenous rural development.

While some studies have established the role of rural SEs as significant local development actors (e.g. O'Hara, 2001; Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Jacuniak-Suda and Mose, 2014; Healey, 2015a; Barraket *et al.*, 2019) less is understood about how rural SEs, whose main aim is to contribute to local and community development, work to make this contribution and in what ways they engage with the rural context, in which they are situated, when doing so. Accepting the view that rural SEs are local/rural development actors the main aim of this study is to explore **how Irish rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities**.

1.3. Conceptual Framework, Research Questions and Objectives

In order to meet its main aim, this study has drawn from the 'substantive' view of the economy (Polanyi, 1957, 1977) as its main theoretical underpinning. The 'substantive' view of the economy emphasises humans' "dependence for [their] living upon […] the interexchange with [their] natural and social environment" (Polanyi, 1957, p. 243). Thus, it stresses the 'embeddedness' of economic relations and actors "in institutions, economic and noneconomic. The inclusion of the non-economic being vital" (Polanyi, 1957, p. 250). This 'substantive' approach concurs with a conceptualisation of SEs

which emphasises their collective and cooperative dynamics and the direct relation between the productive activity and social mission of SEs (Defourny and Nyssens, 2006; Laville, 2014; Roy and Grant, 2019).

Moreover, following a 'substantive' approach, it is argued that the economy is formed by three types of (socio-)economic relations that represent different 'forms of economic integration', i.e. specific institutional arrangements that develop 'supporting structures' for these relations to occur in a regular and structured fashion (Polanyi, 1977, pp. 35 – 43). The three types of (socio-)economic relations ('forms of economic integration') are: market-exchange, that refers to (socio-)economic relations that occur within a competitive price-making system; redistribution, that refers to (socio-)economic relations organised by a central point/authority that gathers and redistributes/allocates resources and; reciprocity, that refers to (socio-)economic relations developed among members of a group/community and/or between different groups/organisations in which mutuality is enhanced (Polanyi, 1977; Laville and Nyssens, 2001).

According to Defourny and Nyssens (2006) SEs constitute organisations that tend to hybridize these three types of (socio-)economic relations ('forms of economic integration') illustrating how "they work together rather than in isolation from each other" (Defourny and Nyssens, 2006, pp. 10-11). In addition, these three 'forms of economic integration' have also been presented as a theoretical underpinning for the analysis of local and regional economic practices that can lead to territorial development from a neoendogenous rural development approach (Ray, 2006, p. 280). Hence, the 'substantive' approach towards the economy and its three 'forms of economic integration' provide a suitable theoretical platform to study rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors.

In addition, rural SEs are characterised by their intrinsic relation with the contexts in which they are based, thus by their place-based character (Lang and Fink, 2019), and by developing networks with local and external actors (Richter, 2019). In the same line, neoendogenous rural development principles also stress the relevance of multi-scalar relations and place-making for this type of development (Gkartzios and Lowe, 2019). Therefore, this study incorporates (socio-)spatial dimensions within its conceptual framework through the concepts of 'spatial scale/multi-scalarity' (Hess,

2004) and ‘place’ (Cresswell, 2004) to add analytical nuance to the study of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors. The first concept (‘spatial scale/multi-scalarity’), allows for the analysis of the relations in which rural SEs engage with other actors at different geo-political levels, i.e. local, regional, national and/or international. The second concept (‘place’), allows for a closer look of the engagement of rural SEs with their context. Following Agnew (1987, 2011), ‘place’, has been further sub-divided into three dimensions: location, which refers to a relative geographical position; locale, which refers to the material and institutional settings where social relations occur, and; sense of place, which refers to the identification and attachment of the population to a place as a unique entity.

Based on the charactersitics of rural SEs abovementioned, this study also argues for the (potential) ‘corporate agency’ (Archer, 2000) of these organisations. This imply looking at rural SEs as collective entities that articulate shared interests, promote collective action and interact strategically with other actors when trying to achieve their goals.

The combination of these elements underpins the conceptual framework through which this study has explored how Irish rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities (these elements that form the conceptual framework of this study are illustrated in detail in Figure 3.2., page 77).

In line with the main aim of this study and this conceptual framework, two research questions have guided this research and are stated as follows:

> Research Question 1: How do Irish rural social enterprises engage in (socio-)economic relations representing different ‘forms of economic integration’ in order to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities?
>
> Research Question 2: How do Irish rural social enterprises engage in (socio-)spatial relations with different dimensions of their ‘places’ in order to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities?

From these research questions three research objectives have been formulated. The first research objective of this study is:

> Research Objective 1: to explore the different kind of (socio-)economic relations which Irish rural social enterprises have engaged in to leverage resources and, how these social enterprises combine these resources in specific (new) ways to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

The second research objective of this study, closely aligned with the former, is:

> Research Objective 2: to explore if, and how, Irish rural social enterprises have worked as 'supporting structures' that promote regular (socio-)economic relations representing different 'forms of economic integration' to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

The third research objective of this study is:

> Research Objective 3: to explore how Irish rural social enterprises engage with different dimensions of their 'places' to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

These research questions and objectives have been explored through two in-depth case studies of SEs operating within Irish rural localities.

1.4. Methodology

This study has drawn from a critical realist philosophy of science which implies that the goal of research is to search for the (non-directly observable) 'causal mechanisms' that explain the phenomenon under study (Archer, 1998). In order to do so, an intensive research design (Sayer, 1992) was followed in which two in-depth case studies of rural SEs based in (small) Irish rural localities were conducted. The exploratory nature of this study makes the case study a suitable research method as it allows for studying a phenomenon, and its complexity, within their natural settings (Hartley, 2004).

Due to the importance of the case selection when applying this method (Vincent and Wapshott, 2014), a preparatory phase of the fieldwork was conducted in which the researcher gathered information of potential cases through different means such as desk research, participation in national and regional SEs events, visits to rural SEs and

informal interviews with local and regional development experts and with rural SEs members. From this preparatory phase two rural SEs were selected based on their potential to provide knowledge to achieve the main aim of this study (Thomas, 2011).

The data of this study were gathered through multiple qualitative research techniques such as participant observations (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010), semi-structured interviews (Brinkman, 2013) with different stakeholders, and from other complementary materials (Rapley and Rees, 2018), e.g. local newsletters, maps. These data were collected during a period of 15 months, September 2018 – December 2019, of continuous engagement of the researcher with the two rural SEs. This study has followed a thematic analysis as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). Furthermore, (part of) this analysis has been conducted concurrently with the data collection, following an iterative process between data collection, the analysis of empirical data and theoretical reflections, which have allowed for an increasingly focused data collection and for the verification and/or refinement of the (preliminary) findings along the course of the fieldwork (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Maxwell, 2005).

1.5. Thesis Overview

This thesis is comprised of eight chapters. After this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 presents Rural Social Enterprises as Neoendogenous Development Actors. In order to do so, an overview of significant literature within the field of SEs is presented. This includes a brief presentation of the landscape of SEs within Europe, the main academic schools of thought on SEs and the relation of SEs with the third sector/social economy. Furthermore, this chapter also presents different perspectives on rurality, rural areas and rural development from a European perspective. The fields of SEs and rural development are linked through a (systematic) review of empirical studies on rural SEs, playing especial attention to the contributions of rural SEs to an integrated development of rural localities/areas, to their relational character and their resourcefulness and to the importance of the rural context for the work of rural SEs. This chapter concludes, based on the conceptual and empirical evidence reviewed, by establishing a link between the characteristics shown by rural SEs and neoendogenous rural development supporting the main aim of this thesis, i.e. to explore how Irish rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

Chapter 3 represents the more theoretical chapter of this thesis. This chapter argues for adopting A Substantive View of Rural Social Enterprises. In this regard the relevance of the work of Polanyi and his 'substantive' approach to the study of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors is presented. The concept of 'embeddedness' is discussed as a useful tool that allows for the study of economic relations as intrinsically linked to other dimensions such as the social, natural or geographical/spatial. The chapter argues for the incorporation of (socio-)spatial aspects to the study of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors and this is presented by introducing the concepts of 'spatial scale/multi-scalarity' and 'place'. This chapter further presents the three types of economic relations that, according to the 'substantive' approach, form the economy and their suitability for the study of (rural) SEs as rural development actors. Moreover, the chapter presents the (potential) 'corporate agency' of rural SEs. Finally, the chapter concludes by linking and organising the conceptual elements discussed throughout the chapter into a conceptual framework. From the presentation of this conceptual framework and linking with the main aim of this study, the research questions and objectives of this thesis are presented at the end of Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 describes in detail the Methodology followed in this thesis. This chapter starts by discussing the links between the methodological implications of the substantive approach and critical realism, which constitutes the philosophical underpinning of this study. The main aspects of critical realism in relation to ontology, epistemology and explanation are briefly explained then. The chapter continues by presenting in detail the (intensive) research design of the two exploratory case studies that form the base of this thesis. This section justifies the selection of the case study as the appropriate method for answering the research questions and explains the process followed to select the cases. Moreover, it presents the research techniques used to gather the data, i.e. participant observation, semi-structured interview and other complementary materials. After this, the chapter shows how, in order to explore the research objectives, the researcher has made sense of the data gathered through an iterative thematic analysis as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). That section also provides detailed accounts of the actual analysis processes followed throughout this study. The chapter ends with three short sections discussing the topics of

reflexivity, ethics and anonymization in rural (social enterprises) studies as well as some of the anticipated methodological limitations of this study.

Chapter 5 is a descriptive chapter which sets the scene, contextualising Irish SEs and the two cases of this thesis, in order to support the interpretation of the findings displayed in Chapters 6 and 7. This chapter presents a short note about Ireland for non-Irish readers that describes the general context in which this study is framed. Moreover, the chapter illustrates in detail the specific features of the rural localities in which the SEs studied are situated. Finally, the main characteristics of the two SEs and the projects that they have delivered are also analysed descriptively to show their contribution to different dimensions of development within their localities.

Chapter 6 and 7 presents the key findings from this thesis. Chapter 6 presents the findings related to the first research question of this study. It explains how these rural SEs have engaged in plural (socio-)economic relations with actors at multiple spatial scales to leverage a wide range of resources and, how they have mixed these resources in specific ways through collective and collaborative resourcefulness practices to deliver their projects. Moreover, it analyses how these rural SEs have acted as local supporting structures contributing to the institutionalisation of plural (socio-)economic relations. Chapter 7 presents the findings related to the second research question of this study. It explores how the work of the rural SEs studied have been influenced by the specific features of their rural context and how they have engaged in an integrated way with locational, institutional, material and identity aspects of their (heterogeneous) rural places to develop their projects.

Chapter 8 presents a summary of the research and discusses the contribution of this study to knowledge in relation to previous literature in the fields of (rural) SEs and rural development. This thesis concludes by presenting some implications for research, policy and practice, by acknowledging some limitations of the study, suggesting avenues for further research and, presenting an overall conclusion about this exploration of Irish rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors.

Chapter 2
Rural Social Enterprises as Neoendogenous Development Actors

2.1. Introduction

In spite of not being a new phenomenon, social enterprises have been increasingly recognised by academics and policymakers as actors with great potential to contribute to tackling some of the challenges that face European territories and societies such as an ageing population, climate change, migration or the depopulation of some rural areas (European Commission, 2020; Copus *et al.*, 2020).

Within rural areas, the reduced presence of the state (public services) and lower incentives for private investors looking for profits, but also a tradition of collective working and mutual self-help have been identified as important drivers for the high presence of SEs in rural settings (Christmann, 2014; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019). For example, in countries such as Scotland, where SEs have a strong recognition by its national government, rural SEs present a ratio of 23 SEs per 10.000 inhabitants whereas these ratio decreases to 9 SEs per 10.000 in the case of urban locations/areas (CEIS, 2019).

'Rural social enterprise' is still a young field of research, however, studies on rural SEs are rapidly increasing especially since the last decade (van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020). These studies show that SEs can represent key actors contributing to the development of rural areas/localities (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Barraket *et al.* 2019; Olmedo, van Twuijver and O'Shaughnessy, 2019). However, the literature that links (rural) SEs and rural development has been scarce to date. This chapter, besides presenting a review of the literature of SEs and, rurality/rural and rural development separately, links these fields presenting through a (systematic) literature review the main features of rural SEs. From this review it is established a tentative argument in regard to the (potential) link between rural SEs and neoendogenous rural development. This link can be observed through four characteristics of rural SEs; their relational character; their focus on innovation and entrepreneurship; their emphasis on participatory governance and; their aim to contribute to an integrated development. Essentially, rural SEs are argued to be actors with great potential to (re)valorise their local territories, to connect the local with the global and/or to accommodate external forces into local tailor made solutions, which constitute the principles of a neoendogenous rural development. However, an in-depth investigation of how rural

SEs work in order to contribute to a neoendogenous development of their localities has not been conducted to date, constituting the main aim of this study.

2.2. Social Enterprises

2.2.1. The Landscape of Social Enterprises in Europe

Despite not being a new phenomenon SEs have received, since the 1990's, increasing attention from politicians, practitioners and academics due to their ability to address social problems through entrepreneurial means (Nicholls, 2006; European Commission, 2020). However, the definition and understanding of the limits of what constitute (and not) a SE is highly context sensitive (Galera and Borzaga, 2009; Defourny and Nyssens, 2010; Kerlin, 2010; Skerratt, 2012; see section 2.2.2. for greater detail on this).

Within Europe, the concept of SEs started to emerge, in first instance in relation to new (social) cooperative types that were established in Italy during the 1990's (Defourny, 2004 in Galera and Borzaga, 2009). Furthermore, in that decade a pan-European research project (EMES[2]) was set up to study a wide range of organisations that presented new entrepreneurial dynamics within the third sector, these organisations were coined as SEs (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001). Despite the recognition during the decades of the 1990s and 2000s of SEs by different European national legal frameworks (e.g. Italy, Belgium, Portugal or Finland) and the adoption by some countries of SEs strategies (e.g. UK), it was not until 2011 with the launch by the European Commission of the 'Social Business Initiative' (European Commission, 2011) that SEs gained increased recognition at a European Union (EU) policy level. This document established a working definition of a SE as:

> "an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives. It is managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involves

[2] The project "EMergence de l'Entreprise Sociale en Europe/Emergence of Social Enterprise in Europe" (EMES) run from 1996-1999 and involved researchers from 15 EU countries.

employees, consumers and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities" (European Commission, 2011).

This definition accommodates a wide spectrum of organisations whose aims include pursuing social, societal or environmental impact rather than generating profits for their shareholders. In spite of this, this working definition does not deny the possibility for SEs of generating profits although profits generated should be reinvested in pursuing their goals. Moreover, this definition stresses the relevance of entrepreneurial strategies and innovation for SEs to achieve their goals at the same time that explicitly reference the social economy as the (wider) field where these organisations operate. Finally, this working definition makes an explicit reference to the type of governance that a SE should have, which imply an alignment with democratic principles.

At a national level, the legal status of SEs varies across Europe. Since the launch in the early 1990's of the pioneer Italian 'Law on Social Cooperatives' there has been an increasing recognition of SEs from a legal perspective. However, according to a comparative report of the European Commission (2020), this recognition is not universal across Europe because of a lack of a common framework that accommodates SEs within national European legal systems. In this regard, some countries, such as Denmark, Finland or Lithuania, have developed specific (stand alones) legal statuses/certifications for SEs, while other European countries have adjusted existing cooperative (e.g. Portugal, Spain) or company laws (e.g. UK, Latvia) to incorporate SEs. Furthermore, it is still usual that, even in countries where specific legislation for SEs has been passed, *de facto* SEs use other legal statuses such as associations, foundations, cooperatives, companies limited by guarantee, mutuals and even private limited liability companies with public benefit status (European Commission, 2015, 2020).

Besides the growing legal recognition of SEs within European states, the increasing political/policy recognition of SEs across Europe is also manifested through the development of national and regional SE support networks which are currently present in 23 of the EU Member States. In addition, 15 EU Member States have developed national policy frameworks for SEs[3], most of these having been developed since the

[3] Some of these frameworks include social enterprises within wider policy framework usually related to the Social (and Solidarity) Economy or to Social Entrepreneurship.

launch of the 'Social Business Initiative' by the European Commission in 2011 (European Commission, 2020). This is for example the case of Ireland which published its first National Social Enterprise Policy in 2019, adopting a (official) definition of a SE as:

> "an enterprise whose objective is to achieve a social, societal or environmental impact, rather than maximising profit for its owners or shareholders. It pursues its objectives by trading on an ongoing basis through the provision of goods and/or services, and by reinvesting surpluses into achieving social objectives. It is governed in a fully accountable and transparent manner and is independent of the public sector. If dissolved, it should transfer its assets to another organisation with a similar mission" (Government of Ireland, 2019, p. 8).

Despite different reports have acknowledged the contributions of Irish SEs to deliver a wide range of goods and services and to the achievement of government policy goals in areas such as labour-market activation, health care, climate action, social cohesion and rural development (European Commission, 2015; Hynes, 2016; DRCD and SFF, 2018), there has not been a consensus about the form and size of the sector and SEs are not included in official statistics to date (O'Hara and O'Shaughnessy, 2021). The development of an official working definition of SEs by the Government of Ireland aims to reduce the ambiguity within the Irish academic discourse on SEs which reflects a variety of conceptualisations that draw upon different academic traditions (O'Hara and O'Shaughnessy, 2021; see also section 2.2.2.).

The Government of Ireland definition of SEs concurs in many aspects with the abovementioned working definition proposed by the European Commission, e.g. it stressed that the main aim of SEs cannot be profit maximisation, it also highlights the need for SEs to provide goods and/or services to the market or their need to reinvest profits/surpluses in their social objectives. However, some differences are also present between these definitions, as for example the Irish definition includes a reference to the assets lock of SEs not included within the European Commission working definition. On the other hand, the European Commission definition explicitly emphasised the link between SEs and the social economy and pay greater attention to the multi-stakeholder governance of SEs. Despite these similarities and differences both definitions encompass a wide range of organisations/actors that partially operate

in the market but whose aims are not oriented to profit maximisation but to tackle social, economic and/or environmental issues through entrepreneurial means.

Furthermore, the increasing recognition of SEs has also been manifested within the academic and (higher) education sectors reflected in the increased presence of specific SE related modules and/or programmes across European Higher Education Institutes (European Commission, 2020). In relation to research, although the first pan-European research project on SEs was established back in the mid-90's, the field has also been gaining momentum in the last years/decades evident in the growth of national and cross national funded research projects[4] and academic publications about (rural) SEs (Granados *et al.*, 2011; Littlewood and Khan, 2018; Dionisio, 2019; van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020).

The wide spectrum of SEs covered by the two abovementioned (working) definitions of SEs concurs with the heterogeneity that the European SEs landscape presents in relation to their missions, fields of activities and resource mix. The wide range of missions shown by SEs across Europe have been compiled into four broad fields of activity, i.e. work integration of disadvantage groups (WISEs[5]); provision of social and health services; local development of disadvantaged areas and; "other", the latter including fields such as micro-finance, sports, cultural heritage, science, research and innovation (European Commission, 2015). Notwithstanding, the activities developed by SEs usually cover, concurrently, more than one of the abovementioned fields, as for example SEs that employ people distant from the labour market to develop services such as transport or childcare that contribute to the development of disadvantaged rural areas (O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016; Róbert and Levente, 2017).

[4] Examples of cross-national funded research projects on SEs:

- PERSE: https://emes.net/research-projects/work-integration/perse/
- EFESEIIS; www.fp7-efeseiis.eu/
- SELUSI: http://www.seforis.eu/selusi
- SEFORÏS; http://www.seforis.eu/
- SESBA:https://lit.ie/en-IE/Research-Development/Development/Social-Enterprise-(1)/SESBA-(Social-Enterprise-Skills-for-Business-Advis
- FAB-MOVE: https://fabmove.eu/project/
- ICSEM: https://www.iap-socent.be/icsem-project
- RurAction: https://ruraction.eu/

This is a non-exhaustive list.

[5] Working Integration Social Enterprises.

In regard to their (revenue) resource mix, SEs are characterised by mixing market and non-market resources that proceed from both public and/or private sources (Nyssens, 2006). The nature of this mix varies significantly across European countries and the sectors in which SEs operate. In broad terms, the abovementioned European Commission (2020) report identified three general types of (revenue) resource mix by SEs depending on their field of activity. First, European SEs that mainly deliver social, health and educational services are (typically) highly dependent on public subsidies and/or contracts. Second, WISEs report a more balanced mix between private revenues from the selling of goods and/or services and from public subsidies and/or contracts. Third, SEs that operate in other fields such as sport, recreational activities, organic agriculture, community shops, and other sectors not directly recognised by the public welfare systems as basic services, usually have a greater reliance on private sources such as the selling of goods and/or services and membership fees.

Table 2.1. The Landscape of Social Enterprises in Europe

The landscape of SEs in Europe	
Legal Status	• Stand-alone legal status/certification (e.g. Finland) • Adjusting cooperative (e.g. Portugal) or company law (e.g. UK) • Other legal status (across Europe)
Political/policy	• National and regional support networks (23 EU countries) • National policy frameworks (15 EU countries)
Research/ Academic	• Cross-national research projects • Scientific publications • Modules and programmes
Fields of Activity	• WISEs • Social and Health Services • Local Development • 'Other' – miscellaneous
Resource Mix (revenue)	• Public subsidies and contracts (welfare services) • Mixed public-private (WISEs) • Private sources (other, non-welfare services)

Source: own elaboration. Based on European Commission (2015, 2020).

In summary, the landscape of SEs in Europe presents a diverse picture represented by an increasing recognition in terms of their legal status, policy and within research and academia and, a great heterogeneity in terms of their fields of activity and resource mix (see Table 2.1). Hence, this landscape of SEs provides a rich ground for the study of this type of organisation which, although not a new phenomenon, is gaining in importance in the last decades.

2.2.2. Academic Schools of Thought on Social Enterprises

The previous section has shown the increasing attention that SEs have gained from different stakeholders including academics, however, (rural) SEs as a research field is still 'young' with great scope for theoretical development based on empirical research (Dees and Battle Anderson, 2006; Muñoz, 2010; Defourny and Nyssens, 2017; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019). In regard to the early developments of the conceptualisation of SEs, Defourny and Nyssens (2010) and Bacq and Janssen (2011) have identified three main schools of thought[6], two of them emanating from a US-Anglo-Saxon tradition[7], i.e. Social Innovation School and Social Enterprise School and a third emanating from the European tradition as the developed by scholars from the EMES network.

A first US-Anglo-Saxon school of thought is the Social Innovation School, authors within this perspective have as their main focus the study of social entrepreneurs (Drayton, 2002; Dees, 2007). These social entrepreneurs are portrayed as heroic individuals, change-makers (Bornstein, 2004), that achieve new (innovative) solutions in order to transform society (Leadbeater, 1997). For Dees (2001, p. 4) these social

[6] These schools of thought represent a global north (Anglo-Saxon and European) perspective on the topic which is in line with the contextualisation of this study. However, drawing from data and literature from other parts of the world, including Africa, Latin America and Asia, some authors have also developed conceptualisations of SEs that incorporate specific elements closer to these contexts, see for example Coraggio *et al.*, 2015; Hulgård *et al.*, 2019.

[7] Following Defourny and Nyssens (2010) the Social Innovation School has been included within the conceptual discussion of social enterprises. However, this school refers greatly to the concepts of social entrepreneurs (individuals) and social entrepreneurship (processes) which are different but closely related to the concept of social enterprise.
In this regard social entrepreneurs refer to individuals who act as agents of change aiming to create social value through innovative processes (Dees, 2001). Social entrepreneurship refers to processes of entrepreneurship aimed at creating positive social impact that takes shape through activities of multiple actors, which can be individuals, groups, organisations and/or institutions (Mair and Marti, 2006). For a more detailed discussion about the differences, similarities and relation between the concepts see Brouard and Larivet (2010).

entrepreneurs are characterised by being driven by: a mission that aims to create social value; their ability to recognise and pursue new opportunities; continuously innovating and learning; not being constrained by the resources currently available and; presenting high accountability to the communities and beneficiaries of their actions. From this perspective, the innovativeness and the potential of scaling up of these new solutions are central themes to research (Alvord, Brown and Letts, 2004). Moreover, according to this school of thought SEs are not constrained by profit making nor distribution, therefore, they can adopt multiple organisational and legal forms ranging from non-profit charities to commercial firms with social objectives (Kramer, 2005; Mair and Martí, 2006).

Another school of thought on SEs emanating from a US-Anglo-Saxon tradition is the Social Enterprise School, also called the 'earned-income' school. This school of thought focuses on SEs as organisations. Early scholars within this school focused on the adoption by non-profit organisations of commercial/business strategies to generate market revenues that increase their funding streams and/or substitute public grants and subsidies ('commercial non-profit approach') (Young and Salamon, 2002). However, as this perspective evolved for-profit social businesses also were included in this configuration ('mission-driven business approach'). The latter are essentially businesses with a social mission, the profits generated by these organisations are partially distributed among their shareholders with some and/or a substantial part being reinvested in the development of social activities (Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern, 2006; Yunus, 2010). Moreover, according to some authors within this school of thought, SEs only qualify if they are entirely self-funded from market revenues (Nicholls, 2006).

A third perspective on the conceptualisation of SEs emanated from the European context and has been primarily developed by scholars of the EMES research network[8]. This perspective focuses on SEs as (collective) organisational forms that act within

[8] The EMES network was originally formed by scholars from European countries, however, it has developed into an international network that is formed by scholars and practitioners from all over the world (see https://emes.net/)

the third sector[9] (Defourny, 2001). According to this perspective, SEs represent a new reality from other organisations within the third sector due to their entrepreneurial and (socially) innovative way of addressing social problems (Defourny and Nyssens, 2013), i.e. SEs are organisations that combine resources in new ways, enhancing innovation and change. Adapting Schumpeter's typology of innovation to the third sector field, Defourny (2001) and Defourny and Nyssens (2013) show how SEs have developed new products and new quality of products, e.g. the development of new services in the field of childcare or elder care; new methods of organisation and/or production, e.g. the integration of different stakeholders such as volunteers, salaried workers, public authorities or community users in the governance structures of the organisation and; new production factors, e.g. the working integration of socially excluded groups through WISEs.

Researchers from the EMES network developed a set of indicators categorised into three different dimensions, i.e. economic and entrepreneurial, social and participatory governance, which constitute an ideal type[10] of a SE (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001; Nyssens, 2006; Hulgård, 2011). The indicators within the economic and entrepreneurial dimension are:

- a continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services, i.e. having a productive activity;
- a significant level of economic risk, i.e. the financial viability depends on the resources secured by its members and;
- a minimum amount of paid work, i.e. there are some degree of paid staff although they are usually mixed with volunteers.

[9] According to Amin (2009, p. 6) organisations within the third sector "engaged in both trading and non-trading activities, but characterised by a community-based or social ownership and a clear commitment to principles of self-help, mutual obligation and social relevance".
Within this section the term third sector instead of social economy is used following early EMES scholars' writings such as Defourny (2001). The relation between SEs, the third sector and the social economy is discussed in greater extent later in section 2.2.3. within this chapter. For a further discussion about these concepts and their relation see Defourny, Hulgård and Pestoff, 2014; Laville, Young and Eynaud, 2015.

[10] In Weberain terms "an ideal type is obtained by emphasising unilaterally one or more standpoints and by linking together numerous isolated phenomena … arranged according to the previous, unilaterally chosen viewpoints in order to forms a homogeneous framework of thought" (Weber, 1918 in Laville and Nyssens, 2001, p. 313). Thus, ideal types establish frameworks to think about/analyse a phenomenon, not corresponding to the phenomenon directly observable.

The social dimension indicators are:

- an explicit aim to benefit the community, i.e. the main mission is to serve the community or a specific group within it and promote social responsibility at local level;
- an initiative launched by a group of citizens or civil society organisations, i.e. results from collective dynamics that have to be maintained and;
- a limited profit distribution, i.e. although the organisation can, and usually does, generates profits, a non-distribution or constrained distribution of profits apply.

Finally, the indicators of the participatory governance dimension are:

- a high degree of autonomy, i.e. the organisation is governed by the people involved in it, not by public authorities or other organisations;
- a decision-making power not based on capital ownership, i.e. normally one member, one vote and;
- a participatory nature which involve various parties affected by the activity, i.e. representation of different stakeholders in decision-making such as workers, users/customers, volunteers, producers and/or public representatives (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001; Defourny and Nyssens, 2012).

These indicators are not intended to be prescriptive, thus not every SE should fulfil all of them. However, they help to identify different types within the 'galaxy of SEs' (Defourny and Nyssens, 2017). In this sense, "they constitute a tool, somewhat analogous to a compass, which helps the researchers locate the position of the observed entities relative to one another and eventually identify subsets of social enterprises they want to study more deeply" (Defourny and Nyssens, 2010, p. 43).

These three schools of thought share some similarities but also present significant differences in their conceptualisation of SEs (see Table 2.2.). First, for the Social Enterprise School the productive activity of SEs is not usually related to its social mission but it (just) constitutes a means for its financial sustainability, however, for the other two perspectives the economic activity of SEs is usually closely related to their (social) mission (Roy and Grant, 2019). Second, authors from the Social Enterprise School stress the reliance of SEs (mainly or entirely) on market resources (Nicholls, 2006), whereas for the other two perspectives SEs tend to mix, albeit in

different degrees, market trading with other non-market resources such as public subsidies/grants and non-monetary resources such as volunteer labour (Gardin, 2006; Defourny and Nyssens, 2017). Third, the European EMES perspective emphasises the significant interaction between SEs and public policies whereas the Anglo-Saxon perspectives places more significance on the interaction of SEs with the market as the main way of addressing social issues (Defourny and Nyssens, 2010). Finally, there is a substantial difference in the emphasis on the governance structure of SEs (Pestoff and Hulgård, 2016). The inclusion of the participatory governance dimension within the ideal type of SEs proposed by EMES denotes the emphasis from this perspective on the collective dynamics and (economic) democratic processes of SEs (Laville, 2014). On the other hand, the Social Innovation School tends to focus on the social entrepreneur, thus denoting a more individualistic perspective towards SEs (Dees, 2001). Furthermore, EMES and a stream of the Social Enterprise School ('commercial non-profit approach') include a profits distribution constrain, as a mechanism to avoid SEs 'mission drift' (Cornforth, 2014); whereas for other scholars from the Social Enterprise School ('mission driven business approach') and for the Social Innovation School distribution of profits within shareholders is accepted, without any specific limitation.

This brief overview of the different schools of thought on SEs show how the conceptualisation of the term is contested. However, due to the emphasis on collective dynamics, on the interrelation of the SEs with public institutions and policies and the geographical, socio-economic and political (European) context of this research, this study has followed a conceptualisation of SEs as proposed by the EMES network.

Table 2.2. Main Schools of Thought on Social Enterprises.

	Social Innovation School	**Social Enterprise School**		**EMES network**
		commercial non-profit approach	***mission-driven business approach***	
Main focus	Social entrepreneurs – individual action	Social enterprise		Social enterprise – collective dynamics
	Market/business methods to address social problems	Market/business methods to address social problems		Interaction with different sectors, market and public policies
	Innovation and scaling up – transformation			Innovation – new combination of resources
Relation productive activity and (social) mission	Direct relation	Not necessary relation		Usually direct relation
Resources	Mix (market, non-market, non-monetary)	Mainly from market		Mix (market, non-market, non-monetary)
Legal form and governance	Any legal form	Non-profit organisations	No legal form constrain	Diverse legal forms (although some constrains) Democratic organisations
	Profit distribution permitted	Non-profit distribution	Profit distribution permitted to certain extent	Non or limited profit distribution

Source: own elaboration. Based on Defourny and Nyssens (2010) and Bacq and Janssen (2011).

2.2.3. Social Enterprises, New Dynamics within (and beyond) the Third Sector

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how rural based SEs contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities. The SEs under study are community owned and situated in rural locations and are understood as organisations that operate within the third sector (Defourny, 2001). According to Amin (2009, p. 6) "the third sector is engaged in both trading and non trading activities, but is characterised by a community-based or social ownership and a clear commitment to principles of self-help, mutual obligation and social relevance". Thus, the third sector represents a distinctive sphere from the private for-profit sector and the public sector/state (Pearce, 2009). The importance of this sector resides in its increasing role in service provision and in the (work) integration of vulnerable people, but also in its role of promoting participatory and non-capitalist economic forms (Hudson, 2009; Laville, 2014).

According to Defourny (2001) there are two major conceptual positions from which to examine the third sector, i.e. the non-profit approach (developed mainly within the US) which focuses on the legal profit distribution constraint as the main feature to define the sector and; the social economy[11] (*économie sociale*, developed namely by European scholars) which emphasises the cooperative and democratic principles of the organisations operating within the sector and their aim to serve the communities and/or groups that they target. From a social economy perspective, the traditional organisations that form the sector are cooperatives, mutuals and associations[12] (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005).

SEs represent new dynamics within the third sector, a 'new social economy' (Pestoff, 2009 in Hulgård, 2014), that address a variety of challenges faced by current societies differently from the public and the private for-profit sector but also (somehow) differently from traditional social economy organisations such as cooperatives or associations (Defourny, 2014). Hence, SEs represent a distinctive subtype of social economy organisations with specific characteristics, i.e. the combination of social and

[11] According to Laville and Nyssens (2001, p. 312) "in Europe, the term 'social economy' is identified with the so-called third sector, the latter being the term also most frequently employed at international level".
[12] Foundations are also included as more recent form of social economy organisations (Defourny, 2014).

economic goals through entrepreneurial strategies that lead to new solutions through mixing and combining resources in innovative ways to achieve their objectives (Defourny and Nyssens, 2010).

In this regard, SEs represent hybrid organisations that tend to combine (some) characteristics/principles typically associated with the public sector, e.g. pursue of general interest; the for profit sector, e.g. sale of goods and services in the market, and; the civil society, e.g. the mobilisation of volunteers. These characteristics situate SEs at the crossroads of the state/public sector, the market/for-profit sector and the civil society, blurring the boundaries among them (Nyssens, 2006; Defourny, 2014; Roy and Grant, 2019). This tendency to converge within an intermediate position has been stressed by Defourny and Nyssens (2017) who have established an international typology of SEs models based on the economic principles of interest (capital, mutual and general interest)[13] and the type of resources mix (market and non-market) of SEs. This (theoretical) typology presents four general models of SEs, i.e. 'entrepreneurial non-profits' (ENP); 'public-sector social enterprise' (PSE); 'social cooperatives' (SC) and; 'social business' (SB) (Defourny and Nyssens, 2017), which has been empirically tested against the analysis of 721 SEs across 43 different countries[14] (Defourny, Nyssens and Brolis, 2020).

The entrepreneurial non-profit (ENP) model represents non-profit organisations that develop an earned-income business through the sales of goods and/or services in

[13] Defourny and Nyssens (2017) based their 'principles of interest' on Gui's (1991) work about the economic rationale of capitalist and non capitalist organisations. According to Gui (1991) capitalist organisations' main driver is seeking profits for their shareholders ('capital interest'). However, this should be distinguished from third sector (non-profit and other non-capitalist) organisations. Within the third sector, Gui (1991) distinguishes between 'mutual-benefit organisations' and 'public-benefit organisations'. In the former, decision makers and beneficiaries are represented by the same group of stakeholders, e.g. traditional cooperatives and voluntary organisations such as book and sport clubs, thus they are based on 'mutual interest'. The latter are based on 'general interest' as the stakeholders that make decisions represent a different group than the beneficiaries, e.g. advocacy voluntary organisations. This 'general interest' concurs with institutions operating within the public sector.

[14] The data that provide empirical support to this typology draw from the International Comparative Social Enterprise Models (ICSEM) project which aim is to compare the situation of SEs in different countries around the world. Within this project 220 researchers from more than 50 countries have participated, more information at https://www.iap-socent.be/icsem-project

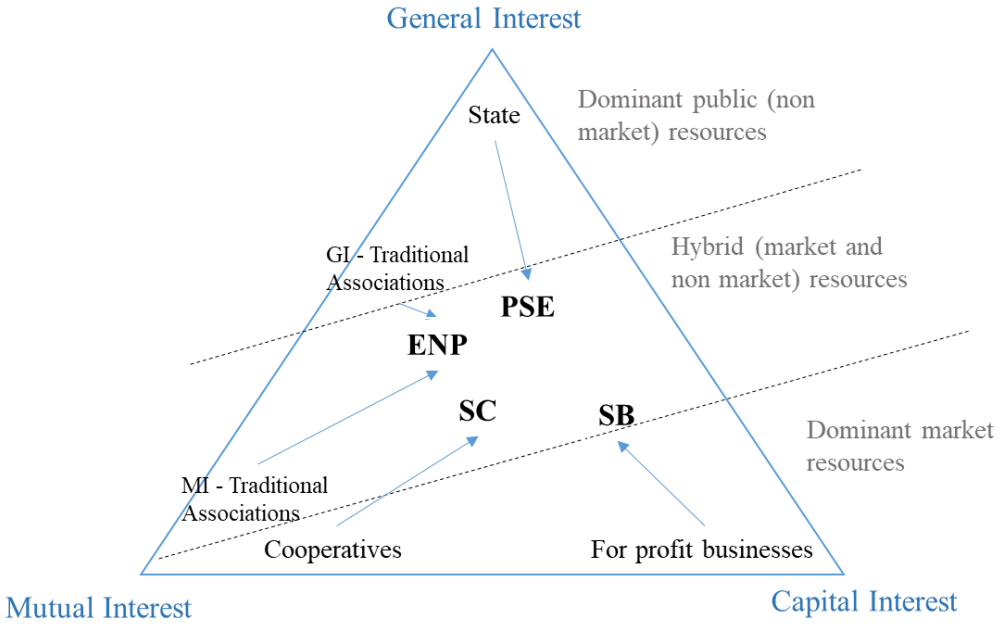
The empirical test of this typology confirmed the presence of 7 clusters of SEs which represent three of the models theoretically proposed, i.e. SB (1cluster), ENP (4 clusters), SC (2 clusters). The PSE model was not confirmed from the empirical findings, however, in two of the ENPs clusters (those corresponding with WISEs) above 10% of SEs involve some type of governmental agency within its founding members indicating the importance of public institutions as partners (rather than as the main driver) within these types of SEs (Defourny, Nyssens and Brolis, 2020).

support of their social mission. ENPs can arise from general interest traditional associations that demonstrate a greater entrepreneurial dimension, which situates them into a space where more market resources are mobilised. Moreover, they can also be closer to, or arise from, mutual interest associations that, besides mobilising (some degree of) market resources, have moved towards more general interest goals. In general, these organisations mobilise resources from both market and non-market origins, with the balance between them depending on their activities and field of operation. The public-sector social enterprise (PSE) model represents public sector spin-offs in the light of privatisation of public services under New Public Management frameworks. These SEs are usually dependent to a great extent on non-market resources such as public funding and are based on general interest principles. The social cooperative (SC) model represents organisations that come from or are close to (traditional) cooperatives but with a greater emphasis on general interest goals that transcend the interests of the single cooperative group, usually incorporating different stakeholders within their governance bodies. Although market resources can play an important role within SCs, these organisations tend to draw in non-market resources to a greater extent than traditional cooperatives. The social business (SB) model represents mission-driven businesses, these organisations develop business approaches to address social issues. They are characterised by mobilising a great degree of market resources. However, in relation to private for-profit businesses, SBs have moved towards a more general interest perspective, abandoning the pure capital/profit maximisation goal exhibited by conventional organisations guided by capital interest and operating in the private for-profit sector.

The models show how different types of SEs come from and/or are closer to the principles typically associated to the state (general principle), for-profit organisations (capital interest) or traditional third sector organisations such as cooperatives or mutuals (mutual interest), see Figure 2.1.. However, these models emphasise that SEs tend to converge in more intermediate positions in which the economic interest principles are blurred and market and non-market resources are rather hybridized[15] (Defourny and Nyssens, 2017).

[15] The arrows of the Figure 2.1. represent these movements/trajectories towards convergence into an intermediate position.
Defourny and Nyssens (2017) stress that SEs can represent new organisations and organisational forms but can also derive from new dynamics within 'traditional' organisations from any of the three sectors.

Figure 2.1. Typology of Social Enterprises Models and their Convergence towards Intermediate (Economic) Interests Positions and Mix of Market and Non-Market Resources.



Source: based on Defourny and Nyssens (2017, p. 2479).

In summary, SEs represent distinctive third sector/social economy organisations that tend to blur the boundaries between the public, private for-profit and traditional third sectors due to their mix of principles typically associated with the state, the market and the civil society (Nyssens, 2006). This mix of principles from different sectors and the cross-sectoral relations that SEs tend to engage in have been key for the ability of these organisations to foster new dynamics within (and beyond) the third sector and deliver (socially) innovative solutions to a wide range of challenges (Defourny and Nyssens, 2013).

This ability to deliver (innovative) solutions presents SEs as interesting development actors to research, however, this study is concerned with SEs which contribute to the development of their localities and operate specifically in rural localities/areas, thus facing particular challenges. Rural localities/areas share some features, however, they do not represent a homogeneous category, on the contrary they are characterised by their heterogeneity. Furthermore, the ways in which the development of rural areas has been addressed have changed from more top-down (exogenous) models towards bottom-up (endogenous) and mixed approaches in which a wider variety of actors,

including third sector organisations such as SEs, are recognised to play a role in this development. In order to discuss these topics, the following section presents a review of the literature about how rurality and rural areas have been conceptualised and an overview of different approaches towards rural development within a European context.

2.3. Rural Areas and Rural Development. A European Perspective

2.3.1. Rurality and the Heterogeneity of Rural Areas

Rural areas represent the vast majority of the European territory, they are key enclaves in terms of biodiversity, food, energy and other raw materials (Woods, 2011). Moreover, an estimated 29.1% of the total European Union's population live in rural areas (Eurostat, 2020a). According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO), in Ireland the population living within rural areas represent 37.3% of the total population of the country (CSO, 2016). In this regard, rural areas are also characterised by complex social and economic relations, functions, representations and meanings and varied levels of social and economic development (Bock, Kovacs and Shucksmith, 2015; Gallent and Gkartzios, 2019). Hence, rural areas represent dynamic spaces with great importance in socio-economic and environmental terms (Woods, 2011; Leuba, 2017).

However, the definition of what constitute the rural/rurality and a rural area is contested (Cloke, 2006; Woods, 2011; Brown and Shucksmith, 2016; Gallent and Gkartzios, 2019). At an administrative level, descriptive definitions of what is officially considered as a rural area vary from different countries. These definitions tend to classify rural areas mainly in terms of population densities. For example, in Ireland, rural areas are defined in terms of settlements with a population of less than 1,500 persons (CSO, 2016) whereas in Spain rural areas are considered as those municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants but also those with less than 30,000 inhabitants and a density lower than 100 inhabitants/km^2 (Government of Spain, 2007).

Despite the lack of agreement between national administrations, international organisations have established descriptive definitions of rural areas with the aim of facilitating international comparisons. An example of this is the widely accepted

definition from the OECD[16] based on three criteria, i.e. population density; the percentage of the population of a region living in rural communities and; the presence of large urban centres in such regions. According to these criteria regions are divided into Predominantly Rural; Intermediate and Predominantly Urban[17] (OECD, 2006).

The definition of the OECD has served as a base for other definitions of rural areas proposed at a EU level that have added more nuance, incorporating further indicators such as accessibility to basic services or the rate of employment within the primary sector (Bertolini and Peragini, 2009). Other descriptive definition is the one used by Eurostat in its yearly Regional Handbooks. Based on criteria of population density, Eurostat (2017) distinguishes between cities, towns and suburbs and, rural areas, however, by incorporating data at Local Administrative Units (LAU2) level it provides a detailed picture of the European rural territories. Finally, different European research projects (e.g. FARO-EU, EDORA, GEOSPECS)[18] have developed more complex descriptive definitions of what can constitute a rural area including different environmental, geographical, social and economic indicators and greater level of spatial detail.

As a result, these efforts have contributed to reflect at a descriptive statistical level the heterogeneity of rural areas, illustrating different degrees of 'rurality' in terms of demography, location, accessibility or economic structure.

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[16] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

[17] The classification of regions into one of the three categories is based on the following criteria:

1. Population density. A community is defined as rural if its population density is below 150 inhabitants per km2 (500 inhabitants for Japan to account for the fact that its national population density exceeds 300 inhabitants per km2).

2. Regions by % population in rural communities. A region is classified as predominantly rural if more than 50% of its population lives in rural communities, predominantly urban if less than 15% of the population lives in rural communities, and intermediate if the share of the population living in rural communities is between 15% and 50%.

3. Urban centres. A region that would be classified as rural on the basis of the general rule is classified as intermediate if it has an urban centre of more than 200 000 inhabitants (500 000 for Japan) representing no less than 25% of the regional population. A region that would be classified as intermediate on the basis of the general rule is classified as predominantly urban if it has an urban centre of more than 500 000 inhabitants (1 000 000 for Japan) representing no less than 25% of the regional population.

[18] More information about the projects on:

FARO.EU: www.faro-eu.org

EDORA: ESPON website. https://www.espon.eu/

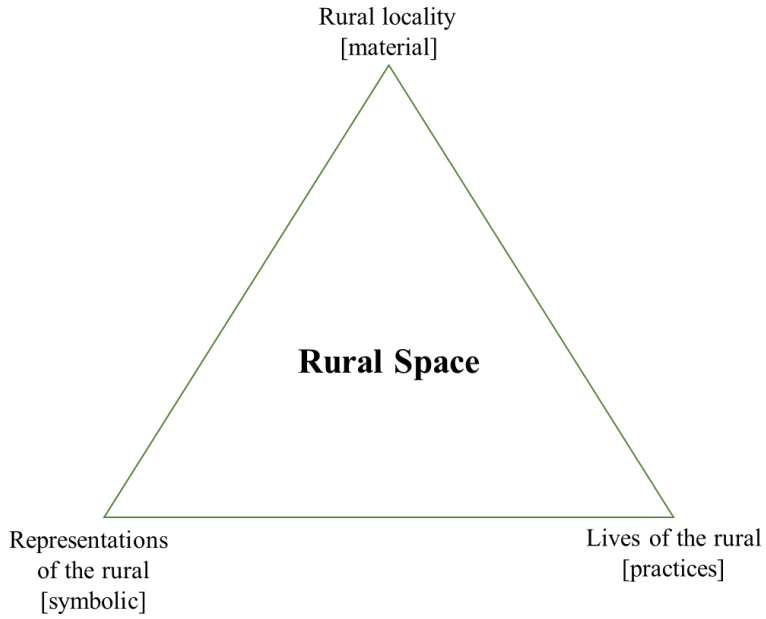
GEOSPECS: www.geospecs.eu

However, this conceptualisation of the rural in descriptive-structural terms has been criticised for portraying a spatial deterministic picture of rural areas and for neglecting other socio-cultural (immaterial) factors such as values or identities that have defined the rural (Philo, 1992 in Cloke, 2006). This 'cultural turn' towards the conceptualisation of rurality emphasises the rural as an imagined category (Mormont, 1990) that becomes detached from its (physical-geographical) space. Hence, the social representation(s) of the rural(s) is what make it distinctive (Cloke, 2006). These representations are heterogeneous and have varied greatly along different periods of history, between regions-countries and among different actors (Woods, 2011). In this regard, the rural is conceptualised differently by a landowner, a national policymaker, a house wife living in a small village, a person retired coming from a city, a tourist or a migrant working in an agriculture field. These different experiences and discourses (social representations) that social groups/actors make of the rural emphasise that the rural(s) is not a fixed but rather a heterogeneous and dynamic category, indicative of the existing multitude of ruralities (Kneafsey and Holloway, 2017).

This 'cultural turn' towards the conceptualisation of the rural(s) is not free from criticism, especially for leading to a dematerialisation within rural studies (Cloke, 2006). In this regard, without denying the importance of the social representations of the rural some authors have advocated for a more relational approach towards rural studies (Heley and Jones, 2012). From this perspective, rural entities, e.g. localities/villages, are not fixed but they are (re)configured in dynamic processes characterised by interactions of rural and non-rural actors, internal (endogenous) and external (exogenous) factors/forces (Copus and Hörnström, 2011; see also Chapter 3). This perspective focuses on the relations developed between different (rural and urban) actors (Murdoch, 2000), thus blurring static boundaries between dichotomies such as the rural and the urban (Cloke, 2006). Furthermore, from this perspective the conceptualisation of the rural(s) cannot be detached from its material aspects but it is "materialised in rural localities through social, economic and political relations involving a variety of actors, both human and non human, indigenous and exogenous" (Woods, 2011, p. 40). From this approach rural areas are conceptualised as hybrid spaces characterised by interrelations of heterogeneous entities which result in different rural spaces (Murdoch, 2003 in Woods, 2011). This increasing complexity when thinking about the rural is reflected in the model of 'rural space' proposed by

Halfacree (2006) in which material (rural locality) and symbolic aspects (representations of the rural) are interrelated and they only exist through lived practices (lives of the rural), see Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2. Rural Space



Source: based on Halfacree (2006, p. 52).

Although ontologically and epistemologically distant, these different approaches (descriptive/structural, imagined/cultural and relational) present the heterogeneous picture of rurality and rural areas. Within this heterogeneity some European rural areas have experienced productivity, GDP and population growth and better access to services while others have lagged behind suffering downward spirals of economic decline, low employment rates, out-migration of the youth and better educated, an ageing population and loss of private and public investment on infrastructure and services (European Commission, 2017; Copus *et al.*, 2020). The former rural areas usually represent the 'accumulation and accessible rural' in which processes such as counter-urbanisation and diversification of social and economic structures take place; whereas the latter usually represent 'depleted and remote rural' in which downward spirals as the abovementioned usually take place (Copus and Hörnström, 2011). Moreover, rural areas present a heterogeneous landscape also in more intangible aspects such as their social capital (Árnason, Shucksmith and Vergstum, 2009), their

positive and/or stigmatised projected images (Bock, Kovacs and Shucksmith, 2015) and their socio-economic and political connectivity (Bock, 2016).

Some of the reasons for this uneven development of rural areas include external structural forces such as global market liberalisation, the growth of mobility of capital, urbanisation and the (most recent) global financial crisis (Shucksmith, 2010). However, in spite of the influence and importance of these external-global factors, rural areas and their population are not simply static actors that receive these external trends but rather they have negotiated and reacted in different ways towards the implications of these exogenous-global factors (Woods, 2007; Woods and McDonagh, 2011; Dax, 2020). This study deals with a specific type of local rural actor, i.e. SEs, and explores how these have contributed to shape and develop, in specific ways, the different rural localities in which they are based.

2.3.2. Approaches to Rural Development in Europe: An Overview

Three main approaches towards the development of rural areas can be identified within European policy and academic thinking from mid-20th century, i.e. exogenous, endogenous and neoendogenous (Gkartzios and Lowe, 2019, see Table 2.3 at the end of this section).

Since the end of the World War II, top-down sectoral policies dominated the European policy discourse and practice as a solution for the development of rural areas (Shucksmith, 2010; Gkartzios and Scott, 2014). This *exogenous* approach, led by external experts and forces for development, was based on a productivist model focused on developing economies of scale through agriculture industrialisation and specialisation (van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2000). Within this approach rural areas' main function was focused on the provision of food and other primary materials to expanding urban areas and development was (solely) related to economic growth. The major problems of rural areas were conceived in terms of their low productivity and peripherality. Hence, modernising farming and agriculture production, attracting external firms to rural areas and investing in transportation and communications that link rural and urban areas were the priorities in order to foster the development of rural areas (Lowe, 1998 in Gkartzios and Lowe, 2019). Within this context, the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), one of the first common European policies, was firstly

implemented in 1962. This policy had as its main objectives to assure food security for the citizens within the EU and to promote that EU's farmers can enjoy a persistent fair living standard regardless of natural disasters and/or of international price volatility (Tangermann and von Cramon-Taubadel, 2013). The CAP has undergone various reforms to date that have modified the market support mechanisms directed towards farmers and aimed to progress the policy towards more sustainable agriculture and rural development. Following the publication of reports such as 'The Future of Rural Society' in 1988 or the 'Agenda 2000' in 1999, the CAP has incorporated other dimensions such as environmental measures, e.g. green payments, and a complementary specific rural development pillar (CAP Pillar II) that address a more integrated development towards rural areas (Dax and Kahila, 2011).

The exogenous approach has been acknowledged to have brought some important success such as having increased agriculture productivity, improved employment rates, technology, infrastructure and decreasing out-migration in some rural areas (Woods, 2005 in Gkartzios and Lowe, 2019). However, it has also been criticised for creating a dependency culture towards subsidies; promoting certain (economic) sectors, especially agriculture, while neglecting others especially those related to non-economic aspects of rural areas; moving decision-making away from local actors thus creating democratic deficit and; more significantly being unable to tackle the specific problems of different rural communities (Ward *et al.*, 2005; OECD, 2006; Shucksmith, 2010).

As a response to the deficits of top-down sectoral policies, during the 1980s and especially in the 1990s, a new approach towards rural development emerged which stressed the socio-economic diversity of rural areas and sought to focus on implementing policies in which different local actors (beyond farmers and external experts) could identify their own specific needs and implement tailor-made solutions; this was described as the *endogenous* approach towards rural development (Ray, 2000a). This development 'from within' encouraged the implementation of bottom-up initiatives that are associated with a participatory nature, thus involving the local population in the identification of the needs and in decision making (Ray, 2000b). While recognising the importance of physical infrastructure for the development of rural areas, the endogenous approach conceived the limited capacity of rural economic

and social actors to participate in development activities as the main problem to overcome in rural areas. Hence, this approach placed its emphasis on enhancing capacity building within the local population in skills related to leadership, entrepreneurship/innovation and networking, aimed at developing "entrepreneurial social infrastructure" (Flora *et al.*, 1997) within rural areas. The promotion of this capacity building (skills) has been identified as a means of mobilising and accessing previously untapped resources, thus (potentially) boosting the potential of each particular rural area (Bentley and Pugalis, 2014).

The endogenous approach to the development of rural areas did not only mean the change towards an implementation of bottom-up initiatives, but also a shift from a spatially-neutral sectoral perspective (highly focused on agriculture) towards a territorial approach; thus recognizing the importance of fostering a holistic and integrated development of rural areas (Moseley, 2003). This concurs with place-based approaches to local and regional development which "assume that geographical context really matters, whereby context is understood in terms of its social, cultural, and institutional characteristics" (Barca, McCann and Rodríguez-Pose, 2012, p. 139; see also Bentley and Pugalis, 2014)[19]. This broadened the perspective of rural (and regional) development from a purely economic phenomenon based on economic growth towards the inclusion of other social, political, cultural or environmental dimensions (Pike, Rodriguez-Pose and Tomaney, 2006). Moreover, place-based development approaches maintain that, although the development of different areas should/might be heterogeneous, every region has the potential to contribute to the (national) aggregate level of development (Barca, 2009; Barca, McCann and Rodríguez-Pose, 2012). Thus, the endogenous and place-based approaches to rural and regional development concur on their focus on the valorisation of the unique local natural/physical, human and cultural resources and characteristics of an area and on the identification of needs by the local population through participatory local

[19] The reference to place-based approaches to development is placed in this paragraph due to their concurrence with the territorial approach supported by endogenous rural development, however, it is noted to say that place-based approaches call for a balance between exogenous and endogenous forces in the processes of development (Barca, McCann and Rodríguez-Pose, 2012), thus being in this sense more in line with the neoendogenous approach towards rural development (see below).

dynamics as key aspects for development (Ray, 2000b; Barca, McCann and Rodríguez-Pose, 2012).

In line with this endogenous perspective, the EU LEADER[20] programme was introduced initially in 1991. LEADER had the aim of fostering community-led and innovative solutions to the specific problems identified by each rural area through Local Action Groups (LAGs). These LAGs are (ideally) formed by representatives from different sectors of a rural area, thus different stakeholders from the local government, the for-profit private sector and the third sector formed a tripartite relationship. In this sense, the development of LAGs and the implementation of the LEADER programme served to highlight the importance of a diversified focus beyond agriculture to other sectors of rural areas. This was promoted through the establishment of multi-sectoral networks encompassing a wide variety of actors from different spheres (economic, political, civil society) and the creation of public-private partnerships and alliances when tackling problems in rural areas in an innovative way (Moseley, 2003; Dargan and Shucksmith, 2008; Bosworth, *et al.* 2016).

However, this endogenous approach towards rural development has been criticised for its limited capacity to integrate the needs of (certain) vulnerable groups within participatory/democratic processes (Navarro, Woods and Cejudo, 2016), thus, in some instances, reproducing the interests of the local elites which can increase the inequalities within the members of a locality/area (Curtin, Haase and Tovey, 1996; Shucksmith, 2000; Shortall, 2004, 2008). Furthermore, the excessive focus on local resources as the basis for development can reinforce inequalities between already 'well-equipped' territories and others that lack the capacity to deliver, by themselves, such bottom-up initiatives, due to their inability to mobilise the necessary resources for these initiatives to happen (Onyx and Leonard, 2010; Farmer, Hill and Muñoz, 2012; Bock, Kovacs and Shucksmith, 2015; Fischer and McKee, 2017). Consequently, the endogenous approach has been criticised for not being practical due to its excessive emphasise on autonomous rural areas, without formally acknowledging the great influence of external influences on the development of these areas (Ward *et al.*, 2005).

[20] Liaisons Entre Actions de Developpement de l'Economie Rurale.
LEADER is still running to date and the principles of LEADER have been widened into the so called Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) which applies to both rural and urban areas.

In order to overcome these shortcomings, and as a response to the increasing interaction between actors at different spatial scales, a more relational approach towards the development of rural areas has been proposed (Woods and McDonagh, 2011). The so called *neoendogenous* approach (Ray, 2006; Cejudo and Navarro, 2020) shares with the endogenous model the emphasis on a locally rooted and territorially based rural development, thus local actors and resources are still the basis for the development of rural areas. However, the neoendogenous approach, in line with place-based approaches, underlines that local development is inevitably related to endogenous and exogenous factors (Barca, McCann and Rodriguez-Pose, 2012; Shucksmith, 2012). Hence, from a neoendogenous approach it is also acknowledged that structural-exogenous factors such as increasing movement of global capital, climate change, urbanisation or historical regional inequalities within a country can have a great influence on the development of rural areas (Woods, 2011; Gkartzios and Scott, 2014). In this regard, from a neoendogenous perspective "the critical point is how to enhance the capacity of local areas to steer these wider processes, resources and actions to their benefit… [being] the focus on the dynamic interactions between local areas and their wider political, institutional, trading and natural environments, and how these interactions are mediated" (Ward *et al.*, 2005, p. 5; see also Galdeano-Gómez, Aznar-Sánchez and Pérez-Mesa, 2011).

This neoendogenous approach emphasises the relevance for (local) development of the interaction with other places and actors beyond the locality, acknowledging the key role that non local actors (can) play both as providers of resources not available at local level but also as 'animators' of the development of rural areas (Ray, 2006; Muñoz and Steinerowski, 2012; Smith, 2012; McElwee, Smith and Somerville, 2018). Hence, according to this perspective, although the development of specific localities and regions should be tailor-made to their features, they "might need external support to find their own paths of sustainable development, with particular attention paid to these regions lagging behind" (European Union, 2011, p.3).

In this regard, the neoendogenous approach towards the development of rural areas stresses the importance of the socio-economic and political connectivity of rural areas/localities with other actors in rural and urban regions (Bock, 2016; Shucksmith, 2018). Thus, from a neoendogenous perspective "multi-scalar governance"

(Shucksmith, 2010, p. 5) represents a key aspect for the development of rural areas/localities. Following Cheshire (2016),

> "governance can be understood to represent a new mode of governing that is no longer enacted solely through the formal, coercive powers of the nation state, but is exercised through a range of government and non-governmental actors and entities operating at different spatial scales and across different sectors" (Cheshire, 2016, p. 596).

Therefore, the shift from government to governance, identified by scholars since the 1990's (Bock, 2019), meant a change towards "governing styles in which boundaries between and within public and private sectors have become blurred" (Stoker, 1996, cited in Shucksmith, 2010, p. 3). Within this framework, the role of the state and its policies is emphasised, but more as enabler of a context which facilitates the emergence and development of community-based initiatives (generative power) which address their specific problems rather than as an actor that organises and implements directly the projects (directive power) (MacKinnon, 2002). Thus, although not denying the importance of the state, there is also a recognition of the potential role of other actors like for-profit businesses and third sector organisations, such as rural SEs, in contributing towards (local) development (Bock, 2019). From this perspective, it is important to focus on those (local) actors with the capacity to develop networks, leverage resources at different spatial scales, enhance citizen engagement and entrepreneurialism, these are considered key actors as they act as "catalysts for change in their local area through collective, networked action" (Shucksmith, 2012, p. 16).

In this line, neoendogenous rural development encourages the participation of different actors through (local) democratic processes and emphasises the valorisation of local resources through (social) entrepreneurialism and innovation at the same time that promotes the connection with extra-local places and actors (Ray, 2006). These aspects stress the focus from a neoendogenous approach to rural development on place-making and community well-being, thus considering a wide range of development dimensions as ways to overcome neoliberal deregulation and coping with austerity policies (Gkartzios and Scott, 2014; Shucksmith and Brown, 2016)

This neoendogenous approach is not without its critics. Some of this criticism argues that this approach still has as its main (although not only) focus for development on local actors, this can result in an overburden on the efforts of these local actors due to their increasing responsibilities towards the development of their localities/areas (Bock, 2019). Moreover, research has also highlighted issues about over-bureaucratisation and lack of innovation (Dax *et al.*, 2016), scarce power sharing between actors at different levels, e.g. regional and national governments and local actors (Bosworth *et al.*, 2016), and the existence of a 'project class'[21] who access to most resources reinforcing the discrepancies and inequalities between social groups within a territory and between different territories (Navarro, Cañete and Cejudo, 2020). Despite these suggested shortcomings, neoendogenous rural development initiatives have provided new solutions for the development of rural areas, creating opportunities for alternative forms of development and novel organisational forms such as rural SEs (Bock, 2019; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019; Bosworth *et al.*, 2020; Navarro and Cejudo, 2020). In this regard, the main characteristics of rural SEs and their (tentative) links with the neoendogenous approach to rural development are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

[21] According to Navarro, Cañete and Cejudo (2020) the 'project class' are

> "members of the local action groups (technical staff, members of the association, public and private stakeholders) and wealthy people from the public and private sectors, with a strong financial capacity, knowledge and ability to innovate" (Navarro, Cañete and Cejudo, 2020, p. 284).

Table 2.3. Summary of Approaches towards Rural Development in Europe.

	Exogenous	**Endogenous**	**Neo-endogenous**
Key principle	Economies of scale and concentration	Harnessing local (natural, human, cultural) resources for sustainable development	Maximising the value of local resources. Competitiveness based on local assets but also competing for extra-local people, resources, skills and capital.
Dynamic Force	Urban growth poles (main drivers of rural development emanate from outside rural areas)	Local initiative and enterprise	Networks of local actors connected to external influences. Multi-scalar and multi-sectoral governance arrangements. The state is a facilitator.
Function of Rural Areas	Provision of food and other primary products to urban areas	Diverse economies	Diverse production and service economies. Interdependency – rural-urban
Major Rural Area Problems	Low productivity and peripherality	Limited capacity of areas/groups to participate in economic activity	Neoliberal deregulation; Climate change; Low service provision; Unbalanced communities; Remoteness, isolation and lack of critical mass
Focus of Rural Development	Agricultural modernisation and specialisation	Capacity building (skills, institutions and infrastructure). Overcoming social exclusion	Holistic approach to include local empowerment, capacity building, overcoming exclusion, adding values to local resources, enhancing connectivity and promoting innovation. Realising and valorising alternatives to development (especially non neoliberal)

Source: own elaboration. Based on Bock (2016) and Gkartzios and Lowe (2019).

2.4. Rural Social Enterprises[22]

2.4.1. Rural Social Enterprises as Actors Contributing to an Integrated Development of Rural Areas

The activities developed by SEs are diverse, as are their contributions to the rural areas in which they are based. Research on rural SEs with (primarily) environmental goals have shown how these have contributed to sustainable forestry (Ludvig *et al.*, 2018), to the development of community renewable energy (Okkonen and Lehtonen, 2016; Vancea, Becker and Kunze, 2017; Morrison and Ramsey, 2019), to the conservation of nature and biodiversity (Keech, 2017) and to the establishment of alternative food networks that promote sustainable agriculture and healthy food consumption (Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen, 2013; Mestres and Lien, 2017). Furthermore, some studies have shown how rural SEs have promoted environmental sustainability through educational programmes and recycling initiatives that enhance the environmental awareness within the local population (Jacuniak-Suda and Mose, 2014).

Additionally, some rural SEs have (primarily) contributed to providing employment opportunities, especially for disadvantaged groups such as people distant to the labour market due to disabilities and/or long-term unemployment (O'Shaughnessy, 2008; Róbert and Levente, 2017). Furthermore, different studies have shown that rural SEs have acted as providers of a number of basic services otherwise not available in some rural localities such as transportation (O'Shaughnessy, Casey and Enright, 2011; Liddle, McElwee and Disney, 2012), childcare (O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016), eldercare (Farmer, Hill and Muñoz, 2012), healthcare (Macaulay, 2016; Kelly *et al.*, 2019), (community) shops (Perry and Alcock, 2010; Calderwood and Davies, 2013), affordable housing (Healey, 2015a) and leisure activities such as music festivals (Vestrum, 2014).

Besides providing these services, some studies also have pointed to the importance of rural SEs to provide and/or retain (community) assets, such as buildings or other

[22] This section (2.4.) draws from a systematic literature review about studies on rural SEs in Europe conducted and published by the researcher and other colleagues, i.e. van Twuijver *et al.*, (2020). The methodology for conducting this literature review is not discussed within this section. Moreover, the section has been complemented with other studies on rural SEs from a non-European context (e.g. Berkes and Davidson, 2007; Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Vaquez-Maguirre, Camacho-Ruelas and García-De La Torre, 2016; Barraket *et al.*, 2019).

infrastructures, within rural localities (Lorendahl, 1996; Healey, 2015a; Aiken, Taylor and Moran, 2016). In this regard, in a study about community cooperatives in rural Scotland, Gordon (2002) stated that the control of property, land and buildings is a key aspect for these organisations when analysing their potential contribution to the development of their localities.

These services and infrastructures have in turn contributed to the economic and social development of rural localities as they enhance spending of money on otherwise non-existent services in addition to providing social benefits associated with the specific nature of some of these essential services (Lorendahl, 1996).

However, empirical studies about rural SEs have shown that what is distinctive about these organisations is that their contributions are usually "not only limited to one aspect (economic, social or environmental) but cover mainly two or three dimensions concurrently" (Jacuniak-Suda and Mose, 2014, p. 37). As examples of this, Morrison and Ramsey (2019) show how Irish and Scottish rural SEs whose main goal is to provide community energy schemes to rural localities, besides basing their projects on the production of renewable energies facilitate processes of social capital development within their localities. Moreover, Vaquez-Maguirre, Camacho-Ruelas and García-De La Torre (2016) have shown how a SE based in rural Mexico, in addition to enhancing the economic and environmental wellbeing of the local community by providing stable and relatively well paid jobs and forestry conservation programmes, has also contributed to the empowerment of local indigenous women through their participation in the SE.

Hence, rural SEs have demonstrated a great potential to contribute to the integrated rural development of the territory in which they are based by addressing concurrently different dimensions of development (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Olmedo, van Twuijver and O'Shaughnessy, 2019). In this regard, of special relevance are those rural SEs which specific aim is to contribute to local/territorial development (O'Hara, 2001; Clark, Shoutern and Beer, 2007; Healey, 2015a). An example of this type of rural SE found especially within the UK context are the so called 'development trusts', which are defined as "community-owned and led organisations, working to combine community-led action with an enterprising approach to address and tackle local needs and issues […] [aiming to] create social, economic and environmental renewal in a

defined geographical area" (Development Trust Association Scotland, n.d.). Although the denomination of 'development trust' is UK specific, similar types of SEs can be found in different parts of (rural) Europe under denominations such as (community) development groups, local development associations or village associations (Kumpulainen and Soini, 2019; Olmedo, van Twuijver and O'Shaughnessy, 2019).

Empirical research about this specific type of rural SEs that aim to deliver local rural development has provided (descriptive) accounts of how their activities and services have contributed to the integrated development of their localities and/or regions (e.g. Jancuniak-Suda and Mose, 2014; Healey, 2015b). Besides, other studies about this type of rural SEs have focused on the organisational governance capacity and legitimacy of these SEs (Healey, 2015a); on the discourses of different stakeholders related to the role of these organisations in regenerating rural areas (Zogafros, 2007) and; on how different institutional models enable or constrain the capacity of these rural SEs to contribute to territorial rural development (Clark, Southern and Beer, 2007). Due to the particular relevance of this type of rural SEs in contributing to an integrated rural development (Healey, 2015a; Olmedo, van Twuijver and O'Shaughnessy, 2019), their importance within the Irish context (O'Hara, 2001; O'Shaughnessy, 2006; Government of Ireland, 2019) and the limited research to date about their relationship with neoendogenous development this study has focused on this specific type of rural SEs.

In addition to the tendency to contribute towards an integrated rural development, the following (sub)sections present some features of rural SEs that also concur with the abovementioned neoendogenous approach towards rural development.

2.4.2. Rural Social Enterprises as Relational and Resourcefulness Actors

- *Strong local focus*

Previous studies on rural SEs have shown that rural SEs primarily exists to meet otherwise not satisfied needs of the local population or some specific group within it (van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020). In this regard, these organisations present a strong local focus which is reflected, on the one hand, in their missions, i.e. focus on specific local needs; but also in their dependence on the collective involvement of the local population and on the legitimacy that they are able to build within their localities (Healey, 2015a; Valchovska and Watts, 2016; van Veelen and Hagget, 2017). In

studies carried out in rural Norway about rural community SEs in the cultural sector, Vestrum (2014) and Vestrum, Rasmussen and Carter (2017) identified that the conformation with internal community norms and the participation of local villagers in the decision-making process were key aspects for building legitimacy with the local community, which in turn was key for these rural SEs to achieve their goals.

Moreover, echoing literature on rural entrepreneurship (e.g. McKeever, Jack and Anderson, 2015), studies on rural SEs suggest that the local attachment of rural social entrepreneurs has been a key feature for developing their projects (Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen, 2013; Vancea, Becker and Kunze, 2017; Richter, 2019) and for tapping in previously underutilised resources (Valchovska and Watts, 2016). In a study about community energy projects in rural Scotland, van Veelen and Hagget (2017) showed how the local population which was characterised by a 'functional and social attachment' towards the localities acted as an important driver for enabling these projects. However, those with a strong ‘emotional attachment’ to the place reflected in their interest in the conservation of its wild landscape opposed these community energy projects. These results highlighted how different aspects of local attachment by the indigenous population should be considered when exploring the factors that can enable and/or constrain the work of rural SEs.

Despite the importance of this local focus and the relations in which rural SEs engage at a local level, research has also shown how an overreliance and dependence by rural SEs on the internal resources of the local community can limit their capacity to mobilise resources and achieve their goals (Vestrum, 2014). In this sense, as rural SEs tend to operate in resource constrained environments (Di Domenico, Haugh and Tracey, 2010), these organisations need to engage in external relations with actors beyond their localities in order to attract human and/or financial resources otherwise not available within their localities (Berkes and Davidson, 2007; Smith and McColl, 2016).

- *Links beyond the local(ity)*

Complementary to their strong local focus, rural SEs tend to act as boundary spanners through their engagement in relations with actors beyond their localities (Vestrum, Rasmussen and Carter, 2017). In this regard, in a study conducted in rural Austria and

Poland, Richter (2019) concluded that the main role of rural social entrepreneurs is to act as 'embedded intermediaries' that connect rural communities with supra-regional networks in order to re-contextualise ideas brought from other places and develop them within their rural localities. These relations in which rural SEs engage outside their localities are usually developed with actors from different sectors, including government/public institutions, universities, social entrepreneurs and/or other third sector organisations (Haugh, 2007; Liddle, McElwee and Disney, 2012; Aiken, Taylor and Moran, 2016). In a comparative study between rural SEs based in Ireland and Greece, Lang and Fink (2019) demonstrated how rural social entrepreneurs occupy an intermediate level, linking their communities with different actors situated in which they called "regime levels", thus linking local community groups with supra-local actors such as research institutions, development agencies or government bodies. The study concluded that rural social entrepreneurs are key in developing bridging social capital through their engagement in horizontal networks with other social entrepreneurs and linking social capital through their engagement in vertical networks with regime (supra-local) actors.

Furthermore, studies on rural SEs have demonstrated that these networks developed with external actors are essential for the emergence stages of rural SEs as they bring skills and expertise otherwise not available within their localities (Haugh, 2007; Farmer, Hill and Muñoz, 2012; Vestrum, 2014). However, studies on rural SEs also showed that these relations with external actors are also key in more consolidated stages of the rural SEs as these networks can be used for example to elevate the demands of the local community but also to channel down policy (and related resources) developed by (national) government institutions to rural localities (Lang and Fink, 2019).

- *Engaging in local and external relations for harnessing a wide range of resources*

This ability of rural SEs to involve the local population while at the same time engaging in relations with different external stakeholders has contributed to their capacity of harnessing a wide range of resources (Farmer and Stephen, 2012; Vestrum and Rasmussen, 2013; Vestrum, 2014). In this regard, in a study about rural (and urban) SEs in Australia, Barraket *et al.* (2019, p. 196) conclude that "well-established social enterprises act as brokers of local resources within communities and as linkers

to non-local resources". Therefore, these relations in which rural SEs engage in with local and external actors have been key to harness a wide range of otherwise untapped resources. These range from material resources such as buildings (Aiken, Taylor and Moran, 2016), different financial streams such as bank loans, donations, market sells or grants (Valchovska and Watts, 2016), labour either paid and/or volunteer (Smith and McColl, 2016) but also more intangible resources such as social capital (Evans and Syrett, 2007; Lang and Fink, 2019; Morrison and Ramsey, 2019), ideas, skills or expertise (Haugh, 2007; Richter, 2019; Vestrum and Rasmussen, 2013).

- *Resource mix*

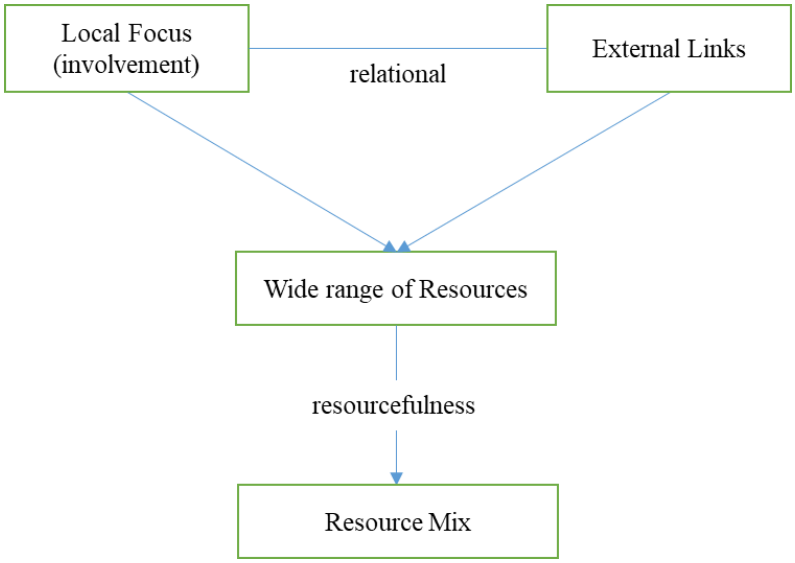
As entrepreneurial organisations (rural) SEs tend to combine these wide range of resources in new ways in order to achieve their different goals. In this regard, studies on rural SEs have identified the mix of different funding streams, e.g. public grants and trading income, and of different types of labour, e.g. volunteer work with paid staff, as the most prominent types of resource mix within these organisations (Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen, 2013; O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016; Barraket *et al.*, 2019).

Despite these combinations, research on rural SEs has pointed to the great dependence that these organisations usually have on subsidies and/or grants (Senyard *et al.*, 2007) and volunteers (Liddle, McElwee and Disney, 2012). Although necessary for the work of rural SEs, the excessive dependence of these organisations on these types of resources have also been identified as risk factors for their long-term sustainability (Senyard *et al.*, 2007; Calderwood and Davies, 2012; Wyper, Whittam and De Ruyter, 2016).

On the other hand, research has also shown that the sustainability of rural SEs solely by commercial-market means is highly unlikely, thus a mix of market and non-market resources seems to be needed for these organisations to be able to sustain themselves and pursue their goals (O'Shaughnessy, 2006; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). Furthermore, research on rural SEs has also shown how these organisations mix diverse resources to pursue their aims through resourcefulness processes associated with 'bricolage', i.e. "combine resources to create value in resource constrained environments by making do with the means at hand" (Baker and Nelson, 2005 in Barraket *et al.*, 2019, p. 190; see also Di Domenico, Haugh and Tracey, 2010).

Summing up, studies on rural SEs have shown the relational character of rural SEs as organisations that present a strong local focus, relying greatly on the involvement of the local community; but this is necessarily complemented by their development of external links beyond their localities with diverse stakeholders. These engagements in both local and external relations have been shown as a key feature of rural SEs for harnessing a wider range of (untapped) resources that these organisations combine in new ways through resourcefulness process in order to pursue their goals (see Figure 2.3.).

Figure 2.3. Rural Social Enterprises as Relational and Resourcefulness Actors



2.4.3. The Importance of the Rural Context for the Work of Rural Social Enterprises

Rural SEs do not operate in a vacuum, on the contrary, the context in which they develop their activities plays an important role in conditioning their way of functioning (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014). In this regard, the rural context has been shown to provide enabling and constraining factors for the establishment and development of SEs (Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). This concurs with literature on (rural) entrepreneurship that stresses the importance of the engagement of (rural) entrepreneurs with contextual factors, including socio-economic, historical, institutional but also spatial aspects, when explaining processes of entrepreneurship

(Steyaert and Katz, 2004; Welter, 2011; Korsgaard, Müller and Tanvig, 2015; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2017; Müller and Korsgaard, 2018; Muñoz and Kimmit, 2019).

- *Policy context*

An important contextual factor stressed by previous studies on rural SEs is the policy environment in which rural SEs operate (Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). Public institutions such as municipalities/local government and governmental programmes have also been shown as critical for the success of rural SEs (Gordon, 2002; Liddle, McElwee and Disney, 2012; O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016). The instrumental role of these public institutions and programmes for rural SEs lay in their capacity to provide both financial and technical support (Farmer, Hill and Muñoz, 2012; Ambrose-Oji, Lawrence and Stewart, 2015; Aiken, Taylor and Moran, 2016).

On the other hand, studies on rural SEs have shown that although (rural) SEs have entered into the discourse of policymakers there is still a gap between the policy aspirations and the actual available support for the development of the sector, especially in rural areas (Whitelaw and Hill, 2013; Mazzei and Roy, 2017; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). This mismatch is represented by unfavourable procurement processes that privilege large companies due to the size of the contracts and that usually do not incorporate environmental and/or social clauses (Davies and Mullin, 2011; Mazzei and Roy, 2017); by the uncertainty in ongoing state support and a silo regulation (Ambrose-Oji, Lawrence and Stewart, 2015; O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016) and; by the lack of context sensitive policy that address rural areas specificities (Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Smith and McColl, 2016).

- *Geographical and socio-economic context*

The importance of the context has also been stressed by studies that have compared the differences between rural and urban SEs. These studies have shown how the rural context is a key factor when explaining the differences regarding their resourcefulness (Barraket *et al.*, 2019) and management practises (Smith and McColl, 2016). In a study that compared rural and urban Scottish SEs, Smith and McColl (2016) showed that rural SEs

> "demonstrated their inextricable linkage between where they were (their remoteness) and who they were (their community identity) … [for these rural

> social enterprises] the socio-economic history underpinned the social enterprise business opportunity" (Smith and McColl, 2016, p. 584).

Furthermore, Barraket *et al.* (2019) showed that rural SEs tend to leverage government funding aligned with local and economic development objectives whereas their urban counterparts are more likely to access funding related to welfare objectives. Hence, rural SEs tend to focus on an integrated development of the territories in which they operate.

Beyond this urban-rural comparisons, some studies have specifically looked at the influence of the geographical and socio-economic contextual aspects of the rural areas where SEs are based (Farmer, Steinerowski and Jack, 2008; Farmer, Hill and Muñoz, 2012). In a study conducted in rural Scotland, Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, (2012) found that, on the one hand, the market context (lack of competitors), the culture of self-help and voluntarism, appreciation and support from local communities to the SE and the small size of an enterprise (which make them easier to manage) favour the development of SEs within rural areas. On the other hand, the geographic characteristics of rural areas associated with isolation and high transportation costs, limited access to work force and finance and a small market size were identified as barriers to rural SEs development. Hence, these studies point at the importance of considering geographical and socio-economic aspects of the localities/areas where rural SEs develop their activities when explaining the way in which they operate and their capacity to deliver their projects.

Despite the utilisation by the majority of studies about rural SEs of the rural as a distinctive signal of this type of research[23], the way in which different studies have treated the rural differs. On the one hand, some studies have afforded a descriptive role to the rural features of the contexts in which the SEs operate (e.g. Vestrum, 2014; Lang and Fink, 2019). In these studies, rural areas/localities are described as the (general) setting in which the SE operate but specific rural contextual features are not incorporated in the analysis, thus are not consider explanatory aspects. On the other hand, some studies have emphasised different aspects of the rural as explanatory

[23] In this regard there are also some studies that include rural SEs but also urban SEs not drawing important distinctions in the findings and/or conclusions between them, see for example Di Domenico, Haugh and Tracey, 2010.

factors of the work of the SEs studied. Within these studies some have focused on comparing rural with urban contexts (e.g. Smith and McColl, 2016; Barraket *et al.*, 2019) whereas others have focused on the specific contextual features of a rural area/region to explain the work of rural SEs (e.g. Farmer, Steinerowski and Jack, 2008). According to the latter stream of studies, different structural aspects of the rural context condition the work of rural SE, however, these organisations show an ability to adapt some of these structural aspects to the benefit of their localities (Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012). This thesis is closely aligned with the latter stream, as it explores how Irish rural SEs engage with their rural context in order to contribute to the (neoendogenous) development of their localities. However, in line with the heterogeneity presented by rural areas this thesis studies the engagement of rural SEs with different dimensions of the specific 'places' in which they are based and operate with the aim to add nuance to this field of research.

2.5. Conclusion. Rural Social Enterprises as Neoendogenous Development Actors

This chapter has presented a brief synthesis of two fields of research address within this thesis, i.e. social enterprises and rural development. Despite the scarce literature that explicitly links these fields (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Bock, 2019; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019) the review of studies that have focused on rural SEs show the potential of these organisations as actors that can contribute to a neoendogenous rural development.

In this regard, the literature shows four themes that support the link between rural SEs and neoendogenous development (see Table 2.4). First, the neoendogenous approach proposes a development of rural areas based on harnessing their specific potential by leveraging and (re)valorising (untapped) local resources, however, from this perspective it is also acknowledged that the specific resources of each rural area need to be complemented through external relations that go beyond the local that enable levering resources otherwise not available within a specific rural area. Hence, it emphasises the significance of local actors connected to external actors and influences. In this line, research has identified rural SEs as actors that concurrently demonstrate a strong local focus and act as boundary spanners through the development of relations with actors external to their localities. Therefore, the relational character of rural SEs

concurs with the emphasis from a neoendogenous approach of linking the local (endogenous) and the external.

Second, according to the neoendogenous development approach innovation and (social) entrepreneurship are important means to tackle challenges faced by rural areas. In a similar vein, studies of rural SEs have illustrated the ability of these organisations to combine a wide range of resources in such ways that they develop new solutions to challenges that face the rural areas in which they are based.

Third, the neoendogenous approach to rural development stresses the importance of governance frameworks in which not only the state still plays a key role in the development of rural areas but also other actors, including third sector organisations, are recognised as legitimate actors contributing to the development of their localities/areas. The inclusion of different stakeholders concurs with the participatory governance structure usually presented by (rural) SEs; moreover, the intermediate position between the state, the market and the civil society that these organisations tend to occupy also concurs with the emphasise on cross-sectoral engagement/relations within governance frameworks.

Fourth, the neoendogenous approach to rural development emphasises the diversity of rural economies and considers development from a holistic perspective which also includes social, environmental, cultural and political aspects. Research on rural SEs has shown the diversity of contributions that these organisations have made in economic, social and environmental aspects, however, a characteristic of rural SEs is that these contributions tend to address, concurrently, different dimensions of development. Hence, rural SEs tend to contribute to an integrated development of their localities/areas as proposed by the neoendogenous approach.

Table 2.4. Rural Social Enterprises as Neoendogenous Development Actors.

Neoendogenous Rural Development	⟷	**Rural SEs**
Networks of local actors connected to external influences Competitiveness based on local assets but also competing for extra-local people, resources, skills and capital	**RELATIONAL**	Strong Local Focus (mission and participation) Boundary Spanners – External relations
(Social) Entrepreneurship and Innovation	**INNOVATION**	Combine Wide Range of (untapped) Resources → Resourcefulness
Multi-scalar and multi-sectoral governance arrangements - state as facilitator	**GOVERNANCE**	Participatory governance Intermediate position (public/state, market and civil society)
Diverse production and service economies Holistic approach – Place making	**INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT**	Multi-dimensional Contributions to (Local) Development
Realising and valorising alternatives to development (especially non neoliberal)		

These commonalities present rural SEs as interesting actors to explore in terms of their contribution towards neoendogenous rural development. In this regard, the review of the literature presents rural SEs as potential key actors to provide (new) tailor made solutions for their localities as a way of shaping and/or reacting to different global factors that have generally presented challenges (and some opportunities) to rural localities. Within the field of rural entrepreneurship empirical studies have shown the link between (local and in-migrant) rural entrepreneurs and neoendogenous rural

development (Bosworth and Atterton, 2012). These studies have highlighted the contributions of rural entrepreneurs in terms that go beyond the purely economic, but also include social, environmental and community aspects (e.g. Bosworth and Atterton, 2012; Korsgaard, Müller and Tanvig, 2015; Steiner and Atterton, 2015). Moreover, these studies have highlighted the importance for these rural entrepreneurs to be locally embedded and connected with strategic external networks (Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors, 2015) and the engagement of these actors with their (spatial) contexts (Müller and Korsgaard, 2018).

Although, while in line with this research this study has a different point of departure and focus as the interest is not on the rural entrepreneur but rather on the rural SEs. Two important differences can be found in this respect, first although rural SEs trade and partially act within the market, they form part of the third sector/social economy. Second, rural SEs are characterised as being collective actors, thus this study focuses on these collective entities as local development actors departing from the individual focus on the rural (social) entrepreneur. This study argues that these organisations can play a key role as actors that contribute to the development of their localities by enhancing collective and collaborative action and broadening the concept of the economy beyond the market (see Chapter 3), thus realising and valorising alternatives forms of development to (mainstream) neoliberalism.

Based on the review of conceptual and empirical literature about (rural) social enterprises and rural development this chapter has shown the links between rural SEs and neoendogenous rural development, therefore, the (potential) contribution of rural SEs to this type of development within their localities/areas. Despite this, there is a lack of empirical research that demonstrates how these organisations work in order to do so (see for some studies close to the topic Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Salemink and Strijker, 2016). Hence, in order to fill this gap and due to the relevance of local development SEs within rural Ireland, the main aim of this study is **to explore how Irish rural social enterprises work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their rural localities.**

Chapter 3
A Substantive View of Rural Social Enterprises

3.1. Introduction. The Relevance of Polanyi in the Study of Social Enterprises and Rural Development.

Through a review of the literature the previous chapter has established a link between rural SEs and neoendogenous development and has presented the phenomenon studied within this thesis. The selection of a theoretical lens from which to observe a phenomenon has significant consequences for the type of research questions to investigate, the analysis of the phenomenon and the conclusions drawn from this analysis (Grant and Osanloo, 2014; Ngulube, Mathipa and Gumbo, 2015). In this regard, this study follows a conceptualisation of SEs as proposed by scholars of the EMES network and; a conceptualisation of rural development from a neoendogenous approach. Different scholars from both streams have stressed the relevance of the work of the economic historian/anthropologist Karl Polanyi to establish a theoretical perspective from which to analyse SEs (Laville and Nyssens, 2001; Defourny and Nyssens, 2006; Laville, 2014; Roy and Grant, 2019) and neoendogenous rural development (Ray, 2006). The 'embeddedness' of the economy and economic relations within society and nature, the co-existence of three 'forms of economic integration' (market-exchange, redistribution and reciprocity) and the key role of institutions[24] and collective action beyond individual behaviour represent the three key elements that link these fields of research with the work of Polanyi and these are discussed in the next sections of this chapter.

The 'substantive' approach to the economy (Polanyi, 1957, 1977) represents the overarching theoretical lens of this study. However, although underpinned in the work of Polanyi, this study draws from complementary literature, namely from economic sociology, human and economic geography, to adapt this conceptual framework to the aim of the study of exploring how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their rural localities.

- *A brief presentation of Karl Polanyi and his work*

Karl Polanyi was born in 1886 in the Austro Hungarian Empire. During his life he witnessed exceptional historical events such as World Wars I and II, the rise of fascism and soviet regimes, the economic crash of 1929, the establishment of the New Deal,

[24] Within this study, institutions are broadly defined as "relatively enduring elements of social life that provide templates for action, cognition and emotion" (Maier and Simsa, 2020, p. 5).

the social democracy and the welfare state. During that time, he moved to different places due to forced exile, from Hungary to Austria and from Austria to Britain, and due to change in academic positions, from Britain to Canada and US. Polanyi died in 1964 in Canada (Dale, 2010; Block and Somers, 2014).

Polanyi's two main academic works published during his life[25], i.e. *The Great Transformation* first published in 1944 and *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory*[26] published in 1957, provided a critique to the 'market society' and to ('formal') neoclassic economics as a way to study the economy and economic relations (Block and Somers, 2014). Polanyi stated that a 'market society' that claims to be ruled by a 'self-regulating market' is a utopian (political) project that tries to disconnect ('dis-embed') the economy from society and nature and tries to subordinate society and nature to the rules of the 'self-regulated market'. The utopianism of this project resides in the claim of the 'self-regulated market' as an entity not regulated by humans' affairs but by the (universal) law of supply and demand. In contrast, according to Polanyi (1957), every economy in the present and in the past is shaped by specific institutional arrangements, not by universal laws. Polanyi (1957) proposed an empirical study of the historical conditions and modes of organisation that exist in specific times and places that can explain different economic and social relations (see below the 'substantive' economy for a more detailed explanation of this point).

In this sense, for Polanyi the rise of regimes dominated by the market is due to a number of institutional arrangements that took place first in Britain during 19th Century and after spread worldwide (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]). However, for Polanyi this utopian project has serious consequences for human well-being and the natural environment, and encounters resistance and counter-movements from a number of different actors (thesis of 'double movement'). These counter-movements gave at his time of writing to the rise of different answers against the 'laissez-faire market' regime that varied from fascism, to soviet regime or the New Deal and more social democrat welfare regimes.

[25] Two other important works of Polanyi are the posthumous, *Primitive, Archaic, and Modern Economies: Essays of Karl Polanyi* (1968), edited by George Dalton and *The Livelihood of Man* (1977), edited by Harry Pearson.

[26] Edited together with Conrad Arensberg and Harry Pearson.

Despite writing in the first part of the 20th century, the relevance of Polanyi's work for the present times have been stressed by scholars from different fields such as anthropology, political science, sociology, geography, (rural) development or economics and have been embraced by different movements and organisations that propose alternatives to neoliberalism (Stiglitz, 2001; Dale, 2010; Block and Somers, 2014; Laville and Salmon, 2015; Roy and Grant, 2019). The following sections explain in some detail some of the main concepts developed within the work of Polanyi and their application to the research objectives of this thesis[27].

3.2. A Substantive Approach towards the Study of Rural Social Enterprises as Neoendogenous Development Actors

Polanyi based his work on the differentiation between a 'formal' and a 'substantive' view of the economy (see Table 3.1. at the end of this section). The 'formal' approach, advocated by neoclassic economists, is based on an analysis of the economy as a field in which individuals make rational choices within a context of scarcity, i.e. "insufficiency of means" (Polanyi, 1977, p. 25). The decisions of these actors are based on their (individual selfish) preferences and they try to reach their goals through the selection of optimal means, in a context of perfect information and competition (Beckert, 2003). Furthermore, this perspective assumes that the economy and therefore the study of economic relations, are bounded to the study of relations occurring within or in relation to a price-making market system, in which "all goods and services, including the use of labour, land and capital are available for purchase in markets and have, therefore a price; all forms of income derive from the sale of goods and services" (Polanyi, 1957, p. 247).

Moreover, from a 'formal' approach to the economy, government intervention should be reduced to a minimum, only having a role in establishing the (basic) framework for the 'best' functioning of the (self-regulated) market (Stiglitz, 2001). The market is conceived of as the main sphere for assuring the provision of the goods and services needed and/or demanded by society; hence, social relations and structures are studied in relation to the 'good functioning' of the market-economy, occupying a subordinated

[27] This study is concerned with the use of the concepts within the work of Polanyi as methodological and analytical tools (Gemici, 2008) to study the question of how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities rather than to examine their political validity and/or relevance.

role in economic studies (Krippner, 2001). From a methodological perspective, the 'formal' approach proposes that the purpose of the study of the economy should be to establish universal laws, similar to the ones found in nature, that can explain how the market and (individual) economic behaviour function (Polanyi, 1977). Although with a different focus, some of the elements from this 'formal' approach can be observed in some conceptualisations of SEs which emphasise the individual behaviour of the social entrepreneurs and the market as the main field where social problems should be addressed (Hulgård, 2010; see also section 2.2.2.).

However, Polanyi explained that the 'formal' view of the economy represents an 'economistic fallacy' referring to "a tendency to equate the human economy with its market form" (Polanyi, 1977, p. 20; see also Block and Somers, 2014, p. 44). According to Polanyi, the 'formal' view of the economy only focuses on a specific type of economic relations, i.e. market-exchange relations, but leave other real economic relations aside, such as reciprocal and redistributive relations, which represent different 'forms of economic integration' (these are explained in more detail in section 3.2.3.). Moreover, the 'formal' approach represents an ahistorical account of the reality that pretends to separate economic relations from others such as social and natural relations. Hence, this approach, he argued, represents a narrow and incomplete approach towards the economy and economic relations (Polanyi, 1957, 1977).

In contrast to the 'formal' approach, Polanyi proposed a 'substantive' view of the economy to "[yield] the concepts that are required by the social sciences for an investigation of all the empirical economies" (Polanyi, 1957, p. 244). This 'substantive' approach to the economy emphasises humans "dependence for [their] living upon […] the interexchange with [their] natural and social environment, in so far as this results in supplying [them] with the means of material want satisfaction" (Polanyi, 1957, p. 243). From this approach, the study of the economy is not (only) focused on the functioning of the market and/or in the choices of individuals, but is focused on the relations of humans (in plural not a single individual) with others in society (humans) and nature (non humans) to provide their livelihood (Gemici, 2008). Hence, according to Polanyi (1957, p. 250) the economy "is embedded and enmeshed in institutions, economic and noneconomic. The inclusion of the noneconomic being vital". In this regard, economic activities are embedded within complex systems of

(social and natural) relations and shaped by economic but also by social and political institutions that need to be studied in order to explain economic relations. Polanyi (1957) argued that this 'substantive' view is based on the empirical analysis of different societies along different times of the history that situate economic relations within its broader (socio-historical and institutional) context. In this regard, the predominance of some 'form(s) of economic integration' upon others is due to specific institutional arrangements in particular times and places, not due to universal laws (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]).

Table 3.1. The 'Formal' and 'Substantive' Views of the Economy.

	'Formal' Economy	**'Substantive' Economy**
Human nature	*Homo economicus*	*Homo socius*
Level of economic analysis	Individual choice	Supra-individual
Motivation in economic life	Scarcity-induced	Procurement of material means for wants and needs
Object of economic analysis	Market exchange, regularities	Livelihood, empirical economy

Source: based on Gemici (2008, p. 22).

- *Relevance of the 'substantive' approach to the study of the work of rural social enterprises as neoendogenous development actors.*

This 'substantive' view concurs with the EMES conceptualisation of SEs which stresses the direct relation of the productive activity and the social mission of SEs, i.e. the economic activities of the SE usually constitute the means by which these organisations pursue and achieve their (social and/or environmental) goals, thus it is not possible to disconnect one from the other (Roy and Grant, 2019). Moreover, EMES scholars have emphasised the importance of mixing market with non-market resources for SEs (Nyssens, 2006; Defourny and Nyssens, 2017) and have also pointed to the collective and cooperative dynamics of SEs, thus their relation with the democratic principles of the social economy (Laville, 2014). In the same line, in a seminal commentary about neoendogenous rural development Ray (2006) stressed the alignment of this approach towards rural development with the three forms of economic integration proposed by Polanyi and with the principles of the social economy, stating that neoendogenous rural development is "seeking to place

development and the economy firmly in a context that is, at once, social and local (territorial)" (Ray, 2006, p. 279).

Hence, the 'substantive' approach to the economy provides a suitable platform for the purpose of this study which is to explore SEs as neoendogenous rural development actors in a number of fundamental aspects. In first instance, by stressing the importance of the 'embeddedness' of economic actors and relations within society and nature in particular geographical and historical contexts. This suggests the importance of analysing the (socio-)economic relations in which rural SEs engage with different (economic and non-economic) actors but also with (socio-)spatial dimensions such as those constituted by the rural 'places' in which the SEs are based and operate.
Second, by broadening the view towards the economy, including redistribution and reciprocity as 'forms of economic integration' besides the market. The 'substantive' approach provides tools for analysing the wide range of (socio-)economic relations in which rural SEs engage in order to leverage and mix resources.
Third, by emphasising the importance of focusing on institutional arrangements to explain how a specific phenomenon takes place. The 'substantive' approach provides conceptual and analytical tools for analysing rural SEs beyond the behaviour of specific individuals but as organised collective entities that articulate shared interests and promote collective action ('corporate agency') that form, reproduce and/or modify (supporting) structures of their localities when contributing to a neoendogenous development. These three aspects are explained more fully in the next sections of this chapter.

3.2.1. Embeddedness and Rural Social Enterprises

From a 'substantive' view, the economy, economic actors and relations are not autonomous from other spheres of life such as society and nature. On the contrary, economic actors and relations are always 'embedded'[28] in economic and non-economic institutions (Dale, 2010; Block and Somers, 2014). In this regard, as development actors rural SEs engage in relations with economic actors, e.g. for-profit businesses, but also with non-economic actors, e.g. local/regional public authorities, and these relations are shaped by economic institutions, e.g. (local) markets, but also

[28] There is a discussion among Polanyian scholars about the 'dis-embeddedness' or the 'always embeddedness' of the market-economy within the work of Polanyi (see for a further discussion Krippner and Alvarez, 2007)

by non-economic institutions, e.g. regional/national political frameworks. Moreover, following the 'substantive' view of the economy, economic actors are also 'embedded' within specific geographical and natural contexts which also influence the work of rural SEs and with which they engage in specific relations as development actors.

However, the phenomenal utilisation of the concept of 'embeddedness', especially within (new) economic sociology since Granovetter's (re)formulation, by scholars attributing to it different meanings have led to conceptual fuzziness (Markusen, 1999 in Hess, 2004). After presenting a brief overview of how the concept of 'embeddedness' has been used within the (new) economic sociology field; this section sketches out some of the dimensions of 'embeddedness' that are significant for studying SEs as neoendogenous rural development actors.

- *Beyond a conceptualisation of embeddedness as (individual) social ties/networks*

The concept of 'embeddedness', although originally attributed (within the field of the social sciences)[29] to Polanyi, has been popularised since the 1980's within the field of (new) economic sociology as a general critique of the analysis of economic agents detached from their social relations/context (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993; Beckert, 2003). However, the meaning of embeddedness in most of the work developed within that field draws from the seminal article of Granovetter (1985) 'Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness' published in the *American Journal of Sociology*. Within that article, Granovetter criticised both 'undersocialised' conceptions of economic behaviour, referring to neoclassical economics, and 'oversocialised' conceptions, referring namely to Parson's functionalism although including Polanyi's work within the latter. Granovetter stated that individuals and groups-organisations do not act isolated from each other taking rational choices but neither are their acts determined by rigid social structures. He claimed instead that the economic behaviour of (market) actors is embedded in concrete ongoing (dynamic) systems of social relations and networks that are continuously shaped (Granovetter, 1985, p. 487).

[29] According to Block (2001, p. xxiv) Polanyi draws from his study of English economic history on the metaphor of extracting coal embedded in the rock walls of the mine as an inspiration to develop the concept of *embeddedness*.

From this perspective, the focus of the analysis lies in the social ties/networks and the positions of (market) actors within these networks. This perspective has given rise to a prolific amount of studies that have focused on the relation between social ties/networks and economic behaviour, namely using network theory for this analysis (e.g. Uzzi, 1997; Burt, 2004). These studies have focused on aspects of the social networks such as their structure, strength, density or geographical diversity within different economic actors, including rural entrepreneurs (e.g. Jack, 2005; Kalantaridis and Bika, 2006; Atterton, 2007) and rural social (community) entrepreneurs (e.g. Vestrum, 2014; Richter, 2019). Moreover, the focus on different aspects of the social ties/networks of these economic actors has led to the appraisal of different terms that complement the concept of 'embeddedness', such as social embeddedness, relational embeddedness, structural embeddedness or local embeddedness (Dacin, Ventresca and Beal, 1999; Vestrum, 2014, 2016)[30].

In general terms, the importance of this approach lies in bringing attention to social ties and networks for the study of economic behaviour, moreover, within the field of rural (social) entrepreneurship this type of analysis has shown significant aspects such as that individual (social) entrepreneurs with social ties 'embedded' within their rural localities[31] demonstrate better access to critical information and resources (Vestrum and Rasmussen, 2013; Vestrum, 2014; Korsgaard, Müller and Tanvig, 2015; McKeever, Jack, and Anderson, 2015; Richter, 2019). Despite the importance of these studies, Granovetter's conceptualisation of embeddedness has been criticised by different scholars mainly for being too narrow and atomistic (Krippner, 2001). Two of these critiques are relevant for this study. First, within Granovetter's conceptualisation of 'embeddedness' the market is not critically examined but is assumed and correlated to the place where economic action happens, with the other 'forms of economic integration' (usually) being ignored (Krippner, 2001; Dale, 2010). Second, this conceptualisation of 'embeddedness' singles out what is considered the most relevant characteristic for linking the social and economic spheres, i.e. the social ties/networks of (specific) individuals, and studies these by abstracting them and

[30] It is also important to note that some studies that have taken this approach towards embeddedness, i.e. correlating it with social ties/networks, have redefined embeddedness in terms of social capital, thus showing the close relation between these terms (e.g. Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993; McKeever, Anderson and Jack, 2014).
[31] This has been usually coined under the term 'local embeddedness'.

neglecting other aspects that potentially contribute to specific institutional arrangements (Krippner and Alvarez, 2007). This conceptualisation of 'embeddedness' usually neglects factors occurring at different spatial scales, collective forms that go beyond the individual and other features such as political and/or spatial dimensions that contribute to shape these economic relations (Hess, 2004; Maucourant and Cangiani, 2008 in Dale, 2010; Roberts, 2018).

In an attempt of widening the focus of the different dimensions of 'embeddedness' Zukin and DiMaggio (1990, pp. 15-23) added to the 'social/structural' dimension others such as 'cognitive', 'cultural' and 'political' dimensions to the concept. Whereas 'structural embeddedness' refers to the original conception of 'embeddedness' by Granovetter (1985), these authors refer to 'cognitive embeddedness' as the structured mental processes that limit economic rationality. This cognitive dimension of 'embeddedness' focuses on the individual behaviour of economic actors, however, it challenges the assumption of rational choice behind economic behaviour. By 'cultural embeddedness', they refer to shared collective understandings that shape economic strategies and goals. However, if we consider the individual not as an isolated subject but defined by their social relations/interactions "one could not accept too sharp a separation between cognitive and cultural embeddedness" (Dequech, 2003, p. 466). Finally, by 'political embeddedness' they refer to political institutions, policy and legal frameworks that shape economic power through the struggles of economic and non-economic actors.

The incorporation of wider dimensions to the study of embeddedness partially responds to the abovementioned critiques to Granovetter's conceptualisation of 'embeddedness'; however, these dimensions do not add (at least explicitly) spatial aspects as a relevant feature towards 'embeddedness' (Oinas, 1997; Hess, 2004). In line with the crescent emphasis on the relevance of the spatial context as an analytical dimension in (rural) entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011; Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors, 2015; Muñoz and Kimmit, 2019) and (rural) SEs studies (Muñoz, 2010; Mazzei, 2017; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019), this thesis argues for the incorporation of spatial aspects as key for the study of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors. Furthermore, the attempt by Zukin and DiMaggio (1990) to incorporate wider dimensions towards embeddedness still do not consider the economy as a sphere

formed by other forms of economic relations beyond the market as proposed by Polanyi (2001 [1944]).

Hence, despite acknowledging the importance of social ties/networks, this study argues for the incorporation of spatial aspects and a wider view of the economy and economic relations that incorporates redistribution and reciprocity besides the market to provide a nuanced understanding of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors contributing to the development of their localities. The following sections are devoted to explain these aspects in greater detail.

3.2.2. Embedding Spatial Dimensions in the Study of Rural Social Enterprises. Spatial Scale and Place.

Since the 1990's there has been an increasing interest from geographers on the work of Polanyi and concepts such as 'embeddedness' (Hess, 2004; Peck, 2013b). This interest relates to the resemblance of methodological practices in economic geography (Peck, 2013a) with Polanyi's emphasis on 'substantive' economic studies of historically and geographically diverse societies "situated in both time and place" (Halperin, 1994, cited in Peck, 2013b, p.1554).

In a reading of the geographical relevance 'out of' the work of Polanyi, Roberts (2018, p. 998) states that "the substantive exploration of empirical factors that shape economic life is inherently geographical". In the same line, Peck (2013b) attributes a geographical dimension to Polanyi's work as it deals with the problematic of 'placing the economy' (Amin, Cameron and Hudson, 2002) and he claims that, through comparative institutional analysis, Polanyi's work "seek(s) to stretch and interrogate registers of difference within local economies" (Peck, 2013b, p. 1546). Therefore, the 'substantive' approach to the economy and related concepts such as (Polanyian) 'embeddedness' denote geographical sensitivity.

When looking at 'embeddedness' and its relation with 'spatial scale', Hess (2004) recognised the importance of relations at local scale when exploring how social and cultural relations shape economic relations. However, he warned about this excessive localism and argued in favour of a 'multi-scalarity of embeddedness' based on a relational concept of 'place' that links different actors and places and the development of their relations over time (Hess, 2004, p. 176; see also Machado, 2011). In this regard, studies on rural SEs have stressed the importance of looking at multiple spatial

scales when analysing the (social) relations developed by rural social entrepreneurs (Lang and Fink, 2019; Morrison and Ramsey, 2019; Richter, 2019).

Four different 'spatial scales' (levels) have been considered for the study of rural SEs relations within this thesis, i.e. local, regional, national, international. The *local* level refers to close (geographical) proximity, and to those relations occurring between actors within the same locality-village and/or with their rural hinterland. The *regional* level refers to a territorial unit smaller than the state but larger than a locality, thus to those relations occurring between actors situated in different localities (rural and/or urban) within the same regional geographical and/or politico-administrative territorial boundaries and to those relations with actors/bodies that extend their presence across these regional boundaries, e.g. Regional Authorities[32]. The *national* level refers to the territorial and administrative unit of the state, thus to those relations occurring between actors situated in different localities within the same state and to those relations with actors/bodies that extend their presence throughout the state, e.g. national government. The *international* level refers to this that transcends the state, thus to those relations between actors situated in different countries and/or with international bodies, including European institutions. However, the boundaries between these spatial scales (levels) are porous and they do not constitute fixed categories (Paasi, 2002), as for example nationally and/or internationally framed/designed rural development programmes are (usually) implemented by local and/or regional bodies, therefore showing the interrelation between these spatial scales. This relational approach towards the relations occurring at multiple spatial scales links with the next point which explains the (relational) concept of 'place' used within this study.

Besides the relevance of the relations developed at different spatial scales, rural SEs have been recognised as organisations that are intrinsically related with the rural context where they are based and operate, denoting their place-based character (Healey, 2015a; Lang and Fink, 2019). In this sense, this study concurs with Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) who argue that the incorporation of a place-based approach to the study of organisations, including those from the third sector such as

[32] This study uses the term region/regional in a loose sense as 'regional' can refers to a politico-administrative territorial boundary but also to a territorial unit (smaller than the state) which is based on the sharing of specific geographical and/or cultural features (for a discussion of different definitions of what constitutes a region, see for example Vukovic and Kochetkov, 2017)

SEs, allow us to "conceptualise how […] these 'actors' participate in shaping and are shaped by the social and physical world" (Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes, 2014, p. 259; see also Amin, Cameron and Hudson, 2002; Mazzei, 2107; Slawinski *et al.*, 2019).

In order to add analytical nuance to this study, it is necessary to focus more specifically on the concept of 'place'[33] and what is meant by it. Drawing from (human, political and economic) geography scholars, 'places' are formed by material objects and social relations that comes together in specific times producing unique geographically located entities (Massey and Jess, 1995; Hudson, 2001; Agnew, 2011). Therefore, 'places' are not fixed entities with essential features that persist over time, on the contrary, 'places' are dynamic entities that are constantly shaped by the interrelations among internal (local) and external (supra-local) actors and in relation to other places, not isolated from them (Massey, 1991; Murdoch, 2000; Heley and Jones, 2012; Cresswell, 2013). Moreover, 'places' are attached to (multiple) meanings and identities that configure them, being inscribed with emotional and symbolic ties, thus they constitute 'meaningful locations' (Massey and Jess, 1995; Hudson, 2001; Cresswell, 2004).

According to Agnew (1987, 2011) 'places' are formed by three interrelated dimensions[34], i.e. location, locale and sense of place. *Location* refers to the geographical coordinates (site) in which a place can be found, thus it relates to its topography, natural features and geographical position within a map (Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes, 2014). This location is not static but it is (re)constructed through the relations among different locations, thus it refers to a relative (relational) position (Cresswell, 2013). *Locale* refers to the material (including technological) and institutional settings in which social relations occur. Thus for the case of this study the concrete configuration of buildings, streets, land, amenities, workspaces, social media sites and institutional frameworks of the localities in which the activities of the rural

[33] For this study the concept of 'place' has been chosen as the terminology to refer to against other related concept such a 'space'. The main reason for this is the emphasis of this concept ('place') in the symbolic meanings and relations, thus its reference to a 'meaningful location' against the more abstract conceptualisation of 'space' (Cresswell, 2004, pp.7-9). However, this study acknowledges the interrelation between these concepts and the proximity between 'place' and 'social space' (Lefevbre, 1991, in Halfacree, 2006).

[34] Although it is acknowledged that 'places' can refer to different entities such as rooms, houses, gardens, cities, the reference of 'place' for this study are the localities (villages) in which the studied rural SEs are based and operate.

SEs take place (Hudson, 2001). *Sense of place* refers to the identification that people express in relation to a specific place as a unique entity. This sense of place can refer to an individual feeling but also to collective feelings when these are shared by (larger) groups of people, for example in relation to the collective sense of belonging towards a locality (Massey, 1991). Moreover, this identification can refer to an emotional attachment to the place in relation to the environment-nature, sites-buildings, culture or history-roots; however, it can also refer to a social attachment, attributed to the presence of social ties and to a functional attachment to specific goals or activities (van Veelen and Hagget, 2017).

Rural SEs have shown an intrinsic relation with different aspects of the rural context in which they are based (Smith and McColl, 2016). In this regard, the concept of 'place' provides a useful tool within a 'substantive' framework to add nuance about how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of Irish rural localities. By using the concept of 'place' complementary to 'embeddedness' this study focuses on not only the social relations that rural SEs develop in order to pursue their goals, but also on other dimensions such as the engagement of these rural SEs with their geographical location, material, institutional and symbolic-identity aspects of their 'places' in order to explain how these organisations contribute to neoendogenous rural development.

3.2.3. Forms of Economic Integration and Rural Social Enterprises

From a 'substantive' approach, Polanyi argued that economic relations are instituted by three different 'forms of economic integration' that "describe patterns of locational and appropriational[35] movements, each of which corresponds to a particular pattern of economic co-ordination and institutional structure" (Dale, 2010, p. 115). These 'forms of economic integration' do not only refer to the type of (socio-)economic relations in which SEs engage in and the resources leveraged from these relations, but also to the (socio-)economic principles and objectives that underline the actions and goals of SEs, thus to their potential to contribute to shape institutional arrangements within a plural

[35] Following Dale (2010, p. 114), locational (in Polanyi's work) refers to production, thus the 'creation and transportation of goods and services'; whereas appropriational refers to distribution/ownership, thus 'rights of disposal over resources'.

economy (Polanyi, 1977; Laville and Nyssens, 2001; Laville, 2014; see also section 3.2.4. for further detail on this).

According to Polanyi, these 'forms of integration' are reciprocity, redistribution and market-exchange[36] (Polanyi, 2001 [1944], pp. 45 – 58; 1957, pp. 250-266; 1977, pp. 35 - 43).

Reciprocity refers to the (socio-)economic principle that shape the relations developed within members of a group/community and/or between different groups/organisations in which mutuality is enhanced as every counterpart is expected to contribute to the allocation of resources based on the social bonds that exist among them (Polanyi, 1957; Laville and Nyssens, 2001; Dale, 2010). In the case of inter-group reciprocal relations, they can occur between two groups but these are "not restricted to duality" (Polanyi, 1957, p. 252), as multiple reciprocity between different groups is likely to happen, especially in larger communities such as for example reciprocal exchanges among various community and voluntary organisations within a rural locality[37]. Allocation of resources based on reciprocity relations usually take non-monetary forms, such as volunteer labour or in-kind donations, but can also be monetary such as sponsorship/monetary donations.

Redistribution refers to the (socio-)economic principle that shape the relations in which resources are allocated by a central point/authority that collects and distributes resources, thus redistribution relations relate to centricity (Polanyi, 1957, p. 254). This central institution is usually related to a public authority that works at society level, for example the role of the (welfare) state in contemporary European democracies, consequently redistribution is typically related to the public sphere. However, redistribution can also originate from private institutions and at smaller scales, evident in the examples of private foundations and their distribution (of some) of the surplus generated by corporations from the sale of goods and/or services or in the case of SEs which (partially) subsidise the cost of some of their services for those who are

[36] Polanyi identified another 'form of integration', this of 'householding' which consists in "production for one's own use" (Polanyi, 2001 [1944], pp. 55), thus it relates to self-sufficiency. This is not included as not been the focus of this study, however, the author acknowledges the relation of some reciprocity resources mobilised by SEs with this 'form of economic integration', e.g. in-kind donations such as items donated by private individuals including for example products from local farmers.

[37] This study assumes that a locality forms part of these 'larger communities' as it is a larger entity that basic units such as household/family or individual organisations.

financially vulnerable from the profits obtained from the sale of goods and/or services (Laville and Nyssens, 2001).

Market-exchange refers to the (socio-)economic principle that shape the relations developed within a (polycentric) price-making market system. Two principal elements define markets as institutions that regulate this form of integration, first, the presence of demand and supply, defined by Polanyi (1957, p. 267) as "a multiplicity of hands desirous to acquire, or alternatively, to dispose of, goods in exchange". Second, a price-making system characterised by competition that determines the rate at which goods and/or services are exchanged, thus these rates are not fixed but they fluctuate. Moreover, within a market-exchange system, mostly every element is converted into a commodity[38] that can be bought and sold within the price-making market system and relationships are based for the sake of commodities and the goal of obtaining profits (Dale, 2010). These market-exchange relations take form of monetary exchanges in compensation of the purchase of a product and/or service. However, Polanyi (1957, pp. 256-66) stressed that not all forms of exchange and trade (and even money uses) can be equated to market-exchange relations, as for example gift trade-exchange will correspond to reciprocity and administered trade is a form of redistribution.

These three 'forms of economic integration' tend to coexist within each specific context, however, specific institutional arrangements (can) make some more dominant than others at specific times and locations. In this sense, the work of Polanyi stresses the important role of market-exchange relations, especially in specific periods of time and places. However, Polanyi's work also shows how market-exchange is but one of the 'forms of integration' within the economy, thus putting the market into a broader perspective and opening up a broader analytical perspective towards the study of (socio-)economic relations.

In this sense, the incorporation of these three 'forms of economic integration' within the analytical framework serves to the purpose of overcoming the 'economistic fallacy' (Adaman and Madra, 2002) of a 'market fundamentalist' view of the economy and society (Block and Somers, 2014). This view equates the market with the economy and market-exchange as the only economic relations to focus on, thus subordinating other economic relations and social aspects to the 'well-functioning' of the market(s)

[38] Including 'fictitious commodities' such as land, labour and money (Polanyi, 2001 [1944], pp. 71 - 80).

for the sake of development (Edelman and Haugerud, 2005; Pike, Rodriguez-Pose and Tomaney, 2006). Acknowledging the co-existence and analytical relevance of reciprocity, redistribution and market-exchange supports a more nuanced analysis of the way in which rural SEs engage in different types of (socio-)economic relations in order to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

Adopting this 'substantive' view, scholars from the EMES network have demonstrated how SEs combine and hybridize these three 'forms of economic integration' illustrating how "they work together rather than in isolation from each other" (Defourny and Nyssens, 2006, p. 10-11). In this sense, the intermediate space that SEs tend to occupy at the crossroads of the market, the state/public policies and the civil society stresses the importance of exploring the (socio-)economic relations of these organisations from this broader (substantive) perspective that includes the market but goes beyond it (Nyssens, 2006). In this regard, Gardin (2006) conducted an economic (budgetary) analysis of 146 WISEs[39] across Europe, showing how the monetary resources of these WISEs proceeded from these different 'forms of integration', i.e. market-exchange, in form of sales of goods and/or services; redistribution, in form of subsidies such as labour market programmes but also through purchasing goods and/or services from the state and/or municipalities to SEs and; reciprocity, in form of gifts/donations. Moreover, the non-monetary resources of the WISEs studied also drew on two 'forms of economic integration', i.e. redistribution, in form of indirect subsidies such as tax deductions or exemptions from social contributions and in terms of loan equipment, and; reciprocity, namely in terms of volunteer work and also in terms of loan equipment. This resource mix by these SEs shows the need of putting the market into perspective in order to develop a more nuanced analysis of how SEs work (Laville and Nyssens, 2001; Laville, Lemaître and Nyssens, 2006).

Furthermore, in an explanation of the theoretical underpinnings of the neoendogenous approach to rural development, Ray (2006, p. 80) explicitly mentioned the Polanyian three 'forms of economic integration' and "their associated wider patterns of social organisation, duality [mutuality], centricity and atomistic individualism [competition]" as a theoretical principle for a neoendogenous rural development approach. According to Ray (2006) studies on neoendogenous rural development are

[39] Working Integration Social Enterprises

concerned with how these 'forms of economic integration' manifest at local and regional level and how they can be used to create conditions for territorial development. In this regard, in a study carried out in rural Flanders (Belgium), Meert (2000) applied Polanyi's three 'forms of economic integration' to study rural households' survival strategies. The study showed the minor significance of redistributive and market-exchange relations in comparison to reciprocal activities developed by economically deprived rural households which mainly "rely on intergenerational and kin-related solidarity" (Meert, 2000, p. 330).

So far this section has argued that in order to add nuance to the understanding of how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities a broader perspective towards the (socio-)economic relations that these organisations engage in is needed to explain how they leverage different resources that allow them to pursue their goals. The next section argues for the (potential) 'corporate agency' of rural SEs and their (potential) contribution to the regular and structured occurrence (institutionalisation) of these (socio-)economic relations and to the reproduction and/or transformation of (some of) the features of their rural 'places'.

3.2.4. Corporate Agency and Rural Social Enterprises

From a 'substantive' view, reciprocity, redistribution and market-exchange as 'forms of integration' refer to institutionalised relations, thus characterised by a certain level of continuity and stability rather than to random relations between actors based on personal attitudes and individual behaviours (Polanyi, 1957; Barley and Tolbert, 1997; Abdelnour, Hasselbladh and Kallinikos, 2017). In order to constitute an effective 'form of economic integration' these relations need to occur within 'supporting structures' (Polanyi, 1977, p. 37). These 'supporting structures' set the frameworks for these (socio-)economic relations to happen on a regular basis, therefore the constitution of these 'supporting structures' shape, although not determine, these (socio-)economic relations (Gerth and Mills, 1953).

Within the context of a rural SE, this differentiation between individual behaviour and institutionalised relations can be seen for example between on the one hand, a timely random act in which a benevolent local farmer donates some trees for an environmental project carried out by a SE and; on the other hand, a systematic approach to fundraising in which a SE creates a platform (structure) for coordinating

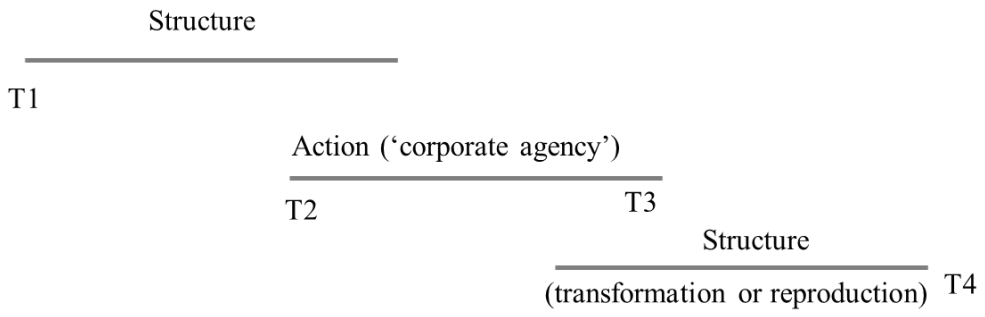
regular donations from different (symmetrical) actors, such as individuals, businesses and other third sectors organisations, as a way of partly funding projects carried out by the SE, and even by other organisations, for the benefit of the locality. The former represents a random individual behaviour/act from a personal motivation; however, the latter represents an institutional arrangement ('supporting structure'), at a small scale, for reciprocity. This 'supporting structure' could create the conditions to (potentially) spur continuous and relative stable relations of mutuality (reciprocity) among the actors participating.

Furthermore, according to a 'substantive' approach these 'supporting structures' are not constituted by the mere aggregation of individual relations but they spring from "collective actions of persons in structured situations" (Polanyi, 1977, p. 37) and they constitute a different entity with its own emergent properties which shape and affect (socio-)economic relations (Polanyi, 1957; Archer, 1998; this is explored and discussed in greater detail in the next chapter of this thesis, see section 4.2.). In this regard, this study argues that rural SEs (can) act as 'corporate agents' (Archer, 2000, pp. 260-70). These type of actors are differentiated from 'primary agents' who represent subjects (individuals or groups) that share some similar features but lack strategic organisation for developing collective action. However, 'corporate agents' represent "organised interest groups…who are aware of what they want, can articulate it to themselves and to others and have organised in order to obtain it and can engage in concerted action" (Archer, 2000, p. 265). Therefore 'corporate agents' articulate shared interests and (consciously) promote collective action trying to influence decision-making; they do so by interacting strategically with other 'corporate agents'. Thus, these 'corporate agents' act "in a manner which cannot be construed as the summation of individuals' self-interest" (Archer, 2000, p. 266).

Due to their collective character, their usual engagement with the local population and in external relations with other actors and their strategic aim to contribute to the (integrated) development of their localities, this study argues that rural SEs have the potentiality to act as 'corporate agents' when contributing to a neoendogenous development. This represents a key aspect as it is through their 'corporate agency' that rural SEs (can) contribute to form, maintain and/or modify 'supporting structures' that enhance the institutionalisation of reciprocity, redistribution and market-exchange relations within their localities. Besides, the relevance of this potential 'corporate

agency' of rural SEs for the institutionalisation of (socio-)economic relations, this study also focuses on the engagement of rural SEs with different (socio-)spatial dimensions of their rural context, understood as 'place'. In this regard, this study argues that due to their (potential) 'corporate agency', rural SEs (can) contribute to reproduce and/or transform (some of) the features that constitute the rural 'places' in which these organisations are based and operate. Following Archer (1982), (pre-existing) structures are not permanent but they are reproduced and/or transformed into different structures by the relations among different actors ('corporate agents') over time, see Figure 3.1. In this regard, the potential 'corporate agency' of rural SEs (can) represent a key aspect for exploring how these organisations have reproduced and/or transformed different (pre-existing) features of their 'places' when contributing to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

Figure 3.1. Rural Social Enterprises (Potential) Corporate Agency



Source: based on Archer (1982, p. 468).

3.3. Conclusion and Research Directions. Rural Social Enterprises as Neoendogenous Development Actors: towards a Substantive Conceptual Framework.

The last section of this chapter presents a brief overview of the concepts that have been discussed so far in this thesis for the purpose of developing a conceptual framework that links these concepts (see Figure 3.2.) with the research objectives (see Figure 3.3.) of this study and that have guided the data collection and analysis which are explained in greater detail in Chapter 4.

This study is concerned with exploring how Irish rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their rural localities. It has been argued that Polanyi's work and especially his 'substantive' view of the economy offers an appropriate

overarching theoretical lens through which to explore this phenomenon. Rural SEs are (socio-)economic actors which focus on the needs of their local population, as a whole and/or of specific (vulnerable) groups within it. According to the 'substantive' view economic actors and relations are embedded within society and nature. Previous literature has primarily linked the concept of **'embeddedness'** with the social ties/networks developed by economic (market) actors, namely individual (rural social) entrepreneurs. However, this study argues for the relevance of incorporating (socio-)spatial dimensions, based on the concepts of 'multi-scalarity/spatial scale' and 'place' and diverse of (socio-)economic relations, based on the three 'forms of economic integration', in order to study rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors. It is important to note that within this study social relations (ties/networks) do not constitute a separate (analytical) element. However, within the concepts of 'place' and the 'forms of economic integration' are implicit the analysis of social relations (ties/networks) as both concepts consider social relations as a central element (Polanyi, 1957; Massey and Jess, 1995). In this regard, this study has added the prefix (socio-) to both the economic and spatial relations that form this conceptual framework.

Due to the close and meaningful relation of rural SEs with the rural localities in which they are based and operate, thus their place-based character (Lang and Fink, 2019), the concept of **'place'** has been used as a guide to incorporate (socio-)spatial elements into the conceptual framework of this study. In this regard, this study suggests that the engagement of rural SEs with different dimensions of their 'place' such as **location,** i.e. relative geographical site; **locale,** i.e. material and institutional settings where social relations occur, and; **sense of place**, i.e. individual and collective identification/attachment with a place, can provide elements with (potential) explanatory power for studying how SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their rural localities. This study considers that these (socio-)spatial dimensions condition the way in which rural SEs work, but also that the through their work these rural SEs contribute to the development/change of (some of) these aspects, thus rural SEs are actors that aims to (re)construct the 'places' in which they operate.

Furthermore, this study argues for the relevance of adopting a broad approach towards the economy and economic relations, an approach which includes but goes beyond the market as the 'substantive' view proposes. Besides engaging in **market-exchange** (competition) relations by trading goods and/or services which provide (some)

financial resources, rural SEs tend to combine this with resources such as grants from rural development programmes leveraged from **redistribution** (centricity) relations and/or, with other resources such as volunteer work based on **reciprocity** (mutuality) relations. It is in the specific combinations/synergies within these (socio-)economic relations that derive from the three **'forms of economic integration'** that form the 'substantive' economy, which influences the capacity of rural SEs to bring about change and innovation to contribute to the development of their localities. In this regard, (rural) SEs are something else other than market players, something else other than organisations subsidised by the government and something else other than traditional civil society organisations, however, they are complex organisations that combine elements associated with these three sectors and associated organisational types.

The complexity of these organisations refers to their specific combinations of these different, but not exclusionary, (socio-)economic relations in order to implement their projects to pursue their goals. Specifically for rural SEs that aim to deliver projects for the development of their localities, these goals can be diverse, e.g. the construction and management of community centres that host social activities and provides working spaces to small local businesses; the development of walks around natural assets that promote environmental awareness, education of the local fauna and flora and attract visitors/tourists to the area. Hence, these type of rural SEs aim to bring about change in different aspects of the locality. This contributes to the abovementioned complexity as different projects require specific combinations of resources derived from the engagement of rural SEs in different (socio-)economic relations.

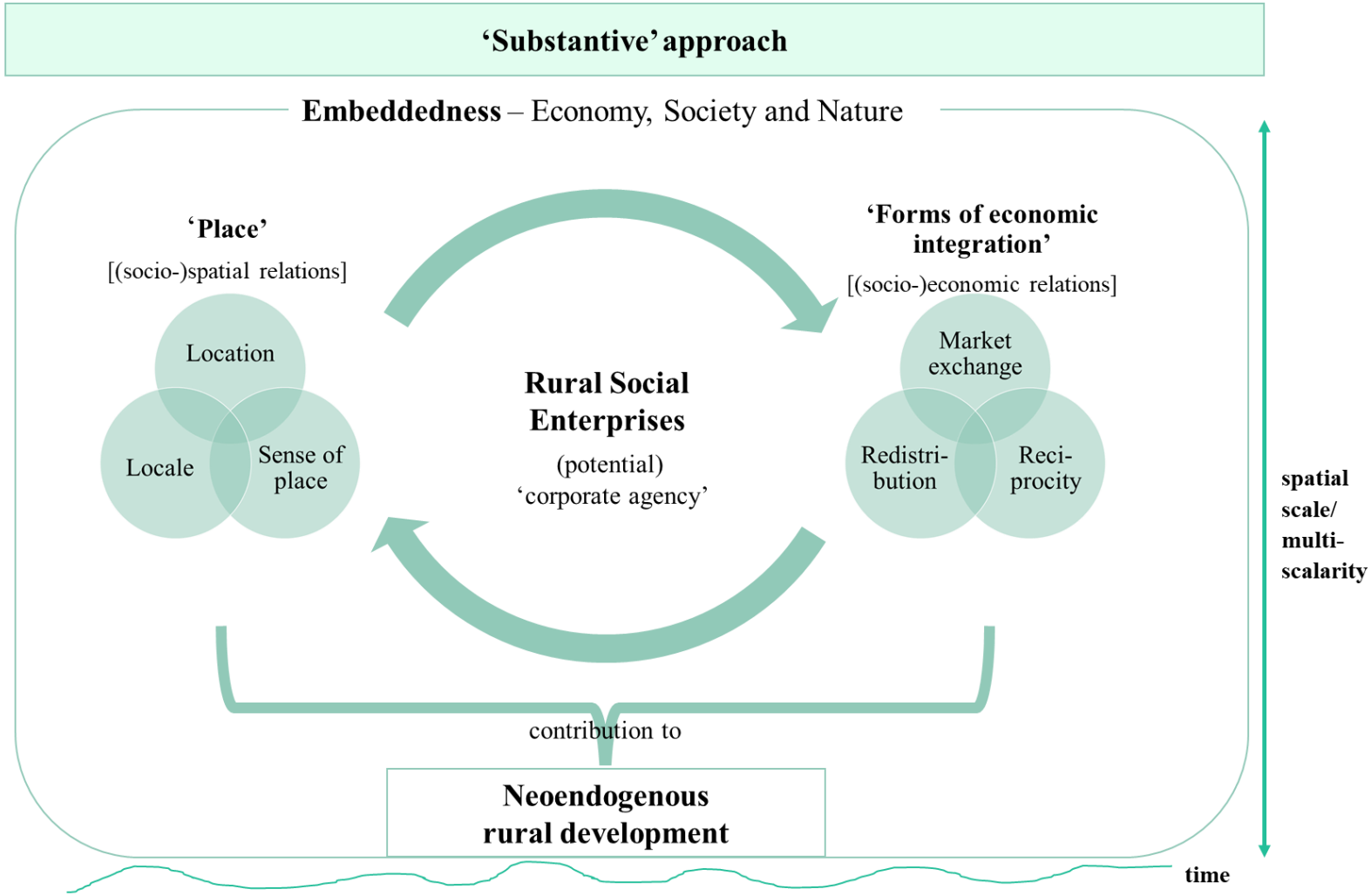
Furthermore, due to the focus of this study on rural SEs as neoendogenous rural development actors, it is implicit that this study assumes the potential of these organisations (rural SEs) to bring about change of certain aspects of their localities. In this regard, in this study rural SEs are understood as actors with (potential) **'corporate agency'**. This term refers to their potential to contribute to the regular and structured occurrence (institutionalisation) of the abovementioned (socio-)economic relations within their localities and with the potential to transform and/or reproduce (some) features of the rural 'places' in which they are based and operate. However, it is also understood that this capacity is conditioned, on the one hand, by the pre-existing

contextual features (structures) in which these organisations operate. On the other hand, by the capacity of these rural SEs to be(come) collective agents with the ability to articulate their demands and put them into action ('corporate agents'), through their interaction with other actors and with the specific pre-existing structures that delimit/condition their possibilities (Archer, 1995).

Finally, two further elements are introduced within this conceptual framework, the notions of 'spatial scale/multi-scalarity' and time. The introduction of multiple **'spatial scales/multi-scalarity'**, i.e. local, regional, national and international, within this conceptual framework supports the analysis of the relations that rural SEs develop in order to implement their projects with stakeholders operating at different (geo-political) levels, from local volunteers, farmers or businesses, to Regional Authorities, national statutory bodies and/or international corporations. It is important to note that the (socio-)economic relations that leads to different forms of integration can be developed at different scales and/or affected by stakeholders at different scales. As an example, reciprocity relations that lead to mutual help-support in monetary and/or in-kind forms, can be practised between organisations within the same locality but also between locals and the diaspora, thus linking local and international levels. Regarding **time**, although it does not occupy a central aspect within this study in terms of its explanatory power, this study focuses on rural SEs which have developed projects over a considerable period of time and takes into consideration key contextual and organisational changes. The representation of time within the conceptual figure as a nonlinear line means that certain periods (of time) have been more prolific than others for the work of the rural SEs.

Besides the presentation of the elements that form the conceptual framework of this study it is also important to focus briefly on the relationship between the two central elements that form this conceptual framework, i.e. 'place' and 'forms of economic integration'. These show clear distinctive dimensions which have been used separately within this study for the analysis of the main aim of this study of exploring how Irish rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their rural localities. However, this study presumes a certain degree of interrelation between these elements in the work of rural SEs (see Figure 3.2.).

Figure 3.2. Rural Social Enterprises as Neoendogenous Development Actors: towards a Substantive Conceptual Framework



Drawing from the conceptual elements presented, the main aim of this study has been further disaggregated in the following two research questions and three research objectives that link this aim with the presented conceptual framework (see Figure 3.3.). The first research question that has guided this study focuses on the engagement of rural SEs in (socio-)economic relations that represent different 'forms of economic integration' and it is stated as follows:

> Research Question 1: How do Irish rural social enterprises engage in (socio-)economic relations that represent different 'forms of economic integration' in order to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities?

The second research question that has guided this study focuses on the engagement of rural SEs with their 'places' and it is stated as follows:

> Research Question 2: How do Irish rural social enterprises engage in (socio-)spatial relations with different dimensions of their 'places' in order to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities?

From these research questions three research objectives have been formulated. The first research objective of this study is:

> Research Objective 1: to explore the different kind of (socio-)economic relations which Irish rural social enterprises have engaged in to leverage resources and, how these social enterprises combine these resources in specific (new) ways to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

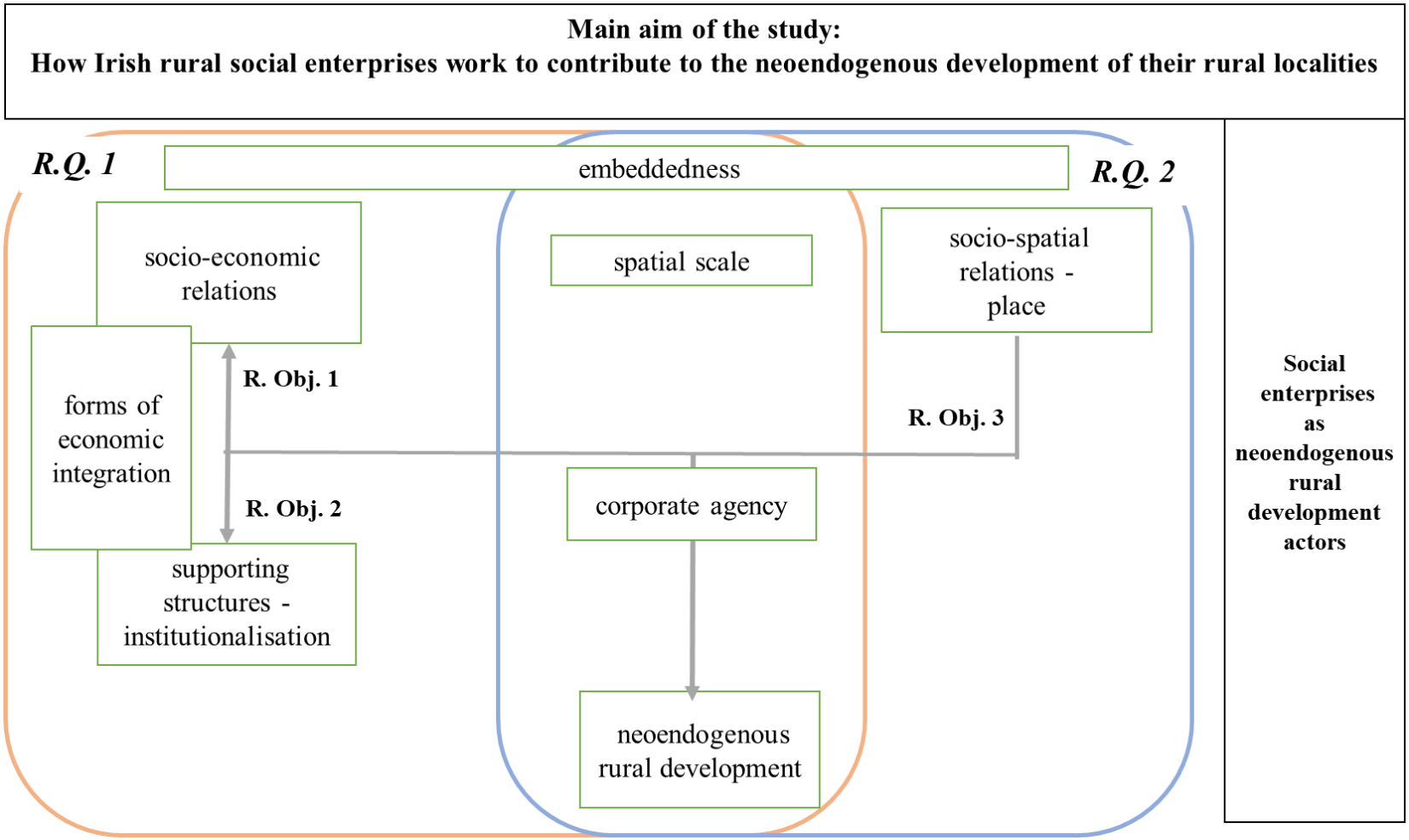
The second research objective of this study, closely aligned with the former, is:

> Research Objective 2: to explore if, and how, Irish rural social enterprises have worked as 'supporting structures' that promote regular (socio-)economic relations representing different 'forms of economic integration' to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

The third research objective of this study is:

> Research Objective 3: to explore how Irish rural social enterprises engage with different dimensions of their 'places' to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

Figure 3.3. Relations between Main Aim, Main Concepts, Research Questions and Research Objectives of the Study.



This chapter has established the conceptual framework from which analyse how Irish rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their rural localities and has disaggregated this broad aim into more specific research questions and objectives linked to the elements that constitute this framework. The following chapter presents the methodology that this study has followed to research this phenomenon.

Chapter 4
Methodology

4.1. Introduction. Substantivism meets Critical Realism

The 'substantive' approach presented in the previous chapter implies a methodological critique of the individualist and formalist perspectives to the study of the economy and economic actors and relations, including those acting within the third sector (Adaman and Madra, 2002). While individualist-formalist perspectives focus on the (aggregated) individual behaviours of (market) rational actors using deductive abstract mathematical models that look for regularities in the form of universal laws (Fleetwood, 2014); from a 'substantive' approach reciprocity, redistribution and/or market-exchange relations are not explained by the mere aggregate of individual behaviours but "by the presence of institutional arrangements, such as symmetrical organisations, central points and market systems" (Polanyi, 1957, p. 251). Therefore, specific institutional-structural conditions influence, though not determine, the agency of economic subjects. Furthermore, a 'substantive' approach implies a methodology in which a phenomenon is studied through deeply contextualised empirical cases that can be explained through an iterative engagement between theory and the (rich) empirical material gathered (Peck, 2013b). These methodological principles situate 'substantivism' in line with critical realist principles (Despain, 2011), which constitute the philosophical underpinning of this thesis. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly present critical realist philosophy and how it underpins this study and discuss how the concepts and research objectives as outlined in previous chapters have been applied to this specific study.

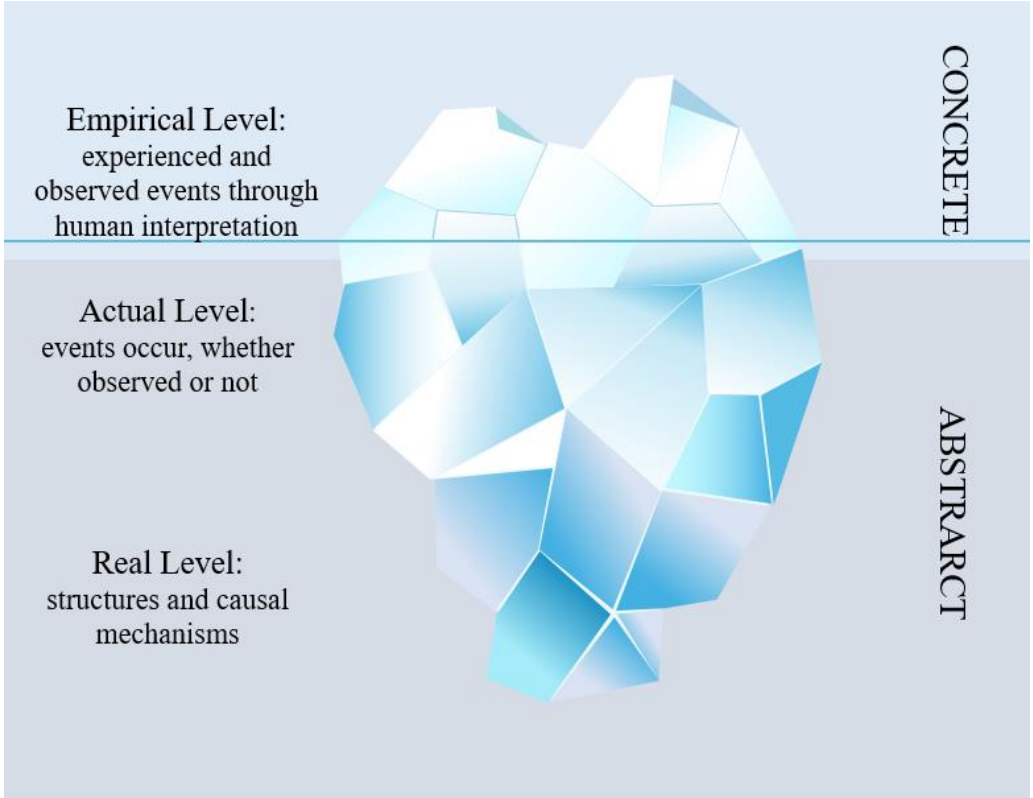
4.2. Critical Realism as the Philosophical Underpinning of this Study. A Brief Note on Ontology, Epistemology and Explanation.

In order to study how Irish rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities this study has been informed by a critical realist philosophy of science. Critical realism lies in the combination of a realist ontology with a constructivist epistemology (Elder-Vass, 2012). According to critical realism, reality exists independent of our knowledge of it (Danemark *et al.*, 2002, p. 17). However, our only way to know about this reality is through social constructions which are socially and historically dependent (Archer, 1998). In this sense, critical realism separates itself from both positivist and idealist positions as they concur in a 'epistemic fallacy' that reduce reality (ontology) to the human knowledge about it

(epistemology) (Bashkar, 1978 in Fleetwood, 2014). In contrast, from a critical realist's perspective we, human beings, can only aspire to know a small part of the vast reality (Sayer, 1992).

Critical realism is based on a stratified and emergent ontology. A stratified ontology means that reality is composed by different but interrelated levels, i.e. empirical, actual and real (Sayer, 1992, see Figure 4.1.). The empirical level refers to our perceptions and experiences of the events-activities, thus it is the level at which research data is gathered; the actual level refers to the events-activities as such, thus to the occurrence of the event independently of the human knowledge/experience of it and; the real refers to the deeper, non observable, level in which the structures and generative (causal) mechanisms that produce these events are located/situated (Danemark *et al.*, 2002).

Figure 4.1. Critical Realism Stratified Ontology.



Source: own elaboration. Based on Sayer (1992, p. 117) and Fletcher (2017, p. 183).

Therefore, the 'causal mechanisms' that explain the events at the empirical level are not directly observable (Archer, 1998, 2000). That is not to say that the gathering of data from the empirical level is futile, on the contrary, the meanings and everyday

conceptualisation attributed by the (social) objects of the phenomenon under study reflect (some of) the 'causal mechanisms', thus are critical for understanding their actions and the deeper relations that explain the studied phenomenon (Fletcher, 2017). However, these everyday conceptualisations about the phenomenon studied need to be (re)interpreted using abstract theoretical concepts that go beyond the superficial and 'dig deeper' in order to produce scientific knowledge about the phenomenon studied. In this regard, the analysis of the phenomenon under study follows an iterative process that moves back and forth from empirical observations to theoretical reflections/abstractions (Sayer, 1992). These (thought) process implies the interpretation, i.e. 'recontextualisation/redescription', of the phenomenon from a conceptual framework or theory ('abduction'), allowing the formation of connections not evident at a superficial level and with (causal) explanatory power within a broader context ('retroduction'), beyond the specific observed phenomenon (Danemark *et al.*, 2002).

The iteration between (conceptually mediated) empirical observations and theoretical reflections leads to the principal aim of establishing a causal analysis that deals with "explaining why what happens actually does happen" (Danermark *et al.*, 2002, p. 52); in the case of this thesis how Irish rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities. However, critical realism emphasises that social phenomena are open systems[40] thus they "are multiply caused, complex, evolving, and subject to the exercise of human agency, they are not characterized by event regularities and, therefore, by laws" (Fleetwood, 2014, p. 207). In this regard, the explanations of a phenomenon under study are not universal but always fallible and open to be changed (Mingers, 2014). Thus, social science cannot establish general universal laws but tendencies, also called 'demi-regularities' (Lawson, 1997 in Mingers, 2014).

Moreover, observations at the empirical level and 'causal mechanisms' are conceptually mediated and (social) scientific knowledge is theory-laden, though not theory-determined (Sayer, 1992). In this regard, conceptual abstraction is critical in order to separate or isolate particular aspects that are considered

[40] An open system means in basic terms that "the parts of the universe or entities, which ultimate interact to cause the events we observe, cannot be studied or understood in isolation from their environment" (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014, p.6)

constitutive/characteristic key elements (properties) of a phenomenon from other not so relevant aspects that form the studied phenomenon (Danermark *et al.*, 2002, p. 42). As an example, in the case of for-profit companies, some constitutive elements would be the maximization of profit for their shareholders and private ownership; however, in the case of this study, constitutive elements for rural SEs would be their combination of social and economic goals, their collective character, their strong local focus, their ability to be boundary spanners and to combine a wide range of resources in new ways (as outlined in Chapter 2). These are properties that make rural SEs a distinctive entity. According to critical realism, and very much in line with the 'substantive' approach proposed by Polanyi (1957), an entity has emergent causal properties that are greater than the sum of its parts (Elder-Vass, 2010 in O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014). For the case of a rural SE, this entity is formed by people (among other things[41]) but the SE has distinctive characteristics beyond the individual features (properties) of each of its members (who are also entities, at a lower level, with their distinctive/constitutive properties).

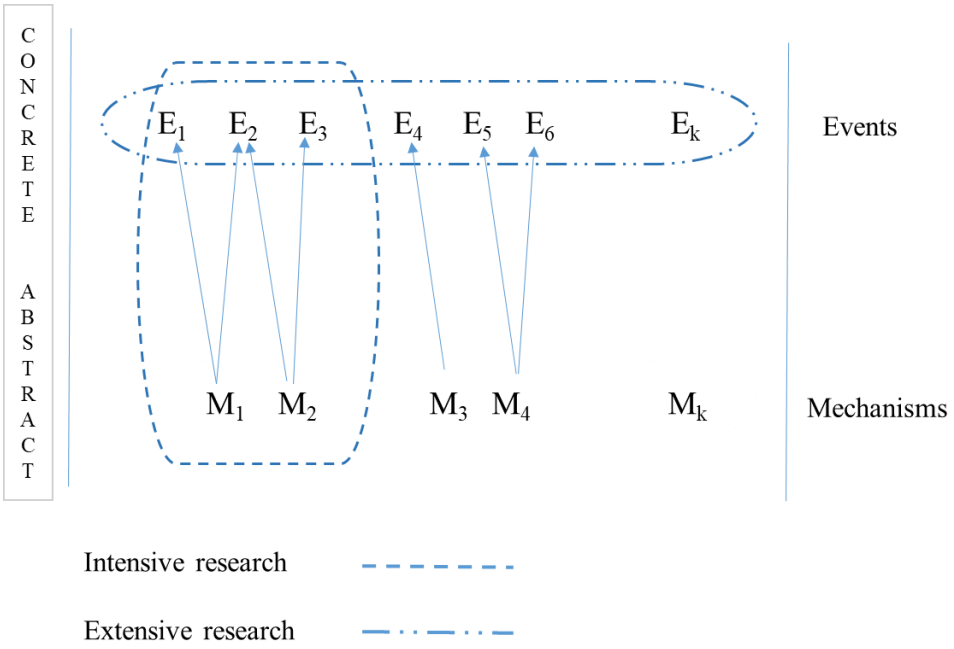
Following this argument, the localities in which rural SEs are based and operate, are also entities with emergent properties. One of the lower entities that form these localities are the organisations and institutions that contribute to their development, including for-profit businesses, public authorities and third sector/social economy organisations such as SEs. The key is that it is in the relations between different entities where the (new) emergent properties are generated, through 'causal mechanisms' (Sayer, 1992). Moreover, within an emergent ontology the greater explanatory power lies in studying an entity (or a phenomenon) as part of a greater whole (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014). All of the former means that for the particular study of how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities, rural SEs need to be studied as part of, and in relation to, other entities such as the locality (and region) in which they are based and other organisations and stakeholders that also influence the work of rural SEs as development actors.

Finally, with regard to the choice of research methods and techniques critical realism supports an inclusive and flexible approach not prioritising quantitative over

[41] From a critical realism perspective not only the people and rules and norms are constitutive of an organisation but also their material aspects, for a definition of 'organisation' from a critical realist perspective see Fleetwood, 2014, p. 215.

qualitative methods or vice versa, arguing that the best methods are those which in each case provide access to relevant information for understanding the phenomenon researched, thus following an eclectic and creative position towards data collection (Sayer, 1992; Danermark *et al.*, 2002; Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014; Fleetwood, 2014; Maxwell, 2018). Critical realist research design approaches can be differentiated into intensive and extensive research designs, the former refers to a focused and in-depth investigation of the phenomenon under study while the latter refers to broader but more superficial research designs (Sayer, 1992; Danermark *et al.*, 2002), see Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2. Types of Critical Realist Research Designs.



Source: based on Sayer (1992, p. 237).

This study follows an intensive research design, and more specifically a (comparative) case study design (explained in greater detail in the next section), this suits with a critical realist approach as the

> "goal of research is to identify the sequences of causation or causal mechanisms at work. [Thus] case studies are a suitable vehicle for examining such sequences, with successful designs identifying a context in which a specific causal mechanism is identified and explored" (Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014, p. 24).

4.3. Intensive Research Design: Exploratory Case Studies

4.3.1. Justification. Contextualised In-Depth Research

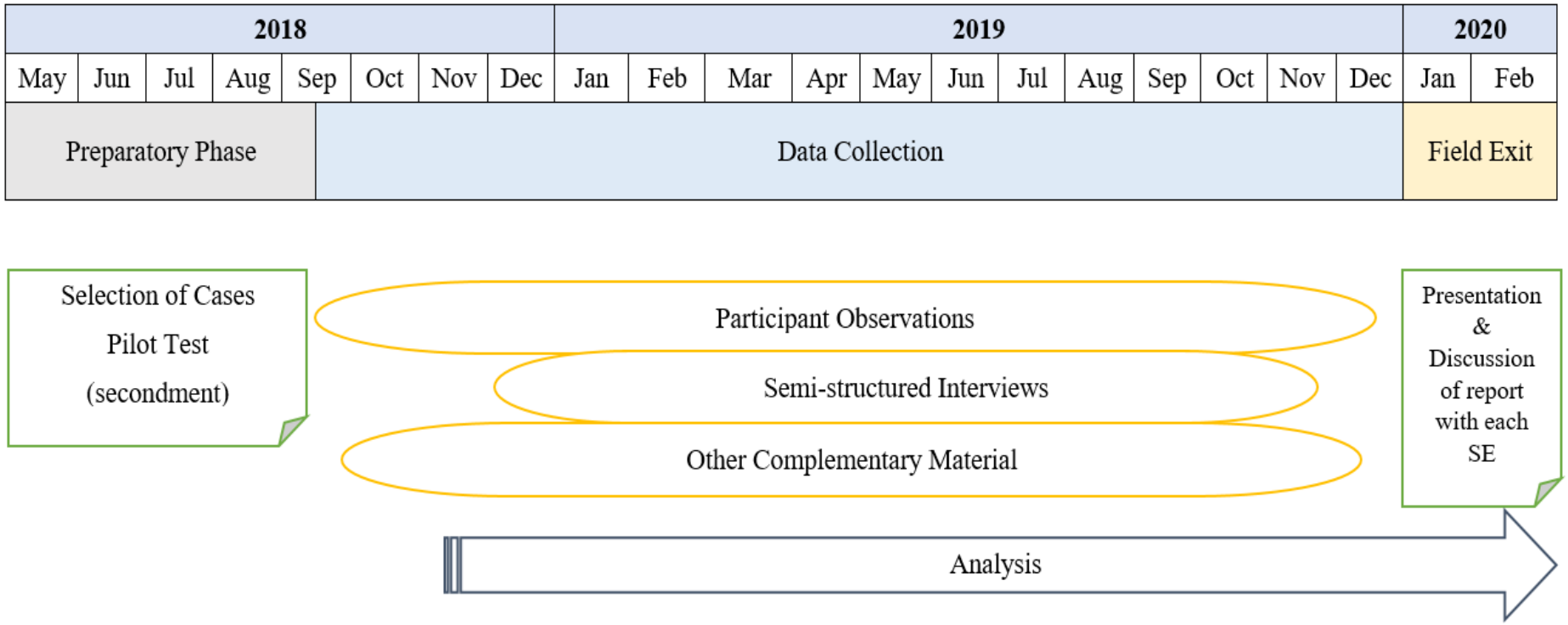
This study has followed an intensive research design based on exploratory case studies (Sayer, 1992; Vincent and Wapshott, 2014). Case studies are suitable for the in-depth study of particular processes within their natural settings and within their own complexity (Hartley, 2004; Yin, 2009). In this regard, based on the main aim and type of research questions, the importance that this study attributes to the context and the relatively scarce research available on the thesis topic, it was decided to pursue the gathering and analysis of rich data from a small purposeful-theoretical sample instead of the comparison of specific variables from a statistically representative sample (Danemark *et al.*, 2002). This study is based on two case studies, which permitted the researcher to conduct an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon studied but at the same time allowed for an examination of similarities and differences across these cases thus providing a deeper understanding and explanation of the phenomenon (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The case study approach is suitable because of its emphasis on the combination of research techniques that capture, from different perspectives, the interactions between many factors (variables). Thus case studies allow to explain how "causal processes work" (Perri 6 and Bellamy, 2012, p. 104), in line with the aim of this research and the critical realist perspective outlined in the previous section (Maxwell, 2005; Vincent and Wapshott, 2014). Furthermore, although carefully designed this study has used different qualitative data gathering techniques, such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation, that allow for flexibility along the research process (Maxwell, 2005). This flexibility permitted the researcher to maintain the core of the research design-methodology while at the same time including some new aspects such as participant observations of non-planned events, interviews with research participants whose importance was unacknowledged at the start of the study and/or the inclusion of some additional more targeted questions to get a deeper understanding of (certain aspects of) the phenomenon studied. Finally, exploratory case studies allowed the researcher to follow an iterative dialogue between empirical data and theory during the process of data collection and analysis which is an important feature of this study as previously mentioned (Vincent and Wapshott, 2014).

Thus, the research design, data collection and analysis have been guided by the (initial) research questions and objectives and the (provisional) conceptual framework, however, these have been subject to adjustments/modifications through this iterative process (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The fieldwork of this study took place over a 21-month period, from May 2018 until February 2020. This period included, first, a preliminary preparatory phase in which the cases were selected and a pilot of the techniques, especially the interviews, was conducted. Second, a data collection phase in which participant observations, semi-structured interviews and other complementary materials, e.g. organisational documents, newsletters, were gathered. Third, a field exit phase in which the researcher prepared, presented and discussed (descriptive) reports with the rural SEs studied. Moreover, (part of) the analysis of the data gathered within this study was conducted simultaneously to the fieldwork (see section 4.3.4 for a more detailed illustration of the analysis process). An overview of the different processes implemented over this period is illustrated in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3. Fieldwork Process.



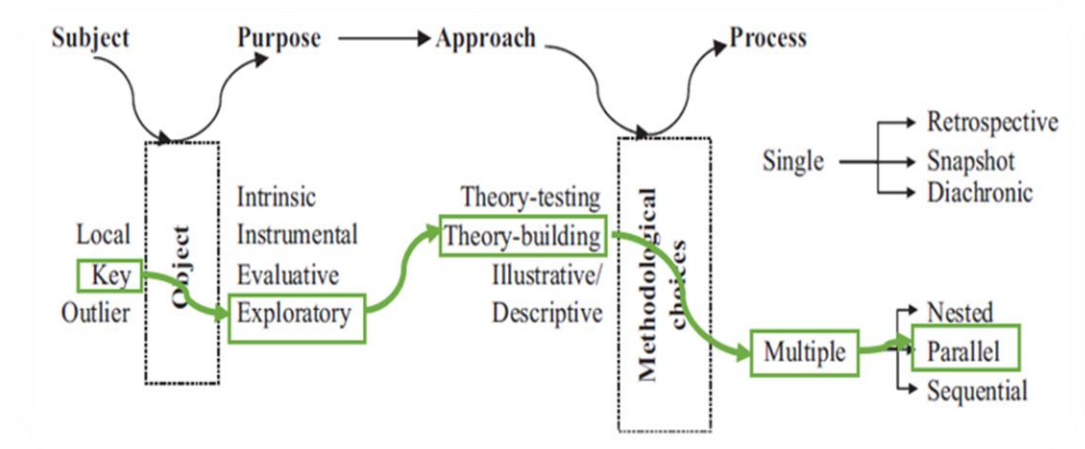
4.3.2. Cases Studies: Typology and Selection Process

This study is built around two case studies of Irish rural SEs and the (neoendogenous) development of their localities. The main entities on which the study is focused are the rural SEs; however, in order to explain how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities, the relations of the rural SEs with other entities are of great importance. In this regard, this study does not only focus on some internal features of the rural SEs but also on the interaction of these SEs with their wider environment/context (Vincent and Wapshott, 2014).

Drawing from Thomas' (2011) typology of case studies, see Figure 4.4., the rural SEs selected represent 'key cases' thus they have the potential to provide "exemplary knowledge" (Thomas, 2011, p. 514) about the phenomenon researched. Moreover, the purpose of the cases is 'exploratory' thus to identify causal relations (mechanisms) (Easton, 2010) and it seeks to 'build theory' about the phenomenon studied. In this regard, it should be noted that this study has not followed a data driven inductive approach towards theory-building as proposed by de Vaus (2001, pp. 5-6) and (some) grounded theory approaches (Morse, 2009; Oliver, 2012). However, this study has started with an early engagement with theoretical constructs (e.g. the Polanyian forms of economic integration) which has informed the 'approach' (Thomas, 2011) towards the phenomenon studied. Despite informing the (initial) research questions and research design, this early engagement with theory did not mean the establishment of defined hypothesis to be tested (Sayer, 1992). Therefore, this study has followed an abductive approach towards theory-building, in line with critical realism (Danermark *et al.*, 2002), meaning that the initial theoretical constructs that have guided this study but were considered provisional and opened to be modified, complemented and/or changed during the continuous iteration between the analysis of empirical data and theoretical reflections (Fletcher, 2017) which has informed the theoretical propositions built within this study.

Finally, this study builds on 'parallel', i.e. the cases have been studied concurrently, and 'multiple' case studies because despite its small number this study draws on the comparison of similarities and differences between the cases in order to address the research questions and objectives that guided this thesis (Ragin and Amoroso, 2011).

Figure 4.4. Case Studies Selection. Typology of Case Study.



Source: based on Thomas (2011, p. 518).

The two case studies were carefully chosen during a preparatory phase which took place while the researcher was seconded within an Irish (Local) Regional Development Company[42] (RDC) for a period of three months[43], June – September 2018. This secondment provided a unique opportunity to get access to key information, in the form of documents and individuals, related to the researched phenomenon. Within this preparatory phase the researcher participated in meetings and events including, but not confined to: stakeholder events organised in preparation of the first ever Irish National Social Enterprise Policy, (rural) SEs showcase events, RDC regional fora. In addition to this, the researcher also engaged in numerous conversations with Irish rural and regional development and SE experts. This was complemented by extensive reading of published reports on Irish rural regions and localities, socio-economic regional and national reports, Central Statistics Office

[42] Local Development Companies are multi-sectoral partnerships that deliver among others community and rural development, labour market activation, social inclusion, climate action and social enterprise services. Those Local Development Companies which are not specifically focus in the development of a city cover multiple rural settlements such as rural dwellers, villages and towns thus they operate throughout a wide area (region). Therefore, within this study the Local Development Companies are (re)named as Regional Development Companies (RDCs) to distinguish them from local organisations such as the rural SEs studied and others which are focused in the development of a specific locality and its surroundings.

[43] This study is framed within a European research and training project, i.e. Social Entrepreneurship in Structurally Weak Rural Regions: Analysing Innovative Troubleshooters in Action (RurAction), https://ruraction.eu/, funded through the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Sklodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network grant agreement No 721999. As part of the requirements of RurAction, the researcher was seconded in two different rural organisations across Europe.

(CSO) Census data, Pobal's[44] deprivation index, and other available information on Irish rural SEs including data bases, annual and financial reports, website information and other documents such as best practices cases.

Four minimum requisites were established to select the (potential) cases: the organisations had to fit within the EMES indicators (ideal type) of SEs (as outlined in Chapter 2); the SEs are based, and operate, within an Irish rural area/locality; the SEs are established organisations, i.e. they have been in operation for more than 5 years and; the SEs have as their main goal the development of the locality/area.

Following these criteria and the information abovementioned, eight rural SEs were shortlisted as potential case studies which could provide relevant information to answer the research questions. All potential cases were contacted by the researcher, directly or via a development officer of the RDC, and informal interviews between the researcher and some of the SE's members, usually the chairperson and/or other board members, were arranged[45]. During these informal interviews the researcher gathered further information about the shortlisted SEs, namely to cross check if they fulfilled the four abovementioned criteria and to have a first impression of their potential to provide information relative to the aim and research objectives of the study. Moreover, within these informal interviews the researcher provided information about the overall European RurAction project and about his specific study. Finally, the researcher further contacted two of these SEs, explaining in more detail the main goals and especially the research methodology to be employed, asking for access to conduct the fieldwork. This access was granted via the democratic approval of the board members of each organisation. A presentation of the researcher with the rest of board members and some staff was arranged in both cases and the data collection started from this moment. This preparatory phase was completed in 4 months, from mid-May to September 2018; ethical approval from the Social Research Ethics Committee of University College Cork to conduct the fieldwork was also processed during this time.

[44] Pobal is a semi-public institution that works on behalf of the Irish Government to support communities and local agencies toward achieving social inclusion and development. The role of Pobal is to provide management and support services to circa 28 programmes in the areas of Social Inclusion and Equality, Inclusive Employment and Enterprise, and Early Years and Young People.

[45] In these first stages related to the selection of cases and entering in the field, the development officers of the RDC and (especially) the chairpersons and other board members of the SEs acted as gatekeepers for the researcher into the organisations and the communities (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010, pp. 45-49).

The two cases selected, i.e. Masvil and Deethal SEs[46], can be considered as 'key cases' (Thomas, 2011) to explore how Irish rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities due to their implementation along more than 20 years since their emergence of a wide range of projects that contribute to the development of their rural localities (these projects are explained in detail in Chapter 5). Despite some differences, most of these projects developed by Masvil and Deethal SEs present similar characteristics and the SEs share a number of organisational features such as having a similar legal structure, number of staff, years in operation and governance bodies, i.e. democratic boards of voluntary directors. Following the typology of SEs models presented in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.1. of this thesis), both organisations can be classified as Entrepreneurial Non Profits SEs as they are non-profit organisations which have developed earned-income businesses (projects) related to their main goal which is the development of their local communities, thus they are guided by a general interest principle. Moreover, both SEs are characteristic of one of the specific types of SEs operating within Ireland which are especially relevant for (small) rural localities, i.e. local development SEs (O'Hara, 2001; O'Shaughnessy, 2006; O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016; DRCD and SFF, 2018). These similarities between the goals, projects and organisational features of the rural SEs selected for this study were purposely sought in order to assure their comparability of the cases in relation to the research objectives that have guided this study.

However, the selected cases also present some differences namely in terms of the rural localities/areas in which the SEs are based and operate. Despite both SEs are based in small villages, these differ in terms of location, communications/connectivity, the education and purchasing power of their local population, their local and regional economies or their Regional Authorities (see Chapter 5 for a more detailed display of the characteristics of the cases). Therefore, these rural SEs operate in (slightly) different rural localities/areas, the introduction of a certain degree of heterogeneity in regard to their context reinforce the objective of this study of researching the influence of rural SEs in their wider environment and vice versa, as explained in the theoretical chapter of this thesis.

[46] The names of the SEs have been changed to assure the anonymity of the participants in the study.

4.3.3. Research Techniques for Data Collection: Aims, within Case Sampling and Data Collection Process

Case studies usually rely on multiple techniques of data collection (Buchanan, 2012). This study has applied qualitative techniques for collecting the data that have built the case studies. Two main techniques have been used during the data collection, i.e. participant observation and semi-structured interviews, moreover, other material, namely documents and official descriptive statistics, have complemented the main data collection techniques (Rapley and Rees, 2018). These techniques have been used (mostly) in parallel with each other and they have been employed to enhance the triangulation of the data (Flick, 2018) in two aspects. First, as complementary techniques that "reveal different aspects of a single complex phenomenon" (Maxwell, 2018, p. 27); second, as a way to corroborate and/or refine from different informants the data that support the findings and conclusions of this study (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014). The data collection took place within a 15-months period, from September 2018 to December 2019, in which the researcher maintained regular contact with the SEs[47].

4.3.3.1. Participant Observations

In order to gather data within their natural settings, the researcher participated and observed different activities/events organised and developed by the SEs or in which the SEs participated[48] (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010, p. 13). These participant

[47] This regular contact was only interrupted for a period of 2 months, June and July 2019, due to a secondment of the researcher in a (local development) rural SEs outside Ireland as part of the requirements of the RurAction project. Nevertheless, during this period e-mail and postcard contact was maintained with the rural SEs that form the case studies of this thesis. Moreover, the researcher used this period for performing an in-depth analysis of the data gathered until that point (see section 4.3.4. Analysis). Part of this analysis was presented in a conference at the end of June 2019; Olmedo, L. and O'Shaughnessy, M. (2019) *Rural Community Social Enterprises and Local Development*, 7th EMES International Conference, Sheffield, UK, 24-7th June 2019.

[48] The degree of active participation of the researcher varied depending on the type of activities/events. In some instances, the researcher had a very active role, e.g. participating in some community events organised by the SEs, while in others the researcher had a role more of an observer than an active participant, e.g. attending board members' meetings. However, the degree of participation of the researcher increased with the passing of time. In this regard, the researcher participation can be stated as moving from and between 'moderate participation/peripheral membership' and 'active participation' (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010, pp. 31-2)
A significant factor that contributes to the explanation of this increasing degree of participation by the researcher is related to the experienced of an initial 'culture shock' (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010, pp. 65-73). Among other features the researcher is a non-native speaker of the language in which the research was conducted (see also section 4.4. for more details). This fact made sometimes difficult to understand some of the conversations going on, especially those at late hours in which lots of people talked at the same time about very specific local issues. It was about the third month of data collection (November

observations were recorded using field notes, following a two-step process. First, hand written sketch/jot notes were taking by the researcher in a fieldwork notebook, usually during the course of the event/activity whenever possible. However, some events required the physical active participation of the researcher e.g. Christmas market or Halloween party[49], thus on those occasions these sketch/jot notes were written down right after the event. Second, expanded field notes were typed into (computer) text for their later analysis (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010, pp. 144-151; Wästerfors, 2018). These expanded field notes were written down as soon as possible in order to minimise the loss of information and to record the feelings of the researcher while these were as vivid as possible (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010, p. 143); usually the expanded field notes were written right after the activity/event had finished or the following morning as some activities/events, especially board meetings, lasted until late at night[50].

A template for recording information systematically from the participant observations was created. This template included, first a brief section in which basic information about the observation was gathered, e.g. time, date, type of event, participants. Second, a descriptive section in which the researcher recorded relevant information of the event in relation to the research question/objectives and; third, a section which included the reflections and feelings of the researcher in relation to the participant observation and to more general aspects of the research process and the phenomenon studied[51]. In order to clearly separate the more descriptive passages from the reflections and feelings of the researcher, the latter were included using *italics* within the typed document.

The participant observations were divided in three different types of events/activities. First, board meetings of the SEs were observed on a regular basis, usually the board

2018) when the researcher started to 'fully' understand the jargon and (usually) strong accent of the people from the SEs and the rural localities studied. The researcher acknowledges the richer quality of the data since that moment.

[49] When negotiating access to the rural SEs, the researcher offered to collaborate as a volunteer during the time that he would be involved within the organisations. During the time that the data collection lasted the organisations were very relaxed in asking the researcher to participate as a volunteer, however, the researcher actively offered his help in different events and/or projects. These include more intellectual and planning processes such as providing feedback in some application forms or participate in the planning process of a Christmas market while others include more physical and/or implementation work such as the participation on some litter picking events, selling goods in a community market stall or dressing as a Paw Patrol dog in a Halloween party.

[50] In this occasions the researcher took extra care in writing more detailed jot notes to assure the quality of the data.

[51] This section was also used as a research diary in which the researcher annotates some key developments within the research process such as literature read, summaries of preliminary analysis findings and other analytical and methodological memos related to the research.

of the SEs met monthly. These are internal-closed meetings in which the SEs make strategic decisions, discuss the main updates from the works, events and services ongoing within the SEs and any other relevant topic brought by a board member; usually these other topics brought by board members were actually brought to them subsequently from local individuals and organisations and/or from regional institutions such as their respective RDCs. Hence, these events (board meetings) allowed the research to gather data about key internal aspects of the SEs and of the relations of the SEs board members with other related stakeholders.

Second, the researcher participated and observed one-off and regular events/activities and services organised (or co-organised) and delivered by the SEs. Examples of these participant observations include the implementation of community events such as a vintage rally or a Christmas market; regular daily work of services of the SEs such as the work carried out in their community offices or; on site visits to facilities such as community gardens with members of the SE. These participant observations allowed the researcher to gather data from the more practical side of the SEs. Moreover, this type of observations gave the opportunity to gather data from a wide variety of stakeholders who took part of these events/activities and/or services and that relate in different ways with the SEs, e.g. staff, one-off volunteers, board members, local SMEs owners or members from other local organisations. Within these participant observations the researcher engaged in 'informal interviews' related to the research objectives of this study with some of these stakeholders (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010, pp. 121-2).

Third, the researcher participated and observed extra-local meetings to which the SEs were invited, usually organised by institutions such as their respective RDCs, Regional Authorities or national bodies such as the Department of Rural and Community Development of the Government of Ireland. These observations allowed the researcher to gather data of the SEs in relation to their wider context, including their relations with other extra-local stakeholders such as other (similar) organisations from other localities, staff from regional bodies and public/political representatives.

The researcher recorded a total amount of 81 participant observations entries, which accounted for 321 pages of (computer) text (see Table 4.1.). By mid-November 2019 the researcher annotated in entries for both of the cases that the data was saturated, shortly after the data collection from these participant observation was concluded.

Table 4.1. Participant Observations.

Type of Activity/Event	Nº of Participant Observations Entries		Main (specific) Aims
	Case 1 Masvil SE	**Case 2 Deethal SE**	
Board meetings SEs[52]	7	14	- Strategic decisions - Main update info about works SEs - Relations among board members and with other stakeholders
One-off local events/activities (co)organised by SEs and regular services SEs	29	23	- Practical work SEs - Informal interviews with wide range of stakeholders
Extra-local meetings	4	4	- SEs in the wider (extra-local) environment.
Total (participant) observations	40 [159 pages field notes (computer)]	41 [162 pages field notes (computer)]	**Other (transversal) aims:** - Rapport – Trust - Improving the sampling of key informants - More in-depth understanding of different local and organisational topics (tacit knowledge).

Besides a technique for collecting primary data with specific aims as detailed in the previous paragraphs, the participation and observation of the researcher in these meetings, events/activities and services of the SEs have also been of great importance in regard to other more transversal aims (see Table 4.1). The regular presence of the researcher during a long period of time (15 months) in the localities and in the facilities of the SEs, which he visited an average of one day a week during the data collection

[52] The difference in the numbers of board meetings attended by the researcher is mainly due to the more regular meetings held during the time of data collection by Deethal SE than Masvil SE.

period, resulted in the researcher becoming familiar to the SEs members and to (some) members of the locality. In first instance, this is an important feature for establishing rapport[53] with the members of the SEs and the wider community. This rapport minimises the potential of getting biased information due to the reactivity of research participants related to the presence of the researcher (Villa Rojas, 1979, in DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010, p. 49). Second, the regular presence of the researcher for a long period of time within the research setting allowed to improving the sampling of key informants within the SEs and of their related stakeholders (see also next section for a more detail discussion of this point in relation to the selection of interviewees). Third, it permitted the researcher acquiring a more in-depth understanding of key local and organisational (tacit) knowledge of topics related to the SEs and the development of their localities. In this regard, participant observations were also used as a way of 'digging deeper' into the topics discussed within the semi-structured interviews, thus acquiring richer information/data, and enhancing the quality of the analysis due to the use of this acquired tacit knowledge in the interpretation of the data (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010, pp. 19-23).

Despite its significant benefits, using participant observations as a research technique is a gradual, delicate and lengthy process which requires patience and spending long hours/time within the research setting. Hence, participant observation is a time consuming and exhausting task with great levels of personal implications, both in terms of time and emotionally (Dentan, 1970 in DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010, p. 27; Buscatto, 2018). This leads to the importance of not only accessing the field,

[53] Rapport is defined by DeWalt and DeWalt (2010, p. 49) as "a state of interaction achieved when the participants come to share the same goals, at least to some extent— that is, when both the "informant" and the researcher come to the point when each is committed to help the other achieve his or her goal, when informants participate in providing information for "the book" or the study, and when the researcher approaches the interaction in a respectful and thoughtful way that allows the informant to tell his or her story".
Beyond the participation and collaboration of the researcher in the events/activities of the SEs, four further (personal) aspects have been identified as positive in the construction of this rapport within this study. First, the researcher is originally from a sunny Southern region in Europe which many participants have visited, thus this allowed for easy small initial chats. Second, the researcher had moved with his wife and one child to Ireland and had two more children while conducting the fieldwork, this personal fact has also been identified as a source of rapport and has allowed to start different small chats that turned into interesting study related conversations. Third, the researcher visited different rural SEs in Europe (over the duration of the RurAction project) and conducted his fieldwork in two different Irish localities, the curiosity of SEs members of what was going on in other places within and outside Ireland and the honest opinion and information of the researcher about it was identified as an important aspect to gain this rapport. Fourth, the researcher shared different information about workshops, meetings, grants calls that he would have received from the university or other sources and could be interesting for the SEs, this was perceived as a nice gesture and increased the rapport.

establishing rapport and maintaining the access during the whole fieldwork but also to exiting/leaving the field (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010, pp. 193-196). In this regard, after finishing the data collection, the researcher produced a synthesis report for each of the cases studied[54]. These were sent in advance to the SEs' board members and staff who were invited to read the document and propose amendments and/or questions to it. After this, the document was presented and discussed at a meeting with each of the SEs, at this point the researcher concluded the fieldwork[55].

4.3.3.2. Semi-structured Interviews

In addition to participant observations, semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders related to the SEs were conducted during the data collection of this study (Bryman, 2004; Brinkmann, 2013). As in the participant observations, a key main aim of this technique is to gather rich an in-depth data about the phenomenon studied (Roulston and Choi, 2018). The semi-structured interviews were complementary to participant observations as they provided the opportunity to the researcher to ask for more detailed information about specific topics and allowed for the reconstruction of critical past events for explaining how rural SEs work[56] (Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 2015, p. 104; Maxwell, 2018).

An interview guideline was prepared by the researcher in which different sections related to the objectives of the study were identified (Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 2015; Roulston and Choi, 2018). A first introductory section in which descriptive questions about the person, her/his relation with the locality and with the SE, and about the context and development of the locality/area were asked. Besides providing information, this introductory section also aimed at establishing rapport between the interviewer and interviewee by asking these more general questions (Taylor, Bogdan

[54] These reports contain five main parts. First a contextualisation of the localities and SEs. Second, a compilation of the work of the SEs over the years and a description of some of the contributions of these organisations to the development of their localities. Third, some of the key aspects for the good functioning of the SEs. Fourth, some weak points and suggestions for further improvement. Fifth, some brief conclusions.

[55] The researcher can proudly say that while attending a community event related to the presentation of a TV documentary about Deethal SE, the chairperson of Deethal SE referred to this document (report) as an invaluable piece of work for the organisation and the community and welcomed everyone in the community to get a copy of the report in the community office. More than 100 people were attending that event and they gave a big round applause which was one of the most rewarding moments for the researcher within this study.

[56] In order to overcome the potential problems of recalling past events inaccurately (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 38), this information was cross-checked with different interviewees and with some documents whenever possible (Roulston and Choi, 2018).

and DeVault, 2015). The second section aimed to gather data about the characteristics of the services, activities, infrastructure, facilities (projects) delivered by the SEs, the relation of these projects with the development of the localities, the resources needed to implement and sustain these projects and the ways of leveraging and mixing these resources. The third section aimed to gather more detailed information about some of the internal characteristics/way of functioning of the SEs and about the relations between the SEs and the local community. The fourth section focused on the relations of the SEs with other organisations and institutions beyond the locality and on the influence of contextual factors in the work of the SEs. Finally, the guide included an end/debriefing section. Within each of these sections some examples of potential questions and follow up questions and topics were included (see Appendix 1 for a General Interview Guideline). The researcher conducted a pilot test of the interviews with three participants from a rural SE, different from the ones included in this study but with a similar aim, during the preparatory phase (Maxwell, 2018).

This interview guideline was a useful tool to retain the focus on the research objectives of the study during the interviews, to check that the main topics had been covered and served to enhance the comparability of the data (Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 2015). However, in line with the semi-structured nature of the interviews conducted, the actual interviews did not always follow the sections' order shown above (except the introduction and end/debriefing) and some sections were emphasised more than others depending on type of stakeholder who was interviewed. Moreover, while conducting the interviews the researcher generally acted with flexibility and was receptive to new topics that emerged (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 31), thus trying to ask open-end questions and allowing the interviewees to expand in their answers. This flexibility was balanced with keeping the interviewees focused on the themes related to the research objectives (Ezzy, 2010 in Roulston and Choi, 2018). The interviews were conducted over a 12-months period (November 2018-November 2019) allowing the researcher to make some minor adjustments to the guideline and questions over the duration of this period, namely in regard to gathering more specific and detailed information.

This study has followed a theoretical sampling for the selection of interview participants within each case (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014; Glasser and Strauss, 1967 in Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 2015). Four main interviewees sampling categories were identified. These are: 'volunteers-board members'; 'staff';

‘local stakeholders’, e.g. members of other local organisations, local for-profit private business owners, and ‘non-local stakeholders’, e.g. staff from RDC, public representatives from Regional Authorities.

The interviews with volunteers-board members (voluntary directors[57]) aimed to provide insights into the strategic decision making within the SEs but also to provide an internal perspective of the services delivered by the SEs, the relations of the SEs with both local and extra-local actors and with contextual features. Furthermore, the long-standing relationship of especially some board members with the SEs provided key insights in how the services, projects, have been developed and maintained along the years. The views and experiences of the staff also provided an internal perspective but in this case was more specifically related to the practical and day to day work of the SEs and/or the specific services in which the interviewed staff work[58]. The main aims of the interviews with local stakeholders were to provide the perspectives of the wider local community in relation to the work of the SEs and on the relations between the SEs and other local individuals and organisations, such as local for-profit businesses or other local third sector organisations. Finally, the objective of including the non-local stakeholders was to provide information about the role and the relations of the SEs with other actors beyond the locality, thus situating the work of the SEs within a wider context/environment. Moreover, these non-local stakeholders also provided an external insight in the work of the SEs within their localities, thus complementing the perspectives of the volunteers-board members and staff and also of the local stakeholders about the phenomenon studied. The inclusion of these diverse stakeholders within the sampling allowed the researcher to build a pluralistic view of the phenomenon studied, which is in line with the aim of this study.

The researcher created lists with potential interesting interviewees according to the different stakeholders’ categories. These lists of potential interviewees were developed throughout the data collection process, in line with the principle of ensuring the best possible sample of interviewees according to their potential capacity to provide relevant information related to the research objectives (Brinkmann, 2013, pp. 57-8). In this regard, the participant observations were crucial in order to select an

[57] Board member and voluntary directors are used interchangeably within the study.
[58] As it turns out from the participant observations and interviews in practice some of the board members are also greatly involved in the daily operation of some of the SEs’ projects.

appropriate sample and recruit the interviewees as it enabled the researcher to observe and identify people who were key in different projects or aspects within the SEs and those local and non-local stakeholders who were mentioned as relevant and/or had experiences of working with the SEs.

The first interviews started in November 2018, after the third month of data collection (from participant observations) thus the researcher had already some familiarity with the research setting and with some people within the SEs. These first interviews were conducted with current chairpersons of the SEs and with two staff members that had a long-established connection to the SEs. The reason for this was to establish a general and historical overview of the SEs and to start constructing the themes of analysis from persons with a great overall perspective of the SEs. The remainder of the interviews were conducted gradually over the subsequent 12 months. Some (key) board members of the SEs were interviewed at the end of the data collection period, when the researcher has already a detailed analysis of the previous data gathered, thus having already a great understanding of the phenomenon researched. While the first interviews were critical for themes to emerge, this last wave of interviews was key for reinforcing some of the preliminary findings, adding nuance and/or clarifying some of the themes which has previously emerged (Brinkmann, 2013).

A total of 36 individual face to face semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann, 2013) were conducted by the researcher for this study, 19 within Case 1 and 17 within Case 2 (see Table 4.2.). The duration of the interviews ranged from 28 to 102 minutes, usually the interviews lasted between 50 and 70 minutes with an average duration of 55 minutes.

Table 4.2. Semi-structured Interviews.

Stakeholder Category[59]	**Nº of Interviews**		**Main Aims**
	Case 1 Masvil SE	Case 2 Deethal SE	
Volunteers-Board Members	8	8	- Strategic decisions - Internal perspective on services, relations with local and extra-local actors and influence of contextual features. - Historical/long term perspective on work of SEs. - [Practical work and implementation of services SEs]
Staff[60]	6	2	- Practical work SEs - Internal perspective on services, relations with local and extra-local actors and influence of contextual features.
Local Stakeholders	2	4	- Perspectives of the wider community/locality in relation to the work and services of the SEs - Perspectives of the wider community/locality the SEs relate/interact with other local (private) organisations.
Non-local Stakeholders	3	3	- Role and the relations of the SEs with other institutions beyond the locality. - External insight in the work of the SEs within their localities
Total Interviews	19	17	

[59] It should be noted that in some occasions the classification of the interviewees within a stakeholder category has not been easy due to the changing positions and/or multiple roles of some participants. For example, two interviewed volunteers-board members of Deethal SE have formerly occupied staff positions within the SE and one interviewed staff has been previously a board member of the organisation. In the case of Masvil SE, one interviewee changed staff positions within the data collection period and was also later on incorporated as part of the board of the SE. The numbers in the table reflect the current position of the interviewee at the time of the interview.

[60] The differences in the number of staff interviewed in each case relate to the wider range of staffed services that Masvil SE presents (childcare, adult education courses, community garden and community office, outdoors workers) in comparison with Deethal SE (only community office and outdoors workers). See for more detail in this regard Chapter 5, section 5.3.2.

The composition of the interviewees sample in terms of gender reflect a greater representation of women, in total 23 women were interviewed compared with 13 men. This greater number of women interviewed can be explained, first, by the overrepresentation of women interviewed within the volunteers-board members and staff which concur with an overrepresentation of women within Irish third sector organisations (Benefacts, 2019). Second, by the greater amount of women interviewed within the non-local stakeholder category, this overrepresentation is explained by the fact that most of these interviews were conducted with staff members from Irish public and semi-public bodies in which women tend to be overrepresented (Russell *et al.*, 2017, p. 16). In terms of age group, in both cases interviewees age ranged from early 30s to late 70s. Despite the fact that an age balance was sought, the cohorts 60+ represents in both cases over 30% of the interviewees. This can be explained by the ageing population of the rural localities in which this study was conducted (this ageing population is especially noted in the case of Masvily as detailed in Chapter 5) and by the tendency of older people to occupy positions within the boards of Irish third sector organisations (Benefacts, 2019)[61]. Finally, most interviewees have had a long relation with the SEs, i.e. five years or more, this was purposely followed by the researcher in order to provide richer information about the work of the SE (see Table 4.3).

Every interviewee was directly contacted by the researcher. For the case of the local and non-local stakeholders' interviewees, these were contacted directly by the researcher either by phone or e-mail; some of these interviewees contact details were provided by board members of the SEs, while others were directly obtained by the researcher as their contact information details were publicly available. The contacts with the volunteers-board members and staff were done by the researcher during some of the visits to the localities for conducting participant observations. When asking to the (potential) interviewees, the researcher provided detailed information about the research, the objectives of the study and purpose of the interview in line with the 'Participant Information Sheet' created for this purpose (see Appendix 2).

[61] According to Benefacts (2019) the average age of a director/charity trustee within Irish third sector organisations is 57 years-old.

Table 4.3. Profile of Interviewees.

	Case 1 Masvil SE	**Case 2 Deethal SE**
Gender		
Male	42% (8)	29% (5)
Female	58% (11)	71% (12)
Age Group		
30-40	26% (5)	18% (3)
40-50	31% (6)	18% (3)
50-60	11% (2)	29% (5)
60-70	21% (4)	29% (5)
>70	11% (2)	6% (1)
Length of Relation with the SE		
Short (less than 3 years)	21% (4)	12% (2)
Medium (from 3 to 5 years)	16% (3)	12% (2)
Long (5 years or more)	63% (12)	76% (13)

The interviews were conducted in the time and places suggested by the interviewees, the researcher usually only asked for a quiet place if possible. Most of the interviews were conducted in some of the premises of the SEs or in the working places of the interviewee, however, some other were conducted in cafés or in the homes of the interviewees[62]. The choice of time and place by the interviewee aimed to provide the interviewee with the most possible comfortable setting for them in order to enhance the quality of the data, thus allowing for a relaxed and well-paced discussion (Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 2015, p. 113). Every interviewee was provided with the

[62] A hard lesson learnt by the researcher is that although an interview can be conducted in a café without major problems, the audio for transcription is usually much harder to understand because of the other external noises thus it can affect the quality of the data.

‘Participant Consent Forms’ (see Appendix 3) in advance of the interview. A written consent, in which the anonymity of the participants was assured, withdrawal rights were stated and permission for audio-recording and for using quotations was sought in all cases as the basis for proceeding with the interview. The researcher allowed the participant enough time to read the forms and to discuss any questions and/or explain any doubts. Every interview was conducted by the researcher himself and audio-recorded. In addition, the researcher took some notes during the interviews, these notes were mainly about follow-up questions and nonverbal/interactional remarks about the interview situation. The audio-recordings were stored after the interviews in a secured password protected online repository provided by the coordinator of the RurAction project following the data management planned signed by University College Cork. Every audio-recording was fully transcribed following denaturalised/standardised procedures, thus no vernacular accents/pronunciation or grammatical features were highlighted (Oliver, Serovich and Mason, 2005; Jenks, 2018). The interviews were transcribed verbatim and some non-verbal and interactional information, such as (long) pauses and sighs, laughter, interruptions, overspeaking, (heavy) noises or unclear sentences, were included within the transcripts (McLellan, MacQueen and Neidig, 2003; MacLean, Meyer and Estable, 2004). Moreover, after the interviews the researcher usually wrote a brief memo which included further information about the process of the interview, contextual information, emotions, conversations after the audio-recording stopped or some other general remarks. Each transcript was assigned an ID which included, case study number, type of stakeholder interviewed and a number, e.g. C1_VBM_01[63]. In addition, a profile for each of the interviewees was created with some general information, such as age group; gender; professional affiliation; role/relation with SE and length of relation with the SE. The written transcripts were re-checked/reviewed against the audio-recordings to assure their accuracy. Once the transcriptions were ready the audio-records were erased from the online repository and only the written transcriptions were stored[64].

[63] Case Study 1; Volunteer-Board Member; First Interviewee.
[64] According to RurAction Data Management Plan, the data needs to be stored for, at least, 10 years in a secure password protected repository.

4.3.3.3. Other Complementary Materials

In addition to field notes from participant observations and transcripts from the semi-structured interviews other complementary material were collected within this study in order to build and analyse the case studies. The researcher classified these materials into two categories, i.e. contextualisation materials and organisational materials (see Table 4.4 for a list of the materials consulted). The former refers to materials that relate to the wider context in which the SEs operate, e.g. Census Data, maps of the locality and the area or regional policy documents such as Local/Regional Development Plans. These materials were publicly available from the website of official institutions such as Regional Government-County Councils, CSO and Pobal. The organisational materials refer to materials from the SEs, e.g. articles of association, financial statements, newsletters, presentations, reports, grant applications or documentaries. Some of these materials were also publicly available through the websites of the SEs, however, others were internal organisational documents that were not publicly available. For the latter the researcher asked (in most cases) some board members of the SEs for access.

The purpose of gathering these complementary materials was threefold. First, the recurrent reference from the study participants to contextual and organisational features, such as key past events and organisational documents, meant that these complementary materials played an important role in providing background information that ensured a better understanding when conducting participant observations and richer conversations within the semi-structured interviews (Rapley and Rees, 2018). Second, these materials were used to support the development of the cases descriptions, thus enabling the development of a first narrative description of the cases and their context which served as an introduction (and base) for a further more in-depth analysis (Buchanan, 2012; see Chapter 5). Third, some of these complementary materials have been used to inform the analysis, for example reinforcing and/or refining statements from the participants within the interviews, thus providing further clarity in the explanation/analysis and supporting the triangulation of the data (Maxwell, 2018; Rapley and Rees, 2018).

Table 4.4.Other Complementary Materials.

<table>
<tr><th>Type of Complementary Materials</th><th>Case 1
Masvil SE</th><th>Case 2
Deethal SE</th><th>Main Aims</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="8">Organisational Materials</td><td>Articles of Association</td><td>Articles of Association</td><td rowspan="9">- Background information for better understanding of participant observations and richer semi-structured interviews

- Support development of cases descriptions

- Triangulation of data</td></tr>
<tr><td>Financial Statements (2017 and 2018)</td><td>Financial Statements (2017 and 2018)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Masvil Community Study (2017)</td><td>Deethal 5-years Community Planning Report (2015)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tidy Towns Reports (2016 – 2019)</td><td>Tidy Towns Reports (2018 and 2019)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Weekly Parish Notes (Sept 2018 – Nov 2019)</td><td>Local Monthly Newsletter (Sep 2018 – Nov 2019)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Grants Applications (2016 – 2019)</td><td>Case Study Report on Deethal SE (2018)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>TV Documentary (2019)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Feasibility Study-Building Report (2019)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Contextualisation Materials</td><td colspan="2">Census Data (CSO)
(1946 – 2016)

Deprivation Index (POBAL)
(2006 – 2016)

Local/Regional Development Plans
(2010-2016 – Masvil SE //
2014 – Deethal SE)

Locality and Area Maps</td></tr>
</table>

4.3.4. Analysis

This study has generated a considerable amount of data[65] from an intensive research design process and fieldwork execution as outlined in the previous sections. In order to analyse and make sense of these data, a thematic analysis was performed (Braun and Clarke, 2006; King and Brooks, 2018). In general terms, thematic analysis refers to "forms of qualitative data analysis that principally focus on identifying, organising and interpreting themes in textual data" (King and Brooks, 2018, pp. 219 - 220).

Generic forms of thematic analysis can be applied within different philosophical (ontological and epistemological) positions, including critical realism; this flexibility "can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 78) which is in line with the philosophical underpinning and the aim of this study. However, the selection of critical realism as the philosophical underpinning of this study presented a number of implications when using thematic analysis for making sense of the data gathered (see Table 4.5.). Some of these implications included the utilisation of some (provisional) codes established a priori from the theory/concepts that inform the study or the refinement of preliminary findings (quality checks) throughout the different stages of the iterative analysis process (these implications and the different stages of the analysis followed within this study are explained in more detailed below within this section).

Table 4.5. Implications for the Use of Generic Styles of Thematic Analysis within Critical Realism.

Philosophical position	Implications for use of generic thematic analysis
Critical Realism	- Seeks to develop an account that is credible and potentially transferable, while recognising conclusions will always be tentative. - Often uses a priori themes informed by theory. - Quality checks to stimulate critical thinking, specific to needs of particular study. - Reflexivity and iteration with theory in analysis important.

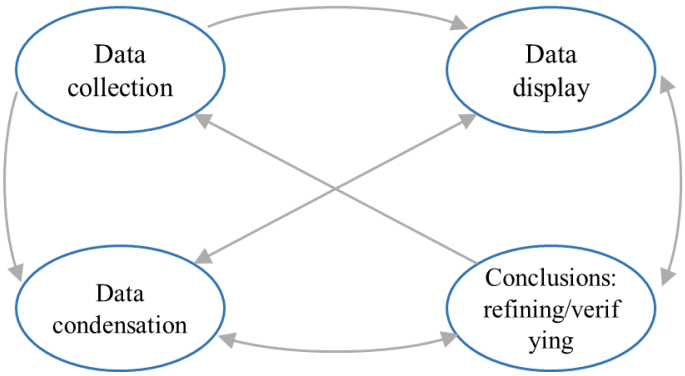
Source: based on King and Brooks (2018, p. 222).

[65] The amount of data generated from the participant observations (321pages) and semi-structured interviews (680 pages) accounts for a total of 1,001 pages of text.

More specifically, the thematic analysis performed within this study has been informed by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014)[66]. According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10-11), besides the data collection, which these authors consider already part of the analysis, three other interrelated processes guide the analysis of qualitative data, these are: data condensation, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions.

Data condensation refers to selecting, focusing and simplifying relevant pieces of data from the whole body of data gathered. This relates to the construction of codes from the data, codes are defined as "tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. [They] usually are attached to data "chunks" of varying size – words, sentences, or whole paragraphs" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 56). Moreover, codes can be differentiated between descriptive codes that refer to descriptive tags, which "entail little interpretation" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 57) and interpretative and pattern codes which are more inferential and explanatory (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 57). Data display refers to organising and assembling information in a way that allowed the researcher to draw conclusions. Finally, drawing and verifying conclusions refers to making sense/interpreting the data and checking the validity of these conclusions. These processes interact during and after the data collection period in a cyclical manner until the final conclusions are written (see Figure 4.5. for an illustration of the processes).

Figure 4.5. Processes of Data Analysis.



Source: based on Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014, p. 14).

[66] The core of the analysis was based on Miles and Huberman (1994) and Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014); however, some elements have been incorporated from other 'generic thematic analysis styles' (King and Brooks, 2018), e.g. this study emphasises the 'familiarisation with the data' as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

In regard to this specific study, five analytical stages and milestones have been identified within this iterative process which started at the beginning of the data collection and finished with the writing of the findings and conclusions chapters of this dissertation, see Figure 4.6.

Due to the exploratory nature of the case studies, the researcher started the data collection with some initial research questions and objectives and a provisional loose conceptual framework that guided the study, however, these were opened to be modified during the fieldwork and analysis processes. During the first months of data collection (September 2018 – January 2019), the researcher focused on getting familiarised with the data gathered (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This familiarisation entailed reading and re-reading through the first field notes and both reading through the interviews transcripts and listening to the audio-tapes. Moreover, some other materials such as documents related to the SEs and the localities and regions were also gathered and read at this stage with this aim.

After this deep familiarisation, a first cycle of coding (data condensation) was performed with the data that had been gathered until the end of January (2019) for each of the cases separately (exploratory within case analysis), i.e. 8 interviews and 17 participant observations encompassing 65 pages of field notes for Case 1 and; 7 interviews and 16 participant observations encompassing 65 pages of field notes for Case 2. The data was analysed in the first instance using Microsoft Word[67] and the coding process was informed by 27 provisional (a priori) codes drawn from the conceptual framework and research objectives (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.58; Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014, pp. 77-78; Fletcher, 2017). These provisional codes were organised into three broad main categories (Development; Organisational strategies/factors; Contextual factors), each containing a number of sub-categories. However, as a result of the actual coding process of the material, the number of codes expanded extensively. Some emerging codes added nuance to the provisional codes, e.g. the provisional code 'volunteering' was subdivided into 'one-off volunteering'

[67] At this stage, a trial was also performed using the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) NVivo11 for the researcher to get familiar with this software. It is worth noting that in the course of the fieldwork, between the first and second milestones, the researcher took a course within University College Cork on the CAQDAS NVivo12 which allowed for a much more efficient use of the tools/options of the software. Once this course was completed, from milestone two onwards, the analysis was assisted by that software.

and ‘regular volunteering’, and many others emerge directly from the data, e.g. ‘copy from nearby villages’. At this stage, the analysis’ main focus was on establishing descriptive codes (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.57) to categorise the data for a later deeper analysis.

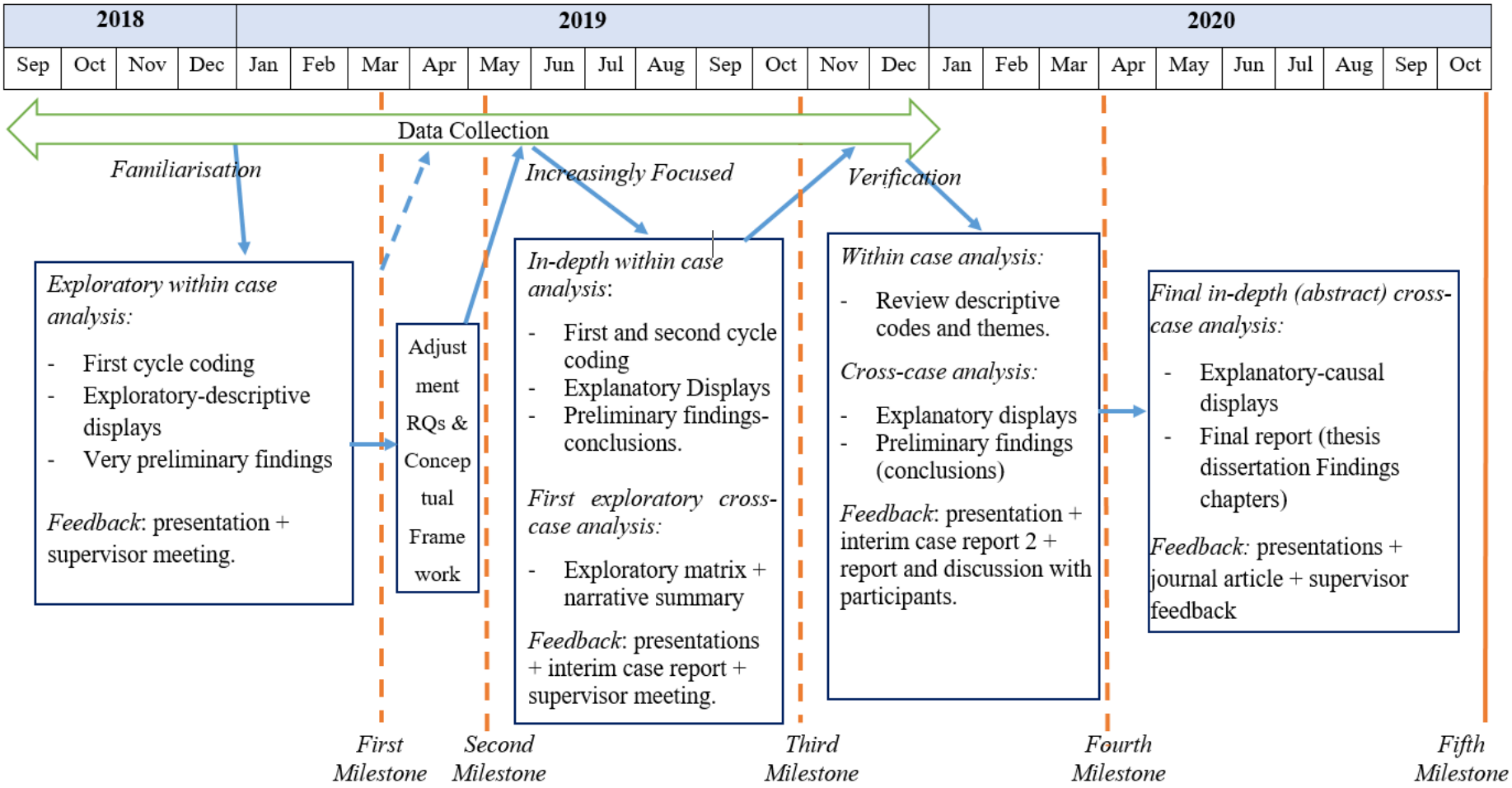
Although at a very initial stage, some of these codes were grouped and compared to construct descriptive matrices (data display). For example, a descriptive matrix with the characteristics of the different ‘projects’[68] developed by the rural SEs studied was created. This matrix included categories such as the year established (project), target group, outputs, contribution to development of the locality, funding-resources, role of SE (for an extract of a descriptive matrix at this stage see Appendix 4). This descriptive matrix provided relevant information at a glance, some of this information was used in first instance as a base for generating cases descriptions (Buchanan, 2012; see Chapter 5 – section 5.3.2.). However, other columns of the matrix such as ‘funding-resources’ or ‘role of the SE’ served as a base to inform further and more detailed data collection about these topics for a further analysis in later stages (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014, pp. 115 – 118). Moreover, some initial (preliminary) themes/patterns were established and linked, which allowed for the creation of some first graphs to display some (basic) relations between the themes and further permitted the drawing of some very preliminary findings for further verification.

During this first stage interview transcripts from different stakeholders and field notes from different types of participant observations were also read by the thesis supervisor and emerging first cycle codes and (initial) themes from these data were discussed as a way of enhancing the quality of the data gathered in terms of consistency of the codes and their ‘credibility/authenticity’, i.e. relation of the data gathered and research objectives (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014, pp. 312-313). These first displays and analysis were presented at a RurAction project meeting[69] and discussed by the researcher and his supervisor. These meetings provided important feedback for the subsequent stage of the process, i.e. adjustment of the conceptual framework

[68] The word ‘project’ refers to every type of activity developed by the SEs, e.g. services, infrastructure/facilities, goods/products.

[69]RurAction Spring School Social Innovations and Regional Development - Possibilities and Limits of Intentional Change, 11 – 14th March 2019, Roskilde University, Denmark.

Figure 4.6. Iterative Analysis Process. Stages and Milestones.



After this *first milestone* (familiarisation and first exploratory within case analysis), the researcher refined the research questions and the provisional conceptual framework (second stage). For example, the abovementioned first stage of analysis of empirical data showed the great importance that socio-spatial dimensions play in the work of rural SEs. In order to capture greater analytical nuance in this respect, the researcher, drawing from literature on human, economic and political geography, incorporated the concept of 'place' to adjust the conceptual framework and research objectives of this study (for a more detailed illustration of this example on the iteration between the analysis of empirical data and theory see Appendix 5). For a short period (from mid-March to April 2019) the data collection continued in a less intense fashion, for example no interviews were conducted during that time, until the research questions and conceptual framework were refined (*second milestone*). After this adjustment of conceptual framework and research objectives (second stage) the data collection in the next stages was increasingly more focused.

In order to reach the *third milestone* of the analysis process an in-depth within case analysis and a first exploratory cross-case analysis were conducted. In this round, 10 interviews and 27 participant observations were analysed for each of the cases, using the CAQDAS NVivo12.

From the in-depth within case analysis, a total of 155 from Case 1, and 153 from Case 2, descriptive codes were generated. Some of these were sub-codes of broader descriptive categories, as an example of this, for the case of Deethal SE (Case 2), within the broader category 'Links beyond the locality (non-statutory bodies)'; four sub-categories were created, i.e. 'Copying from other villages'; 'Links with diaspora'; 'Links with other regional/national organisations'; 'Relations with similar organisations in nearby villages'. Moreover, in this (third) stage of analysis, a second cycle of coding that searched for broader themes (pattern codes) was also performed (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014, pp. 86 – 90). This process resulted in the emergence of 19 themes for Case 1 and 21 themes for Case 2. Moreover, some of these themes included sub-themes within them, e.g. for the case of Deethal SE the broader theme 'Vast Local Knowledge' was subdivided into 'Local Knowledge History-Locality' and 'Local Knowledge Social Ties-People'.

From this within case analysis, graph displays were created in order to map the relations among (some of) the themes and subthemes that emerged within each case[70]. As an example, a graph display was created showing some preliminary findings on the relations between different aspects of 'embeddedness', e.g. 'sense of community', 'local knowledge (physical – social)', and the types of resources leveraged from market, redistributive and reciprocity relations (for an example of a Graph Display at this stage of analysis see Appendix 6). These displays were used as a preliminary base for further stages of data collection and analysis through which some of these themes and relations were confirmed and/or refined.

Besides this in-depth within case analysis, a first exploratory cross-case comparison was conducted based on the comparison between themes and subthemes that emerged during the abovementioned second cycle coding process (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 69). From this first exploratory cross-case analysis were produced some exploratory comparative matrices, for example about the type of resources leveraged and some of the key aspects used by the rural SEs to do so, and a brief narrative summary of this first exploratory comparison between the cases.

This third stage of analysis concluded with the production of an interim case summary/report (Miles and Huberman, 1994, pp. 77-81), which included: brief summaries of the literature review, conceptual framework (research questions and objectives) and methodology sections; a general description of the SEs and their context (case descriptions); preliminary findings (themes and subthemes) and first conclusions from each of the in-depth within case analysis and; the abovementioned summary from the exploratory cross-case analysis. This document (interim report) was discussed with the thesis supervisor and a research fellow from the RurAction project who was also researching rural SEs Ireland (*third milestone*[71]).

The fourth stage of analysis included the last months of data collection (September – December 2019), in which the focus was mainly on gathering data that verified previous conclusions (provisional preliminary findings) and/or added nuance to

[70] Some of the graph displays from the in-depth within case analysis were presented and discussed at the 7th International EMES Conference. 24-7th June 2019, Sheffield, UK, (analysis of Case 1) and at RurAction skills Autumn Seminar, 4th – 6th September 2019, Cork, Ireland (analysis Case 2).
[71] The abovementioned document (interim report) was fully included as an analytical memo within the CAQDAS NVivo12 in order to have it present in further analysis.

themes and subthemes that needed further clarification. Concurrently with the last period of data collection and shortly after (November 2019 – February 2020), the descriptive codes and themes drawn from the within case analysis were refined with the incorporation of the full body of data gathered. Despite the incorporation of a substantial amount of data, a total of 16 interviews and 27 participant observation entries since the previous stage of analysis (third stage), the total number of descriptive codes did not increase substantially (from 155 to 178 for Case 1 and from 153 to 191 for Case 2). Furthermore, the themes (pattern codes) were also reviewed resulting in a total of 35 (Case 1) and 34 (Case 2) themes (pattern codes), which were further organised into three (very) overarching themes, i.e. 'Contributions to Local Development'; 'Key Aspects for Leveraging Resources' and; 'Types of Resources Mobilised (Forms of Economic Integration)', see Table 4.6. for an example of an extract of the Second Cycle Codes-Themes Codebook from Masvil SE.

Table 4.6. Extract of Second Cycle Codes-Themes Codebook, Masvil SE.

Overarching Theme: 'Key Aspects for Leveraging Resources'	
Themes (pattern codes)	Description
Collaboration with (scarce) local for-profit businesses	Masvil SE collaborates regularly with local SMEs, this being a key aspect especially in terms of donations and sponsorship. However, due to the absence of a strong presence of local SMES, Masvil SE often falls short of significant support in this regard. For bigger projects they have mobilised other supports from SMEs beyond the locality.
Collaboration with other key local third sector organisations	Establishing synergies among third sector organisations within the locality in order to harness resources and to have a complementary role and cohesive vision towards the development of the locality.
Communication with the community	A key aspect for levering, especially, reciprocity resources. The use of a wide range of resources in a systematic manner enhances this communication and thus the mobilisation of resources
External (Regional) Links	Relations developed that facilitate the resource mobilisation, especially redistributive resources. Especially important are those with RDC & Regional Authorities on a regular basis. Also relevance to contact with other statutory bodies, national or regional, for specific services and/or projects.

The review of these themes was key for verifying some of the conclusions of the previous in-depth within case analysis and as a base for conducting a more in-depth cross-case analysis than in the previous (third) stage (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 69). As in the previous rounds of analysis, graph displays were created in order to show/explain the relations between some of the themes and subthemes and these were integrated in an extensive narrative document (interim case report 2). This document included a detailed description of the main features of each of the cases and the preliminary findings of this cross-case analysis. The document was again presented and discussed between the thesis supervisor and the author of this study. Furthermore, the previously mentioned reports produced by the researcher for the SEs were presented and discussed at this stage (*fourth milestone*[72]).

Finally, the fifth stage and *last milestone* of the analysis process implied a final (cross-case) round of analysis in which the themes that had emerged and had been verified in the previous stages and their relations were further grouped into broader and more abstract categories. This final round of analysis has established the topics presented in the chapters displaying the findings of this thesis, see Chapters 6 and 7 (*fifth milestone*[73]).

4.4. Reflexivity – my Role and Values in the Research[74]

When conducting social science research, researchers inevitably form part of the social world that they are studying. This reflexivity (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, pp. 14-18) is, although not exclusively, especially notorious when collecting data through qualitative methods in which the researcher is the main instrument of data collection and establishes direct and, as in the case of this study, long lasting interactions with the participants (Maxwell, 2018).

[72] A first version of the cross-case analysis graph displays was presented at the Annual Review of Food Business and Development Department, Cork university Business School, UCC, in December 2019. The document (interim case report 2) generated for reaching this fourth milestone was also incorporated to NVivo12 as an analytical memo in order to have it present during the final stage of analysis.

[73] The findings from this analysis have been presented at a RurAction Summer School 26-7th May 2020, at the 7th ISIRC, 1-3rd September 2020 and at the 7th EMES PhD/ECI Training School, 23-4th October 2020. Moreover, part of these findings constitute the base for the article 'Rurality as context for innovative responses to social challenges – the role of rural social enterprises' submitted to the Journal of Rural Studies.

[74] This section is mainly written in the first person as a way of personalising and highlighting my role and values within the research process.

In this regard, I acknowledge that the whole research process is influenced by my values, from the selection of the topic, to the theories and methodology chosen, hence, this study is value-aware (Mills, 1959; Healy and Perry, 2000). Although this thesis presents my scientific research about the phenomenon studied, my interest in SEs in rural areas is twofold, first as a researcher but at the same time as a practitioner, as one of the greatest motivations for applying for this RurAction research and training fellowship was my aim to establish a SE in a rural area of Southern Spain.

This study forms part of the RurAction project which combines research with trainings and secondments in SEs and related organisations in different rural areas within Europe. These trainings and secondments have provided with a unique opportunity of having continuous contact with different rural SEs throughout Europe. This has played an important role in this study as it provided opportunities to have access to a number of key gatekeepers in order to select my cases. Moreover, my regular visits and participation in a number of different activities that rural SEs developed during some months previous to my fieldwork provided me with some previous experiences and insights about how (some) rural SEs work. On the other hand, my contact and participation with these SEs could have also introduced some bias towards my case study selection and even to the research topic. In this sense, I have tried to be constantly aware that a combination between personal experiences and a comprehensive literature review of empirical and theoretical evidence about the topic have been followed and have guided this study[75]. Moreover, through a careful research design, including the selection of cases as shown in section 4.3.2., I tried to ensure that the cases were selected, from a great number of possible candidates, due to their potential to address the research question[76].

The participation through the RurAction project in a research network of (early stage) scholars with similar interests has provided a unique opportunity for constant exchanges and discussions, some calmer than others, about the phenomenon studied, theories, methodologies and findings. The exchanges, within the RurAction network

[75] As a proof of this wide and systematic literature review of the field the researcher has co-authored a publication on "Rural social enterprises in Europe: a systematic literature review" on the journal *Local Economy*, see Declaration of Originality and Research Dissemination

[76] As proof of overcoming the potential bias towards case selection, one the cases selected have a regular relation with the organisation in which the researcher was seconded whereas the other case has not direct relation with this organisation. Both SEs are recognised both regionally and nationally as organisations that have widely contributed to the development of their localities.

and at external conferences and symposiums, with scholars interested in the same topics but also holding different academic and geographical perspectives have enriched this study and make the researcher aware about potential bias within the study, for example the need to be careful about the generalisation (beyond the Irish context) of the local attachment and focus of rural SEs.

In addition, my personal background has also played an important role within this study. I was born and grew up in a (mostly) 'underdeveloped/lagged behind' Southern European region, i.e. Andalusia, thus my familiarity with the Irish (rural) context was quite limited at the beginning of this study. In first instance, from the beginning of my stay in Ireland which started in September 2017, I have lived (together with my family) in a mid-size town, considered at the same time a commuter place to a nearby city (32km) and a market town for its rural hinterland. Besides an extensive literature review-desk research, my participation in community and daily life activities, e.g. through the utilisation of 'public services' such as transport (when possible), childcare, library or healthcare system and the abovementioned (early) secondment in an Irish RDC have also enhanced my understanding of the context in which the case studies are immersed.

This combination of great immersion within the phenomenon studied with the capacity of applying an external eye/perspective to the phenomenon studied I believe can be a powerful tool for the analysis of the data gathered. However, this requires a huge effort from the researcher to balance these positions and be able to apply both within the research process. In order to avoid an over-immersion within the cases, during the fieldwork of this study I combined days in the field with others in which more theoretical and methodological reflections were developed from the office in the university. Moreover, despite part of the analysis was conducted while gathering the data, I conducted the first in-depth within case analysis during a two-months absence period from the field and I conducted a final in-depth more abstract cross-case analysis once the fieldwork had been concluded. These two intense periods of analysis were critical in order to taking some distance from the immersion in the field and conducting a more theoretical analysis of the data gathered.

Another significant feature of my personal background is that I am a (relatively) young male Spanish-born researcher. This has also played a role within this study in different ways, first, I am not an English native speaker, despite having some limitations (Resch and Enzenhofer, 2018; see also footnote 48, p. 94) I am fluent and comfortable enough with conducting interviews and participant observations in English as it has been my main working and studying language since approximately 2009 when I first left Spain. Moreover, being a man/male also plays a role in conducting research and especially with some more traditional groups, e.g. old women in rural villages. Despite not specifically studying gender issues, my position as a researcher also could pose potential problems of reactivity from the participants (Maxwell, 2005). In order to overcome this, first I have participated in different activities organised by the SEs over an extensive period of time, thus people in the SEs and in the villages became familiarised with my presence there. During these months I have had numerous casual conversations with different groups of people including these with whom I could potentially have greater problems to access more quality information. Moreover, when conducting interviews, I have tried to meet the interviewees in places where they feel comfortable to have a natural and frank conversation.

Finally, parenting and doing (intensive) fieldwork is a specific situation that brings both opportunities and challenges (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010). In this regard, I have felt the proximity and complacency/kindness of many people in the field and small chats about children have also led into other research related significant conversations. On the other hand, finding time for my family while doing this type of intensive research also posed physical and mental challenges.

During the whole research process, I have enjoyed, learnt hugely, developed great skills and met amazing people; however, I have also cried, stressed and worried in some occasions for my mental and physical health. Some of these experiences have been recorded in some entries of the participant observations field notes in order to be able to reflect on how personal circumstances can influence the data collection and analysis (see Appendix 7 for an example).

4.5. Ethics and Anonymization in Rural (Social Enterprises) Studies

The research design of this study received the approval of University College Cork Social Science Research Committee. The topics detailed within the approved ethical application have been discussed in previous sections, i.e. access to the field, type of participants and methods of data collection, arrangements for recruiting participants, informed consent, data storage, relationship of the researcher with participants, debriefing and exit/leaving the field.

Despite the importance given within research institutions such as universities to acquire approval from ethical committees, limited attention has been paid in the literature to the specificity of 'research ethics' within rural (development) and organisational studies (McAreavey, 2014; McLeod, Payne and Evert, 2016). An important aspect in regard to ethics is to secure the anonymization of study participants, however, this is a challenging ethical aspect when conducting research of SEs within rural settings, such as small villages, as is the case of this study. Due to the small number of people and organisations within a village, this challenge is greater than in urban studies in which the identification of the organisation per se is far more complicated. In this regard, in addition to having changed the names of the participants within the interviews and participant observations published extracts, extra measures have been taken for this study in relation to the anonymization of the real names of SEs and the localities in which they are based. In this sense, the maps shown in the next chapters have also been anonymized for this purpose. These anonymizations measures were checked with a member of a RDC familiar with the areas where the study was conducted, after having provided general features about the localities and the type of SEs, the researcher showed some anonymized interview extracts having obtained a satisfactory result as this person could not identify neither the persons speaking nor the SEs.

However, the researcher acknowledges that the full anonymity of the cases and participants is impossible to guarantee due to the nature of this study. Despite not being focused on researching any especially sensitive topic, rural (local) development and SEs are fields in which sensitive issues arise frequently due to their political nature and to their dealing of, and with, vulnerable places and populations. This is why

interviews transcripts and field notes in which sensitive or potential sensitive information appears have not been made publicly available.

4.6. Methodological Limitations

The previous sections have argued for the suitability of the methodology used within this study on how Irish rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities. Despite this, the study is not absent of methodological limitations. First, the researcher acknowledges some limitations in the generalisation of the findings. Due to its nature, this study does not claim (neither seeks) representative-statistical generalisation, thus its findings do not establish any general rules applicable to every context. However, this study seeks theoretical generalisation to some extent (see Hammersley, 2008 in Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014), thus its findings can inform the phenomenon studied within other (similar) contexts (Symon and Cassell, 2012).

Second, in terms of sampling the researcher acknowledges a potential bias of this study towards the perspectives of volunteers-board members of the SEs and of middle-aged and older populations. Concerning the former, the interviews related to this category of stakeholders outnumbered the rest of interviewees stakeholders' categories. Nevertheless, due to the exploratory nature of the study and the type of research questions and objectives this (potential) imbalance was seen as necessary as such stakeholders form the core of the SE. In regard to the latter, age diversity was sought and somehow is reflected in the sampling, however, the reality within the cases was that the SEs studied are namely formed by medium age and older people. Besides a methodological limitation, this reflects the need within rural SEs of greater age diversity and balance in order to reflect wider intergenerational perspectives and aims.

Third, some retrospective accounts were only possible to check with a small number of participants, this was especially the case for the reconstruction of the first projects of Deethal SE as for example only one of the founders of the SE was interviewed (the others had already passed away). Other options such as access to documents from the early days of the SEs were also explored but these were mainly missing/non-existent. However, as previously stated, although the aim of this study was not to do a historical reconstruction of the SEs, the information of how the SEs (and their projects) were

developed through the years was important to enhance the understanding of the way they work(ed) to develop their localities.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the methodology through which the research questions and objectives of this study have been explored in practice. As explained, critical realism has provided a suitable philosophical underpinning to explore the mechanisms through which the rural SEs studied work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities. These in-depth mechanisms were explored through few but very detailed intensive case studies that have been built through data gathered from different stakeholders using multiple techniques in order to provide a rich picture of the phenomenon under study. This intensive engagement of the researcher with the field has been iterated with an equally intensive and rigorous (thematic) analysis process oscillating between empirical data and theory which enabled a very focused process of data collection and verification of the findings generated. The findings and observations that emerged are discussed in the remainder of this thesis. In line with the aim, research questions and objectives and methodology followed by this study the next chapter presents a detailed contextualisation of the general (national) and local context in which this study has been conducted and a description of the main characteristics and projects of the two rural SEs studied.

Chapter 5
Setting the Scene. Contextualisation of Irish Rural Social Enterprises: the Cases of Masvil and Deethal.

5.1. Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the two case studies which form the basis of this study by briefly contextualising SEs within (rural) Ireland and explaining the specific (local) context in which the rural SEs studied are based. This is accompanied by a description of the main characteristics of these SEs and the projects they have developed and managed. This descriptive chapter provides a backdrop for understanding the findings of this study presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

5.2. A Short Note about Ireland for Non-Irish Readers

The two case studies of this research are based in Ireland, an island situated in the Northwest of Europe. The Republic of Ireland is a relatively young country which became independent (from the United Kingdom) in 1919[77], joined the United Nations in 1955 and the EU in 1973. In terms of population, the country is inhabited by about 5 million people[78] (CSO, 2020) and it presents a low population density of about 72 persons/km^2, mostly concentrated in the Greater Dublin Area (Dublin and the Mid-East) which accounts for 40% of the total population of the country (Morgenroth, 2018). Despite Ireland having one of the highest percentage of rural population within the EU (Eurostat, 2017), Ireland's population trend reflects an important process of urbanisation as the share of people living in rural areas has declined from 53,6% in 1966 to 37,3% in 2016 (CSO, 2016).

Historically, Ireland has been a (relatively) poor country, however, from the mid-90's until the crash of 2008 (Celtic Tiger years) its economy boomed, becoming one of the wealthier countries in Europe in terms of GDP per capita (Jacobson, Kirby and O'Brien, 2006; O'Hagan, 2018). After a sharp economic recession (2008-2012), the Irish economy recovered and the country presents at the time of writing one of the highest GDP per capita of Europe (World Bank, 2020). The Irish economic system is mainly based on a liberal economic model highly globalised, thus greatly dependent on foreign direct investment and affected by economic (market) global trends (O'Hagan, 2018).

[77] The denomination of Republic of Ireland was adopted in 1949, before it was called the Irish Free State.
[78] Population numbers refer only to the Republic of Ireland, not including Northern Ireland.

This economic model has led to an increasing commodification of the Irish countryside (McDonagh, Varley and Shortall, 2009, p. 5) and to processes of economic restructuring in rural areas (Creamer *et al.*, 2009), which, especially in times of crisis, has meant higher than average unemployment rates, low average disposable income, reduced service levels from public and private sectors, increased out-migration and more business closures (O'Hara and O'Shaughnessy, 2015, p. 11). According to the (Irish) Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA), rural areas experienced the negatives effects of the post 2008 financial crisis, due to their extensive reliance on declining sectors (including construction), with unemployment increasing by 192% between 2006 and 2011 compared with 114% in urban areas (CEDRA, 2014).

In politico-administrative terms, Ireland presents levels of public expenditure in services such as education, health or transport clearly below the EU's average[79] (Eurostat, 2020b; 2020c). This underspend is notably significant in rural areas which have been suffering from a decline in service provision and from communication and infrastructural deficits (CEDRA, 2014; Morgenroth, 2018). Furthermore, Ireland has been characterised by a centralised government system in which governmental (Local) Regional Authorities[80] had relatively few powers (Callanan, 2003 in O'Hara and O'Shaughnessy, 2015, p. 15). This system was reformed in 2014 by the 'Local Government Reform Act 2014', which reduced (concentrated) the number of Regional Authorities while enhancing their role in the delivery of local and community development programmes and functions. Nevertheless, the minor historical presence and powers of Irish Regional Authorities led to a greater presence of organisations and institutions coming from the third sector. As examples of this, private non-profit Regional Development Companies[81] (RDCs) have been charged with implementing

[79] The levels of public investment for Ireland are: education 3,7% (2016), healthcare 7,2% (2017) and transport 1,1% (2016); while the EU average are: 4,8% in education (2016), 9,9% in health (2017) and 1,9% in transport (2016) (Eurostat, 2018; Eurostat 2020 b, 2020 c).

[80] Within the Irish political architecture, the county (and in some especial cases also the city) forms the core element of local government. In this regard, within Ireland the County Councils are called the 'Local Authority' as there is not a lower tier of government with enforcement powers. However, within this study these political institutions are named as 'Regional Authority' as they cover areas which includes multiple 'localities', including rural dwellers, small villages, towns and in some occasions also cities.

[81] A description of RDCs and the use of this terminology within this study can be found in footnote 42, p. 91.

European rural development funding programmes such as LEADER since the 1990s, and organisations such as rural SEs deliver a range of social, economic and environmental community-based services with the support of national programmes such as the Community Service Programmes and/or Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) such as Community Employment (CE) (O'Hara and O'Shaughnessy, 2015, pp. 16-18).

The former aligns with the significant role that the third sector has had in Ireland in job creation, service delivery and local development (Donnelly-Cox, Donoghue and Hayes, 2001; O'Hara, 2001). The Irish third sector is characterised by having a large workforce, representing about 7,3% of the total Irish workforce, significant levels of volunteers and diverse-heterogeneous organisations operating within the sector (Benefacts, 2018). Irish SEs, which typically take on many forms across a spectrum from local community-based entities to large businesses trading internationally (DRCD and SFF, 2018), are part of the wider social economy[82] and many of Ireland's SEs, especially in rural areas, have emerged from community and voluntary organisations. Although Ireland has a long and rich tradition of social-economy-type organisations (including SEs), it is only since the early 1990s that the concept of SE has enjoyed greater prominence in national policy discourse by different national institutions and programmes such as the National Economic and Social Forum, Social Economy Programme (2000-2006), Community Services Programme (2006) or Action Plan for Jobs (2012) (O'Hara and O'Shaughnessy, 2017). Irish SEs, including those in rural areas, have been acknowledged by the Irish government for their contributions to the social and economic progress of the country using innovative and creative tools and in 2019 Ireland's Department of Rural and Community Development published the first National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland (2019-2022) representing a milestone for the formal recognition of the sector (Government of Ireland, 2019).

5.3. Case Descriptions

The two Irish rural SEs that are in the focus of this study, Masvil SE (Case 1) and Deethal SE (Case 2), display similar features in terms of aims, legal structure, length of operation and (some of) the type of projects developed. Nevertheless, they present

[82] Third sector and social economy are used here interchangeably.

some differences also, namely in the ways they have developed (some of) their projects and in regard to the localities in which these SEs are based.

5.3.1. Contextualisation: the Villages (Localities) of Masvily and Deethaly[83]

Masvil and Deethal SEs operate within Irish rural localities. These localities share some characteristics, e.g. the historical importance of farming, having a similar (national) history or being within the same EU and national regulatory framework. However, they also present some (significant) differences (see for a summary Table 5.1. at the end of this section).

- *Masvily Village (Locality)*

The village of Masvily is situated within a structurally weak rural area, with two market towns and a small city within a radius of 50 km. The locality is connected by local and regional roads, aside of any main traffic route (see Figure 5.1.). Masvily is a small settlement of less than 500 inhabitants, characterised by a declining and ageing population (see Figures 5.2 and 5.3.), with an age dependency ratio much higher than the national average, low levels of formal education and low access to IT services. In this regard, about 60% of Masvily population have access to a computer and to internet at home - which suggests that 40% do not enjoy such access (CSO, 2016).

According to the Pobal Deprivation Index for Small Areas (Haase and Pratschke, 2017)[84], Masvily scores 'marginally below the average', thus being a relatively deprived/disadvantaged locality. Traditionally a farming and agriculture area, these occupations still represent the main activity for 25% of the households and employ 16,3% of Masvily's workers, especially men. However, the majority of workers from the locality are employed in non-manual occupations (65,3%) (CSO, 2016).

[83] In order to ensure the anonymity of the participants the names of the localities have been changed.
[84] Pobal HP Deprivation Index is a multidimensional index that measures the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area in the Republic of Ireland, using data compiled from various censuses, for more information see Haase and Pratschke, 2017.

Figure 5.1. Masvily (Relative) Location.

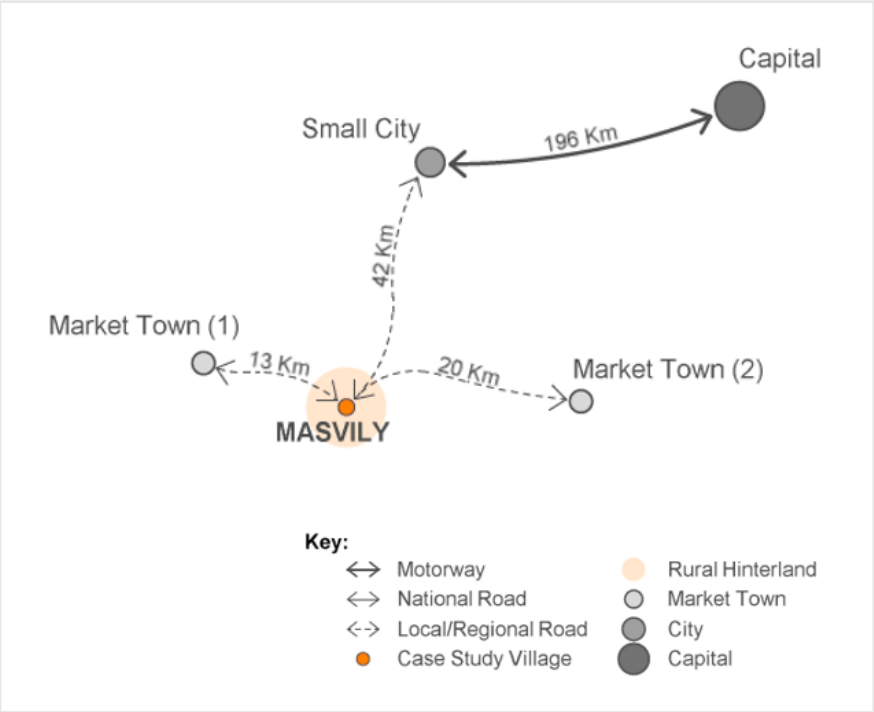
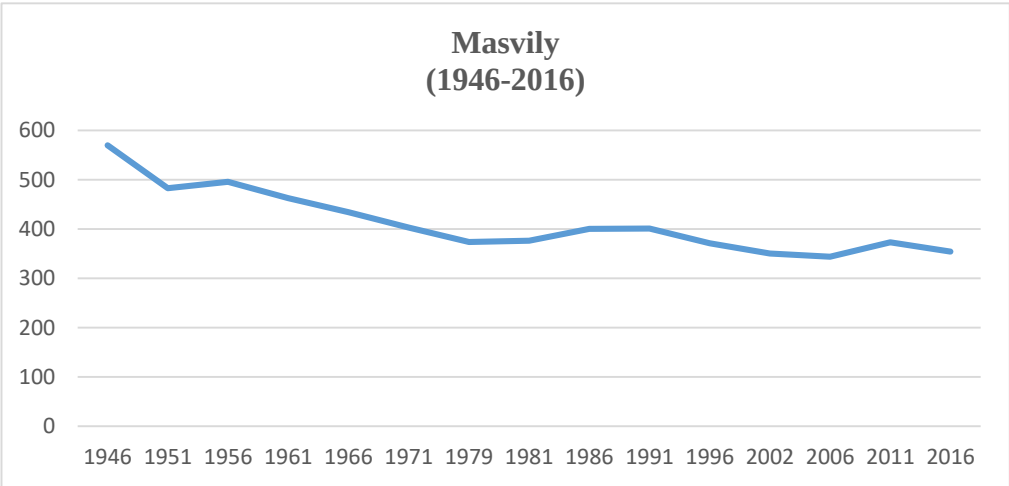
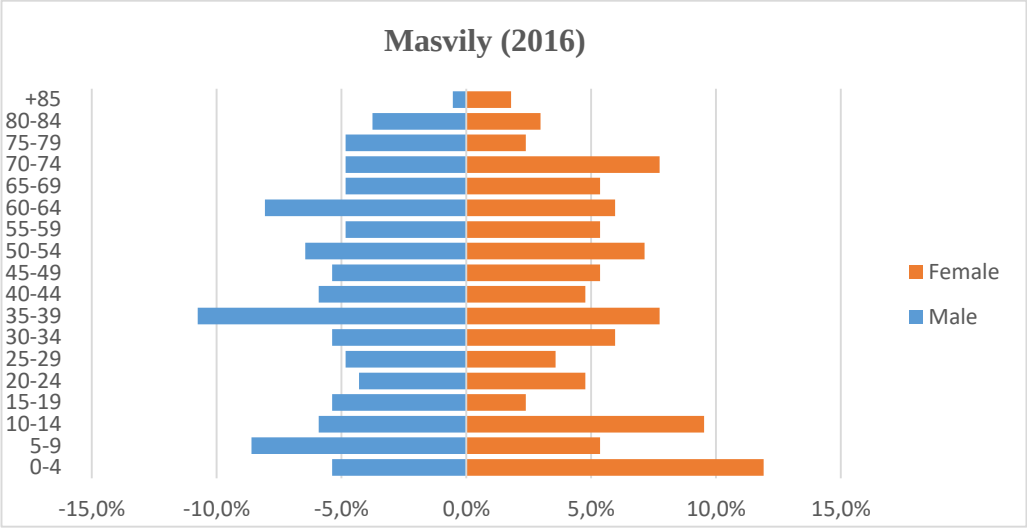


Figure 5.2. Evolution of the Total Population of Masvily, 1946-2016.



Source: own elaboration with data from CSO.

Figure 5.3. Masvily Population Pyramid, 2016.



Source: own elaboration with data from CSO (2016).

Masvily is also characterised by its low levels of basic services as examples of this, the locality lacks a post office, doctor/GP or police station and public transport is scarce[85]. Moreover, the locality is also characterised by the small presence of for-profit businesses, with only three SMEs operating within the village. On the other hand, it is possible to find within Masvily a primary school, a church and cemetery-graveyard, childcare (including breakfast club and afterschool services), adult education courses, a community centre, a water scheme – sewage system, footpaths and some outdoors recreational areas. Some of these services are provided by Masvily's relative high presence of third sector organisations, with 15 different organisations operating within the locality, including Masvil SE.

- *Deethaly Village (Locality)*

The village of Deethaly is situated within a strong agriculture area and lies in the outskirts of a scenic/touristic mountain range. The locality is catalogued as a 'key village' according to its Regional Authority Development Plan. Deethaly is located among three market towns, moreover, two cities (one medium and one small) can be found within a radius of 60 km. The locality is crossed by a national road with significant commercial and touristic passing traffic, also some regional roads link

[85] At the beginning of the study no public transport was available in the village. Since summer 2019, through the negotiations of Masvil SE with other regional SE, a local link bus serves the village linking it with two market towns 6 times a day during week days.

Deethaly with nearby villages and market towns. A highway which connects with the national capital city (at 200 km) and a medium (second-tier) city (at 60km) can be reached at 10 kilometres from Deethaly (see Figure 5.4.). Although situated outside the (official) commuter belt of its closest cities, almost a third of Deethaly's residents commute daily to the city to study and/or work (CSO, 2016).

Deethaly is a relatively small village, with less than 1.000 inhabitants, however, its population has been increasing since 2006 (see Figure 5.5.). The population pyramid of Deethaly illustrates a low number of youngsters (see Figure 5.6.), however, its age dependency ratio and the level of (formal) education of its population are close to the national average. In regard to IT, about 70% of households in Deethaly have access to a computer and to the internet (CSO, 2016).

Figure 5.4. Deethaly (Relative) Location.

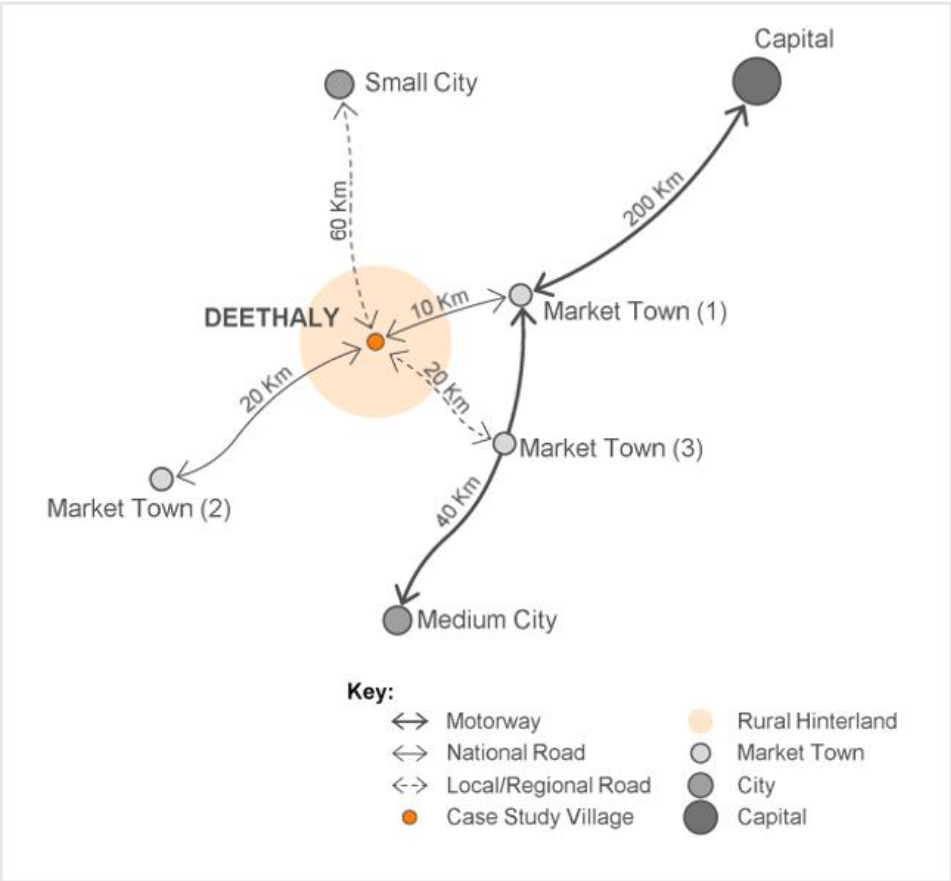
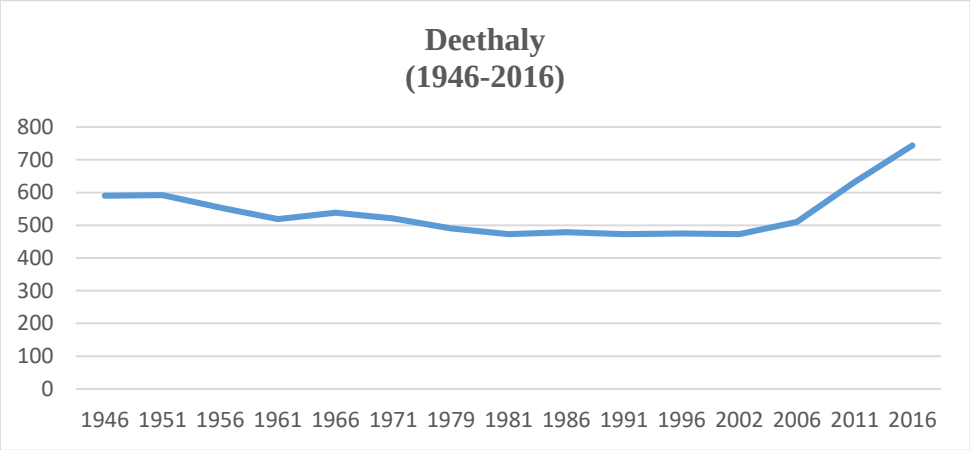
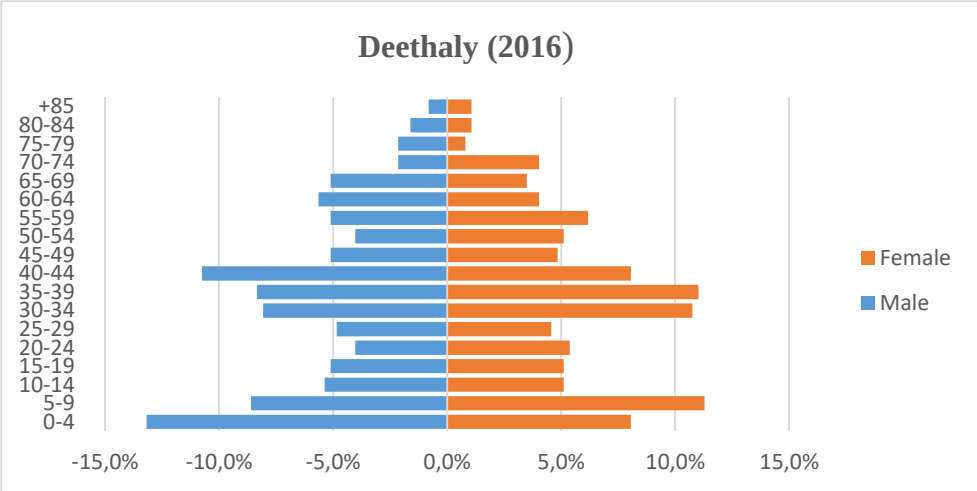


Figure 5.5. Evolution of the Total Population of Deethaly, 1946-2016.



Source: own elaboration with data from CSO.

Figure 5.6. Deethaly Population Pyramid, 2016.



Source: own elaboration with data from CSO (2016).

According to Pobal Deprivation Index for Small Areas, Deethaly is situated 'marginally above the average', thus it is a relatively affluent locality. Despite the strong tradition of farming and agriculture, these represent less than 10% of households' main activity, with the majority of its residents working in the commerce and trade, professional services and manufacturing sectors (CSO, 2016). The locality of Deethaly has most basic services covered, e.g. post office, police station, primary school GP/doctor (once a week) and two route buses operate daily (except Sundays), linking with its nearby market towns. Moreover, Deethaly has a moderate presence of local for-profit businesses with more than 20 SMEs operating within the locality, e.g. petrol pumps, optician/pharmacy, hair salons, veterinary, (small) supermarket. Finally,

Deethaly is characterised by having a very strong presence of third sector organisations with 38 organisations within the locality, including Deethal SE.

Table 5.1. Main Features of Masvily and Deethaly Villages.

	Case 1 **Masvily Village**	**Case2** **Deethaly Village**
(Relative) Location	Relatively isolated	Relatively well connected
Regional Development	Structurally Weak Rural Area [small settlement]	Strong Agriculture Area [key village]
Natural resources/ Landscape	Farming landscape	Farming landscape Close to scenic mountains
Size/Population	Small (< 500)	Small-Medium (< 1.000)
Education level (formal)[86]	Only primary education – 18,5% Third level education – 23,9%	Only primary education – 12,7% Third level education – 35,5%
Age dependency ratio (Ireland: 0,53)	0,74	0,58
IT access (computer + internet)	60 %	70 %
Pobal (socio-economic) deprivation index	'Marginally below average' (relative deprived)	'Marginally above average' (relatively wealthy)
Type of employment/sector	Primary[87] – 16,3% Secondary[88]- 18,4% Tertiary[89] - 65,2%	Primary – 7,6% Secondary – 23,2% Tertiary – 69,1%
Local Businesses (for-profit)	Weak (less than 5 SMEs)	Medium (more than 20 SMEs)
Basic services	Scarce	Mostly covered
Third Sector	15 organisations	38 organisations

Source: own elaboration with data from CSO, Pobal and Regional Authorities Development Plans.

[86] Ireland primary education or lower: 13,3%. Ireland tertiary education: 42%
[87] Agriculture, forestry and fishing
[88] Construction building and manufacturing industries.
[89] Commerce, services, public administration.

5.3.2. The Social Enterprises: Masvil and Deethal

- *Main characteristics*

Masvil SE and Deethal SE present a number of similar characteristics (see Table 5.2). Both SEs were established in the 1990's following a period of economic restructuring that brought great decline for rural localities in Ireland. Due to the closure of local businesses, loss of services and out-migration, small groups of committed local volunteers decided to set up formal structures to fight against this declining situation. These SEs were established with the main aim of fostering the development of their localities (communities) by providing services, facilities and resources to make their localities attractive to live, work and visit. Both SEs are non-profit organisations and are legally structured as Companies Limited by Guarantee (CLG) which represents the most used legal status by Irish SEs (European Commission, 2015; DRCD and SFF, 2018). The main governance body of Masvil and Deethal SEs is a board of voluntary directors in which democratic decision-making is formally established by their articles of association, each director having one vote[90]. The chairperson, secretary and treasurer positions are elected by the directors, with a three year maximum term per office. These SEs hold regular board meetings (usually monthly), in which generally only their voluntary directors are present. Furthermore, an Annual General Meeting (AGM), open to the general public, is held every year.

Due to the breadth of projects of these SEs (explained in detail below), Masvil and Deethal SEs have established different sub-committees which are directly in charge of specific projects. These sub-committees usually include some directors from the board of the SE but also other people, such as staff and volunteers, not directly involved in the main governance body of the SEs. These sub-committees usually operate independently of the board, although they report regularly to it through the directors linked to each of the specific sub-committees. Moreover, each of these sub-committees present a brief annual report at the AGM of the SEs.

[90] During the time of this study the Board of Masvil SE was formed by 10 directors whereas the Board of Deethal SE was formed by 14 directors, these number include Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer.

The annual turnover of Masvil SE is between €25-50.000, Deethal SE's annual turnover is between €75 – 100.000[91]. The money generated is mainly used to pay fixed and running costs, such as insurance or electricity, and is reinvested in further projects, while a small amount is usually kept in the account of the SEs as cash flow. Each SE contributes to the employment of between 15 – 20 staff, mainly through Community Employment (CE) Schemes[92], an Activation Labour Market Programme (ALMP) administered by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) of the Irish government[93].

Table 5.2. Masvil and Deethal SEs' Main Characteristics.

	Case 1 Masvil SE	**Case 2 Deethal SE**
Established	1996	1993
Aim	Local and Community Development	
Legal and Governance Structure	Company Limited by Guarantee Board of Voluntary Directors (one person one vote)	
Turnover	25-50.000€/annual	75-100.000 €/annual
Staff	15 – 20	

Source: own elaboration based on organisational documents of Masvil and Deethal SEs.

- *Main projects* [94]

Masvil and Deethal SEs have delivered a wide range of projects within their localities since their initial formation over 20 years ago (see Figures 5.7 and 5.8.). Both SEs have developed some similar projects such as the development of community offices which provide a physical space from where the SEs host and manage their CE

[91] These figures derive from the audited accounts of the SEs for the years 2017 and 2018. Within these figures are included different streams of income such as the sale of goods and/or services, (monetary) donations, rent of spaces or grants. However, these figures do not reflect streams such as the salaries of the subsidised staff that work for the SEs through national Activation Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) sponsored by the Irish government, the volunteer time spend by members of the SEs or in-kind donations.

[92] The Community Employment Scheme (CE) is a programme launched in 1994 with the aim of enhance the employability and mobility of disadvantaged and unemployed persons by providing work experience and training opportunities for them within their communities. CE are typically sponsored by groups wishing to benefit the local community, namely voluntary and community organisations and/or social enterprises.

[93] The number of staff in both SEs has slightly varied between 15 and 20 during the period of this study. Masvil SE has two part-time directly paid staff.

[94] The word project refers to every type of activity, services, infrastructure, facilities, developed by the SEs.

Schemes/ALMPs. These CE Schemes provide (part-time) employment and training opportunities to (local) individuals distant to the labour market, e.g. long term-unemployed or unemployed close to retirement. The types of employment provided by the CE Schemes of these rural SEs are, on the one hand, outdoors workers that work in tasks related to the maintenance of community/public spaces and minor construction works; on the other hand, (community) office workers that usually do administrative and/or accountancy tasks. In addition, these CE Schemes also provide (full-time) employment to the CE supervisors who are in charge of organising and supervising the tasks of the abovementioned (part-time) workers.

Moreover, these community offices also provide basic administrative services such as printing and communication services to the local community. In this regard, the community offices are used to post advertisements with activities organised by local organisations and businesses and also by other organisations from the surrounding area and to post information from local individuals and from Regional or National Authorities about public matters. These communication services are both offline, through for example printed parish notes/newsletters, and online through social media platforms. In addition, in the case of Deethal SE the community office hosts an officially accredited tourist information point with an extensive range of leaflets about activities and accommodation within the area/region.

Another project common to both SEs are their Tidy Towns[95] groups which are in charge of developing landscaping and environmental conservation and awareness projects within the localities. These projects usually run every year from early spring until the end of the autumn and are managed by sub-committees within the SEs. Moreover, both SEs have established other environmental related projects such as community gardens in which free chemical vegetables are produced. Beyond their environmental aspect the community gardens include a social dimension. In the case of Masvil SE this social dimension is related to the provision of work opportunities to long-term unemployed individuals through positions in the CE Scheme within the community garden but also to the provision of training opportunities through the horticulture adult education courses run by the SE (this is discussed in greater detail

[95] Tidy Towns is a national programme/competition sponsored by a supermarket chain in which a jury provides scores and reports to each town and village participant about different landscaping and environmental aspects.

below within this section). In the case of Deethal SE, its community garden was conceived as a place to socialise namely for the elderly who live in the neighbouring social housing units (see below). However, its use has changed over the years into an intergenerational social space in which local people with different backgrounds share their knowledge, time and the vegetables produced.

Furthermore, both SEs have developed outdoor public/community recreational spaces, such as walks within and in the outskirts of the villages. In the case of Masvil SE these projects also include a wildlife sanctuary and picnic area and an intergenerational leisure garden with outside and indoors siting areas whereas Deethal SE has developed a playground and a village park with a walking loop and benches for people to practise sport and relax. All these projects are free of charge and open to public use.

In addition, these two rural SEs have contributed to the development of catering services. In the case of Masvil SE, it has recently opened the only café-shop in the locality, whereas Deethal SE has developed the premises for a restaurant, also the only one within the village, at the back of its community office building.

In order to address different socio-demographic challenges, both SEs have also developed social housing projects within their localities. With the primary objective of addressing out-migration from the locality, Masvil SE has fostered the development of a social housing estate in the outskirts of the village and has bought and refurbished a number of housing units within the locality[96]. The SE manages a total of 30 social housing units occupied by a mixed of vulnerable/disadvantaged families and single individuals, the latter mostly elderly. Deethal SE has also fostered the construction of 9 social housing units, occupied by elder people who were previously living in isolated/vulnerable conditions and generally alone in the countryside.

The development of community (indoor) facilities are also central for both SEs. In this regard, Masvil SE has developed a (small) community centre and Deethal SE has built a (small) meeting hall used by different local organisation to hold regular meetings and has refurbished two buildings which are currently used to host different community events and are in the process of being developed into a multi-purpose complex for the community. Besides providing indoor facilities for local individuals

[96] This is a joint project that covers Masvily village and another nearby village within the same parish.

and organisations to meet, these facilities host many of the community events organised or co-organised by the SEs such as rambling houses[97], Halloween parties, Christmas markets or Santa Wonderland. Moreover, in the case of Deethal SE some other regular community events/activities such as their weekly community bingo and lotto are run in the premises of other local organisations (church hall) and businesses (pubs).

Finally, both SEs have developed community planning processes within their localities in which the population from the villages were asked to participate in a number of public meetings and surveys in order to discuss the present and future needs and projects for the development of the localities.

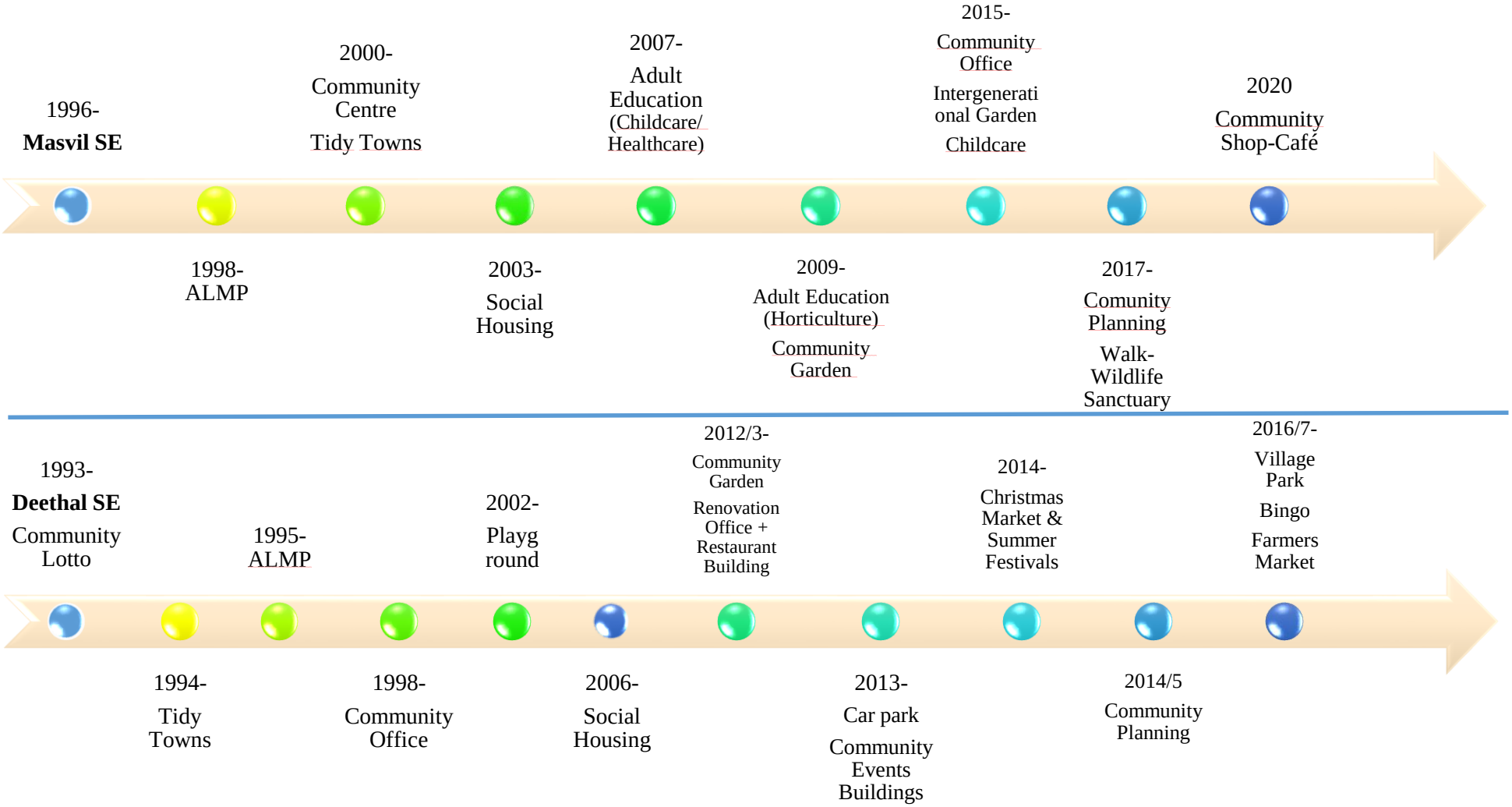
In addition to all the former (somehow) similar projects, these SEs have also developed some distinctive projects. Masvil SE has promoted and hosted two adult education courses on horticulture and childcare/healthcare. These courses target adults who have left the education system early, providing them with the opportunity of returning to education and accessing officially accredited qualifications. Moreover, Masvil SE has also developed childcare services within the village, including a breakfast club, playschool and after school services in order to keep and attract young families with children to the village[98]. Deethal SE developed a community car park that addressed a problem of safety due to the high volume of traffic that pass through the main street of the village via the national road. Furthermore, this SE promotes and hosts within this car park, a range of events including a bi-weekly farmers-artisans market where local and regional producers sell their products and local inhabitants socialise.

[97] This is a traditional Irish social and entertainment activity which mixes different kinds of entertainment such as storytelling, singing, dancing until late into the night.

[98] It is noted to say that education is compulsory in Ireland from 6 years old. However, from 2 years 8 months until 5 years 6 months the government provides a 3 hour per day free childcare during a maximum of 2 years. In this regard, it is not uncommon to have limited childcare facilities around villages of rural Ireland or having facilities that open during these 3 hours per day. In the case of Masvil SE the childcare services are divided between, on the one hand, breakfast club and after school services, running from 8-9 am and 1-6 pm and, on the other hand, crèche-playschool running from 9am-12 pm. These services are run by two different people but in the same building.

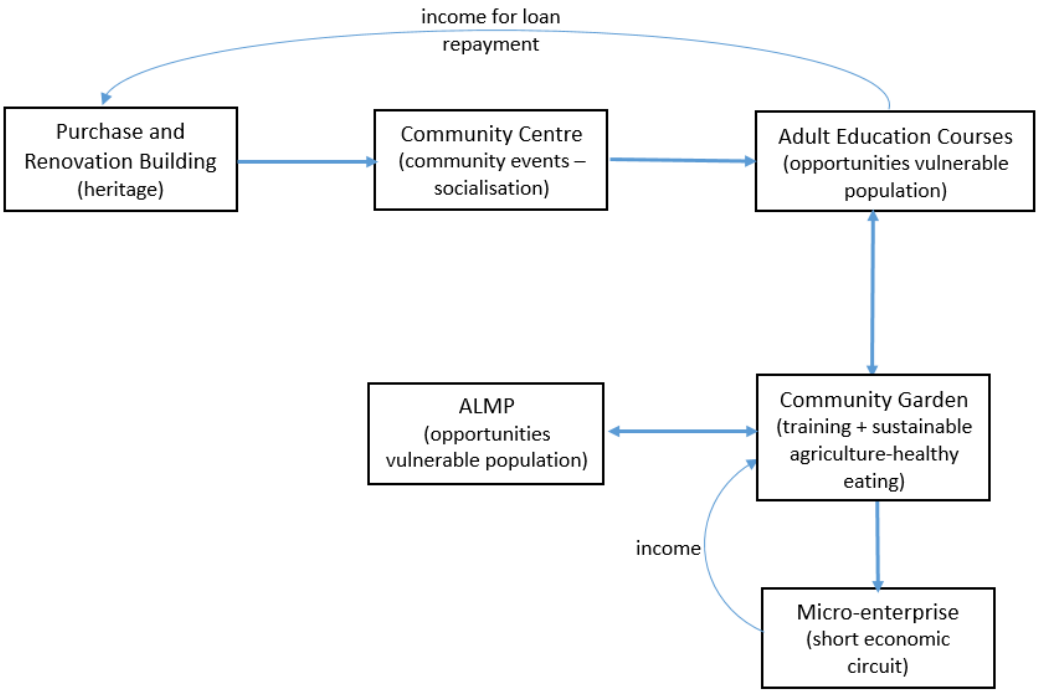
Figure 5.7. Maps of Main Projects of Masvil and Deethal SEs.

Figure 5.8. Timelines of Main Projects of Masvil and Deethal SEs.



This wide range of projects developed by Masvil and Deethal SEs have contributed towards an integrated development of the localities in which these rural SEs are based and operate, in line with a neoendogenous approach towards rural development. In this regard, the projects of these SEs have concurrently contributed to the development of diverse dimensions of the territory and of their local populations, therefore, balancing different aspects of development, i.e. social, economic, environmental, cultural dimensions. Moreover, this integrated development is also manifested through the interrelation showed by the different projects developed by these rural SEs. For a descriptive example of this integrated development (see Figure 5.9.), Masvil SE purchased a semi-derelict (heritage) building within the locality and renovated it into a functional community centre which, among other things, has allowed the SE to host two adult education courses. These courses have contributed, on the one hand, to provide to vulnerable groups within the locality (and surrounding area) accessible education opportunities. Moreover, the courses have generated four direct employment positions (teachers/coordinators) and they record high rates of further integration in the labour market of the graduates. Moreover, the courses have generated income for the SE as it signs an annual service contract with a Regional Education Body. The income generated through the courses has been instrumental in repaying the loan that Masvil SE acquired from a bank to buy the semi-derelict building and refurbish it into a community centre. In addition, one of the courses (horticulture) has been instrumental for the set up and maintenance of the community garden. This community garden, beyond providing a training space for students from the adult education courses, has also created an employment opportunity for some long term unemployed people through the ALMPs hosted by Masvil SE who work (part-time) in the community garden. Finally, Masvil SE has established a micro-business with the vegetables produced from this community garden. This, on the one hand, promotes sustainable agriculture and healthy eating due to their chemical free nature and contributes to the promotion of short food supply chains and short economic circuits. On the other hand, it also enhances local spending and generates a (small) source of income for Masvil SE which is reinvested in the maintenance of this and/or other projects run by the SE.

Figure 5.9. Example of some Projects from Masvil SE Contributing to the Integrated Development of the Locality.



5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has described the main features of the general and specific contexts of the cases that form the basis of this study. In first instance, it briefly described the demographic, economic and political situation of (rural) Ireland and the importance of third sector organisations, including SEs, in the development of Irish rural localities/areas. Furthermore, the chapter has also described and explained how, although both Masvil and Deethal SEs are based and operate in rural localities these two villages display different features, thus, situating this research within a framework of rural heterogeneity. Finally, by describing the main characteristics of the SEs and their projects this section has shown how these SEs strive to contribute to the integrated development of their localities by developing a wide range of (usually) interrelated projects that address local development in an integrated manner, thus contributing concurrently to different economic, social, cultural, environmental aims. However, this study aims to go beyond a (thick) description of the rural SEs studied by exploring the (underlying) mechanisms that explain how these Irish rural SEs work

to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their rural localities. In order to do so and based on the iteration between theory and empirical data, the next chapters present the findings from an in-depth analysis of (some of) the mechanisms that can explain the researched phenomenon by exploring how these rural SEs have engaged in (socio-)economic relations that represent different 'forms of economic integration' (Chapter 6) and how they have engaged in (socio-)spatial relations with different dimensions of their 'places' (Chapter 7).

Chapter 6
Plural (Socio)Economic Integration for Neoendogenous Development: the Work of Irish Rural Social Enterprises

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter has described the wide range of projects that the rural SEs studied have delivered within their localities and how these have contributed to an integrated development of their rural localities. In order to explain how these organisations have been able to do so, this chapter explores how these rural SEs have engaged in plural and multi-scalar (socio-)economic relations in order to leverage diverse resources and how they have mixed these resources in specific (innovative) ways through collaborative and collective practices to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their rural localities. Furthermore, the chapter explains the role of these rural SEs within their localities as 'supporting structures' that contribute to the institutionalisation of different 'forms of economic integration' at a local level. Hence, this chapter explain the findings related to the first research question that has guided this thesis, i.e.:

> R.Q.1: How do Irish rural social enterprises engage in (socio-)economic relations representing different 'forms of economic integration' in order to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities?

6. 2. Plural and Multi-Scalar (Socio-)Economic Relations, Collaborative and Collective Resourcefulness Practices in Irish Rural Social Enterprises

In line with the first research objective of this thesis, this section explores the different kind of (socio-)economic relations in which the rural SEs studied have engaged in as a way to leverage a wide range of resources. Furthermore, it explains how these rural SEs have mixed these resources in specific (new) ways in order to develop their wide range of (local) projects that contribute to the neoendogenous development of their rural localities.

6.2.1. Plural and Multi-Scalar (Socio-)Economic Relations

- *'Sui generis' market-exchange relations.*

Masvil and Deethal SEs are organisations which participate in **(competitive) market-exchanges.** In this regard, these SEs generate (market) income from *selling services and/or products*. Both SEs organise regular leisure events, such as bingo or rambling houses, usually attended by people living within the localities and other villages within

the region. Besides providing entertainment these events generate (small) sums of continuous market income for the SEs.

> *"You need somebody to sell tickets on the [bingo] night. We have a little shop in the corner […] You might make about €100, €120 on the raffle tickets. You will make €20 or €30 in the shop" [Case 2_Deethal SE_Volunteer-Board Member_03]*

On some occasions, these SEs apply price differentiations across these leisure events, based on their local knowledge, charging lower prices to individuals/families in greater socio-economic hardship. In the case of Deethal SE, the SE runs a weekly community lottery from which it generates (market) income through the selling of tickets. This has been described by members of the SE as their "bread and butter" as it constitutes the main source of (continuous) income for the organisation. The tickets of this lottery are not only sold in Deethal SE's community office but also across different local business and weekly lottery draws are held in the local public houses (bars).

Moreover, in the case of Masvil, the SE also generates income from the chemical free seasonal vegetables from its garden that are sold to the local population. The horticulture micro-enterprise established by Masvil SE for this purpose sells its products below the average market price, made possible by the government subsidised workforce (through CE Scheme) and volunteer labour that operate the community garden where these vegetables are grown. In addition, Masvil SE runs a breakfast club and afterschool services used by local families and those from nearby villages. Regarding these services, the SE has engaged in a market-exchange relation with the families who pay a fee for the use of the services. Despite selling these services at a market rate, some families pay directly the full fee for the services whereas others (typically lower income families) are partially subsidised by the government.

> *"[The parents pay] depending on their situations at home; if both parents are working and they don't have medical cards[99] or anything like that, then they have a certain fee that they would be paying per week. But then if your child*

[99] Medical cards in Ireland are provided, among others, to the population that earn below a specific threshold, thus usually denotes low income.

has a medical card, or anything like that, you get X amount of money off, and the government will pay X amount of money, and the parents will pay the balance. That's how that works. There are different schemes for everyone". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Staff_15]

Masvil and Deethal SEs also engage in market-exchange relations through the *rent/lease* of some of their premises to local individuals and businesses, from which they generate a (weekly) market-based revenue/income. In the case of their social housing units, the rents rates are determined by each of the SEs and the charge is approximately 55-65€ per week depending on the type of house but always at a rate lower than the privately let housing stock[100]. The tenants of these social houses are usually people original from the localities and/or nearby area.
Furthermore, each SE leases some of their premises to local for-profit businesses. These premises were, in both cases, developed and disposed of by the SEs to establish previously non-existent essential services for their local communities such as a crèche-playschool (Masvil SE) and a restaurant (Deethal SE).

Despite the fact that in both cases the SEs have engaged in a market-exchange relation with local individuals who run these businesses, a substantial difference exists in the (market) income generation between the cases. Masvil SE has increased the rent of the premises from being free of charge in the first year to 75€/week plus half of the running costs in its fourth year, thus the SE is currently generating a small profit from this leasing. This change in the tariff was not decided by a change in market prices but due to the increasing numbers of parents seeking to avail of the service, from one child during the first year to a full capacity (11 children) in its fourth year. This crèche-playschool service is only opened for 3 hours per day during week days and it is already at full capacity, thus this (small) business has no scope to increase its market revenue nor indeed the income for Masvil SE, denoting a small scope for this SE to generate greater income from this stream. On the other hand, the lease arrangement that Deethal SE has with the local private trader/chef that runs the restaurant is fixed at a higher rate (200€/week). This local business has great commercial potential and has evolved into a successful restaurant open for about 9 hours a day from Monday to

[100] At the time of writing, houses with similar characteristics as the social housing offer by these SEs were between 175 -225€/week in the private let housing market.

Saturday. Moreover, the premise in which the restaurant is located is currently under expansion with a projected weekly income/rent increase to Deethal SE. This renovation is being carried out in order to comply with (national) health and safety regulations and Deethal SE has undertaken this (costly) project in order to maintain, what is considered, an essential service for the locality.

> *"As it transpired there was a local lady who was looking to set up a restaurant, and they [Deethal SE] were able in time then to lease that to her. So there's now an income stream to that social enterprise on a monthly basis from that very successful restaurant" [Case 2_Deethal SE_Regional Development Company Staff_11]*

Other important market-exchange relations in which both SEs have engaged in are related to the borrowing of *loans*, mainly in order to purchase and/or renovate premises. These loans are a significant undertaking by the (voluntary) boards of directors of the SEs which, in some instances, have been negotiated with regular (national) mainstream banks, for example in the case of purchasing the community centre building by Masvil SE. However, more recently, these SEs have availed of a national community loan (social) finance institution (Clann Creedo)[101] that supports community projects with lower interest rates than regular banks, as for example in the case of renovating the community café-shop premises in the case of Masvil SE or the renovation of the community office and restaurant premises in the case of Deethal SE.

Finally, on certain occasions both SEs have received *favourable conditions from (some) local providers/suppliers*, such as buying products at cost price or postponing/delaying payments, for the products and/or services needed by the SEs when organising events or developing some infrastructure projects. These favourable conditions for buying and paying from local businesses are related to the close links of some of the members of the SEs to these businesses and to the non-profit status and community benefit of the work of these SEs.

[101] Clann Credo – Community Loan Finance is a social enterprise established in 1996 that provides affordable loan finance to community organisations that generate social benefit.

Table 6.1. Type, Characteristics and Spatial Scale of Main Market-Exchange Relations of Masvil and Deethal SEs.

Type of Market-exchange Relations	Main Characteristic(s)	Spatial Scale
Selling products and/or services	Often below market price and price differentiations for lower income (partially subsidised by government or SEs)	Local (and regional) population
Renting/leasing	Below market price (often) Essential services (not profit rationale)	Local individuals and businesses
Loans (borrowings)	Regular interest rate	National banks (local branches)
	Below regular interest rate	National not-for-profit community finance
Favourable conditions from (some) local providers/suppliers	Buying at cost price; delay/postponing payments	Local businesses

These observations illustrate how these rural SEs have engaged in diverse market-exchange relations through which they have leveraged financial resources for the implementation and maintenance of their projects. However, the characteristics of the market-exchange relations in which these SEs have engaged demonstrate the 'sui generis' nature of these type of relations in the case of these rural SEs as they usually incur in practices such as price differentiations between users/customers based on their (socio-)economic situation, offer services/products below average market prices and do not follow a profit maximisation, thus limiting the maximisation of gains for the SEs but also (at times) reducing their operational costs. Finally, although these market-exchange relations have been developed with actors situated at different spatial scales (local, regional and national), the findings illustrate how those market-exchange relations at a local level are greatly emphasised by these SEs, especially in their more continuous relations such as those related to selling their products/services and renting/leasing their premises (see Table 6.1.).

- *Redistribution relations*

Masvil and Deethal SEs have also engaged in **(centricity) redistribution relations**. In this regard, the main source of paid staff for both SEs are derived from *subsidised labour* especially through national ALMPs such as the CE Scheme, funded by the Irish (national) Department of Social Protection (DSP). This programme is targeted to provide employment to local population distant from the labour market, e.g., the long term unemployed or those unemployed who are closed to retirement. Besides paying the salaries of the (part-time) workers and (full-time) CE scheme supervisors, the DSP also provides free of charge training to these (part-time) workers. As their main source of paid labour, the SEs show a great dependence on this ALMP for the implementation and especially for the maintenance of (many of) their projects.

> *"I suppose running the CE scheme is a huge thing because without them we [Masvil SE] wouldn't be able to get all this work done". [Case 1_Masvil SE_ Volunteer-Board Member_03]*

Furthermore, both SEs have secured *grants* from European rural development programmes such as LEADER or, in the case of Masvil SE, also from national programmes dedicated to the development of rural areas such as Town and Village Renewal[102]. These funding programmes have been designed at a EU and national level respectively and are administered by regional institutions such as the LAGs in the case of LEADER or the Regional Authorities in the case of Town and Village Renewal. Interestingly, these regional institutions are recurrently termed "funding bodies" by the members of the SEs.

However, access to this type of programmatic funding has differed between the cases, Masvil SE has obtained two important grants of about 100.000€ each for the development of the café-shop premises and upgrading of the community garden over the last three years (2016-2019). However, since 2010, Deethal SE had already accessed three LEADER grants for different infrastructure related projects, e.g. the renovation of the community office and restaurant building. Although the link with their respective RDCs has been key for having success in obtaining these grants, another important aspect lies in the high technical skills required to prepare these

[102] Town and Village Renewal Scheme was introduced by the Department of Rural and Community Development of the Government of Ireland in 2016 with the aim to rejuvenate rural towns and villages.

applications. In both SEs, these grant applications are usually written by voluntary directors from their boards. In this regard, the incorporation to the board of Masvil SE in 2015 of a member with expertise in grant application and technical writing skills was instrumental in their success in securing the abovementioned grants. In the case of Deethal SE, different people who have sat on its board for ten or more years provide these technical skills, including members with rural development higher education degrees and professional and volunteer experience working in RDCs. Moreover, both SEs have incorporated voluntary directors to their boards with expertise in specific fields, such as construction work, electricity or interior design, who have been instrumental in the success of these SEs when applying to these highly competitive, detailed and complex grants.

> *"[When] applying for funding and stuff, they need the support of somebody like the Regional Development Company that will give them… There is a language. If you look at, especially some of the ones that are in Deethal SE, they are there a while. They know how to talk that language. […]. That is quite important in those applications, because the civil servant that is looking at it is used to a language, and you have to deliver on that". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Regional Authority Public Representative_17]*

Furthermore, both rural SEs have accessed *grants* from diverse regional programmes managed by their Regional Authorities. These grants range from small sums of money for small infrastructure projects or the maintenance of the running costs of some of their projects such as for example the lightning of some of the SEs outdoor recreational projects, to larger investments such as the construction and/or refurbishment of social housing units which have been funded in great part with grants from their Regional Authorities.

These programmatic funding (grants) has also been complemented by both rural SEs' regular access to various *prizes/awards* from mainly their Regional Authorities. These prizes usually derived from regional competitions linked to the landscape and environmental projects developed by the SEs and the resources leveraged range from symbolic trophies, such as a plaque or a tree, to small sums of money.

In addition, Masvil SE has also accessed *philanthropic funds*[103] from a regional foundation, established from a philanthropist born in the region, which supports community projects. Despite the SE's access to philanthropic funding having been rather sporadic, this has been instrumental in providing match funding for two of its (large) infrastructure projects, i.e. the community centre and café-shop. Furthermore, this SE has also engaged in a redistributive relation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), a national public body, with whom the SE has negotiated, against a nominal fee of 1 €/year, the *right of use and management of public premises*, such as the premises where the former local police (garda) station was situated which consist of two buildings and garden areas. The SE has been in charge of the renovation of the premises and its current maintenance through their own funds.

> *"They closed the Garda barrack [police station] in 2013. It almost took two years to get it, in 2015, we [Masvil SE] opened it. We were two years negotiating with the OPW to get the Garda barrack [police station]. They were selling them. They said communities could get them. We met the minister behind it in Kennytown [market town close to Masvily] one day and we asked him. He looked at it and we gave him a folder of stuff. It started from there and we negotiated away and eventually we got it" [Case 1_Masvil SE_ Volunteer-Board Member _01]*

Masvil SE has also engaged in a redistribution relation with a regional educational body through *service contracts* as the second provider of the adult education courses[104]. Within these service contracts, the regional public body provides the salary costs of the teachers and some running costs of the courses which make these free of charge for the local (and regional) students attending. Moreover, through these service contracts the SE receives a lump sum (of about 5.000€/year) against the hosting of the courses. The service contracts, renewed annually, have been in place for over 10

[103] Following Laville and Nyssens (2001, p. 324) this study considers philanthropy as a form of (private) redistribution as it relates to the channel/redistribution, usually through a private (non-profit) foundation, of part of the surplus generated through for-profit business by a corporation into social/environmental/cultural projects.

[104] This 'service contract' represents a (socio-)economic relation which can be categorised as in between redistribution and market-exchange as it is a regional governmental institution which finance this service contract. However, the SE is a second provider/subcontractor of the service and has to renew the contract through a 'competitive' process.

years[105] and such permanent income has been instrumental for Masvil SE to repay the loans contracted to purchase and renovate its community centre building.

Finally, these rural SEs have also engaged in redistributive relations when *subsidizing (some of) the costs of services/projects with their own resources*. Following the childcare example explained in the previous section, Masvil SE had (partially) subsidised the breakfast-afterschool and also the crèche-playschool services, in effect redistributing resources leveraged through other projects, for example from the organisation of leisure events in which the customers pay a fee and the SE tends to generate some profits. Moreover, the redistribution of resources between the projects of the SEs have been especially important to make it possible to implement and maintain those projects which are less financially sustainable due to their public character and therefore the free access afforded to users. In this regard, these SEs usually redistribute some funds towards materials and other running costs needed for the maintenance of projects such as those related to landscaping or their outdoor community/public recreational spaces, e.g. playground, park, walks.

Table 6.2. Types, Characteristics and Spatial Scale of Main Redistribution Relations of Masvil and Deethal SEs.

Type of Redistribution Relations	Main Characteristic(s)	Spatial Scale
Subsidised labour	CE Scheme/ALMP main source of paid staff (mainly part-time) Salaries and training for workers	National programme (DSP)
Grants	Rural development programmes Capital grants (usually) Very competitive – highly skilled/great expertise needed	EU and National programmes (administered/managed by regional institutions)

[105] Masvil SE has run two adult education courses through these 'service contracts', Healthcare/Childcare which started running in 2007 and it is still in operation and; Horticulture which run from 2009 until 2018.

Table 6.2. (continuation)

Type of Redistribution Relations	Main Characteristic(s)	Spatial Scale
Grants	Diverse – from small sums to large capital grants.	Regional Authorities
Prizes/awards	Symbolic trophies, small sums of money	Regional Authorities (mainly)
Philanthropy (*only Masvil SE*)	Sporadic, used as match funding	Regional foundation
Assume right of use and management of public building (*only Masvil SE*)	Negotiation for right of use and management. SE responsibility towards renovation and maintenance.	National public body (OPW)
Service Contracts (*only Masvil SE*)	Salaries of staff and (some) running costs Free service (for students) Fixed lump sum for SE for hosting service.	Regional educational body
SEs (partially) subsidizing the costs of some services/projects	The SEs redistribute resources from 'profitable' to non-profitable services of the social enterprise.	Internal (organisational) redistribution

These observations illustrate how these rural SEs have engaged in redistribution relations through which they have not only leveraged financial (non-market) resources but also other resources such as (subsidised) labour and/or the use of premises for the implementation and maintenance of their projects. Within this type of relations those

based on EU, national and regional programmes, usually linked with the development of rural areas and ALMPs, have played a significant role in supporting the work of the SEs. However, the findings show how also other types of redistribution relations, usually at a regional level, such as prizes/awards or philanthropic funding and service contracts in the case of Masvil SE have also contributed to the work of these rural SEs (see Table 6.2.).

- *Reciprocity relations*

Masvil and Deethal SEs have also engaged in **(mutuality) reciprocity relations**. An especially significant reciprocity relation within these rural SEs is that of *volunteering*, as these volunteers constitute the main driving force of both SEs.

> *"When it's a small village the most important resource is going to be the people [volunteers] to start with and everything else follows from there". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Regional Development Company Staff_18]*

> *"Look at all the projects and everything that are going on. I don't think any of those would exist. […] You need a group of volunteers to take it on. I don't think it would have happened. It wouldn't have happened" [Case 2_Deethal SE_Staff_09].*

Volunteers can be distinguished between *regular volunteers* and *one-off/intermittent volunteers*. The formers are represented in these rural SEs by the voluntary directors who form their boards. These are usually individuals living within the localities (or in their outskirts). These voluntary directors participate in regular board meetings where they take strategic decisions, they also are in charge of controlling the finances of the SEs, applying for and managing the grants and, they hold the ultimate legal responsibility of the organisations. However, their work goes beyond these tasks as they also participate in the actual implementation, and have direct oversight, of many of the projects. Hence, (some of) these voluntary directors are also essential to the daily operation of many of the projects of the SEs. The one-off/intermittent volunteers are also usually local inhabitants who participate in the implementation of specific projects. These one-off volunteers do not formally belong to the SE and do not take part in strategic decision making; however, their participation in peak workload moments has also been key for the capacity of these SEs to implement some of their projects, such as the organisation of (big/significant) community events. It is a

common practice in both SEs that some of these one-off/intermittent volunteers are encouraged by voluntary directors to join/replenish the board of the SE.

Despite both SEs having drawn from their respective local populations to mobilise this (regular and one-off/intermittent) volunteer labour, in the case of Masvil SE the shortage of local inhabitants with specific skills, e.g. accountancy or PR-marketing, which are considered important for the running of the SE and some of their projects, have led this SE to try to attract (without success) volunteers from a wider spatial area through some regional institutions dedicated to match volunteers with community organisations and SEs within the region. Moreover, the excessive reliance on volunteer labour and especially on the work of the voluntary directors have meant limitations in the expansion of (some of) the projects of these rural SEs and a great responsibility on the shoulders of these directors who are frequently overburden by their voluntary work commitments and present a real risk of burn-out.

> *"I think you do get burnt out. Now I would say it myself. I am tired of Deethal SE, I still love it but I'm tired, and what I would love to do is take a break, just a break, maybe three years, because I've never been able to give my kids a proper time". [Case 2_Deethal SE_ Volunteer-Board Member_08]*

Another significant reciprocity relation in which these rural SEs have engaged in is the *sharing/lending* of items such as machinery and tools free of charge from diverse local stakeholders in their localities such as, for example, farmers or contractors. These machinery and tools have been used by the SEs to deliver community events and/or construction projects, thus, reducing operational costs.

Furthermore, both rural SEs have engaged in reciprocity relations related to leveraging *donations and sponsorship* which have meant an important source related to *fundraising*. The two rural SEs have engaged in this type of reciprocity relations with different local (and in some instances regional) stakeholders including individual people, for-profit businesses (usually SMEs) and/or other third sector organisations. These donations and sponsorship can take form of monetary contributions but quite often they also include in-kind donations such as cakes, (old) items to sell in SEs stall, trees/plants for decoration/planting, oil for electric generators, bar licences, sound systems, among others.

In addition, these type of reciprocal relations have also included the *transfer of the right of use of assets* such as pieces of land and a building (in the case of Masvil SE) from local individuals and/or organisations to the SEs[106]. These assets obtained through reciprocity relations have been key for the development of projects such as the community garden and the community café-shop in the case of Masvil SE and the playground in the case of Deethal SE.

These diverse reciprocity relations in which these rural SEs engage in with local stakeholders are based on the stakeholders' appreciation of the contributions made by these SEs to the (integrated) development of their localities.

> *"People [from the community] would be supportive. They might not come to an event, but they might donate money. Everybody makes an effort, in fairness. […] I suppose they realise how much work is done in the community by Masvil SE […] They know how important it is for a rural community so why not support?" [Case 1_Masvil SE_ Volunteer-Board Member_06]*

Furthermore, as forms of reciprocal exchange with local stakeholders, both rural SEs regularly share/lend their facilities free of charge to local third sector organisations and/or for-profit local businesses to hold meetings and/or events. The SEs also regularly contribute with donations and/or sponsorship to events and projects organised by other local (third sector) organisations.

Finally, both SEs have engaged in reciprocity relations with similar organisations in order to *exchange knowledge and information* about how to develop and fund certain projects. It is a common practice in both SEs to visit (and receive) other regional organisations for this kind of knowledge/information exchanges. Regional institutions such as the RDCs play an important role in facilitating these contacts between similar organisations at a regional level. In the case of Deethal SE, its associated RDC holds regular regional meetings in which individuals and organisations from different localities are invited to network and exchange ideas and information.

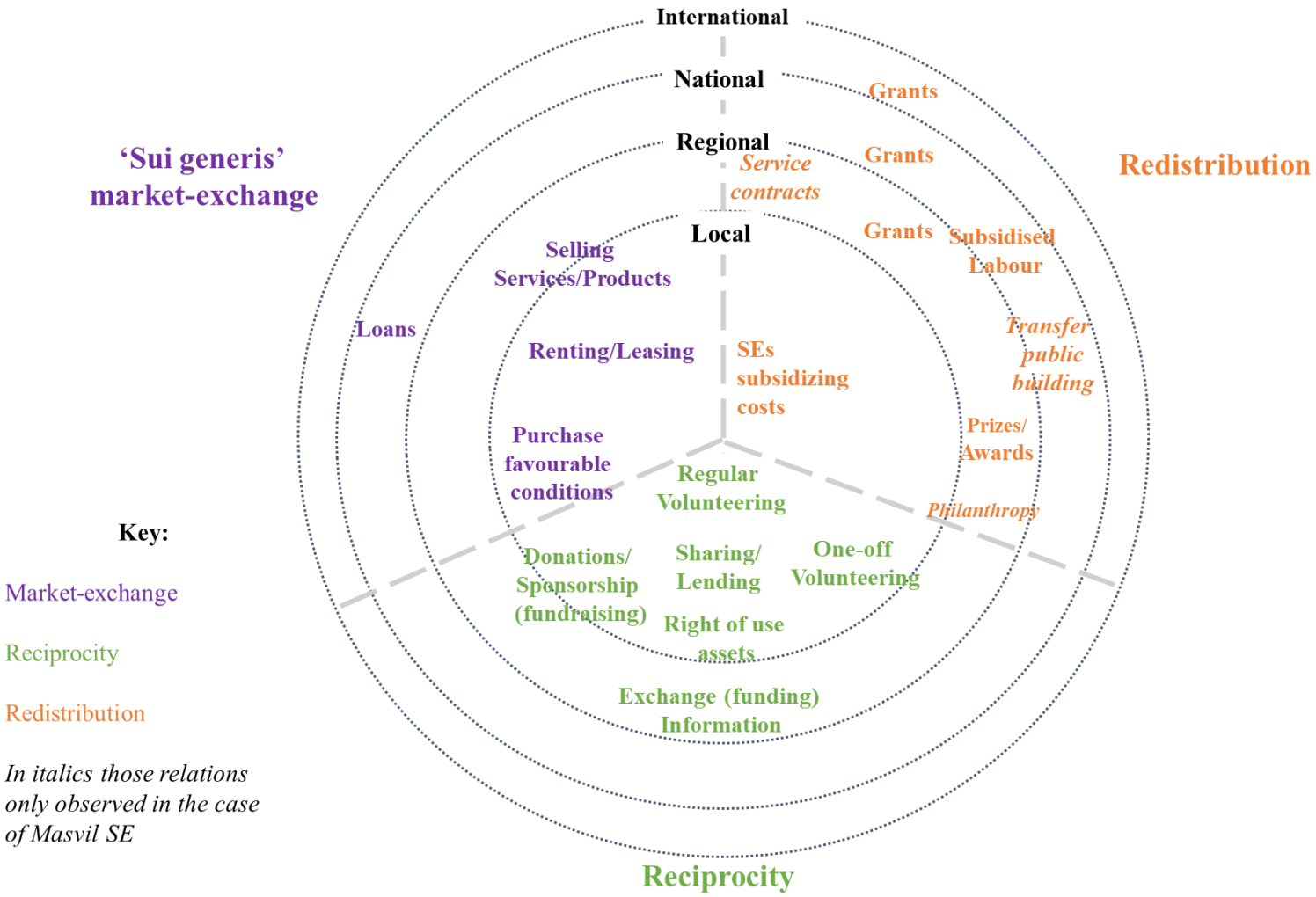
[106] These assets have been transferred to the SEs for a nominal fee.

Table 6.3. Type, Characteristics and Spatial Scale of Main Reciprocity Relations of Masvil and Deethal SEs.

Type of Reciprocity Relations		**Main Characteristic(s)**	**Spatial Scale**
Volunteering	Regular	Voluntary directors as main driving force of SEs (strategic decision-making; implementation; supervision; legal and financial responsibility) Risk of burn-out	Local population
	One-off/ intermittent	Specific projects, peak moments	
Sharing/Lending		Equipment (machinery, tools)	Local diverse stakeholders (individuals, businesses, farmers, other third sector organisations).
Donations and Sponsorship (fundraisings)		In-kind and monetary	
Transfer of the right of use of assets		Land, building (*only Masvil SE*)	
Exchange of Knowledge/Information		Mainly about funding and ideas for implementation of specific projects	Regional similar organisations

These observations illustrate how these rural SEs have engaged in reciprocity relations through which they have leveraged volunteer labour, (non-market) monetary and in-kind resources for the planning, implementation and maintenance of their projects. These findings demonstrate how reciprocity relations are critical for the work of these rural SEs, and within these, of particular importance are those related to the volunteers that form their boards. These regular volunteers constitute the main driving force of these rural SEs. The great responsibility and over load of work by these voluntary directors which usually manifest in their burn-out pose risks on the sustainability of these SEs. Furthermore, these observations illustrate how these SEs have engaged in reciprocity relations with diverse actors such as individuals, third sector organisations and for-profit businesses particularly at a local level, and to a lesser extent at a regional level (see Table 6.3.).

Figure 6.1. Plural and Multi-Scalar (Socio-)Economic Relations in Masvil and Deethal SEs.



- *Plural and multi-scalar (socio-)economic relations. Commonalities and differences between Masvil and Deethal SEs.*

The findings presented within this section show how Masvil and Deethal SEs have engaged in market-exchange, redistribution and reciprocity relations with actors from different sectors and at different spatial scales to leverage a wide range of resources (see Figure 6.1.). When comparing both rural SEs several commonalities but also some differences have been observed (see Table 6.4.). In terms of market-exchange, both SEs have generated income from the sale of products and services and from renting/leasing spaces to mainly local individuals and businesses. Moreover, both SEs have borrowed loans from national banks and from a non-profit community finance organisation and have benefitted from favourable conditions from some local providers/suppliers (usually SMEs). Nevertheless, a substantial difference has been observed in terms of the greater capacity of Deethal SE to leverage market-exchange resources, the main reason for this being that the SE is based and operate within a stronger local (and regional) economy, represented for example by the presence of a greater number of local SMEs, a relatively high purchasing power of the local population or the locality being situated close to a scenic/tourist site (this locational advantage is later discussed in more detail in section 7.2.1.).

In terms of redistribution, both rural SEs have benefitted from the labour of subsidised staff through national ALMPs and have secured grants from international, national and regional programmes and prizes/awards from their regional authorities. Moreover, both SEs have practised internal (organisational) redistribution by partially subsidising the costs of some of their projects from other projects from which these SEs generate profits. However, some differences have also been observed between the rural SEs studied. On the one hand, Deethal SE has secured a greater number of competitive grants through programmes such as LEADER, this is mainly due to the long-standing presence of voluntary directors with specific skills, gained through professional experience and through third level education, for applying for funding to these programmes, On the other hand, Masvil SE presents a greater diversification of redistribution relations as this SE has secured philanthropic funding from a regional foundation, has assumed the right of use and management of a building within its locality owned by a public national body and has yearly signed service contracts since 2007 with a regional educational body for the hosting of adult education courses. This

greater diversification in terms of redistribution of Masvil SE responds to two different factors, first, to the need of balance its scarce capacity to leverage market-exchange resources. Second, to harnessing opportunities derived from external/structural factors such as the presence of a philanthropist born in the region where Masvil SE is based; the close down of the local police station thus the abandon of a public building within the locality and; the high rates of unemployment due to processes of rural economic restructuring and the low educational levels of the area where this SE is situated which make especially relevant the investment of public funding in the adult education courses hosted by Masvil SE.

In terms of reciprocity, both rural SEs present a number of commonalities such as their capacity to engage regular volunteers and the significance of these volunteers as the driving force of the SEs, besides, both SEs have engaged one-off volunteers for special projects and/or in peak work load moments. Moreover, both rural SEs have engaged in reciprocity relations with diverse stakeholders from their localities related to sharing/lending of equipment, donations/sponsorship (fundraising) and the transfer of the right of use of some assets. Finally, both SEs have engaged in reciprocity relations with similar organisations at a regional level, mainly in relation to the exchange of ideas and knowledge for the funding and implementation of specific projects. Despite these commonalities, some differences have also been observed in terms of the reciprocity relations in which these rural SEs have engaged in, for example Deethal SE has demonstrated a greater capacity to mobilise higher numbers of both regular and one-off volunteers. This difference resides, first, on the more structured and systematic approach of Deethal SE towards the engagement of new volunteers, for example by its regular regeneration of approximately one third of the board every three years and having a mentoring system for the new board members of the SE. Second, the bigger and increasing population and the (increasing) influence of Deethaly towards its rural hinterland have favoured the capacity of this SE to mobilise volunteers as it has a greater population to draw from. On the other hand, Masvil SE has shown a greater capacity to mobilise reciprocity resources related to the transfer of the right of use of assets from local individuals. This is due to a combination between the scarce capacity of this SE to purchase (through market-exchange) these type of assets and the ownership of these assets by individuals with a close relationship with the SE and a great attachment to the locality (this point is further explained in section 7.2.4).

Table 6.4. Type of (socio-)economic relations. Commonalities and differences between Masvil and Deethal SEs.

Type of Socio-Economic Relation	Commonalities Masvil and Deethal SEs	Differences Masvil and Deethal SEs
Market-exchange	Sale of products and services and renting/leasing spaces (mainly local scale) Loans (borrowing) (national scale) Benefitted from favourable conditions from some providers/suppliers (local scale)	Greater capacity of Deethal SE to leverage market-exchange resources due to Deethaly stronger local economy.
Redistribution	Subsidised labour (national ALMPs) Grants (EU, national and regional scale) Prizes/awards (regional scale)	Greater capacity of Deeethal SEs to leverage grant resources from competitive programmes due to long-standing presence of voluntary directors with specific skills in grant funding/applications. Greater diversification of Masvil SE in terms of redistribution relations (philanthropy, use/management of public building, service contract with public body) due to need of balance scarce market-exchange capacity and to external/structural challenges-opportunities.
Reciprocity	Regular and one off-volunteers (local scale) Sharing lending; donations/sponsorship (fundraising); transfer of the right of use of assets (local scale) Exchange of knowledge/information (regional scale)	Greater capacity of Deethal SE to mobilise volunteers due to more structured approach and greater number of population to draw from. Greater mobilisation of Masvil SE of transfer of the right of use of assets due to need of balance scarce market-exchange capacity and due to the ownership of these assets by individuals close to the SE and with great attachment to the locality.

Despite some differences presented between the two rural SEs in terms of the (socio-)economic relations they have engaged in and their resources leveraged, the findings presented within this section show how these rural SEs demonstrate engage in a plurality of (socio-)economic relations, including different types of ('sui generis') market-exchange, redistribution and reciprocity relations. These plural (socio-)economic relations have been developed with actors from different sectors, such as for-profit businesses (SMEs), public bodies, other third sector organisations and individuals. Moreover, despite local and regional relations have been especially prominent for these rural SEs, they have leveraged resources from (socio-)economic relations developed at multiple spatial scales, ranging from grants obtained from EU rural development programmes to in-kind and monetary donations leveraged through local reciprocity.

The engagement of rural SEs in these plural and multi-scalar (socio-)economic relations have allowed these organisations to leverage a wide range of resources for implementing and maintaining their wide range of projects, thus to contribute to an integrated development of their rural localities. However, these SEs have mixed these resources in specific (new) ways to deliver their projects. The following section of the findings explains how these rural SEs have developed resourcefulness practices as a way of contributing to the neoendogenous development of their rural localities.

6.2.2. Collaborative and Collective Resourcefulness Practices

Masvil and Deethal SEs have leveraged a wide range of resources through their engagement in a plurality of (socio-)economic relations. These rural SEs have undertaken (complex) combinations of these resources which have allowed them to deliver their wide range of projects.

In order to address these combinations of resources, the projects developed by these rural SEs have been further disaggregated for analytical purposes into two categories, i.e. 'infrastructure/facilities' and 'services/activities'. The former refers to projects such as the development and/or renovation of the buildings/premises for the community centre, the community offices, the café-shop (in the case of Masvil SE) and the restaurant and car park (in the case of Deethal SE). Moreover, these 'infrastructure/facilities' projects also refer to the conditioning of land and needed infrastructure for their community gardens and outdoor community/public recreational

spaces and the construction of their social housing units. On the other hand, 'services/activities' projects refer to the host and management of their CE Schemes/ALMPs, the community (cultural and social) events organised by the SEs, the adult education courses, breakfast club and afterschool services (in the case of Masvil SE) or the farmers-artisan market (in the case of Deethal SE). Despite the close interrelation between the projects of these rural SEs, as for example the adult education courses are hosted within Masvil SE's community centre (this interrelation was explained in more detail in section 5.3.2.), the resource combination for each of these type of projects presents (some) differences.

- *Mix of resources for 'infrastructure/facilities' projects*

Masvil and Deethal SE have developed 'infrastructure/facilities' projects, such as the community centre, community car park and events buildings or the construction of their social housing units.

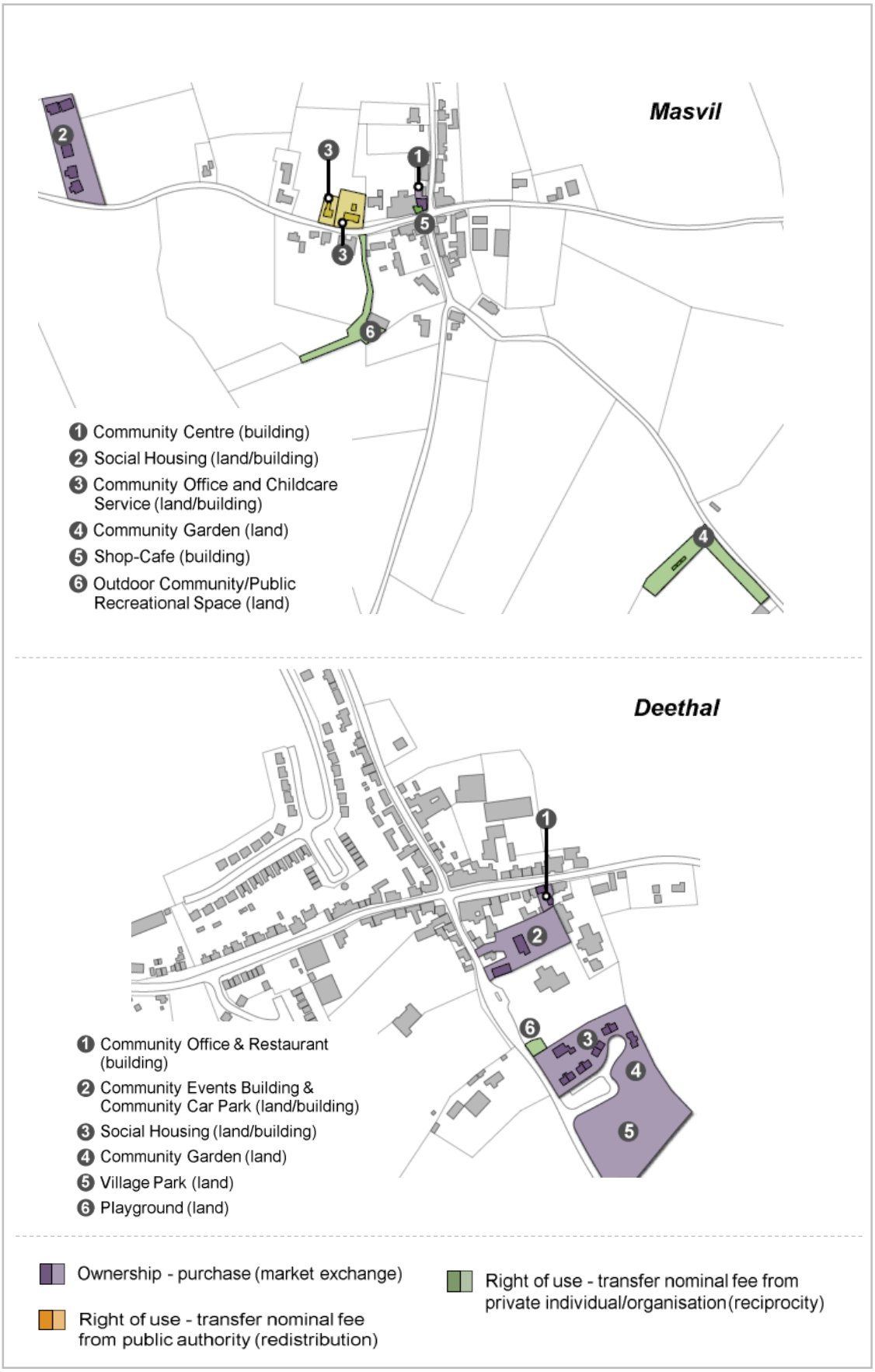
In order to develop these projects, the SEs had to secure the ownership, or the right of use, of the land and/or buildings related to each of these projects. In this regard, a significant difference lies between the two rural SEs studied. In the case of Masvil SE, some of their 'infrastructure/facilities' projects have been developed in buildings and land disposed (against a nominal fee) by local private individuals (reciprocity), e.g. community garden and café-shop, or in premises transferred by a public authority (redistribution), e.g. community office and childcare building and (some) outdoor recreational projects. This SE has also developed some of its 'infrastructure/facilities' projects within land and buildings which it has in ownership due to their purchasing (market), e.g. a piece of land where a social housing state is situated and the building of the community centre.

In the case of Deethal SE, only one of its 'infrastructures/facilities' projects, i.e. the playground, is situated within a land transferred by a local organisation (reciprocity). This SE has purchased (through market-exchange relations) and has in ownership significant assets, land and buildings, within the locality. This greater ownership of assets by Deethal SE is explained by the combination of two factors. First, the opportunities arising from land and buildings available for purchase within the locality. Second, the greater capacity of this SE to generate continuous market income through diverse streams, such as its community lottery which has been in operation since the

establishment of the SE or the weekly (relative) high rates obtained from renting/leasing some of its premises, which in turn have meant an advantageous position to secure necessary loans for the purchase of these assets. On the other hand, Masvil SE has shown a lower capacity to leverage market resources, which can be at least partly explained by structural factors such as its relative isolated position and the low purchase power exhibit by its local population (these points are explained in more detail in section 7.2.1.). However, Masvil SE has balanced its minor market income with a greater diversification in the pursuit of redistributive and reciprocity relations which have provided the right of use of the land and/or buildings required for their 'infrastructure/facilities' projects (see Figure 6.2.).

Hence, both rural SEs have shown their resourcefulness and capacity to adapt to local circumstances and to collaborate with diverse actors such as local individuals, public bodies or other local organisations, in order to leverage these land and/or buildings essential for this type of projects.

Figure 6.2. Ownership and/or Right of Use of Buildings and Land for 'Infrastructure/Facilities' Projects in Masvil and Deethal SEs.



Besides the ownership or right of use of land and/or buildings, the development of these 'infrastructure/facilities' projects has required construction or refurbishment work to transform these assets into functional projects. In order to do so, the voluntary directors of these rural SEs have secured grants. These grants usually cover partially the costs of these projects, for example a maximum of 75% in the case of the LEADER programme, and are paid in stages. The nature of this type of grant aid has pushed the voluntary directors of these SEs to negotiate the borrowing of loans as match funding to generate cash-flow and for the non-granted part of these construction/refurbishment works.

> *"One of the bigger challenges for groups such as Deethal SE is that match finance and arranging bridge finance prior to submitting an application, so they will have had their procurement done, their quotes, they know what they're dealing with, but they'll not alone have to say 'Where will we find that 25%? Do we have that?' They'll also have to talk to the bank or the social finance groupings like Clann Creedo and work out how they can support them in bridge financing that project" [Case 2_Deethal SE_Regional Development Company Staff_11]*

These combinations of grants and loans, and in the case of Masvil SE also philanthropic funds, have been used to pay the material costs, planning permission, but also labour which in these big 'infrastructure/facilities' projects has been usually outsourced to (local) contractors who tender to do the job. Nevertheless, the (collective) volunteer work of the directors of both rural SEs has also been key within these projects, not only for securing the grants and loans and negotiating with the contractors, but also in terms of supervising the projects and reporting to the funding bodies in the case of the grants.

With regard to the loans acquired by these SEs, these have been repaid by a combination of market resources from the renting/leasing of premises and the profits raised from the selling of goods and/or services, the service contracts in the case of Masvil SE (redistribution), together with fundraisings organised by these SEs (reciprocity).

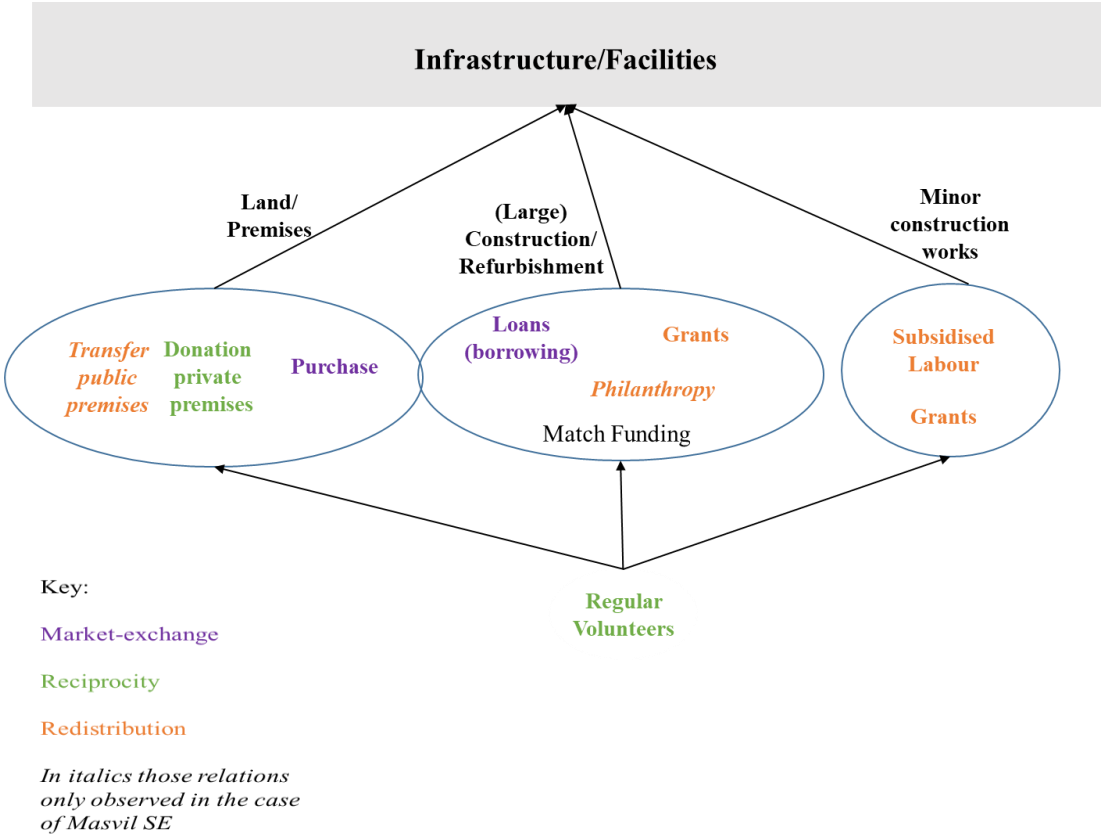
"We [Deethal SE] had a loan taken out but we pay it off. How it works is very simple. The rent from the restaurant pays the loan of the events buildings and car park. If we can continue that, we will be going quite well. We have a great asset. […]. It's a big commitment for the directors to take on, but the community of Deethaly are very good at helping out, we do a lot of fundraising". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Volunteer-Board Member_08]

Finally, both SEs have carried out other 'minor infrastructure/facilities' projects, which have included some small construction works, e.g. walls, footpaths, timber rail. In order to develop these projects, the SEs usually work in collaboration with their Regional Authorities. The usual formula has been the following, the voluntary directors have secured grants from these Regional Authorities to cover the costs of materials (redistribution). These small capital grants have been complemented with the subsidised labour from ALMPs workers and, in some of the projects, also by volunteer labour. Hence, the combination of namely two different redistributive resources, i.e. grants and ALMPs labour, have been instrumental to develop these small but essential minor construction works for enhancing the infrastructure/facilities of their localities.

"Coming from the CE scheme [ALMP], over the years we've done footpaths and stuff like that. Now the Regional Authority is very good in that it gives... We [Masvil SE] provide the labour; they provide the materials. That's where the Regional Authority kicks in" [Case 1_Masvil SE_Volunteer-Board Member_08]

These findings show how, in order to develop their 'infrastructure/facilities' projects, these rural SEs have engaged in collaborative dynamics with different stakeholders and have mixed, although in different degrees and in complex ways, resources leveraged from a combination of market, redistributive and reciprocity relations (see Figure 6.3.).

Figure 6.3. Resource Mix for 'Infrastructure/Facilities' Projects in Masvil and Deethal SEs.



- *Mix of resources for 'services/activities' projects.*

Masvil and Deethal SE have developed 'services/activities' projects, such as regular and one-off community (social and cultural) events or landscaping and environmental conservation and awareness activities, moreover, they host and manage CE Schemes/ALMPs, adult education courses and breakfast club/afterschool (Masvil SE) and farmers-artisan market (Deethal SE).

The workforce employed for this type of projects have come almost entirely from the collaborative work of subsidised paid staff and volunteers[107]. This mix varies depending on the type of 'service/activity', for example community events such as bingo or rambling houses are heavily dependent on volunteer labour and less reliant

[107] Only in the case of the breakfast club/afterschool Masvil SE pays directly with the income from the service (or other projects of the SE) the (part-time) employed staff.

on CE Scheme workers as they usually occur outside normal business hours, whereas in the case of services such as the maintenance of outdoor community spaces or the adult education courses (subsidised) paid staff have a greater role than volunteers.

However, in the former example (community events), CE Scheme workers still play an important role in the organisation of these community events in terms of the preparation and maintenance of the venues and in the dissemination of information about these events through diverse communications channels such as community text phones or social media. Furthermore, some of the CE Scheme workers of these rural SEs have regularly participated as volunteers in the actual implementation of some of these community events organised by the SE, thus blurring the lines between their role as (subsidised) paid staff (redistribution) and volunteers (reciprocity). In addition, in the second example, the voluntary directors still play an important role in terms of promotion of the services to attract users/customers, in managing the financial side of these services or in liaising with the funding body and tendering for the renewal of the service contracts in the case of the adult education courses.
Hence, the collaborative dynamics and mix between these two forms of labour, i.e. subsidised paid staff and volunteers, which derives from redistribution and reciprocity relations, is a common practice in both rural SEs when delivering 'services/activities' projects.

> *"We have a great CE scheme [ALMP] here under the local supervisor, Ruth. We [volunteers from subcommittee of Deethal SE] work in co-operation with her people. We are a small group, but when it comes to the litter pick ever year, and the spring litter clean, we could have up to 30, 35 people [volunteers] on the rota". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Volunteer-Board Member_05]*

Regarding the running (non-labour) costs of the 'services/activities' projects, these are usually covered through a complex mix of resources derived, on the one hand, from the sale of services/goods (market) and the prizes/awards (redistribution) obtained by the SEs. In addition, favourable conditions given by some local providers to purchase materials have also contributed to the organisation of 'services/activities', especially in the case of the organisation of community events and landscaping and environmental projects. Furthermore, (collaborative) reciprocity relations with local individuals, third sector organisations and for-profit businesses are of special relevance

within the mix of resources for these specific projects, i.e. (in-kind and monetary) donations-sponsorship/fundraising and sharing/lending. These collaborations with other (local) stakeholders reduce, to a minimum, the organisational costs, thus making possible the delivering of these 'services/activities' and (usually) generating some profits for the SEs.

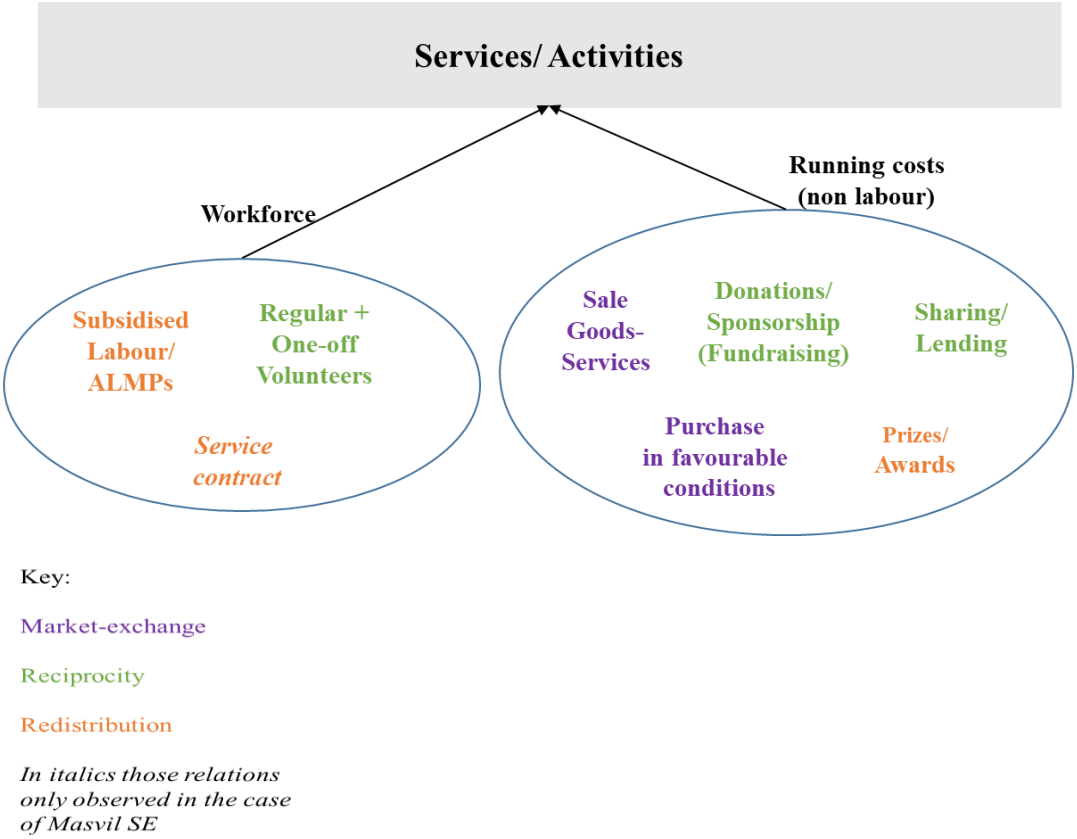
> *"[The volunteers organising Santa Wonderland – community event] don't spend any money on materials, it's all recycled. We tried not to spend, we have to spend a little bit, but our budget is tiny. […] [We take these materials from] local people. At work we've yards of pallets, so I pick out the good ones all year. We'll be watching out for stuff all year that we could use, and if we know if someone is knocking a house, we take the timber out of it or something like that. [….] There's a tree centre down the road, […], and he's very generous. He gives us a load of all the plants for the weekend so we've loads of natural greenery as well" [Case 2_Deethal SE_Other Local Organisation_12]*

Finally, in regard to the revenues generated through the different 'services/activities' projects of these SEs, in some occasions (part of) these revenues are reinvested into the running costs and/or the further development of these projects, e.g. Deethal SE keeps part of the revenues from the organisation of a Christmas market and Santa Wonderland event to assist in the organisation of the same event in the following year. However, it is a common practice in both SEs that the profits generated through these 'services/activities' projects are namely reinvested as match funding and/or to pay the loans contracted for their (big) 'infrastructure/facilities' projects[108].

In summary, in order to develop their 'service/activities' these rural SEs have mixed resources derived from market, redistribution and reciprocity relations. However, due to the significance of volunteers and subsidised labour and of reciprocity relations related to donations-sponsorship and fundraising, the findings show that this type of projects are supported by the complex combination of diverse redistribution and reciprocity, and to a lesser extent market, resources (see Figure 6.4.).

[108] An exception can be found in the case of the breakfast club and afterschool run by Masvil SE, in which the money raised is (mainly) used to pay the salaries of the staff.

Figure 6.4. Resource Mix for 'Services/Activities' Projects in Masvil and Deethal SEs.



- *Collaborative and collective resourcefulness practices.*

The findings presented within this section illustrate how the two rural SEs studied have engaged in a plurality of (socio-)economic relations in order to leverage diverse resources and how these rural SEs have mixed these resources in (complex) specific ways to deliver their projects. This ability to leverage a wide range of resources and to combine them in (new) ways that allow for the delivery of a great breadth of projects have shown the resourcefulness of the organisations studied.

Moreover, the resourcefulness presented by these rural SEs is based on the collaborative practices in which these organisations have engaged in. These collaborative practices can be observed between regular and one-off volunteers and the staff of the SEs but also between the SEs and different actors such as their respective local population, third sector organisations, public (funding) bodies or local for-profit businesses. These collaborations with diverse actors, especially at a local and regional level, have allowed these rural SEs to draw from a wide pool of resources in

terms of labour, finance, assets (land/buildings) and other material aspects. Furthermore, through these collaborative practices these rural SEs have also access to ideas and expertise (knowledge) of these diverse actors. Hence, the findings from this study demonstrate how the resourceful capacity of these rural SEs is intrinsically related to the collaborative practices (synergies) in which these organisations have engaged with actors across sectors and at multiple spatial scales.

> *"We [Deethal SE] have a very strong relation with the post office, the pubs, the big supermarket, and anything else. When it comes to our community festival, all the pubs there will work with us hand-in-hand to ensure that that festival is vibrant, and that everybody benefits. They benefit from it, we benefit from it, and so we work together […] If you take, for example, the shop, the proprietor of that supermarket works very closely with Deethal SE, and provides us with sponsorship during the year, in relation to different things that we'll be going on with, in the community. Then you have the Irish Tree Company, and he works very closely. When it comes to the Santi, the Christmas Party, he provides the trees and he'll spend two days up there. There is a huge level of support, because everybody, particularly the business people, can see the benefit". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Volunteer-Board Member_02].*

Besides the relevance of engaging in collaborative practices with different actors, the findings presented within this section have shown the critical role played by the board of voluntary directors of these rural SEs. Despite charismatic leaders can be found within both rural SEs, the resourcefulness of these organisations lies in their ability to take collective strategic decisions rather than in the visionary performance/behaviour of disconnected single individuals. The relevance of these collective strategic decision making is manifested, on the one hand, by the democratic leadership style shown by the, formers and current, chairpersons of both SEs.

> *"I [as a chairperson] made sure that everybody was involved; that it wasn't just my ideas, the ideas had to come from everybody at those meetings". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Volunteer-Board Member_07]*

> *"Leaders matter a lot and leaders that allow others' voices to come through. And I think that was one of the hallmarks of Martin that I would have seen […]*

people were never saying it's a one-man band, he's going off without us. It was everyone doing it. And I think that trait, in a leader in a community, makes a big difference. That any one person losing the rest, it doesn't work. And I also think that he was very good to spot people with capacity and encourage those people to participate and allow them to get their voice and their space". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Regional Development Company Staff_13].

Moreover, the collective body of governance of each of the rural SEs studied have demonstrated how they operate as a (umbrella) structure that coordinates the different projects delivered by the SEs. Within the boards, each voluntary director is closely involved in one or (usually) various projects run by the SEs. This involvement allows for a detailed knowledge of the projects, including knowledge on the resources used and/or needed and on the work and ideas coming from other volunteers and staff not directly involved in the board. However, this detailed and specific knowledge is complemented with regular board meetings in which the specific projects are discussed from a more comprehensive and strategic perspective. These (internal/organisational) collective-democratic spaces, represented by the regular board meetings, have demonstrated to be key spaces for the resourcefulness of these SEs as, first, (new) ideas coming either from voluntary directors or from other volunteers and/or staff involve in specific projects are brought and collectively discussed. Second, (collective) strategic decisions regarding the allocation and/or mix of resources leveraged from different means/projects implemented by the SEs are taken. Hence, the boards of these rural SEs have enhanced their resourcefulness by allowing new ideas to emerge and coordinating resources through collective (strategic) decision making.

"I was coming from Abbytown and Abbytown didn't have a coordinated structure [referring to a collective body of governance/board of directors] at that time. They had a lot of excellent individual groups but no coordinated structure. Whereas Masvil SE had that structure that brought everything together and, as a result, I think they were seeing progress quickly. They were going about things in a much more strategic way than was happening where I was coming from, where everyone was doing their own little bit individually and it was all fine and perfect individually but there was no big picture [Case 1_Masvil SE_Regional Development Company Staff_18]

In summary, this section illustrates how rural SEs engage in a plurality of (socio-)economic relations with actors from different sectors and at different spatial scales to leverage a wide range of resources. Moreover, the findings show how these rural SEs mix these wide range of resources in specific (complex) ways that have allowed them to deliver a great breadth of 'infrastructure/facilities' and 'services/activities'. Finally, this section demonstrates how the collaborative practices (synergies) of rural SEs with other stakeholders and their collective strategic decisions making is intrinsically related to their resourcefulness.

The strategic interaction (collaboration) of these rural SEs with other stakeholders and the collective decision making demonstrated by these rural SEs concur with the 'corporate agency' of rural SEs argued in the theoretical section of this thesis (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.4.). This study argues that, besides a key aspect for leveraging and mixing resources to implement their projects, the 'corporate agency' of rural SEs (can) contribute to the institutionalisation of different 'forms of economic integration' when pursuing a neoendogenous development of their localities. The next section presents this analysis.

6.3. Local Supporting Structures Contributing to the Institutionalisation of Plural (Socio-)Economic Relations

The previous section of the findings from this study has explained how the two rural SEs studied have engaged in plural (socio-)economic relations with actors at different spatial scales as ways to leverage resources and how specific combinations of these resources have resulted in the delivery of a wide range of projects by these rural SEs. This section presents, in line with the second research objective of this thesis, the analysis of how these rural SEs have worked as 'supporting structures' that have promoted continuous and (relatively) stable (socio-)economic relations representing different 'forms of economic integration' to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

- *Rural social enterprises as 'supporting structures' for local market-exchange.*

Despite engaging in relations within the market, Masvil and Deethal SEs are not considered, neither by their members nor by other (market) stakeholders, as regular/typical market actors that trade their products and/or services in order to obtain profits. Besides their profit seeking constraints and the significance of subsidised and volunteer labour, these rural SEs are very careful about not competing with other local SMEs but rather collaborate with those already established.

However, these rural SEs have demonstrated an important interrelation with market actors and (structural-exogenous) market forces. As an example of the latter, the emergence of both rural SEs is clearly linked with the reaction of (part of) the local population towards processes of economic restructuring suffered in Irish rural areas during the 1980-90's. These SEs are situated in traditionally farming areas with rich pastures used for cattle and dairy production. Structural changes such as the increasing mechanization of farming, the concentration of farms in fewer units with bigger herds, the collection system of milk in bulk tanks directly from the farmers and its transportation to big creameries/factories situated in market towns, meant a downward spiral of closure of businesses, unemployment, outmigration, loss of services; thus a general declining situation within these localities which Masvil and Deethal SEs have tried to reverse since that time.

> *"About '87, Milkygold, who were the main employer in the area, started to close all the creameries [from small villages]. Then […] in '91 they started telling the farmers, 'you've got to get bulk tanks. That's where the lorry would come in and collect your milk in the farmyard. That stopped all the farmers. The farmers were coming to the village on a daily basis, so that started to have a huge ripple effect on the village itself. I remember from about 1993 to 1997, I'm not exaggerating when I say this, between shops and pubs; we probably lost 10 out of the village. For a small village like Deethaly, that was huge.*
> *Unless somebody somewhere was going to stand up and say, 'Okay, this is happening', and we had seen this happening in England before that, 'Is this what we want for our community or are we going to try and do something about it?' so we set up Deethal SE". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Volunteer-Board Member_02].*

Beyond this example from the early stages of these rural SEs, more recent projects have also focused on this interrelation between challenges posed by (structural-exogenous) market forces and the work of these SEs. In this regard, the social housing units developed by these rural SEs address the limited availability of affordable housing within the regular rental market which makes it difficult for vulnerable populations to find adequate accommodation. In the case of Masvil SE, the development of its social housing estate had a threefold aim, first, it was intended to provide affordable accommodation to vulnerable people. Second, it was also intended to attract private housing developers to build on the locality by showing them that if housing was provided people would buy/rent them. Third, it also aimed to stop outmigration especially of local young families who could not find housing within the locality.

Furthermore, Masvil SE's adult education courses were developed initially (2007) as a way of providing training opportunities especially to local population who were unemployed as a result of the closing of a multinational-owned, but locally situated factory, which provided local employment to about 200 people. In more recent years both rural SEs have suffered from the low unemployment rates within the Irish labour market[109] which have made difficult for these SEs to find workers to fill their CE Schemes.

Despite the 'sui generis' nature of their market-exchange relations and the influence in the work of these rural SEs of (structural-exogenous) market forces, Masvil and Deethal SEs have contributed, at a limited extent, to the institutionalisation of local market-exchange relations in different manners. In first instance, these rural SEs have continuously promoted local spending not only by providing (paying) services that enhance market-exchanges between local/regional customers-users and the SEs but also by campaigning and supporting spending in local for-profit businesses. In this regard, the SEs support these local for-profit by disseminating advertisements of these local businesses daily and free of charge within the SE's community social media channels and the community offices. Moreover, these rural SEs have contributed to keep locals and to attract visitors/tourists who (potentially) spend their money within

[109] At the moment of gathering the data unemployment rate in Ireland was below 5% (CSO, 2019). This situation has changed due to the Covid pandemic however, the data collection for this study finished before the pandemic started.

the local for-profit businesses through the organisation of community (leisure-cultural) events and through their landscaping and environmental projects which have contributed to portray their localities as 'beautiful and welcoming places'.

> *"The aim is to keep these people [tourists passing through the national road], when they come to an area, keep the money within the area. Hopefully, that you'll get them to spend their money, and spend some time in the area. You can get somebody flying through a village. They will go for a walk, but they're not spending money. The aim is, entice these people to spend money. […]. We can see here [in the restaurant], Saturday morning, people going or coming from the bike trail will pop in for a cup of coffee. That means spending money in the area, keeping the money". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Volunteer-Board Member_05]*

> *"Everyone [in the village] was going to Kinkcity to see Santa, and we [Deethal SE] were saying, 'if we could keep it here in Deethaly then people will come here and spend. […]. What's happening now is people from outside are coming into the village for our Santa experience. And we combine it with a market of products and knitwear and all that, and we can have anything from 20 to 40 stalls over the two days over Christmas". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Volunteer-Board Member_08]*

In addition, in the case of Deethal SE, it has facilitated the development of a bi-weekly farmers and artisan market on which local producers sells their goods. This project has meant a common point for local market actors to come together and having a physical space to sell their products within the village on a regular basis as well as providing socialisation opportunities for the local population.

Furthermore, both rural SEs have acted as enablers of some emergent local for-profit businesses, especially by providing already developed suitable premises and equipment which host these new local businesses. In addition, on some occasions these rural SEs have also demonstrated their support to these new local businesses by actively promoting and encouraging customers to use the services, by providing expertise, moral support/trust, small financial aid in the early (planning) stages or by embarking on (costly) renovation of the premises to comply with new regulations such

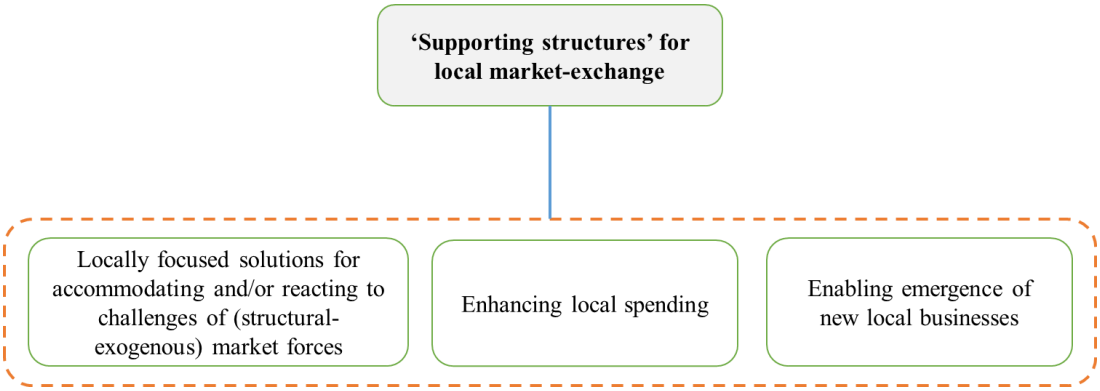
as in the case of the restaurant in Deethal SE. Among these emergent local businesses that the SEs have directly supported are the abovementioned crèche-playschool, the horticulture micro-enterprise in the case of Masvil SE and the restaurant and a recently open bookshop in the case of Deethal SE.

> *"Maria said she would take over the preschool if we [Masvil SE] basically did it up, we put the money in to make it functional" [Case 1_Masvil SE_Volunteer-Board Member_01].*

> *"It was brilliant for me, because I was able to come in, start up my own business [restaurant] without covering huge investment, because the investment was already here. The building was done, the kitchen was done, so I was able to open up the door and just buy in food and a little bit of equipment, and I was ready to go. I couldn't have done that without Deethal SE". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Private Business_15]*

The findings from this study do not suggest any (explicit and/or ideological) critique to the market economy by these SEs. This being noted, the findings show a clear distinction in the work and (socio-)economic relations developed by these rural SEs between, on the one hand, the collaborative and (mutually) supportive relations with local for-profit businesses (SMEs) and; on the other hand, the reaction against the challenges that processes associated with structural-global market forces, big corporations and multinational companies, have meant for the localities in which Masvil and Deethal SEs are based. In relation to this distinction, these rural SEs have acted, despite their limited influence, as 'supporting structures' that contribute to enhance regular local market-exchange relations. They have done so, by providing locally focused solutions/services that have accommodated and/or reacted towards (some of) the challenges posed by (structural-exogenous) market forces; by promoting and enhancing local spending and; by enabling the emergence of some new for-profit business within their localities (see Figure 6.5.).

Figure 6.5. Rural Social Enterprises as Supporting Structures for Local Market-Exchange.



- *Rural social enterprises as 'supporting structures' enabling access to redistribution within their localities.*

Masvil and Deethal SEs have regularly engaged in redistributive relations that have allowed these organisations to access resources such as grants or subsidised labour. In order to access to this type of resources these rural SEs have engaged in regular relations with institutions, especially at a regional level, which are in charge of managing funds from policies/programmes and other type of (redistribution) resources such as public buildings. Therefore, establishing an institutional link between the SEs (and their localities) and these (regional) bodies (the process and nature of this institutional link is explained in greater detail in section 7.2.2). However, the findings from this study show how these rural SEs have leveraged resources from redistribution relations not only to the benefit of their own projects but it is also a common practice that these rural SEs act as 'supporting structures' in terms of 'channelling' redistribution resources towards other (usually smaller) local organisations.

Masvil and especially Deethal SEs have regularly supported other, usually smaller, local (third sector) organisations when applying for grant funding, e.g. providing letters of support or the expertise of some voluntary directors in writing and filling the application forms. Moreover, on some occasions, these rural SEs have applied for grant funding on behalf of local groups/organisations, especially in the cases of those groups/organisations which have not been legally constituted or which were in their very early stages. Hence, these rural SEs have (regularly) enabled other local groups/organisations to access this type of resources by becoming an umbrella (central hub) within their localities for diverse local organisations, and therefore, have acted as

a ‘supporting structure’ to other local organisations in terms of their access to redistribution.

> *“We [Deethal SE] would be the umbrella. The groups would function, but if they wanted in particular to get grants, or they wanted to apply for funding, then we would have the history of having it, so we could get it. They could have it, but we could get it. If you look now at what is happening with the childcare group, they are probably, eventually, going to try to get funding, but they have no history of ever having completed a project. So, if they come in with us, we could say, ‘Yes, they’re part of us, and we want the funding, and look what we have done.’ […] because you have to have that for grants. One of the questions is nearly always, ‘Have you ever managed a project before? If you have, what did you do? Have you got funding before?’ It’s very difficult. There are so many groups now, it’s very difficult to get funding the first time”. [Case 2_Deethal SE_Volunteer-Board Member_06]*

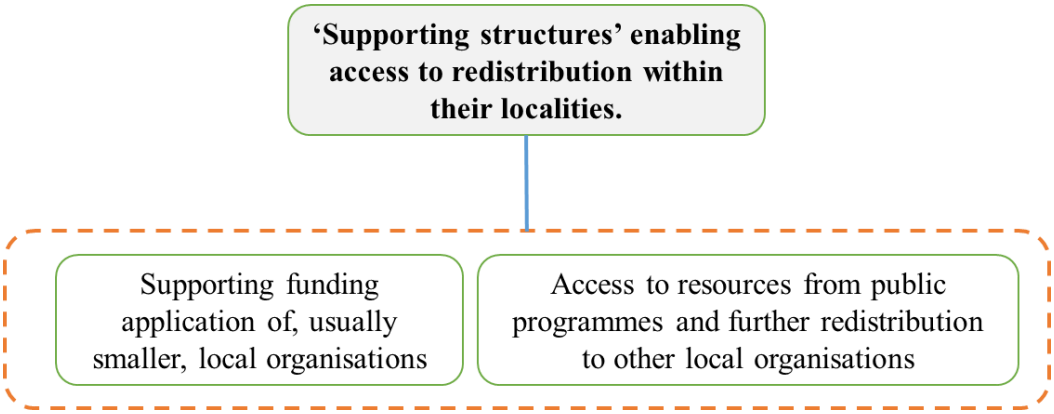
Moreover, besides supporting other local organisations to access their own redistribution resources, these rural SEs have accessed resources from public programmes which have been further redistributed within their localities to the benefit of different local organisations and of the whole local population. A significant example in this regard are the abovementioned ALMPs, which have been running in both localities for more than 20 years. These ALMPs are hosted by these rural SEs and coordinated and managed at a local level from their premises (community offices). However, the subsidised labour acquired through this service work further beyond the specific projects developed by these SEs. In first instance, great part of the work done by this subsidised labour relates to the maintenance of public spaces within the localities. Moreover, the work of these subsidised staff is shared between the projects developed by these rural SEs and by other local organisations, as they also work for example in the refurbishment of buildings acquired by other local organisations, in maintaining the pitch and premises of the GAA[110] and/or the gardens and graveyards of the church. Hence, in this regard these SEs have acted as a local ‘supporting structure’ that enable access to other local organisations and the whole population of their localities to redistribution resources derived from a national programme.

[110] Gaelic Athletic Association.

"We have had a Community Employment scheme, I think, 22 years now. […] you could only make an application if you had a development group in place, which we had in Masvily [Masvil SE] […] We had some funding available to buy the day-to-day things for the participants [CE workers] […] A big thing at the time was the footpaths, the infrastructure. Our footpaths were very, very bad […] We got our footpaths put in. We got our own little stone walls on the approach roads done […] [Another local organisation] had acquired the old primary school, […] with the CE participants, in particular over the winter months. There was a new roof put on it, new ceilings inside, new floors, bathrooms, toilets". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Volunteer-Board Member_07]

These findings demonstrate how these rural SEs have acted as 'supporting structures' enabling regular access to redistribution resources not only by the rural SEs themselves but also to other local organisations within their localities. In this regard, these rural SEs have supported funding applications of other usually smaller local organisations and/or asked on their behalf and; they have also accessed resources from public programmes which have been further redistributed within their localities to the benefit of different local organisations and of the whole local population (see Figure 6.6.).

Figure 6.6. Rural Social Enterprises as Supporting Structures Enabling Access to Redistribution within their Localities.



- *Rural social enterprises as 'supporting structures' enabling and coordinating local reciprocity.*

Masvil and Deethal SEs have engaged in a number of reciprocity relations with different actors especially within their localities and these relations have been critical for these SEs and for the development of their projects. Beyond the reciprocity relations in which these rural SEs have engaged for leveraging resources for their specific projects, these organisations have acted as 'supporting structures', enhancing reciprocity in a regular and systematic manner among different actors within their localities.

In order to do this, these rural SEs have established diverse (offline and online) communication channels such as regularly updated websites and social media profiles, community text phones and community (printed) newsletters. These newsletters are delivered in a regular fashion, weekly (Masvil SE) and monthly (Deethal SE), to various local premises such as the church and local businesses. These diverse communication channels established by these rural SEs have been used to disseminate information about activities related to the SEs and as channels to leverage resources such as donations or volunteer work. They allow the SEs to target different audiences in a regular and systematic manner. However, the use of these communication channels is not restricted to the SEs but they are also used by different local actors such as for-profit business, other third sector organisations and/or (public) Regional Authorities with similar purposes as the abovementioned. Hence, these diverse communication channels provide a permanent platform ('supporting structure') for enhancing regular and systematic synergies between different individuals and/or organisations within the localities where these rural SEs are based and operate, thus contributing to the institutionalisation of reciprocity relations among local actors.

> *"The community office of Deethal SE is where you get your information in, and you get your information out for the people. So for example if the GAA wants to put on something, they will decide to do it, but then they will come in here [to the community office] and they will say, 'can you advertise that for us?' This will be the hub to get the information out. […] The community office is looking for something, but it's on behalf of somebody else. […] It's also about the simple little things. Somebody loses a dog, you put it up on Facebook. We*

do posters. We put it out there. It's all about working for the community". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Staff_10].

Furthermore, both rural SE have engaged in reciprocity relations with other local third sector organisations in order to organise joint projects. The collaboration between the SEs and other local third sector organisations in developing joint community events has enabled the mobilisation of a great number of volunteers from the local population and of donations and sponsorship (monetary and in-kind) from local actors such as local for-profit businesses and individuals. Moreover, these collaborations in joint projects have at the same time reduced the number of occasions that these organisations would have asked for these support if working separately. In this regard, these regular co-organisation efforts for joint projects, namely community events, have also enhanced the institutionalisation of reciprocity relations at local level.

As an example of this institutionalisation of local reciprocity, Deethal SE and its local GAA established in 2014 a collaboration in order to co-organise the local summer festival, a big community event of four days which had previously been held by the GAA alone. Since 2014, these organisations established annually an independent sub-committee with equal members from Deethal SE and the GAA, which works jointly since the winter in the planning and organisation of this significant community event. This structured collaboration has been maintained since 2014 and it has gone beyond the presence of any particular individual personality within the organisations and within the jointly formed sub-committee as (at least some of) the members of this joint sub-committee have rotated every year. Thus these organisations have established a regular and structured (institutional) collaboration at the local level. Besides, the greater leverage of (reciprocity) resources as abovementioned, this regular collaboration between two of the main organisations of the locality has spurred further joint projects between them such as for example the co-organisation of a weekly bingo within the locality.

"It's a very strong relationship now [between Deethal SE and the local GAA], because I mean there is a lot being organised between the two. I suppose none of the two are big enough to hold a good fundraiser on their own, so it was a great idea to come together and unite the two. And I suppose you had more workers to participate then, you see, between the two clubs. […] I think there's great respect between both organisations […] I think they do complement one

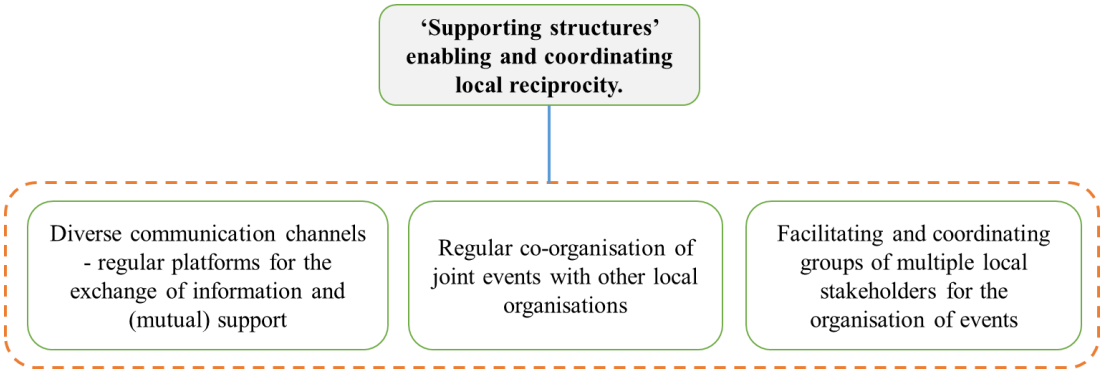
another. They've been together now for so many years and there's never ever been any friction between them or anything like that, no. Again, tempers fray when there's an event being organised and things aren't being done may be as… [laughter] but that's all washed over, then nobody ever thinks of that again; the day after the event is over, that's it, everyone's great friends. [When organising a joint event, we set up a joint independent committee] relay back then to both groups as to what's happening and what they're planning and all that kind of thing. And yes, it works very well". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Volunteer-Board Member_07]

Finally, besides these one-to-one collaborations between the rural SEs with other local organisations, Masvil and Deethal SEs have also regularly acted as 'supporting structures' for local reciprocity by creating and/or facilitating the necessary conditions among different local actors for reciprocity relations to be developed in a regular and structured fashion, thus they have enabled and coordinated reciprocity relations among different local stakeholders. In this regard, it is a common practice that these rural SEs coordinate community events in which they first send an open call to the local population and to other local organisations and businesses to participate. Moreover, the SEs usually coordinate the first meetings and provide the venues to hold these meetings and sometimes also provide the premises for the implementation of the event. However, these events are planned, organised and implemented by groups of multiple local stakeholders such as local for-profit businesses, representatives of diverse local (third sector) organisations, some members of the SEs and/or local individuals. These diverse actors engage in reciprocity relations of mutual self-help among them for the co-organisation of events that benefit, directly or indirectly, each of these stakeholders and that are organised for the whole community to participate. By regularly enabling and coordinating these type of events the rural SEs foster synergies between different local stakeholders which enhance mutual support (reciprocity) and foster a collective sense of belonging (see section 7.2.4. for a more detail explanation of how these rural SEs foster this collective sense of belonging).

Hence, the findings from this study demonstrate how these rural SEs have acted as 'supporting structures' that enable and coordinate regular and structured reciprocity relations among different actors within their localities, therefore, contributing to the institutionalisation of reciprocity at local level. They have done so, by establishing

diverse communication channels among the members of their localities that serve as regular platforms for the exchange of information and (mutual) support; by regularly co-organising joint events with other local organisations and; by facilitating and coordinating groups of multiple local stakeholders for the organisation of (community) events (see Figure 6.7.).

Figure 6.7. Rural Social Enterprises as 'Supporting Structures' Enabling and Coordinating Local Reciprocity.



- *Rural social enterprises as local 'supporting structures' of substantive 'forms of economic integration'.*

The findings of this study show how these rural SEs have regularly engaged with (structural-exogenous) market forces that posed challenges for their localities by trying to accommodate and/or react to these through proposing locally focused solutions to these challenges. Moreover, the findings illustrate how these rural SEs have encouraged/enhanced local spending of both their local population and tourist/visitors and contributed to the emergence of some new local businesses. Despite their limited capacity to influence their local markets, these rural SEs have acted as 'supporting structures' for local market-exchange.

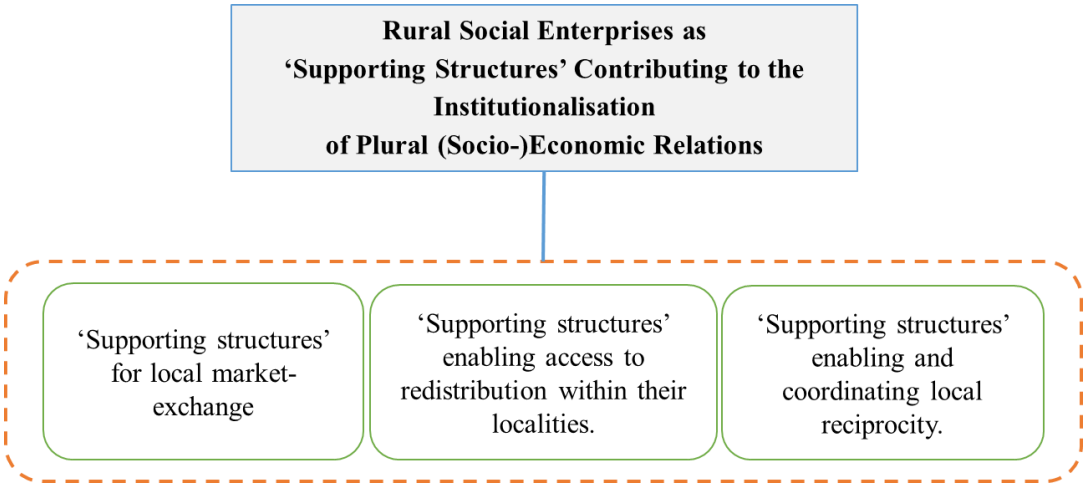
These rural SEs have established regular and strong links with supra-local institutions, mainly regional, that hold redistributive resources. Besides these links, these SEs have regularly redistributed these type of resources among different organisations within their localities and have applied on behalf of other (usually small) local organisations for redistributive resources such as grants. Hence, by linking their localities with supra-local (redistributive) institutions, and by acting as redistributive central structures towards different actors within their localities, these rural SEs have played a twofold

role as 'supporting structures' enabling regular access to redistribution within their localities.

Finally, these rural SEs have also established diverse communication channels that have served as regular platforms for the exchange of information and (mutual) support, regularly co-organised joint projects with other local organisations and facilitated and coordinated events in which multiple local stakeholders participate and engage in reciprocity relations among them. Hence, these rural have acted as 'supporting structures' that have enabled and coordinated local reciprocity in a regular and structured fashion.

Hence, the empirical evidence presented within this section explains how the rural SEs studied have acted as local 'supporting structures' contributing to the institutionalisation of plural (socio-)economic relations within their localities, therefore, contributing to the development of substantive 'forms of economic integration' at the local level (see Figure 6.8.).

Figure 6.8. Rural Social Enterprises as Local Supporting Structures Contributing to the Institutionalisation of Plural (socio-)Economic Relations.



6.4. Summary and Conclusions

Based on the wide range of projects delivered by the rural SEs studied in this thesis which contribute to an integrated development of their rural localities, this chapter has explored how, in order to do so, these organisations have engaged in (socio-)economic relations that represent different 'forms of economic integration'.

The findings presented within this chapter have explained how these rural SEs have engaged in market-exchange relations usually with local actors and to a lesser extent with regional and national actors, through which they have leveraged diverse financial resources. These market-exchange relations have been characterised by the price differentiations between users/customers based on their (socio-)economic situation and by below average market prices transactions, therefore not following a profit maximisation logic. Furthermore, these rural SEs have engaged in redistribution relations with other actors operating namely at regional level and to a lesser extent at national level. Through these engagements these rural SEs have leveraged significant resources, such as (subsidised) paid labour from ALMPs, financial (non-market) resources such as grants from regional, national and EU programme or the use of premises owned by public institutions. In addition, the rural SEs studied have engaged in reciprocity relations primarily with local actors and more occasionally also at a regional level. These reciprocity relations have allowed these SEs to leverage diverse resources such as volunteer work, monetary (non-market) resources and other types of in-kind resources ranging from donations of cakes, the timely use of machinery or the permanent utilisation of assets such as pieces of land and buildings owned by private local individuals or organisations.

Hence, the findings from this study show how through their engagement in these plural (socio-)economic relations with actors at multiple spatial scales and from different sectors these rural SEs have been able to leverage a wide range of resources needed for delivering their projects. In this regard these findings are in line previous studies in the field of (rural) SEs which stressed the ability and importance for (rural) SEs to engage in these plural (socio-)economic relations and to leverage market, redistribution and reciprocity resources for achieving, or at least pursuing, their missions (Gardin, 2006; O'Shaughnessy, 2006; Defourny, Nyssens and Brolis, 2020). Furthermore, these findings also concur with other studies on rural SEs which have pointed to the importance for rural SEs to engage with both local and external actors (e.g. Vestrum, 2014; Richter, 2019).

The findings from this study coincide with Gardin (2006) in showing the relevance for the rural SEs studied of mobilising market, non-market and non-monetary resources and the hybridization by these rural SEs of market-exchange, redistribution and reciprocity (socio-)economic relations and principles. However, this thesis adds

nuance to the typology of SEs in terms of resources mix established by Gardin (2006) which differentiated between five types of SEs. Within that classification three types of SEs, i.e. redistribution SEs; SEs combining market and redistribution and; market and socio-politically embedded market sales SEs, were included within a broader category of SEs not mobilising reciprocity-based resources. Moreover, two types of SEs included reciprocity-based resources but as a complement of redistribution or market-exchange, i.e. reciprocity and predominantly redistribution-funded hybrid SEs and, reciprocity and predominantly market-funded hybrid SEs. The findings shown within this chapter demonstrate that in the case of the rural SEs studied a mix between market-exchange, redistribution and reciprocity is needed for the delivery of their wide range of projects. However, these findings also demonstrate how reciprocity relations occupy a central role within these rural SEs and they constitute the main driving force of these rural SEs. In this regard, the rural SEs studied do not concur with any of the five types of SEs established by Gardin (2006) but they constitute a different type in which market-exchange, redistribution and reciprocity are hybridised under a logic of solidarity as mutuality (reciprocity) relations are at the core of these rural SEs (Coraggio *et al.*, 2015).

Moreover, the findings from this study add nuance to previous studies by linking the plurality of (socio-)economic relations in which these rural SEs engage with the spatial scale of these plural relations. In this regard, this study shows that most of the significant market and reciprocity relations developed by these rural SEs occur at local and, to a lesser extent, at regional levels. Furthermore, in terms of their redistribution relations, although the resources leveraged sometimes proceed from EU and/or national programmes, these rural SEs mostly engage with regional institutions and to a (much) lesser extent with national bodies in order to access redistribution resources. Hence, these findings demonstrate a clear focus from these rural SEs to engage in and develop strong (socio-)economic relations with diverse sectoral actors, such as for-profit businesses, third sector organisations, farmers or public institutions, but mainly at the local and regional levels.

The focus on these local and regional scales by these rural SEs does not diminish the importance of national and international levels for the work of these rural SEs as for example some of the redistribution resources they leverage are designed at these (higher) levels. However, the findings from this study indicate a scarce direct

engagement of these rural SEs with supra-regional actors as suggested by previous studies on rural SEs (e.g. Lang and Fink, 2019; Richter, 2019). The findings from this thesis suggest that these connections with actors at higher spatial scales, namely referring to national public bodies, are made through regional institutions such as RDCs which play an instrumental role in this sense.

In addition to explaining how these rural SEs have engaged in a plurality of (socio-)economic relations with actors at multiple spatial scales and from diverse sectors to leverage a wide range of resources, the findings presented within this chapter have also explained how these rural SEs have mixed/combined these resources to deliver their projects. These findings demonstrate how these rural SEs have acquired the land/buildings to deliver their 'infrastructure/facilities' projects from diverse means such as purchase (market-exchange), donations/transfers from private individuals or organisations (reciprocity) and in the case of Masvil SE also from the transfer of the right of use of public premises (redistribution). Moreover, in order to fund the construction and/or refurbishment necessary for develop these projects, these rural SEs have mainly mixed market resources, such as loans, with redistribution resources, such as grants. These loans and grants have been acquired through the negotiations and grant application writing of the voluntary directors that form the board of the SEs (reciprocity). Moreover, other resources derived from the renting/leasing of premises, the sale of goods/services, fundraisings or philanthropy have also been used complementary to the former to deliver these type of projects demonstrating the ability to manage complex mix of resources (resourcefulness) by these rural SEs.
Furthermore, the findings from this chapter also illustrate how these rural SEs deliver their 'services/activities' projects, usually through the collaborative work of subsidised paid staff (redistribution) and volunteers (reciprocity). Moreover, in order to fund the (non-labour) running costs for these projects, a mix of diverse reciprocity resources, such as in-kind and monetary donations-sponsorship, with market resources such as the revenues reinvested from the sale of goods/services have been applied. Hence, showing (again) the complex mix of resources (resourcefulness) developed by these rural SEs.

By showing the ability of these rural SEs to leverage a wide range of resources and to mix them in complex ways this study echoes a previous study by Barraket *et al.* (2019) that linked the resourcefulness practices of these organisations with their role as rural

community development actors. Furthermore, the findings from this thesis, in line with the abovementioned study, demonstrate how the resourcefulness capacity of the rural SEs studied is based, on the one hand, on the collaborative dynamics (synergies) that these rural SEs have been able to develop both within different members of the SEs, e.g. volunteers and subsidised labour, and with actors from different sectors, e.g. for-profit SMEs, public bodies or other third sector organisations Moreover, the resourcefulness demonstrated by these rural SEs also lies in the collective work of their bodies of governance, i.e. boards of voluntary directors. The findings illustrate how the close connection by some voluntary directors to specific projects are complemented with regular (internal/organisational) collective-democratic spaces (board meetings) in which more comprehensive and strategic discussions of the projects of the SEs take place. This has allowed for collective decision making, the incorporation of new ideas from voluntary directors but also from staff and other volunteers and to the strategic mix of resources in an integrated manner between the projects managed by these rural SEs, which suggest their 'corporate agency'.

Hence, based on these findings, this study demonstrates that **the leverage of resources, through the engagement in plural and multi-scalar (socio-)economic relations, together with the mix of these resources through collaborative and collective resourcefulness practices** constitute a (first) mechanism that can (partially) explain how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

In addition, the findings presented within this chapter also show how these rural SEs contribute to the institutionalisation of substantive 'forms of economic integration' within their localities. In this regard, this study demonstrates how, by accommodating and/or reacting with locally focused solutions towards (some) challenges posed by (structural-exogenous) market forces to their localities; by promoting and enhancing local spending and; by enabling the emergence of some new businesses within their localities these rural SEs have acted, despite their limited influence, as 'supporting structures' for local market-exchange. Moreover, by regularly supporting funding applications of other, usually smaller, local organisations and/or by applying on their behalf and; by accessing resources from public programmes which have been further redistributed within their localities to the benefit of different local organisations and

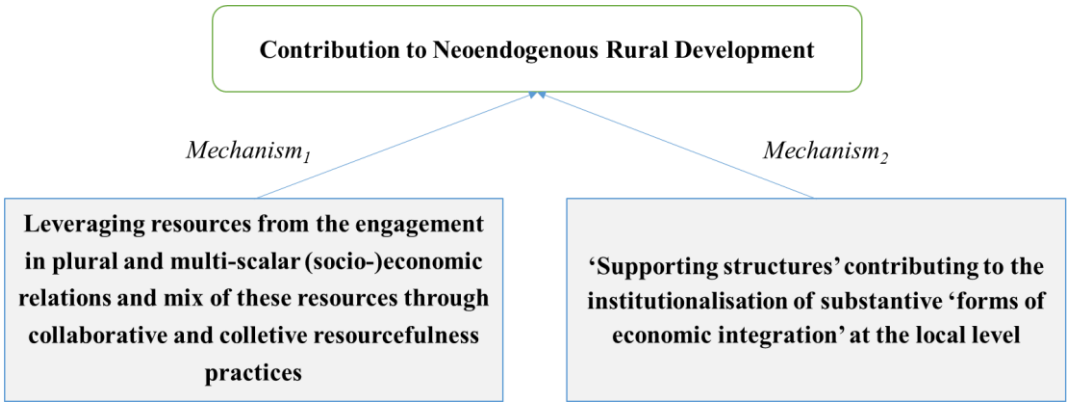
of the whole local population, these rural SEs have acted as 'supporting structures' enabling regular access to redistribution within their localities. Finally, by establishing diverse communication channels among the members of their localities that serve as regular platforms for the exchange of information and (mutual) support; by regularly co-organising joint events with other local organisations and by facilitating and coordinating groups of multiple local stakeholders for the organisation of events based on mutual support, these rural SEs have acted as 'supporting structures' enabling and coordinating reciprocity at the local level.

These findings align with previous studies that analysed the capacity of rural SEs to contribute to institutionalisation processes (Chatzichristos and Nagopoulos, 2020) and the significance of SEs as (supporting) structures within rural communities that contribute to the development of their localities (Onyx and Leonard, 2010). In this regard, the findings show the capacity of the rural SEs studied to enhance institutional collective social entrepreneurship (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006; Wijen and Ansari, 2007), illustrated by their ability to modify their local context by acting as local supporting structures when contributing to the development of their rural localities. Moreover, the findings presented in this chapter build on previous studies by linking the analysis of the institutional role of SEs operating as rural development actors with the 'forms of economic integration' proposed by Polanyi (1977) in his substantive approach to the economy and economic relations. In this regard, the findings from this study suggest that the rural SEs studied act as **'supporting structures' that have contributed to the development of regular and (relatively) structured plural (socio-)economic relations within their localities, thus to the institutionalisation of substantive 'forms of economic integration' at the local level**. This constitutes a (second) mechanism that can (partially) explain how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

In summary, this chapter has presented two mechanisms that can (partially) explain how Irish rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their rural localities. The first of these mechanisms is related to the leveraging of resources from the engagement of rural SEs in plural and multi-scalar (socio-)economic relations and the mix of these resources through collective and collaborative resourcefulness practices. The second mechanism is related to the role of rural SEs acting as

‘supporting structures’ that have contributed to the institutionalisation of substantive ‘forms of economic integration’ at the local level (see Figure 6.9.).

Figure 6.9. Mechanisms for Explaining How Rural Social Enterprises Work to Contribute to the Neoendogenous Development of their Rural Localities (1).



While this chapter has focused on the (socio-)economic relations in which these rural SEs have engaged to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities, the next chapter presents the findings related to the engagement of rural SEs in (socio-)spatial relations with the different dimensions that form their ‘places’.

Chapter 7
Place Engagement for Neoendogenous Rural Development: the Work of Irish Rural Social Enterprises

7.1. Introduction

The previous chapter has demonstrated how rural SEs work to contribute to a neoendogenous development by engaging in plural and mulit-scalar (socio-)economic relations to leverage a wide range of resources, which have been mixed in complex ways through collaborative and collective resourcefulness practices. Moreover, the findings presented in the previous chapter have demonstrated how rural SEs act as 'supporting structures' for the institutionalisation of substantive 'forms of economic integration within their localities. This chapter addresses the (socio-)spatial relations of rural SEs when contributing to a neoendogenous development. Rural SEs have been characterised as place-based organisations intrinsically connected with the rural context in which they are based and operate. In this sense, the purpose of this chapter is to explore how the rural SEs under examination in this thesis have engaged with the different dimensions that form their 'places', i.e. location, locale and sense of place. More specifically this chapter explains how the work of these rural SEs is influenced by the specific locational, institutional, material, and identity features of their rural contexts ('places') and, how, through their engagement with these features, these rural SEs have (re)valorised their rural 'places' to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

Hence, this chapter aims to answer the second research question that has guided this thesis, i.e.:

> R.Q.2: How do Irish rural social enterprises engage in (socio-)spatial relations with different dimensions of their 'places' in order to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities?

7.2. Place Engagement in Irish Rural Social Enterprises

In line with the third research objective of this study this section explores how rural SEs have engaged with locational, institutional, material, and identity aspects of their 'places' in order to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

7.2.1. Harnessing Locational Aspects

An important feature of a 'place' is its location, which relates to aspects such as its relative geographical position, topography and natural environment. Masvil and Deethal SEs have engaged with (some of) these locational aspects when contributing

to the neoendogenous development of their localities. However, the localities in which these rural SEs are based and operate present some heterogeneity/diversity in terms of their location which, in turn, has influenced their work.

As stated in a previous chapter (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.1) Masvily can be considered a relatively isolated location situated within a structurally weak rural area, poorly linked with its nearby market towns and far from the influence of any (strong) urban centre. In this regard, the relative isolated location of Masvily is not related to its remoteness in terms of geographical location as it could be for other rural villages situated in mountainous chains or islands. However, poor connections in terms of transport linkages, internet access and the economic weakness of the surrounding region have contributed to this relatively isolated position.

Deethaly is situated in a relative central location. The village is within a strong agriculture area and it enjoys (relatively) good public transport with two regular buses services to nearby market towns. The village presents good road connections, a national road passes across the village and leads towards a national touristic destination and, a highway, situated at ten km from Deethaly, links the village with the capital of the country (situated approximately 200km away) and with a medium-size/second tier city (at approximately 60 km). Moreover, the village is situated close to a scenic mountain range in which, among other things, featured the opening of an internationally renowned mountain bike centre in 2007 which attracts great numbers of tourists/visitors to the area.

> *"We're very very centrally located. The motorway is only about seven miles [10km] away from us, which is great". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Volunteer-Board Member_08]*

> *"In Deethaly what I love is the view. […] You drive through Deethaly and then the mountains are there in front of you. It is gorgeous. […] [Back in] 2007 the mountain bike park first opened […] we [RDC] did a lot of work with local communities to try and take advantage of what visitors might come to the mountain bike park […] It was the first mountain bike park in the Republic. It was really important then through the Tidy Towns work to try and make communities aware that they are actually going to be the welcome windows for people travelling. Deethaly was one of those points, because if you're*

coming off the motorway it's quite easy to come in through Marytown and go straight to Deethaly and then turn right, and that will take you down to the mountain bike park". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Regional Development Company Staff_11]

These abovementioned locational features have contributed to the reduced private and public investment in the locality where Masvil SE is based, which has lost basic services such as its two local shops, a pub, the post office, police station and healthcare centre in the last 15 years. Moreover, the locality has suffered from the before mentioned closure of a large (international) factory situated in a nearby village which (in the past) provided around 200 jobs in the area and basic services such as the primary school and the church are under pressure to stay in operation.

"We are still waiting [for private investment]. […] We would like to see private development […]. It is just that people, you might have noticed that there is the forestry, the hill, between us and the city. I think that is a step too far, almost, for people to come over. Hopefully, if the motorway is built to the city, then it will be less. It will probably be 25 minutes to the city, so maybe we might become a little bit more of a commuter belt". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Other Local Organisation_17]

On the other hand, in the case of Deethal SE, the locality has experienced in the last 15 years counter-urbanisation processes linked to its relative central location which have attracted, in particular, two cohorts of population, i.e. young families and retired people to the village. As an example of this, in parallel with the construction of the highway[111] two housing estates were built within the locality providing nearly 60 new houses, which are mainly occupied by young families. This increase in the population, since 2006, has had a ripple effect with regards to the capacity of the locality to retain some of its essential services such as the post office, police station or doctor, which have been lost in some of its neighbouring villages. Consequently, Deethaly has increased its influence on its rural hinterland, including other smaller and more isolated nearby localities.

[111] This highway was built between 2006 and 2010.

Due to the importance for the work of these rural SEs of the involvement of the local population and the collaboration with local stakeholders, such as for-profit businesses, the abovementioned locational features has influenced their work. These locational conditions have meant differences in terms of the local economies in which these rural SEs operate, in the case of Masvil SE this is characterised by its weakness, with few SMEs and a scarce population with relatively low purchasing power. These features, in turn, have meant significant limitations in the scope of this SE to leverage market resources through the sale of goods and/or services and through the renting/leasing of its premises within its locality. This has also meant limitations in their capacity to ask for donations and sponsorship when fundraising due to the lack of a critical mass within the locality from which the SE could draw these kind of resources.

Despite these limitations, Masvil SE has harnessed this relative isolated location by offering previously non-existent services directed at those who, due to lack of access to public and/or private transport, are constrained from leaving the village and/or to commuting from nearby villages to other market towns or cities where these services are offered. This is for example the case when it comes to the childcare services and the adult education courses delivered by Masvil SE. In the case of the latter, the courses have been in operation for more than 10 years, being one of the keys for their survival the marketing strategy followed by the staff and voluntary directors of the SE. This strategy is based on targeting potential students from the rural catchment area around Masvily for whom this locality, despite its relative isolated position, is a convenient location to access education rather than other larger education centres situated in market towns or cities. Hence, this local provision enables them to overcome logistic difficulties such as a lack of transport, time and/or money.

> *"If you're 40-50 kilometres outside of the city getting yourself into this campus here in [the city], between public transport, first of all the cost, and especially if you're in receipt of a Social Welfare payment, it's out of certain people's grasp to be able to afford the commute in and out every day. And if they have young children or young families, logistically trying to manage that, and the cost of going in and out to [the city] every day. I find in the case of Masvily with the Healthcare programme [adult education course] that's run there, it's had fantastic certification and placement over the years, and it's because of its location; if you're out in Masvily, trying to come into the [city]*

campus every day is a challenge logistically if you don't have access to a car, and public transport is limiting in terms of the timetable and trying to get yourself on a bus route. […] The whole idea is that it's working in the location that it's working in. It's getting the right outcomes, the right certification, and it's meeting the needs of the people in that catchment area, that driving to [the city] is not feasible but they can make it to Masvily". [Case 1_Masvil SE_ Regional Education Body Staff_16].

On the other hand, in the case of Deethal SE its local economy is relatively strong, characterised by the presence of over 20 SMEs offering services of diverse nature, a growing population with relatively high purchasing power and significant passing (tourist) traffic. This has been harnessed by this SE by developing projects such as the restaurant, situated in close proximity to the national road, and benefitting from custom generated by the growing local population within the village and also from the passing (tourist) traffic through this national road. Moreover, the SE has also harnessed these features through the organisation of regular community events like the summer festival, the Christmas market and Santa or bingo. These events have also benefitted from the presence of a (relative) significant number of local SMEs, e.g. by leveraging sponsorships, from the increasing population within the locality, e.g. by attracting more numbers of volunteers and customers/users, and from the increasing importance of the locality in relation to other (smaller) nearby villages within its rural hinterland, e.g. by attracting the population of these nearby villages to participate in these events usually non-existent in their own localities. Furthermore, these projects have diversified Deethal SE's regular fundraising and market revenues, which as a ripple effect have supported this SE in demonstrating to public and private funders their financial sustainability situating them in an advantageous position to secure (public) grants and (private) loans.

Deethal SE has harnessed features related to the locational aspects of it 'place' to develop (some of) its projects and leverage resources. The specific locational features in which Deethal SE operate, e.g. good road connections or being close to scenic-touristic mountain, and its associated processes, e.g. counter-urbanisation or tourism, create an advantage for the work of this SE in relation to others operating in (relatively) more isolated conditions characterised by a lower population, less local businesses and less accessible.

"Survival of villages at the moment is really an issue; depopulation. Deethal SE, I think, saw that coming down the tracks, and they did everything they could to make sure that that wasn't going to happen to their village. They have pluses in that where they are situated, it is on a main route. That makes it a bit easier for them to survive. But I don't think they would have survived as well as they did if they hadn't the people that were driven, and had a vision to keep Deethaly relevant and alive" [Deethal SE_Regional Authority Public Representative_17]

These findings show how specific locational features, e.g. the relative isolated/central position of their localities, of the 'places' in which these rural SEs are based and operate have influenced their work. These locational features are usually shaped by structural processes that escape the control and/or influence of these rural SEs, for example the provision of good road connections that improve the accessibility of rural localities or the provision of broadband that enables fast internet access. However, the observations from this study also demonstrate how the two rural SEs studied have engaged with their 'places' by harnessing (some of) their specific locational features to provide (previously non-existent) services that contribute to the development of their rural localities.

7.2.2. Navigating their Regional[112] Framework to Enhance Institutional Connectivity

Another important aspect of a 'place' is its institutional framework. In order to develop their projects these rural SEs have engaged with (some) national and particularly with regional institutions such as Regional Authorities and RDCs that have facilitated the leveraging of, especially, redistribution resources. The rural SEs studied are situated within different regional institutional frameworks which, despite presenting some similarities such as those related to policies designed at higher shared (national and EU) levels, illustrate some differences which have influenced the work of these rural SEs.

[112] As previously explained in Chapter 3, section 3.2.2., the term regional within this study is used to refer to a territorial unit smaller than the state but larger than a municipality/locality. Within this section regional refers both, to a politico-administrative territorial boundary, for the case of the Regional Authorities, and, to a territorial unit which is based on the sharing of specific geographical and/or cultural features, for the case of the Regional Development Companies whose territorial operational boundaries do not (exactly) correspond with these of the Regional Authorities.

The findings from this study indicate that those regional (institutional) partners which present a greater decentralisation in their way of working present a favourable framework for the rural SEs in terms of accessibility. In the case of Masvil SE, its RDC has its central office in a market town of the area. The staff of this RDC are based on this central office and tend to work with organisations from the whole region covered by the RDC. The interactions between the staff of the RDC with organisations such as Masvil SE is usually based on specific programmes such as LEADER or the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)[113]. On the other hand, in the case of Deethal SE, its RDC has further subdivided the whole region it caters for into three sub-regions/areas, and its staff is spread in outreach offices distributed across different localities of these sub-regions/areas. Despite some of the staff of this RDC work across the whole region and are in charge of specific programmes, others, such as the development officers, work in a more integrated fashion beyond any specific programme with the population and organisations, such as Deethal SE, situated within a specific sub-region. This more decentralised and integrated approach of this RDC enhances accessibility to its staff expertise and the redistributive resources managed by these regional institutions.

> *"[Masvil and Deethal respective] RDCs have a different model. One [Deethal SE's RDC] has the outreach offices, and the development officer is based in the outreach offices. They are far more ingrained in the communities, and linked in with the communities, and all that is going on, […] The other [Masvil SE's RDC] tend to be based in the office in Kennytown [market town]. The development officers in [Deethal SE's RDC] would know all of the personalities in each community. They would attend a lot of community meetings. There would be a very plugged in kind of way of working […] they would know everybody, and everybody would know them. They are spread throughout the area […] the outreach is better for the communities, because it is more in your area. […] so there is a connectedness there, and there are relationships built". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Other Local Organisations_17]*

[113] SICAP is a national programme funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and by the European Social Fund which aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.

Other differences between key regional institutions supporting the work of these rural SEs, such as their Regional Authorities, are also noted. Since their establishment up until recently Masvil and Deethal's respective Regional Authorities (County Councils) had focused exclusively on the different rural localities of the region they catered for. These regions presented a separate body catering for their respective regional cities (City Council). However, in the case of Masvil SE, its Regional Authority carried out a process of amalgamation in 2014, this process meant the merger of the City Council and County Council, two previously separated institutional bodies. This merger has meant a centralisation of financial and staff/labour resources towards the city and a decrease in the (perceived) relative importance of, especially, small rural localities and the organisations based and operating within them within its region, such as Masvil SE. This, has resulted in an increasing difficulty for this rural SE to access the staff and resources from its (amalgamated) Regional Authority.

> *"In those days and up to recently enough, it was easy to get access to the people you needed from the Regional Authority […] When you met the engineer [staff from the Regional Authority] in Kennytown [market town close to Masvily] and said you wanted to do something in Masvily, he knew where Masvily was. Now [after the Regional Authority amalgamation process in 2014] there's a great chance that they don't, you're talking to them and after a while you realise he doesn't know where Masvily is at all. He has never been here". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Volunteer-Board Member_01]*

Despite these differences, both rural SEs have navigated their respective regional (institutional) frameworks by regularly engaging and establishing strong and regular relations (links) with the abovementioned regional institutions, which in turn have enhanced the institutional connectivity of their localities.

In order to establish these regular links between the SEs and their regional institutions three features have appeared as most prominent. First these SEs are constituted as collective legal entities, hence, despite some individuals being more active within the SEs in developing and maintaining these relations they do so on behalf of the whole organisation. In this regard, these rural SEs have developed institutional links with their regional institutions beyond the presence of any specific individual. Second, these rural SEs are local organisations with a track record of project delivery-

achievements which have enhanced their legitimacy within the local community but also from funding bodies (institutions) that redistribute resources, hence, reinforcing their institutional links. Third, on many occasions these rural SEs have acted as channels through which local actors raise their demands to these higher level institutions such as the Regional Authority. In addition to that, these rural SEs have engaged in community planning processes through which they have managed to articulate a (rather) cohesive voice for the planning and development of their localities. This has also enhanced their institutional links with regional institutions and their capacity to negotiate (redistributive) resources when necessary.

> *"What the Regional Authority always says is if there are people they can work with in the community that are structured, they're organised, they know what they're about, the Regional Authority is more likely to go out and engage with those than a community who is unstructured, where there could be infighting or where they don't know what they're about and it's very hard for the Regional Authority to go out and engage in a situation like that". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Regional Development Company Staff_18].*

Both rural SEs have been highlighted by their respective regional institutions as strong organisations contributing to the development of their localities, using them as exemplary models for other similar villages within their regions. Furthermore, the two rural SEs have been recommended by their regional institutions to national bodies/institutions for their 'best practices' and have been asked by their respective RDCs to host regional information and networking events or presentations of regional reports carried out by the RDCs. The recognition by their respective regional institutions have enhanced the visibility of these rural SEs and of their localities, especially but not only within their regions, where these villages are associated with the good work done by these rural SEs. Furthermore, as a consequence of this recognition by their respective regional institutions these rural SEs have enhanced the (regional) institutional connectivity of their localities. This has helped to give voice to local demands within these regional institutions and to leverage (redistributive) resources otherwise not available and/or accessible within the localities.

In this regard, the lack of a local/municipal tier of government within Irish rural localities such as those where these SEs are based, has made that these rural SEs play

an instrumental role in terms of linking their localities with the abovementioned regional institutions. In order to link their localities with these regional institutions, the regular directional flow of these relations, and especially with their Regional Authorities, is bottom-up. In practice this means that these rural SEs actively contact their respective regional institutions to present their plans and/or demands. Moreover, when dealing with their Regional Authorities, both rural SEs have regularly used their respective politicians, i.e. regional politicians/councillors and/or public area representatives[114], with whom voluntary directors and (some) staff from the SEs maintain a constant interaction, as a way to access and/or pressure these regional institutions, thus to facilitate some of their plans and/or demands.

> "*If you haven't a bit of pressure coming from a local community group [such as Masvil SE], it might never be done. You might put it to the bottom of the list. It is unfortunately the way it works. The people that shout the loudest and put on a bit of pressure and approach the Regional Authority, these people can get their area upgraded […] They [Regional Authority] are good at working with us […] That is where our local County Councillors [regional politicians] come in as well, when you go to the Regional Authority, looking for work done, if you have the backing of your local Councillor [regional politician] with you, it is a great help" [Case 1_Masvil SE_Volunteer-Board Member_05]*.

However, it is important to note that despite their ability to navigate their regional frameworks and in turn to enhance the institutional connectivity of their localities, these rural SEs have demonstrated very limited engagement and capacity to influence the design of policies and/or programmes that underpin these institutional frameworks and associated (redistributive) resources. The abovementioned regional institutions, such as the Regional Authorities or RDCs, represent the intermediaries between these local SEs and higher-level national institutions which are in charge of establishing these redistribution frameworks (public policies and programmes). In relation to this, the findings from this study show that many of these policies and programmes are still perceived by the different stakeholders related to the rural SEs included within this study as being designed by external/distant policymakers and, as a consequence of this, these policies and programmes are regularly viewed as spatially blind. This lack

[114] Democratically elected representatives of a specific area/territory within the Dail (Irish Parliament).

of spatial sensitivity (not rural proofed) refers to, not only, some national sectoral policies, e.g. social inclusion or education policy-programmes, but also in relation to specific rural development programmes such as LEADER, which are criticised for their limited acknowledgment of the heterogeneity of rural areas/localities, perceived as typically benefitting better equipped and bigger localities often to the detriment of smaller villages.

> *"They [SICAP and LEADER] are national programmes and […] the programmes are a one size fits all design. […] So the programme that they [national policymakers] designed to work in inner city, in Dublin, is also supposed to work in rural [regions]. So I suppose it's a misunderstanding of how much variation can be in the country and trying to make that one size programme fit everywhere. Now, they do allow us, whenever a programme comes out, to put in our own development plan but you're doing it within certain structures and certain restrictions. They can make it difficult to do exactly what actually needs to be done". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Regional Development Company Staff_18]*

> *"For smaller communities then the challenges are very different from towns, […] how do you compete with a community from [Deethaly – small village] versus a community from Mannytown [nearby market town]? […] that will be a question on every single [funding] application, around your population. So if a Department is assessing a project where the population impact is 5000 versus 300 […] We're all getting from the same pot and that's just excluding the key cities […]. That is a challenge" [Case 2_Deethal SE_Regional Development Company Staff_11]*

These findings demonstrate how specific features, such as the de/centralised fashion of the regional institutions, of the (regional) institutional frameworks that form the 'places' in which the rural SEs are based and operate have influenced their work. However, these findings also show how these rural SEs have been able to navigate their respective regional institutional framework to establish regular and strong relations with their respective regional institutions which have enhance the institutional connectivity of their localities as a way of contributing to their neoendogenous development.

7.2.3. (Re)Valorising Existing Underutilised Material Settings

Another important aspect of a 'place' is its material settings, represented in this study by the land, buildings and the physical composition of the localities where these rural SEs are based and operate. Masvil and Dethal SEs have engaged with different material aspects of their localities in order to develop their projects. These engagements have usually entailed the renovation of (semi-)derelict buildings and/or the use of previously idle or underutilised pieces of land within their localities. Hence, the historical configuration/layout and ownership of the material settings of the localities where these rural SEs are based and operate have influenced their work.

In this regard, both rural SEs have purchased and/or acquired the right of use of semi-derelict buildings, including some classified as heritage buildings, and underutilised pieces of land within their localities. In relation to the latter, both SEs have experiences difficulties in purchasing (large) pieces of land for developing their social housing projects due mainly to the reluctance of local owners to sell their land. However, both rural SEs managed to acquire the land required to build these social housing units within their localities[115], mainly due to the local contacts of the rural SEs' voluntary directors.

The findings of this study also show some differences between the cases related to the material configurations of their localities and how these have influenced the work of the two rural SEs. In the case of Masvil SE, the lack of (existing/available) large premises within the locality has forced this SE to move some of its big community events to nearby localities with premises more suitable to organise these or in some instances to discard ideas from some voluntary directors and other local volunteers. This limits their capacity to develop some services and activities. As an example of this, a large joint event organised by Masvil SE and its local GAA took place in a hotel room of a nearby market town, the last Halloween party organised by this SE was hosted in the community centre of a nearby village and a Christmas Market-Fair proposed and planned by some voluntary directors was finally discarded due to the lack of any suitable premise within the locality to organise this type of event. On the

[115] In the case of Masvil SE its social housing estate was built in the outskirts of the locality due to the impossibility of getting land within the village.

other hand, Deethal SE, enjoys access to two large buildings and a large piece of land, which used to be the local dairy cooperative creamery barn and yard, in the centre of its locality. After the closure of the creamery, these premises had been idle for about 20 years until Deethal SE purchased the premises from the local cooperative. The SE renovated the premises turning them into a community car park and events buildings (see Figure 7.1.) which have offered a suitable space to organise large community events and the farmers-artisan market within the locality due to its large surface, central location within the locality and its capacity to host a great number of people both outdoors and indoors.

Figure 7.1. Renovation of the Creamery Yard and Barn by Deethal SE.

Source: reproduced with the permission of Deethal SE.

Moreover, these characteristics have made it possible for Deethal SE to provide a material infrastructure which has been key for enhancing the collaboration between the SE and other stakeholders such as third sector organisations and for-profit businesses within the locality. As an example, within these premises, Deethal SE has, usually in collaboration with other stakeholders, organised annual events such as a barn dance, Halloween parties, international food fairs, vintage runs, Christmas Markets and Santa Wonderland or the bi-weekly farmers-artisan market. The (material-space) characteristics of these premises have been essential for spurring these collaborations (synergies) between Deethal SE and other local stakeholders and for developing events that (can) enhance the social and economic life of the locality.

> *"It's a fantastic facility over in the carpark. The collaboration [with the GAA] started when the Deethal SE bought the creamery and developed the carpark and they started fundraising. Deethaly GAA has held a festival for years, and*

with insurances in the GAA it's got more difficult to hold events here [in the GAA premises], so we went over to Deethal SE and we split some of the bigger events" [Case 2_Deethal SE_Other Local Organisations_13]

Furthermore, the development of the community car park has provided a safe and free space to park within the village[116]. This car park has also acted as a central space for the village as it has physically linked/interconnected many of the key buildings and services of the locality such as the church, the GAA, cemetery, post office, primary school or the restaurant (see Figure 7.2.), thereby facilitating for locals and visitors the access to local businesses and services.

Figure 7.2. Deethal SE Community Car Park as a Central Point for the Interconnection of Services within the Village.

[116] It is noted to say that usually in Irish rural villages parking space is not easy to find unless in the margins of the road which can be dangerous in highly transit roads such as the one in Deethaly. Moreover, in Irish towns where car parking spaces can usually be found these are usually managed by for-profit companies and charges apply.

In spite of the abovementioned differences between material settings of the 'places' in which these rural SEs are based and operate, in both cases the SEs have turned a number of underutilised material settings, such as idle farm land, closed police stations, semi-derelict (heritage) houses and the creamery, into functional social and community spaces, such as outdoor recreational spaces, community offices and community centres. Along with contributing to the transformation of the aesthetics of their localities and the conservation and/or promotion of local cultural and historical sites/assets, the renovation of these underutilised material assets has also meant the development by these SEs of purposely-built premises occupied for new local businesses that have provided (previously non-existent) basic services for the localities. This is for example the case of the childcare services in case of Masvily which are hosted in the former/closed police station building or the restaurant in the case of Deethaly which is hosted in a renovated heritage thatched building.

In addition, the processes of (re)valorisation of these underutilised material assets have also meant transfers in terms of ownership and/or use, usually from private to community hands[117]. In both cases, these changes have increased the responsibility, but also the capacity, of the SEs to partly take "ownership" (decide) of some aspects of the future of their localities. This change towards the acquisition and management of community property and/or use of material assets fostered by these rural SEs has contributed to the provision of physical spaces that have facilitated formal and informal social gatherings especially among the local population. This, in turn, has contributed to enhancing social relations/socialisation, community engagement and tackling social isolation, which is an important and persistent challenge for Irish rural communities.

> *"Buying that [semi-derelict heritage listed] house and having [there] the community office was the crucial piece. And then obviously what they [Deethal SE] have done on from that. […] I think the community office was key for bringing the community together. People having a space to talk about things, to get tasks done". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Regional Development Company Staff_16].*

[117] Both SEs have within their legal statutes an asset lock, thus in case of dissolution of the organisations their assets will be transfer to another similar organisation. Thus, the assets will be retained by the community.

"Before Masvil SE formed, there was no place to hold a meeting. There was no community centre. That is the main addition to the place, because you have a public building in the village now, which is very important […] Any group that wants to hold a meeting now, they can hold it there. It has kept the village alive". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Volunteer-Board Member_05].

"The older people who suffer from rural isolation. Absolutely; that really is the aim of the café. And even young mothers who... It can be quite isolating. I remember myself, when I had my daughter, and not really knowing anyone at that time. It could be quite lonely. And at least having a focal point, a place to go for a cup of coffee and sit down, you get to talk to people and you get out". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Volunteer-Board Member_04].

Furthermore, by transforming some of the underutilised material assets of their localities these SEs have conditioned physical spaces to develop different services that have contributed to attracting and retaining people in the villages either to live, work, visit and/or spend. Projects such as the development of the social housing, besides providing some income for the SEs, has also provided a basic service to vulnerable groups, such as an affordable house, and has attracted people to live into the localities. Although the amount of social houses developed is not impressive in absolute numbers, in relative terms their significance increases. This especially refers to the case of Masvil SE, according to the Census of 2016 these social housing represents 10,8% of the households' units and 10,5% of the population of this locality (CSO, 2016). Moreover, this population, mostly families with children, tend to use other services and facilities within the locality such as the childcare, school, pub or recreational spaces thus having a ripple effect on the social and economic life of the village.

In addition, the renovation of different buildings such as the community offices, or the community centre in the case of Masvil SE, have provided the SEs with the necessary physical spaces for hosting services such as the CE Schemes or the adult education courses which have contributed to bringing employment to their localities. Besides providing opportunities for people distant from the labour market through their CE Schemes, the services developed by these rural SEs within these renovated buildings have also contributed towards the creation of other professional positions/employment

opportunities within these rural localities such as the teachers of adult education courses, the supervisors of the CE Schemes or the staff of the childcare services. Moreover, these SEs have renovated premises in which they have hosted new local businesses which contribute to the economic life and employment of the local population. As an example of this, the restaurant leased by Deethal SE to a local chef employs 8 paid staff positions[118].

Therefore, both SEs have (re)valorised underutilised material settings their localities, turning them into functional social and/or community spaces for the benefit of their localities.

> *"Deethal SE is using every resource they have and they're utilising it. That's what happened on the social housing, they had that bit of land there and they utilised it, like the backyard, the events building and car park, they're utilising that. They can see ahead, that they can use the structure that's here, they can use that structure, and use it for the better of the locality". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Other Local Organisation_14]*

These findings illustrate how the specific (historical) configuration of the material settings of their 'places', e.g. availability of (big) pieces of land and/or premises within their localities, has influenced the work of these rural SEs. However, these findings also show how the two rural SEs have engaged with the material aspects of their 'places' by (re)valorising existing underutilised material settings turning them into renovated functional (community) spaces. Therefore, through the (re)valorisation of these existing material settings these rural SEs have provided a material base that has enhanced the social and economic life of their localities.

7.2.4. Leveraging Individual Attachments and Enhancing an Inclusive Collective Sense of Belonging

An important aspect of a 'place' is the individual and collective identification (attachment) of the population with it (the 'place') as a unique entity. Masvil and Deethal SEs have engaged with these identity aspects of their 'places' in order to develop their projects.

[118] 5 part-time, 3 full time (2018).

The localities where these rural SEs are based are recognised as having a historical tradition of community involvement and organisation. This collective involvement in community affairs is represented by the presence within these localities of voluntary Group Water Schemes, Macra na Feirme local groups[119] or GAA clubs, these having their origins well in advance of the establishment of Masvil and Deethal SEs[120]. Moreover, both localities are characterised by being "close knit communities" with strong mutual-self-support and a sense of community pride/community spirit among the local population who tend to identify strongly with the locality.

> *"I'm in Deethaly since 1998 […] it's a very nice community to live, very nice people, very close-knit community; always seem to look out for each other" [Case 2_Deethal SE_Volunteer-Board Member_04].*

> *"I like the community spirit. I like the way people do get involved. If there's something going on, like an event or even a funeral, the village get together and they bring up teas and they have stuff for people in the funeral or they go to the house and they might get stuff ready for the people. It does feel like a community that actually care what is going on around them, not just for their own gain. That's what I find." [Case 1_Masvil SE_Staff_12]*

> *"The sense of pride is unbelievable. They are passionate about their own area. Mannytown is only a few miles over the road, but Deethaly has a sense of where they belong. […] I can remember, my own husband is involved in rugby, he was training a rugby team and some of the Deehtaly boys played on that team […] I remember standing below in Clotown stadium and when they won, without thinking, the three Deehtaly boys stood and sang 'The Mountain',*

[119] Macra na Feirme is an organisation set up in the 1940s which aim is "to contribute to the sustainable development of rural communities in Ireland by supporting the social, economic, cultural, personal development and well-being of young people who have a rural connection including young farmers, by representing their interests in the development and implementation of relevant policies, programs and services at national, regional and local levels and by advocating on their behalf". (https://www.macra.ie/about)

[120] Masvil Water Scheme was set up in the 1970's, its GAA (which includes other village of the same parish) was established in 1955. The local Macra na Feirme group has not been possible to date its origins but several interviewees related to the SE refer to their involvement in this group in their youth (previous to the establishment of Masvil SE) and the previous involvement of some of their older family members.

In the case of Deethal its GAA was established in 1944. Regarding the local Macra na Feirme group the same as in the case of Masvil applies for Deethal. Moreover, Deethaly had a Community Council which preceded Deethal SE and was dissolved after this organisation was established in 1993.

which is their own song. [laughter] […] Their victory was for Deehtaly, while they were playing for Mannytown team. [laughing] That summed up Deehtaly to me, of a passion. These lads were only under 18, and they knew their local song. It's that spirit, and that is really strong in Deehtaly". [Case 2_Deethaly SE_ Regional Authority Public Representative_17]

These characteristics have been harnessed by the two rural SEs. In terms of individual attachments, the members of Deethal and Masvil SEs have shown great attachment towards their localities. This attachment is especially important in the case of the members that form the boards of voluntary directors of these rural SEs (regular volunteers). Some of these voluntary directors have been "born and reared" in the localities and have shown strong (local) social connections in terms of acquaintances, friends and family. Besides, these voluntary directors have also shown an important emotional attachment towards their localities related to their (family) roots, the history and natural environment. However, within the boards of Masvil and especially in Deethal SE a mix between members "born and reared" in the locality and "blow-ins"[121] is on the increase. Despite the fact that the latter do not usually show some elements related to this emotional attachment, e.g. family roots, they still show great local knowledge and attachment namely in terms of social connections, thus their involvement within the board of the SEs is expressed more in social and functional terms. Therefore, these different types of attachment, emotional, social and functional, have acted as a spur for the involvement and commitment of these regular volunteers in the board of the SEs and in the implementation of different projects.

"I believe that committee members like those of Masvil SE are the unsung heroes of the country. Because they bring their expertise, whatever it might be, there's nobody better that has local knowledge. But they just spend so much time on their communities, because we just want to see Masvily improving. […] we have that basic love of our area and that's where it comes from". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Volunteer-Board Member_08].

[121] This is a term used in Ireland for people that have not born in the locality but has moved to it (newcomers). Some members of Masvil and Deethal SEs are considered 'blow-ins' although they have been living locally for more than 20 years, others have moved more recently.

"Since 2010, I've been very involved in full-time on a voluntary basis in Deethal SE […] I just love Deethaly. It's where I was born, it's where my family history is, and in the olden days in Ireland there was a lot to do with the land. We had the English landlords and my family had a long history in that, where they were evicted off the land and then they got their land back. So there was a piece of me that is driven by some of that: this is our land and this is what we need to mind. […]. I have travelled quite a bit, but my heart is back here. My purpose in getting involved in Deethaly SE was when I moved back here, I very quickly realised what the village was lacking. And I said, if we need these things, I can't complain that they're not here unless I'm prepared to – like we say in Ireland – put my shoulder to the wheel". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Volunteer-Board Member_08].

Furthermore, the extensive local knowledge in terms of social connections of the voluntary directors and of some of the staff – especially the CE Scheme supervisors - of these rural SEs have played a significant role in attracting one-off volunteers or workers to the CE Schemes, but also in terms of borrowing tools or machinery from local stakeholders and of raising donations-sponsorship. This personal, face-to-face, interactions and informal channels of communications related to social bonds have shown to be essential for the work of these SEs.

"Lewis [Deethal SE voluntary director] is a great personality with meeting people. If we [Deethal SE] had required any machinery in the village, he would approach the local farmers, for removing rubble, or supplying topsoil and all that". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Volunteer-Board Member_05].

Moreover, the detailed knowledge of the history and the natural assets of the localities have also supported specific decision making by providing key information for embarking (or not) on some projects, for example in relation to the development of buildings and spaces.

"We were lucky in that in '99 the Taoiseach [Ireland's prime minister] would have come to the parish and reopened the Garda [police] station at the time […] so we [Masvil SE's voluntary directors] knew there was a good roof on it. We knew there was a bit of work done to it. There was a lot needed inside,

but we knew we had a better Garda station than most people. As it turned out it was a fantastic site". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Volunteer-Board Member_01].

Despite the importance of harnessing these individual attachments across both SEs, in the case of Masvil SE its more limited capacity to leverage market income for purchase land and/or buildings to develop their 'infrastructure/facilities' projects has been, to some extent, balanced by their capacity to leverage from reciprocity relations the transfer of the right of use of a piece of land and a building. Two key assets for developing their community garden and café-shop respectively. The close contact of both donors with the SE made these transfers in the right of use possible. Moreover, besides the importance attributed by these donors to the function that these assets were going to play, when asked they also stressed the importance of the emotional element of these assets for them as a reason for donating to Masvil SE.

"R: We've kind of donated that [café-shop] building to Masvil SE. They're renting off us for a nominal fee of one euro per year.

I: Why did you give the building to Masvil SE?

R: I guess there was sentimental value there for me; that's where my grandfather had his shop originally, and my great-grandfather. My father grew up there and all my uncles and aunts and I can't remember it as a shop but it was only closed a short time when I was born. […]. And it just seems such an obvious place, right at the crossroads. I think it would bring life back to the village plus I think, when people get together and get innovative in a community, and get an idea like that and bring it to fruition, it's just... I mean, what more could you ask for in life, from the point of view of sense of achievement for everybody involved and what it has to offer". [Case 1_Masvil SE_Private Business_09].

Besides the important role in leveraging these individual attachments, these rural SEs have enhanced an inclusive collective sense of belonging within their localities through facilitating social relations among the local population and community engagement. In this regard, besides the abovementioned projects related to the provision of community/public physical spaces where people can gather in formal (meetings) and more informal ways, these SEs have organised and/or co-organised regularly community events in which the local population is asked to participate from

the planning phase to its implementation. These, in turn, have contributed to enhancing social contacts and engaging a wide range of local people in community affairs, thus enhancing a collective sense of belonging (pride) that has fostered collective action for the benefit of their localities.

> *"Deethal SE have a huge role in helping people here to get funding for worthwhile projects. The other role I think is just bringing people together, regardless of the money side of it, getting people together and getting the volunteers together, and coming up with ideas that might sound crazy but making them work. I mean, the car park, the creamery yard. Things that you think, 'How are we going to do this? We're only a small village,' but Deethal SE has given us confidence in ourselves that we can do it. I did say that they are important in getting grants but a lot of the money for projects here has come from local people and people volunteering their time and they volunteer their skills. So, for example, getting back to the playground I was working at the time with a girl whose father is a builder. So he had a digger. He came up one Saturday and he dug out the area for where we were putting the playground. He did it for free. I think Deethal SE has instilled that pride in our place in that you'll go the extra mile and do something because you know it's going to benefit everybody eventually". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Other Local Organisation_14]*

Furthermore, the diversity of the events/activities and services developed by these SEs, in line with their vision to address the needs of different groups within their localities, has enhanced an inclusive sense of belonging. This inclusivity is exemplified by the development of community outdoor recreational spaces such as walks, playground, picnic areas or parks, and community events such as coffee mornings, international food fairs and local festivals with diverse dancing-music, in which people can participate and gather regardless of their creed, values, age or socio-economic situation. These rural social enterprises fulfil an important social function aimed at inclusivity, in which they complement the work of traditional social institutions in their localities, like the church or GAA. This inclusive and collective sense of belonging has been further strengthened by the development of collective democratic spaces in which the local population is invited to express their opinions, such as the community planning projects. Besides having provided the opportunity to

local people to 'have a say' in the development of their localities, these collective democratic spaces have been used by these rural SEs to engage local people in the participation in community projects developed and/or promoted by these SEs, effectively to spur collective action at a local level.

> *"Another strong voice in the village would also be the church, but the church doesn't speak for everybody anymore […] I think that's gone a lot now. That's why I think Deethal SE is very important, because it gives voice to everybody. […] They had a five-year [community] development plan, and that was decided by, the whole community was invited to a meeting. Everyone was asked what they felt was important that Deethaly needed. […] The process was very good, and it was very fair. What Deethal SE were trying to do was to get people to take ownership of the village, and that if there is something that you really want, instead of saying, 'Why don't we have it?', to do it, and get it, and they will show you how, and help you". [Case 2_Deethal SE_Private Business_15]*

The findings from this section illustrate how the population living within the localities where the rural SEs studied are based have traditionally demonstrated an individual and collective identification (attachment) with their localities. However, these rural SEs have, on the one hand, leveraged the individual attachments of (some of) its local population to work for the SE and to mobilise resources, especially related to reciprocity. Moreover, these rural SEs have enhanced an inclusive collective sense of belonging among the local population. Hence, the rural SEs have engaged with identity features of their 'places' to foster processes of community engagement and collective action for the development of their localities.

7.3. Summary and Conclusions

The findings presented within this chapter explore how two Irish rural SEs have engaged with different locational, institutional, material and identity, aspects that form the 'places' where they are based and operate in order to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

In regard to the engagement with locational aspects, the findings demonstrate how specific features related to the location of the 'places' where these rural SEs are based and operate, such as their relative central/isolated position in relation to other localities

or their proximity to scenic natural environments, have influenced the work of the SEs, for example in terms of their capacity to leverage market income. Despite some differences shown in terms of locational features between the cases, the findings illustrate how both rural SEs have harnessed specific features related, especially, to the geographical position of their localities to develop some of their projects; such as the proximity to a national road to develop a restaurant or the logistical difficulty in accessing market towns and cities to develop local services such as childcare or adult education courses used by the local population with mobility/transportation challenges.

Furthermore, the findings show how these rural SEs have engaged with institutional aspects of their 'places'. In this regard, the findings have demonstrated how those regional institutions working in a more decentralised fashion have facilitated the access of these SEs to the resources they manage in comparison to those working in a more centralised way. Despite these differences, the findings demonstrate how both rural SEs have been able to navigate their respective regional framework to establish regular and strong relations with their regional institutions (Regional Authorities and RDCs). These relations have enhanced the institutional connectivity of their localities as a way of contributing to their neoendogenous development.

In addition, these findings illustrate how both rural SEs have engaged with material aspects of their 'places'. The findings show how the (historical) configuration of the material settings of the localities in which these rural SEs operate presented opportunities but also limitations to the work of the SEs, highlighting some of the differences between the cases for example in terms of the existence/availability of spaces to hold big community events. Despite these differences, the findings demonstrate how these rural SEs have (re)valorised existing underutilised material settings turning (semi-)derelict building and/or idle pieces of land into renovated functional community spaces. These have changed the aesthetics of the localities and the ownership and use of material settings usually from private to community hands. Moreover, these new community spaces have also provided physical locations for the local population to gather in formal and/or informal ways, and physical spaces for new businesses and previously non-existent services to emerge. Hence, the (re)valorisation

of existing underutilised material settings have contributed to enhance the social and economic life of their localities.

Finally, the findings from this chapter illustrate how these rural SEs have engaged with identity aspects of their 'places'. Both localities have been characterised by individuals with a strong (social and emotional) attachment to their localities and by having a tradition of community involvement. In this sense, these findings show how these rural SEs have leveraged the strong individual attachments, expressed in terms of social bonds, emotional identification and functional aims, of some of their local population by engaging these individuals in their voluntary board of directors, therefore harnessing their time and skills for the benefit of their localities. Moreover, the great local knowledge demonstrated by these voluntary directors and (some of) the staff of the SEs have also been used by these SEs to harness further (reciprocity) resources such as one-off volunteers, donations or sponsorship. In addition, these rural SEs have enhanced an inclusive collective sense of belonging within the local population by developing a wide diversity of community events and services for the different groups of their local population. This has been matched by the creation of open and democratic spaces for planning the development of their localities which, in turn, has enhanced the participation of the local population in community affairs and fostered collective action within their localities.

In conclusion, these findings demonstrate how the heterogeneous features of the rural 'places' in which these SEs are based and operate have influenced the work of SEs in terms of their capacity to engage in specific (socio-)economic relations, leverage resources and in turn develop their projects. In this regard, this study concurs with previous literature on the field of rural SEs which have shown the influence of the rural context on SEs (Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012). Moreover, this study adds nuance to this literature by explaining in some detail how some of these contextual features have influenced differently the work of rural SEs operating in (slightly) different rural contexts. Hence, this thesis highlights the importance of treating the rural not as a residual but as a central category and, not as a single-homogeneous category but as a category characterised by its (internal) heterogeneity, for understanding and explaining the work of rural SEs. These heterogeneous rural contexts have positioned some rural SEs in a (dis)advantaged position in respect to

others (Farmer, Hill and Muñoz, 2012). In this regard, this study suggests, in line with Bock (2016), that for portraying a realistic picture of the capacity/potential of rural SEs it is important to build (institutional) frameworks which acknowledges the heterogeneity of rural areas and provides opportunities for the (re-)connection of those structurally weak/marginalised rural areas in order to avoid increasing disparities between those well-equipped and those who are not.

Beyond showing the influence of some features of their rural 'places', the findings presented within this chapter demonstrate how these rural SEs have constantly engaged with locational, institutional, material and identity dimensions of their specific 'places' in order to develop their projects. In this regard, this study concurs with previous studies on rural SEs which have stressed the inextricable linkage between these organisations and their rural context (Smith and McColl, 2016). However, this study adds nuance to previous research by showing how the rural SEs studied have engaged with different dimensions of their 'places'. Despite the differences in terms of locational, institutional and material features presented by the 'places' where the SEs are based and operate, both organisations have shown similar ways of engaging with their rural contexts ('places'). In this regard, the engagement of these rural SEs with their 'places' by harnessing locational aspects have explained how they engage with geographical and natural aspects of their 'places' in order to negotiate and/or translate structural-exogenous dynamics (such as the effects of rural economic restructuring or processes related to out-migration and/or counter-urbanisation) into concrete organisational and community action which have led to the implementation of new locally focused solutions (Woods, 2007; Bock, 2016).

In relation to their engagement with institutional aspects, the findings show how these rural SEs have enhanced the institutional connectivity of their localities voicing up local demands, thus linking their localities with higher institutional levels (Lang and Fink, 2019). This role of rural SEs as actors who speak on behalf of their communities opens questions about the legitimacy of these organisations to occupy this role as their members have not been democratically elected (Kleinhans, Bailey and Lindbergh, 2019; Connelly, Bryant and Sharp, 2020). In this regard, the findings from this study concur with Healey (2015a) as they illustrate how this legitimacy is based on the track record of delivering projects presented by these rural SEs and in the regular

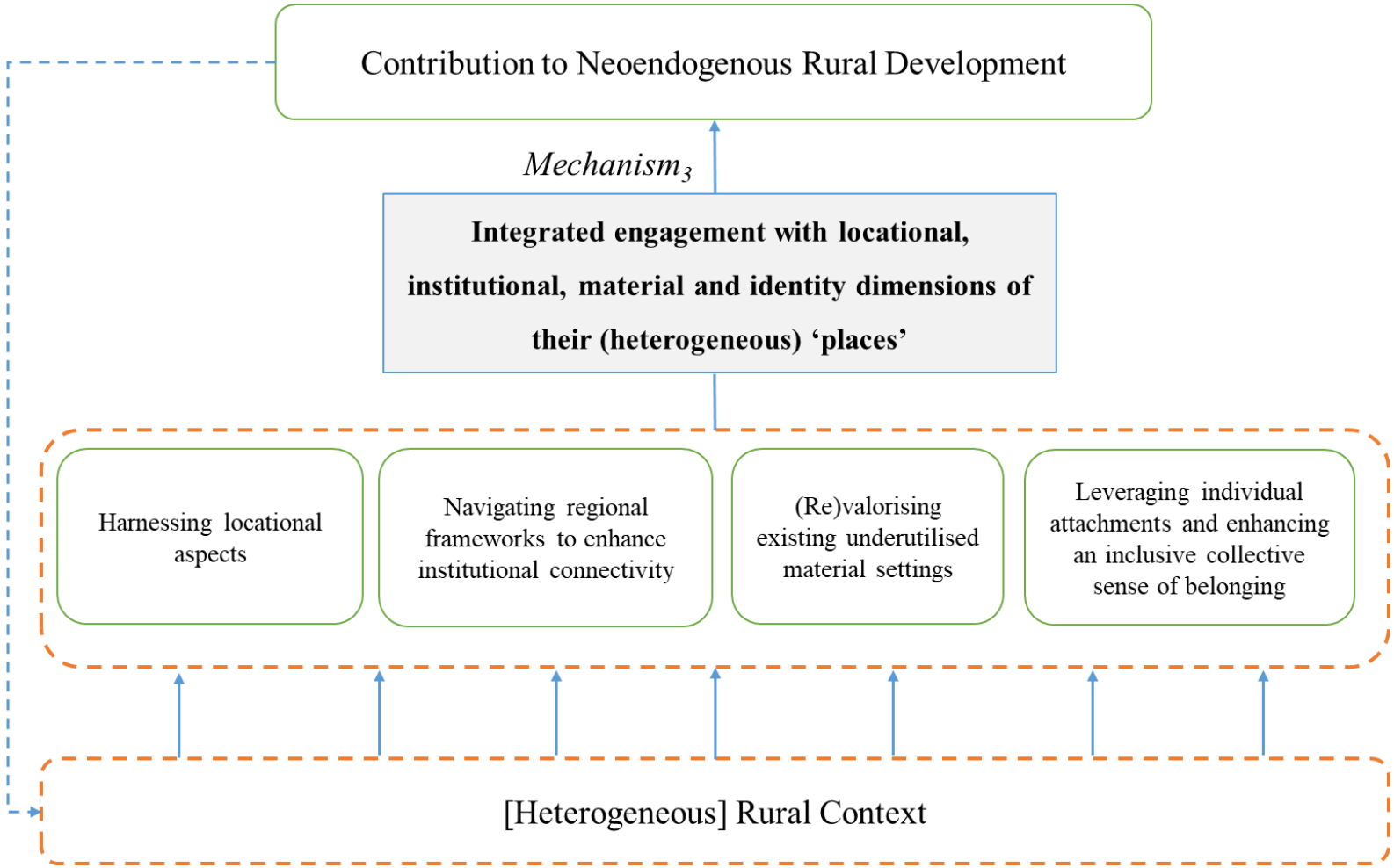
development of democratic spaces/processes, such as their community planning processes, in which the local population is invited to provide their visions towards the development of their localities. Furthermore, by acting as local-community governance actors these rural SEs have assumed some responsibility(ies) for the development of their localities (Bailey, 2012; Bock, 2019). In spite of this assumed responsibility, the findings from this study show a very limited engagement by these rural SEs with institutional bodies at national and international/EU levels nor a willingness and/or capacity to influence in institutional frameworks beyond their localities, thus showing their compliance rather than critique and/or transformation of the development policies/frameworks in which they are 'invited' to participate (Zografos, 2007; Swindal and McAreavey, 2014 in Bock, 2019).

Moreover, these findings highlight the significance that suitable community material assets (infrastructure) play as a necessary base for the socio-economic development of rural localities (Woods, 2011) and the key role that rural SEs (can) play in providing these by (re)valorising existing underutilised material settings (Healey, 2015a). In this regard, this (re)valorisation of material settings has meant a transfer of the ownership and/or right of use of these settings which has been essential for transforming private spaces into community/public spaces and for the further development of 'quasi-collective'[122] goods and services such as childcare or community gardens (Nyssens and Petrella, 2015). Finally, by harnessing individual attachments and enhancing an inclusive collective sense of belonging, these findings demonstrate the ability of rural SEs to leverage unique resources such as those related to the sense of place of their local population (van Veelen and Hagget 2017; Kumpulainen and Soini, 2019).

[122] According to Nyssens and Petrella (2015),

> "the type of production stemming from social and solidarity economy organizations [including SEs] can be described, in many cases, as "quasi-collective" goods and services: childcare services, social integration through economic activity, short-circuit cooperatives, social finance, etc. In addition to the direct benefits for the users, these initiatives simultaneously generate benefits for the collectivity as a whole (a better functioning labor market, social cohesion, local development, public health, sustainable development, etc.). These goods or services are described as quasi-collective because while the user and his/her consumption can be clearly identified, the benefits created are collective" (Nyssens and Petrella, 2015, p. 183).

Figure 7.3. Mechanisms for Explaining How Rural Social Enterprises Work to Contribute to the Neoendogenous Development of their Rural Localities (2).



Hence, these findings demonstrate how these rural SEs engage with their rural context as a (integrated) 'place', i.e. as a unique entity that combines location, locale and sense of place dimensions. Through this integrated engagement the two rural SEs have harnessed and (re)valorised the specific features that characterise their 'places', which have provided with opportunities and limitations to the work of the SEs. Hence, **the integrated engagement with locational, institutional, material and identity dimensions of their (heterogeneous) 'places'** constitutes a (third) mechanism that can (partially) explain how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities (see Figure 7.3.).

This and the previous chapter (Chapter 6 and 7) of this thesis have presented the findings of this study related to the work of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors. The next chapter discusses these findings in relation to previous research, thus it assesses the contribution of this study to knowledge. Moreover, the next chapter establishes some overall conclusions that link the findings of this study.

Chapter 8
Discussion and Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

The last chapter of this thesis presents an overview of this study in order to review the key points presented throughout this monograph. Later on, a discussion of the main findings from this study in relation to existing literature on the field is presented as a way of assessing the contribution of this study to knowledge. Moreover, some implications of this study in relation to research, policy and practice are also outlined before establishing some overall conclusions, limitations and further research directions on the topic.

8.2. Summary of Research

This study deals with the phenomenon of SEs that are based and operate within rural areas and aim to contribute to the development of their localities. Based on a review of the literature in the fields of social enterprises, rural development and rural social enterprises, this study has established some conceptual links, supported by empirical evidence from previous research, about the relevance of studying rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors.

The commonalities that link the characteristics of rural SEs with neoendogenous rural development are based on, first, their relational character, i.e. their focus on the local (endogenous) at the same time that recognising the relevance of links with external actors and acknowledging the influence of external processes/forces. Second, their focus on (social) innovation and (social) entrepreneurship, i.e. on combining resources in new ways to provide new solutions that address challenges presented by rural areas/localities. Third, their emphasis on governance, i.e. the acknowledgement of the role that different stakeholders can play and the importance of establishing synergies/collaborations among cross-sectoral actors. Fourth, their focus on an integrated rural development, i.e. on pursuing a holistic approach towards rural development that includes and balances different dimensions such as social, economic and environmental. Despite these links, to the knowledge of the author of this study, there has not been any study to date that (explicitly) explores how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their rural localities. This exploration has constituted the main aim of this thesis.

To pursue this aim, this study has analysed this phenomenon from a conceptual framework that has drawn from a 'substantive' view of the economy which stresses that economic actors and relations are embedded within economic and non-economic institutions, thus the study of these economic actors and their relations cannot be separated from society and nature. This theoretical lens has been emphasised by previous literature to provide a suitable framework for explaining both SEs and neoendogenous development. The embeddedness of economic actors and relations has been usually studied in relation to the way in which social ties/networks influence the economic behaviour of (social) entrepreneurs. However, due to rural SEs' close relationship with the rural context in which they are based, thus their place-based character, the conceptual framework of this study has incorporated (socio-)spatial dimensions as a conceptual tool for adding nuance to the analysis of the work of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors. These (socio-)spatial dimensions have been incorporated through the concepts of 'spatial scale', distinguishing four levels, i.e. local, regional, national and international and; 'place', which has been disaggregated in three dimensions, i.e. location, locale and sense of place. Moreover, according to the 'substantive' approach, the economy and economic relations are not only constituted by (competitive) market-exchange relations but also by (centricity) redistribution and (mutuality) reciprocity. These represent different 'forms of economic integration' and for the purpose of this study they provide a distinct analytical tool for studying the (socio-)economic relations that rural SEs have engaged in when contributing to the neoendogenous development of their rural localities.

This study has argued for the (potential) 'corporate agency' of rural SEs as collective subjects (entities) that articulate their interests and interact with other actors in order to pursue/obtain them. Within this study, this (potential) 'corporate agency' relates to the (potential) capacity of rural SEs to act as 'supporting structures' that contribute to the regular occurrence of (socio-)economic relations representing different 'forms of economic integration'. This (potential) 'corporate agency' of rural SEs also relates to their capacity of reproducing and/or transforming features of their 'places' through their engagement with different aspects of these 'places'. From these premises this study developed the following research questions and associated research objectives.

The first research question that has guided this study focused on the engagement of rural SEs in (socio-)economic relations that represent different 'forms of economic integration' and it is stated as follows:

> Research Question 1: How do Irish rural social enterprises engage in (socio-)economic relations representing different 'forms of economic integration' in order to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities?

The second research question that has guided this study focuses to the engagement of rural SEs with their 'places' and it is stated as follows:

> Research Question 2: How do Irish rural social enterprises engage in (socio-)spatial relations with different dimensions of their 'places' in order to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities?

Based on its main aim and on these research questions, this study established three research objectives. The first research objective of this study is:

> Research Objective 1: to explore the different kind of (socio-)economic relations which Irish rural social enterprises have engaged in to leverage resources and, how these social enterprises combine these resources in specific (new) ways to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

The second research objective of this study, closely aligned with the former, is:

> Research Objective 2: to explore if, and how, Irish rural social enterprises have worked as 'supporting structures' that promote regular (socio-)economic relations representing different 'forms of economic integration' to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

The third research objective of this study is:

> Research Objective 3: to explore how Irish rural social enterprises engage with different dimensions of their 'places' to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

In order to investigate these research questions and objectives, two in-depth case studies were conducted through an intensive engagement of the researcher with two

Irish rural SEs. During this process rich data from semi-structured interviews, participant observation and other complementary materials have been gathered and thematically analysed, in a constant iteration between empirical data and theory.

This study has thereby researched two Irish SEs which have developed a wide range of projects as a way of contributing to the integrated development of their localities. The contributions of these projects to their localities are manifold, providing (previously) non-existent goods and services, e.g. childcare or adult education courses, and a range of community facilities, e.g. community centre, some of which have enabled the development of further projects by these SEs and other local organisations. The projects delivered by these rural SEs have contributed to development in regard to social dimensions, e.g. by providing affordable housing to vulnerable populations or organising events for the local people to socialise; cultural-heritage dimensions, e.g. by renovating semi-derelict heritage buildings or organising cultural events; economic dimensions, e.g. by contributing to job creation or to the emergence of new local businesses and; environmental dimensions, e.g. by promoting sustainable agricultural practices or awareness among the local population about reducing waste and recycling.

Moreover, these projects do not usually target one of these dimensions alone but they cover concurrently different dimensions of development, e.g. the community gardens developed by these SEs promote sustainable agricultural practices as chemical-free vegetables are grown. At the same, these gardens are also a social outlet as people gather to garden together sharing experience and practices. In the case of Masvil SE, its community garden has also provided some employment to distant from the labour market local population and a (small) market income is generated from the sale of vegetables, hence, promoting the circulation of money within the locality/area. Such revenues are further reinvested in projects of the SE. By showing the interconnectedness of the projects delivered by the SEs and their integrated/holistic approach taken towards the development of their localities, this study shows the role of rural SEs as actors that contribute to an integrated local development, which is one of the features that characterise neoendogenous rural development.

However, beyond a descriptive analysis of the projects of these rural SEs, the main aim of this thesis has been to provide an in-depth exploration of (some of) the

mechanisms that can explain how these rural SEs work to contribute to a neoendogenous development of their rural localities

The findings from this study demonstrate how these Irish rural SEs have developed a plurality of (socio-)economic relations with actors at different spatial scales, although with a great focus on the local and regional levels, and from different sectors such as local SMEs and individuals, regional (public) institutions and other (local) third sector organisations. Moreover, the findings explain how through these plural (socio-)economic relations these rural SEs have leveraged a wide range of resources and how these rural SEs have combined these resources in specific complex ways to deliver ('infrastructure/facilities' and 'services/activities') projects. The resourcefulness demonstrated by these rural SEs is based on their collaborative practices (synergies) with other stakeholders and, on the capacity of their collective bodies of governance to embrace new ideas and to strategically mix resources in an integrated manner.

Based on these findings, this study argues that the leverage of resources through the engagement in plural and multi-scalar (socio-)economic relations together with the mix of these resources in (new) complex ways through collaborative and collective resourcefulness practices constitute a (first) mechanism that can (partially) explain how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

Moreover, the findings of this study show how these rural SEs have contributed to the regular occurrence of these plural (socio-)economic relations within their localities. In this regard, these SEs have regularly reacted and/or accommodated global market forces into locally focused solutions, promoted and enhanced local spending and enabled the emergence of (some) new businesses within their localities. Hence, they have acted as 'supporting structures' for local market-exchange. Moreover, these rural SEs have regularly supported funding applications of other, usually smaller, local organisations and/or have applied for grant funding on their behalf and, have accessed resources from public programmes which have been further redistributed within their localities to the benefit of different local organisations and of the whole local population. Hence, these rural SEs have acted as 'supporting structures' enabling access to redistribution within their localities. In addition, these rural SEs have

established diverse communication channels among the members of their localities that serve as regular platforms for the exchange of information and (mutual) support; have regularly co-organised joint events with other local organisations and; have facilitated and coordinated groups of multiple local stakeholders for the organisation of events based on mutual support. Consequently, they have acted as 'supporting structures' enabling and coordinating reciprocity at the local level.

Based on these findings, this study suggests that rural SEs act as 'supporting structures' that have contributed to the development of regular and (relatively) structured plural (socio-)economic relations within their localities, thus to the institutionalisation of substantive 'forms of economic integration' at the local level. This constitutes a (second) mechanism that can (partially) explain how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

Furthermore, the findings from this study illustrate how rural SEs have engaged with different dimensions of their 'places'. In this regard, the findings show how locational aspects that escape the influence of these rural SEs have conditioned their work. However, these organisations have harnessed different aspects related, especially, to their geographical position to implement their projects. Moreover, the work of these rural SEs has also been influenced by the specific characteristics of their regional institutions (Regional Authorities and RDCs), which are key actors in the work of these rural SEs. The findings illustrate how these rural SEs have navigated their regional framework to establish strong and long lasting relations with these regional bodies, thereby enhancing the institutional connectivity of their localities. In terms of engagement with material aspects of their 'places', this study illustrates how the (historical) material configuration of the localities in which these rural SEs are based has influenced some of their projects. However, both rural SEs have (re)valorised existing underutilised material settings such as (semi-)derelict building and idle pieces of land turning them into community functional spaces for the benefit of their localities, thus providing a material base to develop projects that bring and keep/maintain life into theses rural villages. Finally, in terms of identity these rural SEs are based in 'places' with strong attachment and history of community involvement. The SEs studied have leveraged the strong individual (social, emotional and/or functional) local attachments present in some individuals and have enhanced

an inclusive collective sense of belonging as a way of harnessing unique resources and spurring collective action within their localities.

These findings demonstrate how the rural SEs studied have been influenced by the specific features of their 'places', which have provided both opportunities and limitations to their work. However, the findings also show how these organisations have engaged with their rural context as a (integrated) 'place', i.e. as a unique entity that combines location, locale and sense of place dimensions, in order to harness and (re)valorise (some of) these specific features of their rural 'places'. Based on these findings, this study argues that the integrated engagement with locational, institutional, material and identity dimensions of their (heterogeneous) 'places' constitutes a (third) mechanism that can (partially) explain how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

In summary, this study has explored two Irish rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors by uncovering and explaining three mechanisms which can (partially) explain how these organisations work to contribute to the development of their localities. In order to assess the contribution of this study to knowledge, the following section discusses and integrates these findings with pre-existing literature.

8.3. Contribution to Knowledge

One of the key aspects of the neoendogenous rural development approach is that (rural) development is not dictated by a single sector/actor but it needs the cooperation of different actors (Gkarztios and Lowe, 2019). Previous studies have stressed the role of actors such as rural entrepreneurs (Bosworth and Atterton, 2012; Cejudo, Navarro and Cañete, 2020) or civic initiatives (Salemink and Strijker, 2016) in contributing to neoendogenous rural development. These previous studies have pointed to some key characteristics of these actors in this process, such as the capacity of in-migrant rural entrepreneurs to mix resources from local networks while at the same time drawing from extra-local networks (Bosworth and Atterton, 2012, p. 272) or, the ability of some civic initiatives to establish collaborative synergies with governments and market players to develop broadband in rural areas (Salemink and Strijker, 2016, p. 791). This thesis aims to complement previous research by exploring an under

researched actor, i.e. SEs, in terms of its contribution to neoendogenous rural development.

The descriptive analysis of the projects delivered by these rural SEs presented in this study reinforces previous studies that have stressed the role of rural SEs as actors that contribute to an inclusive and sustainable (integrated) local development (Jacuniak-Suda and Mose, 2014; Kim and Lim, 2017; Olmedo, van Twuijver and O'Shaughnessy, 2019). Yet the main aim of this thesis has been to provide an in-depth exploration of (some of) the mechanisms that these rural SEs have engaged in to contribute to this neoendogenous development of their rural localities. These are discussed in the context of existing literature in the following sections.

8.3.1. Rural Social Enterprises Plural, Cross-Sectoral, Multi-Scalar and Resourceful Relations for Neoendogenous Development

The findings from this study show how the wide range of projects delivered by the rural SEs studied have been made possible due to their ability to leverage resources from their engagement in a plurality of (socio-)economic relations with actors from diverse sectors and at multiple spatial scales and, to their ability to mix these resources through collective and collaborative resourcefulness practices (*'mechanism$_1$'*).

These findings are in line with previous studies in the field of rural SEs, which highlighted the ability of these organisations to leverage market, redistribution (non-market) and reciprocity (usually non-monetary) resources from their engagement with actors from different sectors (O'Shaughnessy, 2006; Liddle, McElwee and Disney, 2012). These previous studies focused on rural SEs with specific missions, such as working integration (O'Shaughnessy, 2006) or rural transportation (Liddle, McElwee and Disney, 2012). This study expands on previous research, first, by adding empirical evidence from another specific type of SEs as these which aim (an integrated) local/community development.

Moreover, this study adds nuance to previous studies by showing the critical role that have played the boards of voluntary directors and the engagement of the rural SEs studied in mutual self-help (reciprocity) relationships with a diversity of local stakeholders, such as individuals, for-profit businesses, other third sector organisations

or farmers, as a way to leverage monetary and non-monetary/in-kind resources. Despite the critical role of reciprocity relations, these rural SEs also need to operate in the market (engaging in market-exchange relations) and leverage public resources (engaging in redistribution relations) to deliver their wide range of projects and, in turn, to contribute to an integrated development of their localities. Based on these findings, this study suggests that the way in which the rural SEs studied work aligns with (some of) the economic indicators proposed by Coraggio *et al.* (2015), i.e. 'hybridization of economic principles and logic of solidarity' and 'consistency of economic, social and environmental commitment', to define social (solidarity) enterprises. These economic indicators are based on a review of the EMES indicators (ideal type) of SE from a solidarity economy perspective. This perspective emphasises, among other things, the significance of informal practices, of aligning economic, social and environmental objectives/practices and of hybridizing plural economic principles as proposed by Polanyi under a logic of solidarity.

In this regard, Polanyi's substantive view of the economy has been acknowledged as a suitable theoretical underpinning for exploring neoendogenous rural development from early scholars in that field (Ray, 2006). Moreover, the substantive view has been used as a framework for analysing the resource mix of (rural) SEs (Gardin, 2006; Nyssens, 2006; O'Shaughnessy, 2006). However, this is the first study that provides empirical evidence which supports the substantive view of the economy as a suitable conceptual and analytical framework to explain how rural SEs work as neoendogenous rural development actors. This study demonstrates the link between the capacity/ability of rural SEs to contribute to an integrated development of their localities and their engagement in plural (substantive) (socio-)economic relations.

Besides examining the plurality of these (socio-)economic relations, this study has also analysed the links between the type of (socio-)economic relations and the spatial scales at which these relations have been developed. In this regard, the two rural SEs studied have engaged in market-exchange relations mainly with local stakeholders and to a lesser extent at regional and national levels. Redistribution relations have been developed mainly with regional institutions but also, to a lesser extent, with national bodies. Finally, reciprocity has been developed with a wide range of actors predominantly at the local level and to a lesser extent at a regional level. Hence, this

study highlights the ability of rural SEs to engage in (plural and) multi-scalar (socio-)economic relations and to draw resources from both local and external actors/networks in line with previous studies on the field of rural SEs (Vestrum, Rasmussen and Carter, 2017; Lang and Fink, 2019; Morrison and Ramsey, 2019; Richter, 2019).

However, the findings from this study differ from these previous studies which have stressed the engagement of, particularly, rural social entrepreneurs in supra-regional (national and international) networks. What this study has found are not highly mobile (individual) rural social entrepreneurs but rather collective SEs rooted in their rural localities with numerous and diversified links at the local and regional levels and, a capacity to develop timely strategic links at higher levels (particularly national) for specific projects rather than in a regular fashion. Despite the limited supra-regional links established by these rural SEs, this observation does not diminish their intermediary role between actors from different sectors and at different spatial scales. The findings from this study show how rural SEs have established links between their localities and extra-local, mainly regional, actors and institutions, however, this is complementary to their local embeddedness. Hence, despite the differences related to the spatial scale at which rural SEs develop (regular) relations with other stakeholders, this study concurs with Richter (2019) who showed the ability of rural SEs to act as 'embedded intermediaries' (Richter, 2019, p. 186).

Furthermore, in relation to the plural, cross-sectoral and multi-scalar relations in which these rural SEs have engaged, this study demonstrates how these relations have usually been developed with other rural based actors/institutions. These findings differ from a recent study which has stressed the significant development of cross-border (rural-urban) constellations of actors, including SEs, when providing new solutions for challenges of rural localities/areas (Noack and Federwisch, 2019). The findings from this thesis demonstrate the significance of the regular and active engagement and collaboration of rural SEs with actors at different spatial scales and from different sectors. However, this study shows how for the case of the studied rural SEs these relationships have been developed with actors that share similar challenges associated with being based and operating in a rural locality/area. This observation does not deny

the interconnection between the 'rural(s)' and the 'urban(s)', yet, for the work of these rural SEs this interconnection is more related to structural processes, such as out-migration or counter-urbanisation, which influence their work rather than to the development of collaborative relations with 'urban' stakeholders.

This study demonstrates the significance of both local (endogenous) and external (exogenous) relations for the work of rural SEs in line with a neoendogenous approach to rural development (Salemink and Strijker, 2016; Cejudo and Navarro, 2020). Despite this, the findings from this study reveal that the regular relations developed by these rural SEs with external actors/institutions occur usually at a local and regional level and that these relations are mainly between actors from different sectors but also based and operating within rural areas. Hence, this study stresses the significant role that geographical, social, economic and/or identity aspects related to the 'rural(s)' have in the development of the relations by these rural SEs and the relevance of rural-rural linkages for these SEs when contributing to a neoendogenous development.

Furthermore, this study illustrates how these rural SEs mix diverse resources in (new) complex ways to deliver their projects. In this regard, the findings from this thesis align with previous studies that highlighted the resourcefulness of rural SEs when providing locally oriented solutions (Di Domenico, Haugh and Tracey, 2010; Barraket *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, this study shows how the resourcefulness demonstrated by these rural SEs is based, on the one hand, on the collaborative practices (synergies) established between these rural SEs and other local stakeholders such as SMEs, farmers or other third sector organisations and regional actors such as Regional Authorities and RDCs. On the other hand, in the capacity of their collective (and democratic) body of governance to strategically mix these resources in an integrated manner to develop and maintain the projects of these rural SEs. Thus, this study adds nuance to previous literature in the field of rural SEs by stressing the collective and collaborative practices (de Bruin, Shaw and Lewis, 2017) that have led to the resourcefulness of rural SEs. This study concurs in this regard with literature in the field of social innovation that highlights the collective and collaborative character of (social) innovation within rural areas and their importance for neoendogenous rural development (Dargan and Shucksmith, 2008; Neumeier, 2012; Esparcia, 2014; Bosworth *et al.*, 2020). Hence, this study adds empirical evidence regarding the role

of specific actors such as rural SEs in fostering this type of innovation as a way to contributing to the development of their localities.

Summing up, the findings presented contribute to previous knowledge in the fields of rural SEs and rural development by demonstrating and explaining how the contribution of rural SEs to an integrated development of their localities is linked with their engagement in a plurality of socio-economic relations with cross-sectoral actors at different spatial scales, mainly local and regional. Moreover, this study contributes to knowledge by explaining how the resourcefulness of these rural SEs is based on their collaborative and collective practices. This (partially) explains how these rural SEs work to contribute to a development of their localities which can be characterised as integrated, relational and (socially) innovative, hence, in line with the approach advocated by neoendogenous rural development (Gkartzios and Lowe, 2019).

8.3.2. Rural Social Enterprises as Local Supporting Structures for Neoendogenous Development

The findings from this study show how beyond engaging in plural (socio-)economic relations for the development of their specific projects the rural SEs under investigation have acted as 'supporting structures' that have enhanced regular and (relatively) stable market-exchange, redistribution and reciprocity relations among other stakeholders within their localities. Hence, these rural SEs have contributed to the institutionalisation of substantive 'forms of economic integration' at the local level ('*mechanism*$_2$').

By acting as such 'supporting structures' these rural SEs have contributed to the development of their localities not only by advancing their own projects but also as a "structure which can take the initiative and work across the community by engaging a range of organizations" (Onyx and Leonard, 2010, p. 395). Therefore, this study concurs with Barraket et *al.* (2019, p. 196) for whom rural SEs can act as a community resource in themselves for their own local population. This means that these rural SEs act as stable resources (structures) which enable the access to further (tangible and intangible) resources which can be used by, and benefit to, other local organisations and individuals sharing a similar objective of local rural development.

By acting as (community) 'supporting structures' at the local level these rural SEs contribute to, first, the emergence of new local organisations and businesses. For example, by providing suitable physical spaces to host local businesses or to hold meetings and by supporting emergent organisations in securing funding resources. Second, they have contributed to the regular interaction, exchange and cooperation between local organisations. For example, by creating platforms (structures) for regular exchange of information or by facilitating regular events in which multiple local stakeholders interact and collaborate. Third, they have contributed to establishing regular coalitions of different organisations within their localities. For example, by regularly organising joint projects with other third sector organisations. Fourth, they have enhanced awareness within the local population of pursuing a common goal such as the (integrated) development of their localities. For example, by developing community planning projects where different voices within the community are included and these are later developed into a formalised common document that is distributed among the local population. These four features concur with what Amin and Thrift (1994, p. 14) described as 'institutional thickness', which has been acknowledged as a significant feature for localities/regions to foster local (economic) development (see also Copus *et al.*, 2011; Rodríguez-Pose, 2013; Zukauskaite, Trippl and Plechero, 2017). According to Amin and Thrift (1994, p. 15) when these four characteristics are brought together they can enhance institutional persistence and flexibility, i.e. the reproduction/stability of organisations and their ability to learn and change; collective knowledge and capacity building; innovation; trust and reciprocity; and a sense of inclusiveness.

Hence, this study suggests that by acting as local 'supporting structures' that have contributed to the regular occurrence of substantive 'forms of economic integration' these rural SEs have enhanced the 'institutional thickness' of their localities as a way of contributing to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

Despite the scarce literature that links rural SEs with institutionalisation, a study from Chatzichristos and Nagopoulos (2020) conducted in rural Austria, illustrates how the institutionalisation process of a rural SE within its regional political-institutional framework can be explained by a combination of structural forces and the actions (agency) of the SE. The findings of this thesis align with this study as they show how

the interaction between structural factors, such as rural economic restructuring or the specific politico-administrative framework of Ireland which lacks a municipal/local tier of government, and the 'corporate agency' demonstrated by the rural SEs studied can explain their role as 'supporting structures' for the regular and (relatively) structured development of (socio-)economic relations representing substantive 'forms of economic integration' within their localities. By showing how through their 'corporate agency' these rural SEs have been able to act as local supporting structures (institutions), this study contributes to the literature on the (broader) field of institutional work/entrepreneurship (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006; Leca and Naccache, 2006), first, by adding empirical evidence to previous studies on (individual) social entrepreneurs (Desa, 2012; Muñoz and Kibler, 2016) from under researched actors such as rural SEs, which represent collective forms of institutional social entrepreneurship (Wijen and Ansari, 2007). Second, by analysing the institutional role and the links of rural SEs with institutions at different levels (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). This study shows the influence and capacity of the rural SEs studied to create and/or modify (some) institutions at the local level; however, this study also shows the limited capacity of these local actors to directly engage and influence wider institutional frameworks in which they are embedded and which also affect their work. Concerning the latter, this study points towards the relevance of intermediary institutions at the regional level which can channel up the demands of local rural SEs but also channel down policies/programmes from national and international levels (Lang and Fink, 2019). Furthermore, the institutional role played by the rural SEs studied stresses the public and political dimensions of these organisations (Laville, Lemaître and Nyssens, 2006). The rural SEs studied actively interact with other actors from the public, (for-profit) private and third sectors and through their relations and their projects aim to intervene in public and political matters that affect the development of their rural localities by creating, reinforcing and/or modifying institutional structures (Zukin and DiMaggio, 1990; Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006) and by actively participating within rural governance frameworks (Cheshire, 2016; Esparcia and Abassi, 2020).

In summary, by linking the analysis of the institutional role of SEs operating as rural development actors with the 'forms of economic integration' proposed by Polanyi

(1977) this thesis adds empirical evidence to the call of Ray (2006) for studies of neoendogenous development to focus on how market-exchange, redistribution and reciprocity manifest at the local level and "more importantly […] whether, and how, these factors can be manipulated so as to create the conditions for territorial development" (Ray, 2006, p. 280). Hence, this study shows how rural SEs work to create these conditions not only by delivering a wide range of projects but also acting as 'supporting structures' that contribute to the institutionalisation of substantive 'forms of economic integration' at the local level.

8.3.3. Rural Social Enterprises Engagement with Place for Neoendogenous Development

The findings from this study demonstrate how the studied SEs have engaged with their rural context as a (integrated) 'place'. The specific features of the (heterogeneous) rural 'places' where these SEs are based and operate present both opportunities and limitations to the work of the SEs. However, through this integrated engagement with locational, institutional, material and identity dimensions of their 'places' these rural SEs have harnessed and (re)valorised the specific features that characterise their localities to contribute to a neoendogenous rural development (*'mechanism$_3$'*).

By exposing this engagement with their rural 'places', this study aligns with previous literature in the field of rural SEs that revealed the close relationship between these organisations and the contexts in which they are based and the influence of this rural context on the work of rural SEs (Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Smith and McColl, 2016; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). This study expands upon this literature by conceptualising the rural context in which the SEs studied are based and operate through the concept of 'place'. Through the use of 'place' and its three dimensions of location, locale and sense of place, this study provides a nuance analytical tool to research the relation between SEs and their contexts, by emphasising the relational influence of geographical, natural, institutional, material, socio-economic, cultural and identity (contextual) aspects in the work of rural SEs. The findings presented within this thesis have provided empirical evidence of how rural SEs have harnessed and (re)valorised concurrently locational, institutional, material and identity aspects of their 'places' to contribute to the neoendogenous development

of their localities. By showing this integrated engagement with their 'place', this study concurs with literature from the field of rural entrepreneurship which highlights the importance of rural entrepreneurs' 'placial embeddedness', understood as the "entrepreneur's intimate knowledge and use of the (local) physical, cultural and historical landscapes and the concern shown for the well-being of the places" (Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors, 2015, p. 586). This study adds nuance to this previous research by stressing that this 'placial embeddedness' is also a significant characteristic of collective social entrepreneurial entities such as rural SEs engaged in neoendogenous rural development.

Furthermore, by explaining how these rural SEs have engaged with different features of their 'places' this study demonstrates how rural SEs harness and (re)valorise local (endogenous) assets and features of their localities, such as their geographical relative position or underutilised material settings, when contributing to local development. However, by explaining this engagement with their 'places' it has also been demonstrated how the work of these rural SEs is intrinsically related and therefore has been influenced by the specific features of their 'places' and by exogenous-structural forces, such as processes related to connectivity or the historical material configuration of their localities. In this sense, this study aligns with Healey (2015a) who observed that the capacity of an English rural SE to contribute to local development lay in a "combination of structural opportunity and agency power" (Healey, 2015a, p. 18). This thesis has analysed this interaction between contextual features (structures) and the (corporate) agency of rural SEs from a critical realist perspective. Thus this study has shown how pre-existing structures, such as for example the historical material configuration or the tradition of community involvement of the localities in which the rural SEs are based, have influence their work. Moreover, this study shows how these SEs through their corporate agency have engaged with these pre-existing structures, for example by turning privately owned derelict buildings into functional community spaces or enhancing a collective sense of belonging to foster collective action, in order to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities. By establishing an analytical separation, duality (Archer, 2000), between (previously existing) structures and agency, this study differs from Steinerowski and Steinerwska-Streb (2012) which studied the interplay between structural-contextual features and the agency of rural

SEs for creating sustainable rural communities drawing from Giddens' structuration theory, therefore, conflating structure and agency making them (analytically) inseparable (Archer, 1982, 1995). In this sense, this study contributes to add empirical evidence to previous studies which have researched the relation between structure and agency from a critical realist perspective (e.g. Leca and Naccache, 2006; Maier and Simsa, 2020) and to advance the field of rural SEs by engaging in theoretical, ontological and epistemological debates which have been scarce to date (van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020).

Finally, by showing the influence of different dimensions of their 'places' in the work of rural SEs and the integrated engagement of these organisations with their 'places' when contributing to the development of their localities, this study links its findings to literature in the fields of place-based (local/regional) development (Pugalis and Bentley, 2014) and neoendogenous rural development (Gkartzios and Scott, 2014). This thesis contributes to these wider (theoretical and political) discussions related to neoendogenous and place-based (rural) development, first, by providing empirical evidence about how the specific features of their rural 'places' have influenced the work of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors, thus supporting the assertion that 'place matters' (see also section 8.4.2. Implications for Policy for greater development of this point). Second, by explaining how specific rural development actors, such as SEs, engage with locational, institutional, material and identity features of their context ('places') to "enhance the capacity of local areas to steer these wider [structural] processes, resources and actions to their benefit" (Ward *et al.*, 2005, p. 5).

8.3.4. Rural Social Enterprises as Neoendogenous Development Actors

This study makes two main contributions to our knowledge on rural SEs and neoendogenous rural development. First, this study provides empirical evidence which reinforces the (conceptual) links established within this thesis between the characteristics exhibit by rural SEs (van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020) and the principles of the neoendogenous approach for the development of rural areas (Gkartzios and Lowe, 2019; Cejudo and Navarro, 2020).

In this regard, this study shows how the two rural SEs studied have developed a wide range of projects which have contributed concurrently to different dimensions of development within their localities, hence, these rural SEs have contributed to an integrated local development. This study also demonstrates that although these rural SEs are locally embedded, they have at the same time engaged in relations with external actors, moreover, their work and projects undertaken have been influenced by external influences that transcend the SEs and their localities. Hence, the work of these rural SEs is characterised by its relational character. Furthermore, these rural SEs have mixed a wide range of resources to provide new solutions to local challenges, hence, they have demonstrated their social entrepreneurial and innovation capacity. Finally, these rural SEs have engaged with different actors from the public sector, market and civil society when contributing to the development of their localities, hence, they have acted as one of the local community governance actors that contributes to local development. Therefore, the first overall contribution of this study has been to provide empirical evidence that reinforces the relevance of the links between the fields of (rural) SEs and specific forms of rural development such as those proposed from a neoendogenous perspective.

However, this study aims to go beyond a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the phenomenon and, instead, also seeks to provide some causal explanations (Fleetwood, 2014) about the role of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors. The identification and explanation of these mechanisms which can (partially) explain how rural SEs work to contribute to the neoendogenous development of their localities constitute the second, and main, overall contribution of this study to knowledge. In this regard, this study shows how this role can (partially) be explained by the engagement of rural SEs in a plurality of (socio-)economic with cross-sectoral actors at multiple spatial scales and their ability to mix resources from these relations through collaborative and collective resourcefulness practices (mechanism$_1$); their capacity to act as local 'supporting structures' contributing to the institutionalisation of substantive 'forms of economic integration' (mechanism$_2$) and; their harnessing and (re)valorisation of locational, institutional, material and identity features of their context through their engagement with their rural contexts as a (integrated) 'place' (mechanism$_3$).

8.4. Implications of the Study

8.4.1. Implications for Research

This thesis has explored how rural SEs work to contribute to a neoendogenous development of their rural localities. By exploring SEs based and operating in rural areas this study contributes to the call of Muñoz (2010) to develop a geographically diverse and sensitive SE research field. More specifically, this study points to the significance of studying rural SEs in (slightly) different rural contexts, thus treating the 'rural' in relation to SEs not as a homogeneous and fixed category but as a diverse and dynamic element with important implications for the work of these organisations. Moreover, by incorporating spatial elements, based on the concepts of 'spatial scale' and 'place', into the conceptual framework and the analysis of the two in-depth case studies that form this thesis, this study demonstrates that geography matters when analysing the complexity of the work of these organisations as development actors. In this sense, this study contributes to the development of 'relational (micro)geographies' (Farmer *et al.*, 2020) in order to study how SEs work.

This thesis has drawn from a conceptual framework based on a socially and naturally embedded perspective towards the economy and economic relations represented by the 'substantive' view of the economy (Polanyi, 1957). In this regard, this study has provided an empirical exploration of how the substantive economy constitutes a sound theoretical framework that links the (research) fields of SEs and (neoendogenous) rural development (Steiner and Teasdale, 2019; van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020). By complementing the market with other 'forms of economic integration' such as redistribution and reciprocity, this study shows that this broad perspective towards the economy and (socio-)economic relations can provide a powerful analytical tool to add nuance and draw a realistic picture of the work of SEs as rural development actors.

8.4.2. Implications for Policy

This study has not specifically focused on establishing a direct link between SEs and policies that affect their work. However, when considering rural SEs as development actors some policy implications can be drawn from this study. On the one hand, this study reveals the great capacity of these organisations to harness (untapped) resources both within their localities and beyond and to combine them in locally focused

solutions that address the needs of their local populations. A diversity of examples provided throughout this thesis illustrate these points and the effective use of resources by these organisations to achieve an integrated development within their localities. This observation concurs with the increasing attention of SEs from policymakers both within Ireland and the EU (Government of Ireland, 2019; European Commission, 2020).

On the other hand, this study indicates that even in 'successful' cases, such as those represented in this thesis, the role of SEs as key development actors of their localities/areas raises some issues. In terms of the types of resources leveraged and combined by these organisations, as discussed in this thesis, rural SEs have demonstrated a rather limited capacity (and willingness) to operate within the market. Thus it does not seem realistic to understand these organisations as quasi-regular market actors/businesses (social businesses). Their limited capacity to operate within the market is especially important in regard to the employment of (highly-qualified) staff members who due to the range and complexity of projects run by (some) rural SEs seem to be necessary to assure the sustainability of these projects. However, this study highlights how much of the work of these rural SEs requires these highly-qualified staff, e.g. grant application writing or technical design and supervision of infrastructure projects. In this context, the critical role that reciprocity resources have played within these rural SEs and, especially the volunteer labour/specialist skills of the directors, has meant an overburden for some members of these communities with a great risk of burn-out, and (potential) disparities between communities with a diversity of (locally available) skills and those who do not. Besides the significance of skill differences, the locations (in terms of connectivity rather that the strictly geographical position) where these rural SEs are based have meant a dis/advantage position for their work, reinforcing the statement that "place matters" (Barca, McCann and Rodriguez-Pose, 2012; Bentley and Pugalis, 2014).

These observations relate to, at least, two policy implications. First, in order to be realistic the long-term contribution of rural SEs to an integrated development of their localities/areas policy must support the financing of highly-qualified employment positions, which would complement the less qualified but still significant work of ALMP participants. Otherwise these organisations are in a permanent fragile position

due to their great dependence on the skills and time provided by volunteers, meaning a permanent threat for the development and continuity of their projects.

Second, (socio-)spatially sensitive policy that address not only the different needs between urban and rural localities but also between different rural localities and areas can represent a tool for levelling rather than increasing the inequalities between those rural SEs and localities better equipped and those left behind[123]. Hence, policy based on equity and positive discrimination measures towards these rural localities/areas and SEs that face grater challenges should be encouraged rather than policy/programmes based on equality in which every SE compete for the same resources from an (supposedly) equal basis regardless of their stage of development and the challenges associated to the (rural) localities/areas where they are based and operate.

Finally, these recommendations reinforce the notion advocated from neoendogenous rural development theory and policy that an integrated development should be based on different complementary actors such as third sector organisations, (local) businesses, public authorities, civil society, that tend to establish synergies among them and that (policy) frameworks that enable these synergies/collaborations are needed rather than silo policies primarily focused on single (disconnected) actors and/or sectors.

8.4.3. Implications for Practice/Practitioners

Despite the rather theoretical focus of this study some more practical implications for rural SEs practitioners can also be drawn. First, this study illustrates how the structure of the main body of governance of the studied SEs have allowed for an integrated mix of the wide range of resources leveraged by these rural SEs. These collective bodies of governance present a close connection of different voluntary directors to specific projects, which allows for a detailed knowledge of the characteristics of each of the projects and a close relation with staff and other volunteers. This has been complemented with regular (board) meetings in which collective strategic decision making from an overall and more comprehensive perspective are taken. This kind of

[123] Following the statement that 'place matters', this study acknowledges that this statement is not only applicable to rural SEs but also to those based and operating within urban settings. However, due to the rural focus and empirical evidence presented within this study, the relevance of 'urban heterogeneity' for the work of SEs has not been investigated neither explicitly referred.

structure has been identified as relevant in order to foster knowledge exchange and strategic mix of resources, avoiding overlapping of resources and goals between different projects.

Second, this study shows how rural SEs need the support and contribution of the local community for the development of (most) of their projects. In this regard, establishing regular communication channels (both online and offline) with the local population in which local affairs and the work of rural SEs is shared in a transparent manner seems to be key for engaging different local stakeholders. Moreover, the coordination between different local organisations in joint projects, and establishing clear and common goals have been identified as important features that allow rural SEs to establish collaborative synergies and to leverage greater resources than by working separately. In addition, the development of open and democratic spaces, such as community planning processes, in which the local population is invited to give their opinion and the formalisation of these views and ideas into a written document with specific and realistic tasks have also contributed to developing a cohesive vision of local development. Moreover, these democratic processes and their formalisation have contributed to enhance the engagement of local stakeholders and, external stakeholders such as public, non-profit and for-profit private funders.

Third, this study demonstrates that in order to develop a diversity of projects rural SEs need to combine a wide range of resources. Besides the importance of local resources these need to be complemented by resources not available within the localities. In this regard, looking beyond the localities for financial and non-financial resources is critical for the work of rural SEs. This finding suggests that a balance between local embeddedness and developing external connections is needed. This requires a continuous reaffirmation and dedicated resources and time from the rural SEs to achieve this balance in order to (strategically) engage with different actors situated at different spatial scales and across different sectors. This complex intermediate (hybrid) position should not be overlooked from (rural) SEs members as it is key for their effective functioning.

8.5. Limitations and Further Research

This study is not absent of limitations. Beyond some methodological limitations presented in a previous section of this thesis such as those related to (statistical) generalisation, within case sampling and retrospective accounts of some experiences (see section 4.6.), this study presents some further limitations.

First, this study is based on the investigation of two in-depth case studies of relatively successful rural SEs. Despite some limitations and shortcomings of their work that have been highlighted throughout the study, the main aim of this thesis has been to explore how these rural SEs work to contribute to the development of their localities. The main focus has therefore been on their contributions and enabling aspects rather than in the in-depth exploration of their 'downsides'. This study has signaled some of these shortcomings of rural SEs such as their limited capacity to influence (non-local) institutional frameworks, the overburden of volunteers, limitations in their capacity to offer competitive salaries or the questioning of their legitimacy to represent and/or speak on behalf of their communities due to the private nature of the selection of its governance body (board members). Given the main aim of this study, these topics have not been treated in much depth, however, they also constitute an important part of the work of these rural SEs. The exploration of these and further aspects that hinder the work of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors represent an interesting avenue for further research.

Second, this study explains how rural SEs (can) represent actors that play a key role for the neoendogenous development of their localities. However, this study fails short in comparing the development of the localities where these rural SEs are based and operate with the development of other localities where these type of rural SEs do not exist and/or play a much minor role. Further comparative research between localities/areas with successful rural SEs and others in which this type of organisations do not exit or do not play such a key role represent avenues for further research that can reinforce and/or refine some of the findings of this study.

This research is confined to the study of two Irish rural SEs, therefore, operating within a very specific historical, geographical, political, economic, social, environmental and cultural framework. Despite not claiming any statistical generalisation from the

findings of this study, it is noted that a rather theoretical generalisation of the findings presented can inform knowledge about rural SEs and their contributions to neoendogenous development operating in, at least, rather similar contexts. The validation, refinement and/or rejection of this claim could benefit from studies conducted in similar contexts but also from studies carried out in other contexts with different political, legal, institutional, historical, geographical and cultural frameworks in order to clarify which findings are exclusive for Irish rural settings and which could be more generalizable and/or translated to other contexts.

Third, this study demonstrates the importance of establishing collaborations (synergies) with diverse actors/stakeholders for the work of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors. However, these collaborations have been examined in relation to the ability of rural SEs to leverage and mix resources. This study fails short in examining other aspects of these collaborations such as (potential) tensions and/or power relations between different actors when contributing to a neoendogenous rural development. These represent relevant themes to further examined the role(s) of rural SEs within rural governance frameworks.

- *Towards a research agenda for social enterprises as rural (neoendogenous) development actors*

Rural SEs represent a rather emergent field of research with great scope for development, besides showing evidence of mechanisms that can (partially) explain the work of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors, this study has pointed towards important aspects for advancing the field. A first avenue for research is the relation of rural SEs with their context ('places'), despite the insights provided by this thesis and other previous studies, further national and international comparative research, for example using quantitative methods on a bigger sample of SEs, between rural SEs established in different rural areas would benefit the field. This comparative research would provide further empirical evidence on topics such as the influence of structural-exogenous features on the development of rural SEs, the types of rural SEs that operate within different rural areas or the impact of rural SEs towards local and regional development. This research would contribute not only to the field of rural SEs but also to the broader field of place-based local/regional development.

A second relevant aspect for further research relates to the study of the work of rural SEs that although sharing the aim of rural/local development are at different stages of (organisational) development, from emergent to well-consolidated rural SEs. This research would be especially relevant for developing suitable policy measures that target the different needs of these organisations in relation to their stages of development. Moreover, this research would also be relevant especially to those rural SEs in earlier stages as a way to overcome barriers that could hinder their development and their contribution to their localities/areas. In this sense within this stream of research would also be relevant to include 'failed' rural SEs to explore the causes of their cease, thus to establish from a policy and from an organisational/practititoners perspective adequate measures to avoid/reduce failure.

Third, this study has pointed towards the relevance of the collaboration of rural SEs with other stakeholders from different sectors and at multiple spatial/geo-political levels. Further studies focusing on different aspects of these collaborations, including tensions, power relations or the formation and development of coalitions, would contribute not only to the field of rural SEs but also to the broader field of (rural) governance. These studies can contribute to inform the development of governance frameworks in which different rural development actors collaborate and establish synergies for contributing to overcome downwards spirals of out-migration/depopulation, business closures, reduce of basic services that many rural areas across Europe are facing and in turn contribute to an integrated and sustainable rural development through the collaboration of actors from different sectors.

Finally, this study draws from theory and concepts from economic anthropology (i.e. the substantive view of the economy) and human/economic geography (i.e. place and spatial scale). Despite the relevance argued within this thesis for using this lens for the study of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors, the utilization of other theoretical approaches would contribute to the field. Due to the transdisciplinary nature of SEs and rural development, the discussion and integration of relevant theories (and/or concepts) for the study of SEs as rural development actors deriving from fields such as sociology (e.g. sociological institutionalism; (social) network theory), entrepreneurship (e.g. resource dependency theory; bricolage), political science (e.g. governance), management/organisational studies (e.g. stakeholder

theory) or economics (e.g. theory of the commons) would contribute to field by stressing the complexity and transdisciplinarity of this emergent, vibrant and increasingly relevant field.

8.6. Overall Conclusion

This study has sought to explore rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors. The ways in which these organisations have contributed to this type of development have been explored, documented and explained throughout this thesis. In summary, this research has demonstrated how rural SEs have delivered a wide range of projects within their localities which have contributed to an integrated local development. In order to do so, these organisations have developed a plurality of (socio-)economic relations with actors from different sectors and at multiple spatial scales that have allowed them to leverage a wide range of resources. Moreover, they have been able to combine these resources in complex ways based on their collaborative and collective practices.

The rural SEs studied have not only engaged in these plural relations for developing their own projects but they have also acted as 'supporting structures' for other stakeholders within their localities. Through this role, these rural SEs have contributed to the institutionalisation of substantive 'forms of economic integration' at the local level. Finally, this study has explored the engagement of these rural SEs with locational, institutional, material and identity aspects of their 'places'. This research has shown how the work of these rural SEs has been influenced by their specific contextual features but it has also been demonstrated how these organisations have harnessed opportunities provided by their 'places' to (re)valorise (untapped) resources when contributing to the development of their localities.

Hence, this study tentatively concludes that these rural SEs work as 'placial embedded structures' that hybridise resources deriving from their engagement in plural (substantive) socio-economic relations through collective and collaborative resourcefulness practices. This enables them to develop their projects and support other local development actors within their localities through their role as local 'supporting structures' of substantive 'forms of economic integration'. These features have resulted in the integrated development of the rural localities using local potential

and complementing it with extra-local resources. This way of working concurs with the neoendogenous development approach which make these rural SEs relevant and interesting actors if this kind of rural development is sought.

In spite of the former, this study also provides some notes of caution towards the role of rural SEs in the development of their localities, especially in order to avoid an over romantic perspective of these organisations as a panacea for the development of their localities. In this regard, this study shows that it is unrealistic the expectation that rural SEs by themselves can offer a solution for the development of their localities. These organisations represent but one of the constellation of actors, including public authorities, local for-profit businesses or other third sector organisations, which need to cooperate to foster the (integrated) development of rural areas. This observation is especially relevant in relation to the (growing perceived) role of rural SEs as a safety net for the retrenchment of the public services offered by the (welfare) state. This study concludes that rural SEs can complement some public functions by providing tailor-made locally focused solutions. However, they do not have the capacity nor should have the responsibility to (try to) substitute by themselves the essential redistributive role that the state (should) play. In the absence of spatially sensitive research and public investments/policies that recognise and try to level-up disparities between regions and localities rural SEs can contribute to augment the disparities between those already well-equipped and those lagged behind regions/localities.

In conclusion, this study argues that third sector organisations, such as rural SEs, can play a significant complementary role to other actors, such as public authorities and local for-profit businesses, when pursuing (new) solutions that address the needs of their local population in an integrated manner. Their engagement in plural, cross-sectoral and multi-scalar (socio-)economic relations, their collaborative and collective resourcefulness, their capacity to act as supporting structures of other local stakeholders and their engagement with their rural context as a ‘place’ can (partially) explain how rural SEs work to contribute to a neoendogenous development of their localities.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. General Interview Guideline.

Section 1. Introduction -

Personal features – relation with locality/area
Development locality – Context
Relation with SE

(Introduction of myself and research project aim – remember informed consent)

Example of questions:

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
  (link with the locality-area, employment history, education, activities, etc.)

I would also be interested in your opinion about (*name of the locality*) and the development of the area….

- What are for you the best things of (*name of the locality/area*)?

  And the major challenges-problems that the area/locality have faced?

- Do you think that (*name of the locality/area)* has seen major changes?
  Why do you think these have happened?

- Which would you say is the main organisation/institution in charge of the development of the locality/area?

Let's talk a bit about (*name of the SE*) …

- Could you describe (*name of the SE*) in a few words?

- What would you say is the main role/mission of (*name of the SE*)?

- How and when did/have you become involved in (*name of the SE*)? //
  What is your relation with (*name of the SE*)?

  (possible follow up questions: what have been your role within (*name of the SE*) //
  have you participated in different activities/projects within the organisation?)

Section 2. SEs –services/projects – resources - local development

Services/Activities/Projects – types; target population; participation - inclusiveness
Resources - types, access/provision
Contributions Local Development

Let's talk a bit about the services/projects that (*name of the SE*) offer…

(if it is known that the interviewee only participates in a specific service/project ask questions mainly about this). Start this section talking about the services/projects that the interviewee has mentioned before:

Example of questions:

- Can you talk about some especially important services/activities/projects that (*name of the SE*) has developed within (*name of the locality*)?

  (follow up: who usually use these services?
  what are in your opinion the main benefits/the importance of these services-activities-projects?
  how would you say that (*name of the SE*) address the needs of the most disadvantage/vulnerable groups within the area?)

- Do you think that the services/activities/projects of (*name of the SE*) have changed over the years?
  (Follow up: in what ways? why (reasons)?)

- Which have been the key for the implementation and continuation (or not) of these services/activities/projects?
  What type of resources have been key for making these services/projects possible?
  how has (*name of the SE*) has accessed to these resources?

- In which way/how do you think that the service/activity/project has changed somehow the locality?

- Do you know other similar organisations (profit or non-profit) and/or institutions?

  - (If yes,) what would you say is the difference (if any) between (*name of SE*) and the others?
  - (If not,) why do you think (*name of SE*) is the only one providing them?

Section 3. SEs internal features and local 'relations'

Internal features organisation – decision-making; skills; leadership; inclusiveness

Relations with other stakeholders within the locality (non-profit and for-profit)

I would be interested in your view about you view about how (*name of the SE)* operates/works…

Example of questions:

- How would you describe the people that form the board of (*name of the SE*), their main characteristics?
  [only for board members]
  Why did you decide to become a board member?

- Can you explain how decisions are taken within (*name of the SE*)?
  (follow up about specific programmes/projects mentioned and/or known to go in more depth)

- How does (name of the SE) gather/ collect the opinions of different people form the community?
  Can you give me an example?

- How would you say that that (*name of the SE*) has encouraged the participation of the people from the locality/community?
  (Follow up: What do you think are the benefits and problems, if any, of doing so? (if possible bring an example from the locality to illustrate that)?
  Do you think that people from (*name of the locality*) actively participate within the locality/community?
  (follow up: Have been always like that or it has changed along the years?
  (If not) why do you think so? Who are participating and who not?

- How is the relation of (*name of SE*) with other organisations of the village?
  What do you think is the key for the collaboration (or not) between (*name of the SE)* and other organisations within the village?
  (ask for a specific example)

- Have you participated/Do you participate or have your participated in other organisations?
  (if yes) What would you say are the main differences between (*name of SE*) and the other organisations that you participate/know?

- How is the relation of (*name of SE*) with the (local) businesses?
  (follow up: do they tend to collaborate? (If yes) How?)

Section 4. SEs – external relations and 'contextual' factors

External relations – type; how developed…

Context - enabling/facilitating and barriers/hinder factors

I would also be interested in the relations of (*name of SE)* with other organisations beyond-outside the locality …

- Do you think that (*name of the SE*) has good connections outside the village? Why do you think these are important?

- How does (*name of SE*) has developed/built these connections?

- How serious would you say that (*name of the SE)* is listened by the public authorities?

- Do you think that (*name of the SE*) is a legitimate voice to speak for the village? Why?

- In your opinion which are the main enabling/facilitating factors that help (*name of the SE*) to achieve its mission?

- And which are the main barriers/hinder factors that it confronts?

Last questions…

- What would you say that has been the most innovative/different think that (*name of the SE*) has done within the locality/area?

  What would you say has been the key to do it?

- What would you say is/has been the key for the good functioning of (*name of the SE*)?

- How would you say that (*name of the* locality) would be without (*name of the SE*)?

Section 4. End, Debriefing.

I have finish all my questions; would you like to add something to the interview or to ask me any questions?

Before finishing remind the purpose of the interview/study, data protection information and their possibility for withdrawal.

Thank you for your time and for participation!

Appendix 2. Participant Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Purpose of the Study. As part of the requirements for PhD at UCC, I have to carry out a research study. The study is concerned with the role of social enterprises in fostering inclusive development in rural areas. This study supported through the MSCA ITN PhD training network project, i.e. RurAction, a consortium of European Universities and social enterprises. For more information about RurAction you can contact myself and/or the researchers listed below (details at the end of this document) and/or visit the website www.ruraction.eu

What will the study involve? The study will involve the collection of primary data through interviews, participant observation and secondary data via published reports and other relevant documentation. All proposed interviews will be arranged at a convenient time for the participant and will take approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be recorded using a digital recorder if you are comfortable with this approach, if you prefer not to be audio recorded I will only take handwritten notes. No previous preparation of any kind is needed from the participant.

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been asked because of your knowledge/experience/involvement with this (organisation) and the development of (this region).

Do you have to take part? No, participation is voluntary. You will be asked to sign a consent form with the option of withdrawing before the study commences and/or after data collection has started and for a period of time of four months since the interview has been held. In case of withdrawal your data will be destroyed. You have to give no reasons for withdrawal.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential? Yes. All data will be anonymized in form that no clues about your identity nor the identity of other people, organizations or institutions that you mentioned could be recognized. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the final thesis will be entirely anonymous.

What will happen to the information which you give? The data will be kept

confidential for the duration of the study, available only to me, and to the research team once it has been anonymized. The data will be securely stored in DFN-Cloud, a server provided by the coordinating institution of the RurAction project (IRS), copies will be also stored in a secure UCC server, i.e. NAS. On completion of the project, they will be retained for minimum of a further ten years.

What will happen to the results? The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be seen by my supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner. The thesis may be read by future students on the course. The study may also be published in research journals. Moreover, some results will be used to produce policy briefs, published press releases or magazines and will contribute to a practice handbook that addresses social enterprises operating in rural regions.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part. In the case that talking about some experiences may cause some distress you will be given different options to deal with that, see below.

What if there is a problem? At the end of the interview, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you subsequently feel distressed or have any complaints , you can contact the following community development worker: Donna Cleary - dcleary@ballyhoura.org – 0868893490 / Sadie Allen, sallen@ballyhoura.org – 02585213).

Who has reviewed this study? This study has received ethical approval from the Social Research Ethics Committee of UCC.

Any further queries? If you need any further information and/or complaints, you can contact me and/or my supervisor:

Researcher: Lucas Olmedo, e-mail: lucas.olmedo@ucc.ie

Main supervisor: Dr. Mary O'Shaugnessy, e-mail: mary.oshaugnessy@ucc.ie

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Sklodowska-Curie grant agreement No 721999

Appendix 3. Participant Consent Forms.

CONSENT FORM

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

I……agree to participate in RurAction research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with UCC PhD candidate Lucas Olmedo to be audio-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within four months of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box:)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview ☐

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview ☐

Signed: ……. Date: ……..

PRINT NAME: …….

Social Entrepreneurship in Structurally Weak Rural Regions: Analysing Innovative Troubleshooters in Action

Participant Consent Form I

Main investigator and contact details Prof. Dr. Gabriela Christmann
Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space
Flakenstrasse 29-31 , 15537 Erkner/Germany
gabriela.christmann@leibniz-irs.de

Name and host institution of the Early Stage Researcher:

Lucas Olmedo – Univesity College Cork (UCC)

1. I agree to take part in the RurAction research project. I have read the Participant Information Sheet for the study. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I am free to ask any questions at any time.
4. I understand what will happen to the data collected from me for the research.
5. I have been provided with a copy of this Participant Consent Form and the Participant Information Sheet.
6. I understand that quotes from the interview may be used in the dissemination of the results.

Processing and publishing my interview data in

☐ **an anonimysed form**

Any information which might help to identify the respondent will be removed from the transcript. Data that will be removed are your name, your job title, location information (name of municipalities, cities and towns), names of institutions and time specifications.

☐ **a non-anonimysed form**

Hereby I agree that my interview data will be processed and published in a non-anonymised form. I know that I have the opportunity to withdraw from this agreement and to demand that my interview data will be anonymised. I understand that this is only possible before publication.

I wish to withdraw from this study

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please contact the project coordinator Prof. Dr. Gabriela Christmann (gabriela.christmann@leibniz-irs.de) and the early stage researcher referring to the project title RurAction. You do not have to give a reason for why you would like to withdraw.

Name of participant (print)

Date and Signature

Participant Consent Form II

Main investigator and contact details	Prof Dr. Gabriela Christmann Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space Flakenstrasse 29-31 15537 Erkner/Germany gabriela.christmann@leibniz-irs.de

Name and host institution of the Early Stage Researcher:

Lucas Olmedo – University College Cork (UCC)

Your interview data (original text and its changes) will be archived for at least ten years in order to allow follow-up research in a chosen social science repository and it will be only used for research purposes. Anonymity will be checked and, if necessary, further measures of anonymity will be taken. The voice recordings of your interviews will be deleted after completion of these anonymity measures.

I agree ☐yes ☐no

Your contact information will be transferred to the chosen social science repository in order to give other interested researchers the possibility to contact you at a later time. Your contact information will not be linked with your interview data and will be saved so that no third person can access them. The transfer of your contact details to other interested researchers will only be approved for non-commercial research purposes in similar research fields.

I agree ☐yes ☐no

Name of participant (print)

Date and Signature

Participants will be given a copy of this form to keep.

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 721999.

Appendix 4. Descriptive Matrix. Analysis Stage 1 (February 2019). 'Characteristics Services'. Masvil SE - Case 1 (partial extract).

Case 1 (Masvily SE) – Origin 1996						
Service / Assets	**Established**	**Target group**	**'Outputs'**	**Development of the locality**	**Funding/ Resources**	**Role of SE**
Employment Scheme (CE)	1997 (expanded in 2016)	Unemployed (long-term) (community and beyond)	12 participants (part time) + 2 supervisors (village, supervisors + participants) (54 in total scheme, central office in the village) Tidy Towns competition and implementation of other projects	• Employment and training opportunities • Social interaction (against isolation) • Bring people to the village - visibility - tourists or resident? • Maintenance and improvement of village	DSP (salaries and training) SE (premises) Volunteer work (committee)	Management scheme. Service providers

Tidy Towns	2000's	Whole community	Awards (Limerick in Bloom, Pride of Place) Maintenance of village Regular volunteer cleanings	• Social interaction (against isolation) • Community involvement – Proudness • Attractive village – bringing people in • Visibility (external) • Environmental awareness (litter, flowering, etc.)	SE County council-SuperValu (awards) Volunteer work	Sub-committee of SE
Social Housing	2003	Disadvantage Families (and elderly) (community and beyond)	30 social housing (parish) Revenue generation 1 employee	• Affordable housing • Bring people to the village (in-migration) - population growth/replenishment • Employment • Local economy (community)	County Council (building) SE (land, maintenance, employee) Volunteer work (committee)	Management houses, service providers

Community building 1 - Community Center	2000	Whole community	2 Local Training Initiatives Regular activities (Rambling House, Youth Club, Painting lessons, LTIs) One-off activities (business meetings, funerals, regional meetings…) Revenue generation (renting premises) Restoration of heritage building	• Social interaction (against isolation) • Training/Education opportunities • Collaboration local organisations and business • Local culture • Conservation Local heritage building	SE (maintenance, loan) POBAL (initial refurbishment) Volunteer work	Management (property belong to SE)
Community Building 2 – Community offices	2015	CE scheme; CBSE office; whole community	Offices for CE scheme and CBSE Phoenix project within the premises Refurbishment underutilised building and garden (Old Garda Barracks)	• Employment • Social interaction – meeting space • Conservation – regeneration of misused building	OPW (donate/lease building) SE (maintenance)	SE manage the premises

Community Building 2 – Breakfast club, playschool, afterschool	2015	Parent(s), young children (community and beyond)	11 children crèche-playschool 9 children afterschool 2 employees (previous LTIs students, 1 living in village social housing) Revenue generation (75 €/week – leasing preschool; income from after school)	• Education – basic service • Working and family life balance • Employment • Local economy • Bring people to the village - visibility	Government (salary preschool teacher) SE (salary afterschool carer + maintenance premises)	SE promoted and management (preschool private manager, SE lease space)

Appendix 5. An example on the iteration between the analysis of empirical data and theory

This study has followed a continuous iterative process between the analysis of empirical data and theoretical reflections in line with the form of qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) and with critical realism (Sayer, 1992; Vincent and Wapshott, 2014).

The following example illustrates how this iterative process has been carried out in practice within this study. Drawing from the (systematic) literature review on rural SEs conducted for this study which show the close relation between these organisations and their context, the 'context' was incorporated into the (provisional/loose) conceptual framework and the engagement of rural SEs with their context was formulated into a (initial) research question, therefore guiding the (initial) data collection and analysis.

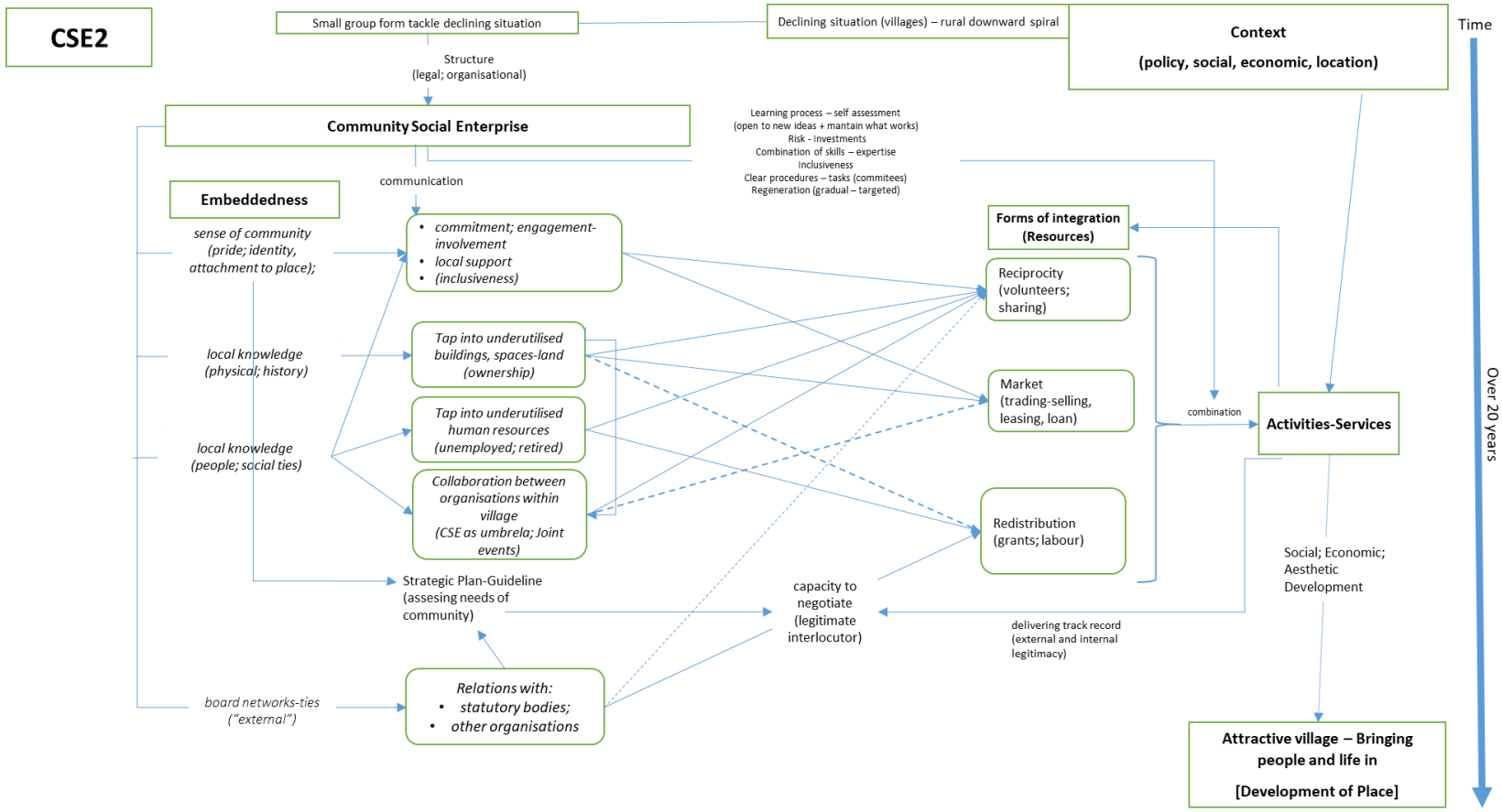
During the (first stage of) analysis of empirical data of transcripts from semi-structure interviews and field notes from POs several codes were developed that pointed towards the significance for the work of rural SEs as neoendogenous development actors of different socio-spatial dimensions of their 'context'. Some of these codes included for example: "Central location"; "Landscape-scenery"; "Renovation-use of underutilised land/buildings"; "Close knit community/community spirit. Due to the lack within the study, at that point, of a conceptual element that could guide a nuanced and in depth analysis of these socio-spatial dimensions and make sense of them from a theoretical perspective, the researcher decided to engage with theory from human, economic and political geography (e.g. Agnew, 1987; Massey and Jess, 1995; Hudson, 2001; Cresswell, 2004, 2013). During these readings the reflections made by the researcher concluded that the (relational) concept of 'place' (Massey and Jess, 1995; Cresswell, 2013) and its three dimensions of location, locale and sense of place (Agnew, 1987; Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes, 2014) provided relevant conceptual and analytical elements for making sense of the data gathered, thus for pursuing the main aim of the study of exploring how Irish rural SEs work as neoendogenous development actors.

As a consequence of these theoretical reflections from the analysis of previous empirical data 'place' was incorporated into the conceptual framework and research

objectives of this study. The incorporation of the concept of 'place' allowed to make sense from a theoretical perspective of the empirical data related to the 'context' gathered from the cases studied. Moreover, the theoretical reflections about the data gathered and the incorporation of the concept of 'place' was also used to guide a more focused data collection, represented for example in the greater attention paid to the relations between the rural SEs and the material aspects of their localities, and; a more nuanced and in depth analysis of the subsequent empirical data, for example in terms of analysing how the rural SEs harness the individual attachment of some of the local population and enhance a collective sense of belonging when contributing to the neoendogenous development of their localities.

In summary, this example shows how the iterative process between the analysis of empirical data and theoretical reflections has been carried out in practice and also shows the relevance of this iterative process for an increasingly focused data collection, the refinement/verification of preliminary conclusions and especially for conducting an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon studied that mix rich empirical data with more abstract-theoretical analysis.

Appendix 6. Graph Display (within case analysis - Preliminary Findings). Analysis Stage 3 (September 2019) 'Relations between dimensions of embeddedness and forms of integration'. Deethal SE - Case 2.



Appendix 7. Researcher feelings.

PO (39) (partially reproduced)

Name of the activity: Interview in Masvily (morning) and Halloween party organised by Masvil SE (afternoon – evening).

Date: 31/10/2019

Time (start/end) and place: 9 am – 8 30 pm. Masvily and Feerran Village (Community Hall).

Other comments and/or feelings:

[I have been in the last months or even years under great stress due to high pressure at both work and home. This has been increasing as the demands of being involved in conducting a PhD with long and deep fieldwork immersion, together with other project commitments and travelling – although in this sense I am so thankful to the flexibility that from the project and my supervisor have given in this regard – having two and on the way the third children and being in a foreign country with no (family) support network is being a very challenging task. During the last months but especially the last one I have been with some problems that have remind me that I should not push my body and brain too far beyond the limits as it has negative and dangerous consequences. So from time to time I need to take it easy. Even I only stayed about 15 minutes in the Boreen lane I greatly enjoyed that quiet time. I was also getting ready for the madness of Halloween party where I was heading after.]