

## Participation in Rural Development

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## Chapter 1

### The Forces of Change Affecting Rural Areas

#### 1.1 Introduction

The scope for participation in rural development is set by the economic functions of rural areas and these have changed considerably in recent years. On the one hand, there has been an inexorable decline in primary sector employment and traditional rural industries have been squeezed. On the other hand, new industrial and service activities have emerged, although not necessarily in those regions suffering the most from rural decline. These changes in economic functions have led to a rethink in the philosophy of rural development towards approaches in which local people are cast as key agents in the development process.

#### 1.2 The Changing Economic Functions of Rural Areas

All the EU countries have suffered losses of primary sector employment over several decades. Figure 1.1 gives details for agriculture. There are now few regions in the EU where agriculture contributes more than 10% of the regional value added and these are concentrated in Greece, Portugal and Ireland (see Figure 1.2). Forces of mechanisation have widely affected not only agriculture, but forestry, fishing and mining too; and expansion of production has encountered problems of over exploitation and oversupply. At the same time, processing and manufacturing activities once closely linked to the primary sector (such as farm machinery, food processing, the leather industry, timber processing, etc) have undergone significant economic and geographical concentration and face growing competition from outside the EU. Many service activities traditionally found in rural centres have also experienced intensified competition from urban centres. The consequence of all these developments has been the loss of much localised employment from rural areas and regions.

At the same time, new economic functions have emerged for rural areas. Indeed, new firm formation rates and employment growth have been higher in small towns and rural areas than in large urban centres. In France, for example, 52 percent of all industrial jobs in the period 1976-85 were created in rural areas. In Italy, between 1971 and 1981, 63 percent of the non-agricultural jobs created by private firms were

situated in rural areas (OECD 1988, p.16). The situation varies greatly from one country to another and from one region to another. In some cases growth is due to the decentralisation of productive activities, but very often it is due to indigenous industrialisation. In any case, research done in southern European countries (Fua 1988; Vazquez-Barquero 1988; Colletis *et al.* 1990) shows that industry in rural areas has increased productivity considerably. Furthermore, in more central regions, certain service activities have also relocated to rural areas, thereby accentuating an employment pattern already heavily weighted towards the service sector (Vazquez-Barquero and Lopez 1988).

Certain characteristics of rural areas may be identified to account for these new roles. These include:

- a relatively low-wage and non-unionised workforce;
- reduction in migration flows from rural to urban areas, as a result of both the urban production crisis and better accessibility, helping to stabilise rural labour supply;
- a small-scale business structure and a culture of entrepreneurship which provides conditions for rapid economic adjustment;
- state support for agriculture, which has been capitalised in land values, giving rural landowners sources of collateral to invest in new businesses, and which provides support systems designed to encourage farmers and rural landowners to diversify;
- greater accessibility for rural areas as a result of improvements in telecommunications and transportation systems;
- the favouring of rural locations by some of the new-wave technologies, particularly biotechnology and information technology;
- the high priority given to non-material and positional goods by influential and affluent sections of society, who place increasing value on the opportunities rural areas provide for living space, recreation, the enjoyment of amenity and wildlife, and a wholesome and pleasant environment.

These characteristics are not uniformly present. No longer so subject to the imperatives of a single sector, the development trajectories of rural areas are diverging, leading to a more differentiated countryside across Europe. This is heightened by the increasing competition within and between regions to attract or resist external forces of change. Certain areas are seen to offer comparative social, locational and environmental advantages to the technologies and processes of flexible production and have benefited from the decentralisation of economic activity. These



areas, in part through their attractiveness to the professional and managerial classes, have a good skills base and local business services. Other areas - particularly ones with poor communications infrastructure with difficult or unattractive environmental conditions, or with a weak skills base - continue to suffer from rural decline.

In the European Commission's assessment of the socio-economic challenges facing rural areas (CEC, 1988), specific comparison was drawn between:

- rural areas under 'pressure of modern life', which commonly means those within easy access of large urban areas, enjoy a relatively favourable economic performance;
- rural regions in decline, which tend to experience high rates of unemployment and outmigration;
- 'very marginal areas', where rural decline is even more marked and the potential for economic diversification is highly limited. This last group is characterised most notably by mountainous and island regions on Europe's periphery.

### 1.3 The Exogenous Model of Rural Development

The classical formulation of the rural development problem was founded in an understanding of urbanisation and industrialisation as mutually reinforcing and unilinear processes whereby capital and labour were increasingly concentrated in cities. Within the modernist development trajectory, the function of rural areas, stripped of other economic activities, was to provide food for the expanding cities. The notion of balanced or articulated development was embodied in the achievement of a spatially polarised but nationally integrated geography in which cities functioning at the core of specialised regional economies concentrated the bulk of population and commercial and industrial activity, while rural areas became dominated by a technically progressive, market-orientated agriculture. The spatial category of rural was often viewed as a residual category and became equated with the sectoral category of agriculture.

The 'problem' of rural development followed from this classification and was seen to arise in those regions and countries where too many people remained on the land, thus restricting the transfer of profit and labour needed to fuel urban and industrial growth, as well as inhibiting the development of a competitive and efficient agriculture. It was widely believed that such stagnant regions needed to be connected to dynamic centres

and expanding sectors. It was never clear, however, what the eventual equilibrium between urban centres and their rural hinterlands would be. Even areas of highly commercialised agriculture seemed destined to steadily lose population because of the tendency towards diminishing returns within agriculture. Thus even the most developed and prosperous rural areas were locked into an unequal exchange relationship with urban-industrial growth poles.

Classically, therefore, the development problems of rural areas and regions were diagnosed as those of marginality. As a concept, marginality has a number of dimensions - economic, social, cultural and political - although in discussions about rural development marginality is often understood in geographical terms to be synonymous with peripherality or remoteness. In this sense it has long been recognised that people living in rural areas have suffered problems of physical exclusion from urban-based services and jobs. Low productivity in the primary sector has compounded such difficulties, condemning those who live and work in rural areas to a low standard of living.

Peripherality, though, was always a metaphor for other types of distance too. Rural areas were distant technically, socioeconomically and culturally from the main (urban) centres of activity. In all of these respects they were either backward or lagged behind. From a regional perspective, the ideal model depicted dynamic centres as being locked into dynamic regions. Steps could be taken to encourage the transfer of progressive models, technologies and practices from dynamic sectors and regions. However, it was only through overcoming peripherality that rural 'back-waters' could be reconnected to the main currents of economic and social modernisation. Within this fundamentally exogenous perspective on rural development, the basic policy response was a combination of subsidising the improvement of agricultural production to enhance farm incomes, and the encouragement of labour and capital mobility (Clout, 1993).

The state-sponsored modernisation of rural services and of agricultural practices and technologies has been a constant feature of post-war rural development. Policies to encourage labour and capital mobility, though, have fluctuated. The first phase in European policy was one of consolidating farm structures (i.e. land reform in southern Italy and Greece, and plot consolidation and enlargement programmes in Belgium, France, West Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands) linked to land improvement schemes (including drainage and irrigation) and the development of farm-oriented infrastructure. The aim was to establish commercial units able to mechanise and absorb other 'productivist' technologies and to reduce the agrarian population particularly through the elimination of small and marginal holdings.

Although this strategy was intended to strengthen the economic and social structure of rural areas, the aim was closer integration into regional, national and international markets. It was participation in these wider fora which would ultimately determine rural development patterns.

However, it became apparent that such measures could not stabilise rural economies and rural populations; indeed, they seemed to intensify the flow of labour out of agriculture and often out of the rural areas altogether. A second phase of rural development therefore emphasised the attraction of new types of employment to rural areas. Manufacturing firms were encouraged to relocate from urban areas or to set up branch plants. As well as financial and fiscal inducements, development agencies concentrated on providing infrastructural support, including improvements in transportation and communication links and the provision of serviced factory sites and premises. Most European countries adopted this approach, but it was particularly strongly pursued in France, Ireland, Italy and the UK. In some regions the emphasis was on the development of tourism as well as, or instead of, manufacturing, particularly around the Mediterranean, but also in remote and mountainous areas across central and northern Europe.

By the late 1970s the exogenous model of rural development was falling into disrepute. The continued intensification and industrialisation of agriculture came up against the saturation of domestic markets, against ecological limits (with rising problems of agricultural pollution and ecological degradation) and against a greatly diminished capacity in the urban sector to absorb the surplus rural population. Moreover, the recession of the early 1980s resulted in the closure of many branch plants and a growing sense that rural regions that had attracted a great deal of such inward investment were highly vulnerable to fluctuations in the world economy. Areas that had experienced rapid expansion of tourism also came to realise its seasonal and cyclical fluctuations as well as the destructive impact on local cultures and environments of mass tourism. Terms such as ‘branch plant economy’ and ‘development without growth’ were coined to highlight the incorporation of such regions within the global business logic of firms governed elsewhere; a logic working against any self-governing and self-sustaining regional economic development (Amin 1993, p.2).

Exogenous approaches to rural development thus came under criticism for promoting:

- *dependent development*, reliant on continued subsidies and the policy decisions of distant agencies or boardrooms;

- *distorted development*, which boosted single sectors, selected settlements and certain types of business (e.g. progressive farmers) but left others behind and neglected the non-economic aspects of rural life;
- *destructive development*, that erased the cultural and environmental differences of rural areas;
- *dictated development* devised by external experts and planners.

#### 1.4 Endogenous Approaches

These difficulties encouraged the exploration in the 1980s of so-called endogenous approaches to rural development based on the assumption that the specific resources of an area - natural, human and cultural - hold the key to its sustainable development (van der Ploeg and van Dijk 1995). Endogenous development ideas drew on three separate sources.

First there was the recognition that out of the economic restructuring of the 1970s and 1980s certain rural regions, with previously unrecognised internal dynamism, had emerged as leading economic regions. The Third Italy was the most celebrated example but successful rural regions could be identified across Western Europe, including, for example, East Anglia, Bavaria and South Jutland. The question arose of what was the key to success of these regions and could it be replicated elsewhere. Picchi (1994) cites the following elements as critical to development 'from within' in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy: the importance of the agricultural sector for the provision of capital and labour needed in non-agricultural enterprises; the ability of this labour to engage in new economic activities; the cultural orientation towards self-employment; an extensive network of small- and medium-sized enterprises; and a dense system of interdependencies between economic sectors and units. He also identifies a set of political-institutional arrangements which have helped strengthen endogenous development patterns. These include a rich network of services provided by local administrations for economic sectors, economic planning mechanisms and a stable climate for industrial development.

The second source of endogenous development ideas was regionalist movements and agencies seeking to overcome previous policy failures and to promote forms of local development less dependent on external capital. The emphasis shifted to rural diversification, to bottom-up rather than top-down approaches, to support for indigenous businesses, to the encouragement of local initiative and enterprise and, where these were weak, to the provision of suitable training. Prominent examples of

this kind of approach can be found in the activities of development agencies particularly in peripheral regions of Europe, for example in the Irish Gaeltacht, in the local contract plans drawn up in the fragile zones in France, in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, in rural Wales and in mountain community projects in Italy.

The third source of endogenous development ideas was from the debate about rural sustainability. Increasingly, the environmental and natural resources of rural areas have come to be valued, and forms of development favoured that benefit from and enhance those resources. The sustainability concept seeks to bridge not only the conventional divide between economic development and environmental protection but also embraces the viability of localities and communities on which the maintenance of both the environment and economic activity ultimately depends (Redclift 1991; Norgaard 1994). Thus there has been a growing awareness that a conserved countryside must be socially viable and is therefore dependent on the vitality of rural communities (Lowe and Murdoch 1993).

In general, ideas of endogenous development in Europe and North America have been informed by alternative development approaches and theories formulated in the Third World. The failure of official aid programmes based on notions of community development (i.e. the involvement of local people in development projects) to tackle rural poverty in the South led to a major rethink amongst development agencies and rural development workers which had begun in the 1970s (Holdcroft 1982). Increasingly it came to be seen that it was not just a question of the design and targeting of development projects but the failure to address the structural causes of poverty and to incorporate marginal groups. Many influential ideas emerged from this reassessment of the fundamental aims of development assistance - such as the notions of “putting people first” (Cernea 1990) “development from below” (Oakley and Marsden 1984), “popular participation in decision-making for development” (UN 1975), and “sustainable livelihoods” (Chambers 1983 and 1992).

There is a tension running through the alternative development literature, however, between advocates of what might be termed integrationist and self-reliance perspectives. The former perspective is well represented by work done in this field for the World Bank. Here development is conventionally defined as “financially induced growth and change” (Cernea 1990) that will perforce integrate local people into market economies. The role of participatory rural development is seen as being to strengthen the terms on which they are integrated. The philosophy is defined as “giving people more opportunities to participate effectively in development activities” (Cernea 1990). This can be achieved through “tailoring the design and

implementation of projects to the needs and capabilities of people who are supposed to benefit from them” (Uphoff 199).

Advocates of the self-reliance perspective on the other hand challenge the very desirability of integrating under-privileged groups into external market relations as leading inevitably to dependency and reinforcing processes of proletarianisation and marginalisation. They question whether local people can ever really participate in an increasingly globalised economy on their own terms. This perspective draws on the insights of rural sociologists into the ways in which peasant societies maintain their solidarity and routinely resist the imposition of external authority (Scott 1985). Many poor communities are seen not to be interested in ‘development’ and operate their own co-operative structures of self-help (Midgely 1986). From this perspective, the very notion of external development assistance is problematic, especially when it is observed that “government support for community participation in social development results not in an increase but in a diminution of community involvement” (Midgely 1986). The only appropriate response is the empowerment of marginal and poor communities by giving them control over the resources needed to manage their own livelihoods (Friedman 1992, Rehman 1993).

Rural development initiatives and theorising in the North have borrowed eclectically from the Southern experience despite the different political and economic contexts (Nelson and Wright 1995). In that all social groups and regions in the North are to some extent integrated into external market relations, autochthonous or self-sufficient local development is a utopian ideal. It has been argued that:

rural areas are subject to both localising and globalising tendencies. This is why the exogenous/endogenous distinction presents a false dichotomy. Most forms of development in capitalist societies involve the welding of local with extra-local labour and resources. The crucial question is how local circuits of production, consumption and meaning articulate with extra-local circuits (Lowe 1996, p.196).

From this point of view the key issue is the interplay between local and external forces in the control of development processes. Effective rural development strategies must seek to build up the economic and political institutions at the local and regional levels which help to ensure favourable terms of trade with the external world.

Nevertheless, notions of self-reliance have gained considerable currency amongst two groups in the North - radical greens and development activists working with particularly marginalised groups. The former have elaborated the ‘Small is beautiful’ thinking of Shumacher into the field of community economics. The intention is to

reassert local control over economic activities (Dobson 1993). Douthwaite (1996) argues that sustainability requires communities to have control over their economies to protect themselves from the forces of globalisation and restructuring. This means local production primarily for local needs and appropriate control over energy production and distribution (through alternative energy schemes), finance (e.g. through credit unions, community banks, Local Exchange and Trading Systems, local currencies, etc.) and food production (e.g. through community allotments, local farmer markets and home gardening).

Development activists working with marginalised groups have also promoted notions of self-reliance. A feature of community development in peripheral regions such as the West of Ireland, the Scottish Highlands and Islands and the mountainous areas of Italy has been the promotion of community enterprises and community ownership and management of natural resources, through the formation of craft, fish farming, tourism and agricultural cooperatives (Hawker and Mackinnon 1989; Varley 1991). Advocates of cooperatives argue that not only can they mobilise and effectively exploit under-utilised natural and human resources, but they can also ensure that resulting benefits are retained locally and distributed on an equitable basis. There are those, though, who are pessimistic about the ability of cooperatives generally to compete effectively against private enterprise (Ruddy and Varley 1991; Curtin and Varley 1991).

## 1.5 Conclusion

It is clear that sectoral policies are no longer adequate mechanisms for solving the multi-faceted and changing social needs of the countryside; the call for more integrated rural policies responsive to the diversity of rural areas has strengthened. Given pressures on public funding, it is essential that public subsidies available for rural development are targeted efficiently so as to maximise the economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits. More reliance will be placed on rural communities themselves responding creatively to the various pressures. Endogenous approaches to rural development stress making the most of the local resources, including human capital, and favour encouraging local people as agents in the development process. Participation, therefore, becomes both a means and an end of rural development.

The rest of this report explores the implications. The next chapter examines the scope for local participation in rural economic development and planning. Chapter 3 then examines the experience of various groups who suffer from social exclusion in rural areas. Chapter 4 turns to the relationship between cultural identities and participation. Finally, Chapter 5 assesses relevant EU policies for their contribution towards participatory rural development.



## Chapter 2

# The Scope for Effective Local Participation in the Economic Development and Planning of Rural Areas and Regions

### 2.1 Arguments for Participation in Rural Development

Participation in rural development is now generally assumed to be a good if not vital thing. The assumption is that more participation is better than less and that past development strategies failed through its absence. There is, however, surprisingly little written about *why* participation is so important.

The increasing interest in participatory forms of rural development can be seen in the context of the wider shift in models of development from exogenous to endogenous approaches. Previously, development policies - intended to overcome what was seen as the intrinsic backwardness of rural areas - had focused on improving their physical facilities and material resources. The emphasis was on investment to restructure and boost productivity in the primary sector, the financing of infrastructural projects and the encouragement of inward investment. Places on the receiving end were seen merely as the locations in which externally-driven economic forces were played out with little consideration of the potential for indigenous development (Garafoli, 1991; Amin, 1994). However, during the 1980s, both academic research and the assumptions underpinning development policies began to shift as the human and cultural resources of localities came to be seen as neglected factors in understanding the geography of economic development in Europe's rural regions.

As a result, the dominant top-down development paradigm has been replaced with a more bottom-up perspective which focuses on territory, diversity and the optimisation of local resources (Stor and Taylor, 1981; Rondinelli, 1993). A territorial approach is one that seeks to enhance the particular strengths of a rural locality by developing the potential of local actors - individuals, businesses, communities and voluntary organisations - and its cultural and natural assets. It entails recognising and accommodating the integrity of local areas - the interdependencies of environment, economy and society within a locality.

It is argued that such a system develops:

through adaptive change rather than by linear progress ... it is dynamic and its parts interact by influencing each other. It is not possible to effect change in one element of the system in isolation without affecting the other parts. Consequently the system as a whole has to be understood in order to identify and help bring about desired changes (Theis and Gracy, 1991,p. 24).

Recognition of such interdependencies, which are seen to underlie the correlation between vibrant local cultures and strong local economies (Asby and Midmore 1996), has fuelled calls for a more *integrated* approach to rural policy (see for example, CEC, 1988), one that combines economic, social and environmental objectives. This approach requires a sensitivity to the diversity of rural circumstances rather than a single, universal notion of 'the rural':

Basic dimensions of rurality must be respected such as the small size of communities the low density of activities and facilities, the limited capacity of human and financial resources, the strong social networks and the slower and less regular pace of change. These dimensions result, in turn, in distinctive needs from one rural community to another. The most likely place to obtain an appreciation of these needs is from the rural community itself (Hodge 1988).

Participation is a central feature of such endogenous development, in terms of both what it is seeking to achieve and how that is achieved. As a means to an end, participation involves harnessing local people's resources and support as an input into a programme on the assumption that this will improve its effectiveness and efficiency. The measures taken are then more likely to address local needs and to be better adapted to local circumstances, and the external resources applied can better complement and help mobilise local resources. The efficiency of the participation will be judged by the material outcomes of the programme. Such promotion of local participation as a means to achieve developmental goals is often referred to as community development. However, participation can also serve as an end in itself, with the overall purpose being to strengthen the capacity of local people to participate, whether in the economic or political sphere or both, as the only sure way of overcoming their dependency or marginality. This involves a fundamental reinterpretation of what development is about. It is reasoned that "development is not simply a question of undertaking projects, nor of achieving objectives specified in narrow economic terms. Development is also a process, by which is meant the creation of social products such as upgraded local leadership, a culture of enterprise and innovative action, or the enhanced capacity of people to act in concert,

purposefully and effectively so as to cope with the threats and opportunities they face” (Kearney, Boyle and Walsh 1994).

There is thus an increasing emphasis on the need for ‘capacity-building’ and organisational support for grassroots action. According to Mannion (1996), two factors should be taken into account in order to ensure representative local participation and make operational the bottom-up approach to development:

- the extent to which local people have the capacity and skills to contribute to the development of their own area;
- the opportunities they are given to express themselves through meaningful involvement in the development process.

But what do we mean by *capacity building*? At its most basic, it means “strengthening the knowledge, skills and attitudes of people so that they can establish and sustain their area’s development” (Mannion, 1996). Capacity building therefore includes: the individuals and groups living in the target area, and the institutions that support them. Shorthall and Shucksmith (1997, p.5) refer to capacity building as “a gradual and complex process aimed at upgrading the local physical and human resource bases” - a type of investment, in other words. For them, the term applies to the capacity of an entire local population, rather than just individuals, to contribute to local development, and it can be enhanced through improving skills, encouraging new forms of organisation, stimulating new forms of linkages between groups and public agencies, and by enabling individuals and organisations to be more flexible and adaptable to changing situations.

Implicitly or explicitly, the promotion of local participation is a challenge to established structures of political representation and how these are embodied within government. On the one hand, the instrumental notion of participation (i.e. participation as a means) implies that existing structures of functional representation, usually organised on an indirect, national and sectoral basis, are inadequate to convey the needs of particular areas or social groups. The dominant type of functional representation for rural areas relates to the agricultural sector, and the promotion of participatory rural development recognises the requirement for other types of representation to reflect the actual diversity and multifunctionality of rural areas.

On the other hand, the promotion of local participation as an end in itself carries a more fundamental challenge to formal democratic structures. This is not always acknowledged which is one reason why such initiatives often fail (Coyle 1996).

What drives them is captured partly in the notion of subsidiarity with its implication that decisions should be taken at the lowest possible level. Subsidiarity, however, is about choosing the most appropriate tier of government at which to take particular decisions, while participation, involves the establishment of informal structures and procedures that are additional to, and in many cases separate from, local government. This may reflect the weakness or insensitivity of the formal local structures of elected representatives, officials and councils. In some instances the promotion of local participation may help to reinvigorate those structures but in others the intention may be deliberately to by-pass them. A number of commentators have pointed to the complicity of national governments and the European Commission seeking to shape local structures to their own ends (Coyle 1996, Smith 1995, Goldsmith 1993). More generally, the official emphasis on community-based solutions has been associated with the curtailment by the state of many local services (Curtin 1996; Murdoch 1996). Even so, the emergence of new modes of informal and voluntary participation outwith existing state structures is seen by some commentators as part of a process of local democratic evolution towards more direct, inclusive and cooperative forms of political expression (Fowler 1991, Norgaard 1994).

## 2.2 Participatory Strategies

Fundamentally, therefore, participation raises the issue of power and its redistribution. Local groups cannot gain control without others losing some. Participatory strategies can be distinguished according to how much or how little control they concede. In principle, the pursuit of participation as a development objective should involve a greater transfer of power than when it is used as a means of development planning or implementation.

The most celebrated model of different levels of community participation is that proposed by Sherry Arnstein (1969) who studied citizen involvement in planning in the USA. She formulated an eight-step ladder of participation, depicted in Figure 2.1, which reaches right up to full citizen control. The lower steps though, are essentially non-participative and, characterised as '*manipulation*' and '*therapy*', are little more than public relations exercises. The next step, '*informing*', represents the most important first step to legitimate participation, but typically the flow of information is one way without opportunity for feedback. '*Consultation*' is the next step and might, for example, involve attitude surveys, neighbourhood meetings or public enquiries. Arnstein was sceptical about the practical merits of this level of participation, suspecting that the tendency was for consultation to be used merely as

a window dressing ritual. *'Placation'* comes next on the ladder of participation and this involves the co-option of hand-picked local 'worthies' onto committees to advise on plans or projects, but the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice is retained by the power-holders or 'officials'. At the next stage of participation, that of *'partnership'*, power is redistributed through negotiation between local citizens and power-holders, and planning and decision making responsibilities are shared through, for example, joint committees. *'Delegated power'* represents the next step. Here citizens hold a clear majority of seats on committees with delegated powers to make decisions. Finally, the highest level of participation identified by Arnstein is *'citizen control'*, when citizens exercise full control over the planning, policy making and management of a programme, with no intermediaries operating between the citizens and the source of funds. Figure 2.1 analyses the stated relations with local communities of various countryside agencies in the UK in terms of Arnstein's ladder.

It may not be possible, however, to involve the whole community in the planning and execution of local development projects (Bryden et al 1995). As Moseley and Cherrett (n.d., p. 8) point out, "the scale of such involvement is too massive and the public in any case is made up of many different people with different interests, priorities and resources". In any case, only a few people have the time, resources and inclination to commit themselves to lengthy involvement. There is therefore another dimension to the redistribution of power besides that between state agencies and local communities, namely the way in which participatory structures and procedures affect the power relations within communities and localities.

The approach adopted to this issue reflects different models of community development. Curtin (1996) distinguishes two dominant models:

- *the consensus model.* "The emphasis is on all the people within a particular area working together and taking actions to improve the 'whole' community. Although disparities of income and access to other resources may be recognised, the underlying assumption is that the similarity of interests is powerful enough to form the basis for building consensus" (p.257).
- *the conflict model.* This sees local inequalities as an expression of the structural causes of poverty. While the model equally emphasises "bringing people together to discuss their problems and organise collectively in search of solutions, its focus is more directly on the poor and disadvantaged and 'empowering' those who are outside the power structure" (p.259).

Most rural development projects rest implicitly or explicitly on the consensus model, assuming a certain social cohesiveness or homogeneity and a solidarity of interest arising from the problems and difficulties of living in a particular locality. Actual community structures vary considerably, however, and so such assumptions will be more or less applicable in different contexts. However, for many people the consensus model represents an ideal to strive for whatever the underlying social reality.

Given that it is usually not practically possible to involve all members of a community in running a local development programme, the tendency often is to operate through the community's social and political leadership. This may be the best way to achieve practical results. It is non-provocative and avoids stirring up local conflicts or tensions. Critics of the consensus model argue, however, that such an approach reinforces existing power structures that oppress or marginalise the poor and other disadvantaged groups (Syrett 1995). An analysis of 'whole-community' development initiatives in rural Ireland observed that they "tend to be dominated by a small group of enthusiasts, adept at assembling the illusion of consensus that allows the interests of some to masquerade as the interests of all" (Varley 1991).

An overview of the rural projects included in the European Union's Third Anti-poverty Programme concluded that:

It would be naive to think that more decision-making power devolved to local levels would, of itself, help to counter exclusion. This is because localities are 'negotiating arenas' where there can be sharp gradations of power, and the social composition of local organisations can be a factor in creating or maintaining exclusion. The counter process must be one of deliberate interventions to improve the capacity of excluded people to function collectively and effectively in their own interests (Mernagh and Commins 1997, p.46).

Intervention should therefore focus on advocacy of and support for the underprivileged, including siding with them in their struggles with locally dominant forces, whether these be landowners, large farmers, middle class residents, corporate interests or state agencies.

However, promoting the participation of the poorest sections of communities can present particular difficulties. The Irish experience with anti-poverty programmes is instructive as these have been specifically based on the conflict-model of community development, combining a local development brief with a particular emphasis on assisting the poor and most disadvantaged, and have accumulated experience over a twenty year period. Under the First European Anti-poverty Programme (1975-1980),

the approach adopted by the project teams brought them into direct confrontation with local power-holders, including the Catholic church and prominent business people, but, in their efforts to involve the poor, all the projects “found eventually that they worked largely with people who had sufficient resources to enable them to become involved in group work and who were not living from crisis to crisis as the poorest appeared to be” (Review Group, Irish National Committee to Combat Poverty 1980). The Second Anti-poverty Programme (1985-1989) sought to broaden the participation of the poor through such measures as establishing resource centres, holding public meetings, publishing newsletters and building confidence through training initiatives (Cullen 1989). The rural projects in the Third Anti-poverty Programme (1989-1994) built on this experience but, while the overall level participation achieved was high, still it was found difficult to involve the poorest in management structures (Curtin 1994). Reviewing these successive episodes Curtin finds that “the evidence is inconclusive as to whether community efforts to alleviate rural poverty should be focused on the most disadvantaged or whether the gains to the poor are ultimately greater when emphasis is placed on involving the ‘whole’ community and increasing the resource base and opportunities for all” (Curtin 1996, p.270).

An intermediate approach between the conflict and consensual models is one that recognises the different sectional groups within a locality but does not intervene in a partisan way. Thus Moseley and Cherrett, propose identifying and encouraging as wide a range as possible of interest groups covering all aspects of local political, economic, social and cultural life, and focusing their interest and attention on the elements and stages of the proposed project or plan which have most significance and importance to them.

A number of studies and practice guides suggest that different levels of participation might be appropriate for different actors and different situations (Wilcox, 1994; Tenant Participation Advisory Service 1989). The case is made that:

those who don't have much at stake may be happy to be informed or consulted. Others will want to be involved in decisions and possibly action to carry them out (Wilcox, 1994, p.6).

Effective participation, then, is most likely “when each of the key interests - the stakeholders - is satisfied with the level of participation at which they are involved”. (Wilcox 1994, p.5). The notion of stakeholder includes not only those who will be affected by any project, but also those who control the information, skills and resources required, and who may help or hinder progress. Stakeholders need not



necessarily be equally affected by a scheme and therefore need not necessarily require an equal say. While such an approach may optimise the opportunities for participation, it does not look at what is behind different levels of involvement. It therefore may overlook the causes and consequences of social exclusion (see Chapter 3).

Achieving participation is about pursuing appropriate means as well as a clear strategy. From their investigations of Third World rural development projects, Oakley and Marsden (1984) pinpoint two important features which characterise those projects that seek effective participation:

- project activities to bring about this participation are an end in themselves and the project is designed and staffed to this purpose;
- these activities are seen as an essential and necessary foundation to activities of a more economic nature.

Flowing from these two features, Oakley and Marsden go on to list those elements that might form part of an effective participatory strategy. These are listed in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2**

**Important elements in an approach to effective participation**

- (a) the *process* nature of such project work, in which it is difficult to establish fixed, quantifiable parameters;
- (b) the disaggregation of the rural poor and the identification of discrete socio-economic *groups* as the basic unit of development;
- (c) the notion of *bottom-up* with the absence of any pre-determined models and the emphasis upon the emergence spontaneously of a relevant approach from below;
- (d) the principle of *self-reliance* and the need to reduce development based upon dependence;
- (e) the issue of *local control* of the development project activities by the groups concerned;
- (f) the importance of *collective action* by the group to tackle the problems which they confront

Source: Oakley and Marsden, 1984, pp.66-67.



## 2.3 Organisational Structures for Participation

Various organisational structures have been tried for promoting participation in rural development. The following are the most common. They are not mutually exclusive and occur in a variety of combinations.

### *Animateurs*

Animateurs work with communities by providing support and advice to local people, businesses and groups to enable them to participate in developing projects to meet local needs. Their role is to help these actors identify key problems and opportunities, articulate their concerns, and formulate appropriate solutions. Through arousing enthusiasm and interest, and imparting particular skills and resources, the participatory practices that animateurs seek to promote can be sustained beyond the life of an individual project, and thus have longer term benefits for an area.

### *The Community Network or Forum*

A community network or community forum can be established to bring together on a regular basis a locality's key political, professional and economic leaders, along with local activists and interest group personnel. The purpose is to exchange information on the locality's main social or economic issues and to debate development strategies or projects to be pursued. The membership should be representative of the area. To be effective, discussions and decisions also need to be taken forward to avoid the sessions becoming merely 'a talking shop'.

### *Co-operatives and Community Enterprises*

Co-operatives and community enterprises involve the more formal cooperation of local people working together to run practical ventures such as businesses, community services, local employment schemes and the like. Co-operatives are de facto non-profit businesses which draw their capital from local savings, with those local people who subscribe their capital or labour becoming shareholders. Such arrangements may require substantial technical, legal and administrative support. Figure 2.3 illustrates the range of community enterprises.

**Figure 2.3 Examples of Community Enterprise**

	Prevalence	Ease of:		Comments
		Getting Involved	Starting up	
Community Businesses	**	@	@	e.g. childcare schemes, community cafes, managed workspace
Telecottages	***	@@@	@	
Community Shops and Pubs	**		@	
Community Trusts and Foundations	**	@@@	@	Independent charities which give grants in a local area.
LETS (Local Exchange and Trading Systems)	**	@@@@	@@@	Allows members to trade goods and services without using conventional money using a local credit or 'currency'
Credit Unions	****	@	@	A practical cooperative way to save and borrow
Food Co-ops	**		@@	
Women's Institute Markets	***	@@@@		
Community Recycling Schemes	****		@@	
Community Renewable Energy Schemes	*		@	Wind, hydro and biomass schemes are the most likely to be pursued
Community Self-Build	**		@@	
Community Land Trusts	*	@@		
Community Orchards/Woodlands	**	@@	@@	
Managed Workspace	**		@	
Community Gardens/Allotments	***		@@	
Car Sharing	*	@@@		
Community Transport	****	@@@		

**Key:** Prevalence in the UK \*\*\*\* 500+ initiatives \*\*\* 150-500 \*\* 20-150 \* 0-20

Starting up/Getting Involved @@@@ Simple @@@ Fairly Easy @@ More difficult @ Complex

Source: New Economics Foundation n.d.

Institutional partnerships are an increasingly common feature of area-based rural development programmes (OECD 1990). They bring together agencies and organisations with responsibilities for an area in order to coordinate their actions. The thinking is that “a synergistic effect is created by a range of bodies working together which in turn generates more strategic and effective regeneration than if these bodies acted independently of one another” (McArthur, 1995, p.63). They may be led by local authorities or other localised state or quasi-state agencies. The involvement of community organisations in local partnerships is increasingly seen as a key element (Kearney, Boyle and Walsh 1994; National Economic and Social Council 1994). Community involvement can be fostered by means of direct community representation on main partnership boards or committees or through local animateurs acting as a channel between local communities and ‘the partnership’. However, detailed research into the operation of partnerships in the UK found that such mechanisms “appear to have achieved only limited results, especially in involving and empowering the most excluded groups and communities” (Geddes and Benington 1995, p.104).

#### **Figure 2.4 Village appraisals**

Village appraisals are another means by which participation in rural development can be extended. They are a type of ‘stock-taking’ exercise in which the resources and facilities available to a rural community are audited and the households comprising the community are surveyed about their circumstances and opinions to clarify local problems and needs. Village appraisals usually represent a ‘do-it-yourself’ exercise with community members having a voice in what types of questions are asked in surveys and in analysing the information and drawing up priorities for action. Because of this participatory ethos, village appraisals are considered to be both a means of community development but also an end in themselves.

## 2.4 Tools for Participation

Moseley and Cherrett (n.d.) identify the following as the key tools for promoting participation in rural development projects and programmes:

- *Public meetings* are a useful way of publicizing projects and providing open debate;
- *Adult education and training* play a determinant role in the active involvement of local people, most particularly in the implementation of development projects;
- *Village appraisals* are self-administered community surveys for local people to formally identify their common problems and opportunities and the action needed to tackle them (see Figure 2.4);
- *Exhibitions and fairs* can be means for bringing projects to public attention and eliciting popular responses
- *Media and telecommunications* provide for widespread and regular dissemination of information and debate about development projects and programmes.

These tools are appropriate at different stages of the development process and with different groups, as summarised in Figure 2.5.

**Figure 2.5**      **Selecting Tools for Local Involvement -  
When? and Towards Whom?**

Tools	When?		
	Initial Stage	Development Stage	Implementation Stage
Public Meetings	■	▲	□
Adult Education and Training	□	■	■
Village appraisals	□	■	▲
Exhibitions and Fairs	■	▲	□
Media and Telecommunications	■	▲	▲

  

Tools	Towards Whom?		
	Local Leaders	Organisations/ Interest Groups	General Public
Public Meetings	■	■	■
Adult Education and Training	□	■	■
Village appraisals	□	■	▲
Exhibitions and Fairs	■	■	■
Media and Telecommunications	■	■	■

*Key factor*            ■  
*Partial factor*        ▲  
*Very limited factor*   □

Source: Moseley and Cherrett n.d.

## Chapter 3

### The Social Exclusion of Marginalised Groups.

#### 3.1 Introduction

Endogenous approaches to rural development emphasise the importance of the human and cultural resources of a local area in the formulation, implementation and outcome of development initiatives. The effectiveness of such initiatives depends upon the involvement of the different sections of local society. Some sections though enjoy many fewer opportunities than others. If problems of need are to be tackled then such excluded groups must be equipped to share more fully in the benefits of social and economic development. Otherwise, an area cannot achieve its full potential and problems of need will persist. Identification of specific social groups and assessment of their needs and requirements should therefore guide the objectives of endogenous development, and strategies to overcome obstacles to participation should help determine the methods adopted. This chapter therefore looks at the forces of social exclusion in rural areas and the groups that are most affected.

#### 3.2 Conceptualising Disadvantage; Defining Social Exclusion

There is now a considerable literature within rural studies and in social policy studies more generally about the most appropriate way in which disadvantage might be conceptualised (see Shucksmith *et al* 1994b for a summary). Poverty, usually taken to denote levels of financial need, is no longer the sole focus. The term deprivation has often been used as an alternative, to refer to a complex of problems beyond financial need, including difficulties of access to basic services. However, the subjectivism of that term has moved commentators to refer instead to the marginalisation or exclusion of certain social groups by the broader society (Woodward 1996).

Mernagh and Commins define social exclusion as follows:

Social exclusion can be described as a process whereby certain categories of people and the environments in which they live are excluded from the opportunities, status, power and privileges accorded to others in contemporary society. This exclusion leads to multiple forms of inequality, and not just poverty of material resources, for such people and places. (Mernagh and Commins 1997, p, 13).

The following are the broad groupings of factors that structure lived experience in rural areas and are the primary mechanisms by which opportunities and access to resources - advantage and disadvantage - are determined:

*Labour market*, including levels of engagement with the labour market (rates of part-time and full-time employment); the structure of local labour markets (levels of unskilled, skilled, managerial and professional employment); training and education opportunities; and access to employment for different groups (for example, men, women, the young).

*Housing market*, including the structure of local housing markets; the supply of accommodation suited to levels and nature of local demand; and differential access to the housing market.

*Service access*, including the provision and accessibility of education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels; training opportunities for the acquisition of labour market skills; healthcare facilities such as primary health care; transport facilities; and community services.

*Social and community life*, including levels of local social cohesion; the existence of supportive social networks based on kith and kinship relations; access to community groups and organisations; and tolerance of different cultures within a locality.

A number of case studies and comparative analyses conducted in various European regions attest to the salience of these factors in people's circumstances and opportunities (Cloke *et al* 1994; Curtin *et al* 1996; Milbourne *et al* 1996; Shucksmith *et al* 1994a, 1996). Social exclusion may thus be conceptualised as the denial of access to labour or housing markets or services or social and community life—in short, the basic facilities enjoyed by the majority in society and regarded as essential by that society in order to fulfil human potential. The concept extends to cover opportunities for participation in civil society in its fullest sense, including, for example, denial of political representation of specific interests.

### 3.3 The Heterogeneity of Marginalisation

The key point about the experience of marginalisation or social exclusion is that different social groups and individuals experience it in different ways. It cannot be conceptualised as homogenous with universally applicable causes and effects. Whilst

similar factors may be implicated in the production of exclusion, the severity and interplay of these factors must be seen as specific to individuals and groups. The identification of these factors has to be recognised as a precondition for development strategies. This is necessary because successful strategies to overcome exclusion rely on tackling the causes of that exclusion as much as the symptoms of it.

The territorial, physical and economic diversity of the European Union's rural areas is matched by the diversity of lived experiences of the people of these areas. There are vast differences in people's experiences, for example, between rural Andalusia and Friesland or between the Highlands of Scotland and Bavaria. Diversity of lived experience is also tangible *within* regions, for example, between the landowner and the landless or between the unqualified local youth and the commuting professional. In consequence, different people experience different things as good or bad in different places. Recognising this diversity is important, in view of the tensions that exist between the equitable distribution of resources and the imperative to target scarce financial resources most effectively. It has implications for the identification of need, the method of involvement and the applicability of procedures for monitoring outcomes. The conceptualisation of social exclusion as a heterogeneous and geographically varied experience, though, is critical to the evolution of rural development initiatives that are inclusive of the people in specific places and relevant to their particular needs.

This suggests, of course, a more radical strategy than those often advocated by national governments and policy makers. This point will be taken up in conclusion. First, the heterogeneity of marginalisation and exclusion will be explored with reference to the experiences of specific groups often defined as marginalised. Using the framework suggested above, the exclusion of different groups through the mechanisms operating in the labour and housing markets, service access and social and community life will all be explored. The groups this chapter will focus on are women, lone parents, ethnic minorities, the elderly and young people.

The approach taken here, of describing social exclusion in terms of the experiences of different groups across Europe, is slightly unusual. More often, regions across the Union might be described in terms of the common features that attribute marginalisation to a geographical place, as exemplified in the report on the EU's Third Anti-poverty Programme (Mernagh and Commins 1997). Alternatively, the different factors that contribute to social exclusion (agricultural decline, social service provision, the operation of the housing market and so on) might be analysed in terms of their impacts on different social groups (the young, the elderly, etc.), as



exemplified in a recent study of poverty in rural Ireland (Curtin *et al* 1996). By examining social exclusion with reference to the experiences of particular groups across the European Union, the intention is to show how particular groups might share the label of exclusion, but how this might be manifest in very different ways in different places. The emerging picture is thus rather complex, in terms of material and cultural experiences, which serves to reinforce the point that strategies to deal with exclusion have to be carefully targeted at both people and places.

### 3.4 Women

It could be argued that the conceptualisation of women as a marginalised group is problematic, when they constitute half the population. However, the position of women across the European Union provides a useful entry into discussions of marginalisation. Many of the factors that might cause marginalisation in labour and housing markets, difficulties in terms of access to services and in terms of their roles in community and social life are problematic for many social groups but most keenly felt by women. Furthermore, it is essential for the effective delivery of policies directed at reducing marginalisation that the experience of women in different areas is noted. This is because policy mechanisms are often directed at the dominant group in a deprived region, often male heads of households or those working in a particular sector. The invisibility of women means that rural development policies are often not directed at their specific needs.

The invisibility of women's work often results in their *de facto* marginalisation. Their contribution to both formal and informal labour markets is usually undervalued by official statistics. In areas dominated by family farming, their diverse contributions are treated as subordinate family labour and generally go unremunerated and unrecorded. Even in areas dominated by large estates, where labourers' wives and daughters have always been engaged in work in the fields and their contribution is essential to the economic viability of the household, it is still undervalued (Garcia Ramon and Cruz 1996), gaining lower wages and often being omitted from official counts of employment. The negative social image of women's involvement in agriculture contributes further to their marginalisation. In addition, many women bear a double burden of both paid employment and unpaid work within the home, a reflection of the way processes of marginalisation operate within strongly patriarchal societies.

Women are also marginalised through factors in the sphere of social and community life. Again, the impact of these processes is also felt by other social groups, but again, the experience for many women is instructive. In many European cultures, community and social life is dominated by activities undertaken by women, either because their lower levels of engagement with the labour market gives them greater opportunity to facilitate social activities, or because of the pressure of social expectations about their 'natural' role (Little and Austin 1997). Certainly, as Seymour and Short (1994) note in terms of women's participation in church activities, they are likely to pre-dominate in unpaid and voluntary positions within an organisation that provides an important focus for rural communities. However, this inclusion can be oppressive. First, the participation of women in voluntary and unpaid social activities can often re-inforce rural gender relations which work to uphold patriarchal values which ultimately work against women's interests. Second, as Hughes (1997) notes, participation in community and social life is often undertaken more as a duty than a joy, with reluctance compounding social isolation for those unwilling to undertake voluntary activities. The operation of such dominant forces should be recognised, particularly when policy mechanisms seek to rely on the availability of women in unpaid or voluntary capacities.

### 3.5 Lone Parents

We noted above how the operation of factors associated with the labour and housing markets, services and community life might all lead to social exclusion or marginalisation for different groups. The experience of lone parents in rural areas, the majority of whom are women, illustrates how this complex of factors operates in the production of this marginalisation.

There has been little research to date on the experiences of lone parents in rural areas. This reflects both the social invisibility of the subject as well as the demographic fact that the majority of lone parents live in urban area. The research material that does exist on rural lone parents demonstrates extreme levels of marginalisation and exclusion from social and economic life for many.

The interplay and interdependence of factors which structure marginalisation makes the identification of causal factors problematic. Difficulties in access to the labour market are generally taken as highly significant. The issue is primarily one of access to employment, hindered by difficulties in finding affordable, reliable childcare which in rural areas can be particularly difficult, as research by Stone (1991)

indicates. Access to housing markets is also a problem; lone mothers unable to find employment which they can combine with family responsibilities are often faced with limited access to housing due to lack of financial resources. This is compounded by the paucity in many areas of suitable housing in both the private and public rented sectors. In addition, lack of financial resources makes transportation a problem; if a lone parent cannot afford to run a car, this can make access to education, health and community services difficult.

Research by a voluntary organisation in Norfolk in the UK provides a good example of how this complex of problems operates:

One of our clients has three small children under 8, one in a pushchair and two just starting school. She has had to move away from where she grew up because of a violent partner. She did not know the area and when she was offered a house to rent in a small village, she accepted virtually the first thing she saw as she was desperate — very soon after she moved in she realised her mistake. She had to walk one and a half miles [c. 3km] along unmade roads to the school bus stop and one and half miles back again every day twice a day with two small children walking and one in a pushchair. Often when we rang her she was in tears totally frustrated at having to placate grizzling, cold children on her own. (Norfolk RCC 1997)

### 3.6 Ethnic Minorities

The experiences of members of the hundreds of ethnic minority groups across the European Union is instructive for this account of social exclusion and marginalisation. Many would deny the experience of exclusion. For others, living in a rural area compounds existing problems of xenophobia and the knock-on effects of racism felt through experiences in the labour and housing markets, and in access to services and community life.

The experience of migrant workers in rural Spain illustrates the mechanisms by which members of ethnic minorities become excluded from material and social opportunities. Much of the Mediterranean coast of Spain is characterised by intensive small-scale agriculture geared towards the production of export crops, accounting for around 60 per cent of the agricultural exports of Spain. This is a low wage labour market, characterised in more recent years by a lack of indigenous labour willing to accept the wages and working conditions offered by farmers. Farms are coming to depend increasingly on migrant workers, mainly people from North Africa and South America, who now constitute a significant proportion of the agricultural labour force

employed in parts of Almeria, Murcia, Valencia, Castellon and around Tarragona. Due to many employers' unwillingness to conform to labour legislation enacted in the early 1990s, many of these migrant workers are employed illegally in the irregular economy. Such employment tends to be irregular, unprotected by health and safety legislation, characterised by long hours and difficult working conditions. These employment practices are often compounded for migrants by rudimentary or inadequate housing conditions and difficult access to health services. For many members of ethnic minority groups, economic marginalisation is added to by racism and discrimination causing social exclusion (Izcara Palacios, 1996). The situation on the Mediterranean littoral of Spain is repeated in other southern European countries. An estimated 1 million non-EU immigrants in Italy are irregular workers, employed mainly in the heavy and worst-paid jobs, particularly in agriculture, construction or catering.

One ethnic group that is often identified as suffering some of the greatest problems of marginalisation are gypsies. An estimated 2-3 million gypsies live within the European Union, with about double that number on the EU's eastern border. Increasingly, gypsies are bearing the brunt of rising nationalism and xenophobia. Many local, regional and national authorities do not accept them as citizens with rights to pursue their traditional lifestyles. They suffer considerable and increasing harassment and enforced displacement, and their position as one of the most socially excluded groups in the EU attests to the salience of these processes (Sibley 1995).

Cultural processes, as well as economic ones, can lead to social exclusion in rural areas. Rural areas are significant spaces for the construction of national identity. In expressing the dominant national or regional culture, rural ideologies leave little room for ethnic minority or immigrant cultures. As European cities have come to play host to a variety of cultures, so rural areas have come to be portrayed as places of racial purity where the nation's true cultural roots reside. Ethnic minority groups feel excluded from the countryside (Agyeman 1992). This exclusion extends from direct experiences of racism encountered by counterurbanisers moving into rural areas, through to the alienation of the contribution of ethnic minority groups to the national cultural heritage.

The experiences of what some might term indigenous ethnic minorities is also pertinent here. In certain parts of the European Union - Brittany, Galicia and Wales for example - a local linguistic minority is claiming an experience of social exclusion and marginalisation through the in-migration of a dominant majority language group. So, for example, Welsh-speakers in rural Wales claim an experience of

marginalisation in cultural terms due to the in-migration of significant numbers of English speakers (Cloke and Milbourne 1992). The experience cuts both ways, however; literature on the inclusion or exclusion of linguistic groups also points to feelings of isolation of in-comers moving into a new land, whether or not those incomers might be identified as members of a dominant language group nationally.

### 3.7 The Elderly

Europe's rural areas tend to have a higher proportion of older people than the national average, reflecting lower birth rates and higher levels of out-migration from rural areas by young people and people of family-rearing age. These processes are compounded by the fact that in general demographic terms, Europe's population is ageing. Thus the problems of exclusion felt by many elderly people in the 1990s are likely to be shared by a higher proportion of rural residents in the 2020s, purely on demographic factors. For this reason, it is important to assess the social exclusion and marginalisation of older people.

The social exclusion and marginalisation of the elderly in many areas is a reflection primarily of poverty through lack of access to economic resources. The rural poor are more likely to be elderly. A recent study of deprivation in rural areas in England and Wales found that seven out of ten households living in poverty were made up of elderly household members (Cloke *et al* 1994). Furthermore, because of differential mortality rates between men and women, a high proportion of those households will contain a single elderly woman. This pattern is replicated across many countries of the European Union.

But as we outlined in the beginning of this chapter, exclusion and marginalisation are more than the effect of financial hardship. They are the consequence of the interplay of factors relating to the housing and labour markets, access to services and social life. Like many lone parents, the elderly's experience of exclusion is often attributable to the *interplay* of factors, rather than any single primary cause. Much research does emphasise however the importance of access problems in structuring this marginalisation.

The elderly are often marginalised most acutely because of problems of access to services. This limits the use they can make of services that enable them to participate fully in social life and reap the benefits of living in economies with highly developed welfare systems. Research conducted in Ireland illustrates many of the problems

elderly people face in rural areas (O'Shea 1996). For example, many people face a fundamental problem of access to health services. Provision in rural areas may be adequate for those with transportation of some kind, but for those 'rural transport poor', a group which includes many elderly who cannot drive, do not have access to their own transport or who are badly served by limited public transport facilities, access to basic health care services can be extremely difficult. For many elderly, the problems of difficult access to health services are compounded by low levels of community-based care and assistance, either from health care providers or from family members due to the effects of out-migration. As O'Shea notes, changes in family formation, an increase in the labour force participation rate of women, and the consequences of prolonged and ongoing emigration has tended to reduce the pool of potential carers in rural areas, a process that seems set to continue given the salience of current migration and labour market trends. This process is repeated in parts of north-east Italy, Portugal and Spain (Mernagh and Commins 1997).

A specific problem for the elderly, compounding experiences of marginalisation, is the gap between lived experience and expectations. Many of those who we now call 'the elderly' grew up in the years of economic depression in the 1930s and social turmoil of the Second World War and post-War years, living through hardships with the promise of an easier old age through the availability of a supportive family structure and provision of the modern welfare system. With the disruption to family life caused by the out-migration of younger people, and the decline of health and transport services through the restructuring of many welfare systems, many rural elderly seem sorely disappointed that their expectations of a secure old age remain unfulfilled.

### 3.8 Young unemployed people

The problems of young people living in rural areas are often overlooked. Broad demographic indicators show a tendency, across Europe's rural areas, for out-migration amongst younger people, in search of employment opportunities and perhaps a more adventurous life style in major towns and cities. This is a long-term historic trend, little affected by counterurbanisation processes mentioned above.

International comparative research undertaken as part of the European Commission's Poverty 3 programme provides some key indications of the nature of social exclusion and marginalisation experienced by young people in rural areas (Mernagh and Commins 1997). The most stark fact to emerge is the very limited number of options

facing young people: to remain unemployed or to emigrate. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that the unemployment faced by rural youth sits within a wider European context where high levels of unemployment are already a concern. Common features of unemployment across the European Union include the simple fact of too few jobs for too many applicants, the inability of many unemployed to compete for job vacancies because of a lack of qualifications or appropriate skills, and the fact that both the long-term unemployed and first-time job seekers are often the least favoured by employers. Furthermore, unemployment is often linked to wider social issues such as discrimination against minorities and the effects of living in an area of high unemployment where inadequate income is linked to a loss of confidence in the local economic system, disillusionment, poor self-esteem, social isolation and involuntary migration. All these factors apply to rural as well as to urban areas, but the experience of rural unemployment is compounded for many young people because of the local effects of adjustments in the agricultural sector (a traditional employer), peripherality of many regions and the costs associated with spatial exclusion such as the problems of access to education and training facilities.

For many rural residents in Europe, the lack of employment opportunities for younger people is perceived to be the most serious problem facing rural communities. For example, research conducted into poverty in Scotland indicated that although many respondents recognised that limited work options were a fact of life for those living in peripheral regions, appreciation of this fact did little to ameliorate people's frustration at the lack of local labour market opportunities and dismay at some of the consequences for the wider community of the out-migration of young people (Shucksmith *et al* 1994). Furthermore, the out-migration of those more able to make use of limited labour market opportunities makes the position of those left behind even more stark. This group of young rural unemployed face exclusion in terms of labour market participation which has a knock-on effect in terms of their ability to compete in the housing market, their ability to access certain services (particularly education and training) and more generally their ability to participate fully in social life.

### 3.9 Strategies for the Reduction of Social Exclusion

This brief overview of the experiences of marginalisation and exclusion for different groups in Europe's rural areas has explored some of the principal factors structuring that exclusion, and shown how some of these factors operate in practice. Three points lead on from this discussion.



First, we would wish to emphasise again the importance of recognising, on the one hand the diversity of experiences of social exclusion, and on the other the commonality of causative factors producing this exclusion. Recognition of the diversity of lived experience should not be taken as indicative of some sort of inherent difficulty in tackling the issue, but rather as a *sine qua non* for the formulation of effective rural development policy to tackle the problems of exclusion. Marginalisation and social exclusion affect groups in different ways; policy needs to be sufficiently flexible to address this diversity of experience. Furthermore, it needs to address the causes of this exclusion as well as its consequences.

Second, it is apparent from writing this review that there is little explicit and detailed research of either a case study or comparative European nature into the experience of marginalisation. The emphasis of much of the literature is on the locality as the locus for marginalisation and the focus for policy. The strategy suggested here is that a more people-orientated policy approach requires, as a first principle, research into living conditions and experiences.

Third, and to return to the central theme of participation in rural development, there is still less in terms of public debate and literature as to the most appropriate mechanisms for enabling full participation in rural development strategies by those who are socially excluded. Further research is needed in this area. As the European Union takes steps towards greater integration, it should be remembered that political and economic stability rest on inclusion and participation rather than exclusion and marginalisation.



## Chapter 4

# The Relationship Between Cultural Identities and Social and Economic Development

### 4.1 Introduction

Endogenous development favours economic activity based on place-specific resources. For rural areas which may be poorly endowed with physical capital (equipment and infrastructure) and have low population densities, the focus is increasingly on the environmental and cultural resources with which they are often richly endowed. Cultural products and services have thus become a feature of local and regional development. It is argued that, by raising consciousness of local cultural identity, participation could be stimulated in forms of social and economic development that would be fixed in the locality. Regionalist movements have supported economic and political strategies to valorise regional cultural identities, including ‘minority’ languages. At the same time, the rise internationally of ‘green’ and ethical consumerist concerns has encouraged forms of development that respect and value local differences, such as ethnic craft products and cultural tourism.

What we term the ‘culture economy’ approach in rural development, then, is an admixture of: the economic theory of competitive advantage and international trade; the marketing concept of niche markets; and a response to the critique of exogenous development and the notion of modernity as a “cultural melting pot”. It is also a manifestation both of localist agendas as rural regions and regionalist movements explore new opportunities to re-integrate peripheral areas or minority cultures, and of European agendas, such as the EU’s “Unity in Diversity” cultural policy. In terms of development theory, the approach can be located in the logic of economic growth within consumer capitalism in which a cultural system is seen as a means to create space-specific resources for economic exploitation. Alternatively, the approach can be seen as a reaction to modernism and its homogenising, centralising and disruptive changes.

The culture economy approach has considerable potential to promote a participative form of rural development. First, the approach allocates a central role to the local community. It is often the unit in the design and implementation of projects, whether in the pursuit of ‘soft’ (social) development or ‘hard’ economic development. The local level thereby assumes some control, and captures the direct benefits, of

development activity. Second, the cultural approach entails the creation (or re-discovery) of a territorial identity and serves to promote the area in wider policy and commercial circles. In those cases where the cultural identity is founded on the reconstruction of an existing regional or ethnic identity then a further participative rationale can be added in the empowerment of an historically repressed or marginalised cultural system - such as Gaelic, Breton or Lap - which may continue to have potent symbolic and quality of life meaning for the indigenous population, and perhaps for visitors and incomers too. A further important element of the culture economy rhetoric is the raising of local consciousness of territorial identity so as to cultivate a general commitment to the area within local businesses and individuals and to raise confidence in the ability of the area to regenerate itself.

Although similar issues to do with the employment of cultural resources in local social/economic development may arise in the context of urban regeneration, the notion is particularly germane to rural development. Faced with geographical and economic peripheralisation, attributed to historical factors and external forces (mobile capital, political and economic polarisation, etc.), rural areas are increasingly paying attention to *territorial* resources as a means of exerting control over development. It is also the case that in these rural areas the raw material for cultural economy is still tangible and often conveys a strong sense of 'authenticity'; for example, a peripheral area may still contain speakers of the regional language, traditional foods, remnants of craft skills, important historical or archaeological sites and the native flora and fauna. Finally the type and scale of economic activity generated, involving specialised and niche markets, tend to be more related to the capacity of rural areas and their small-scale enterprise structure.

The rest of this chapter deals with a number of pertinent dimensions of the culture economy approach. The first section begins with cultural tourism - perhaps the most readily identifiable form of the culture economy. This is followed by a consideration of how the culture economy operates more directly at the community level. The final section deals with the special case of linguistic economies in which regional languages are employed as a resource of rural development. Running through all these dimensions is the argument that the culture economy has to be seen not only as a straightforward economic means (resources to generate local economic activity) but also as a socio-cultural end. In other words, the type of activity initiated in the culture economy approach plays an important and direct role in cultivating the socio-cultural well-being of an area.

## 4.2 Cultural Identity and Participation in Tourism Activity

Cultural identity has come to manifest itself in tourism in a number of forms: cultural (ethno) tourism, literary/art tourism, green tourism and regional cuisines. They are all 'upmarket' forms of tourism, having in common the potential for higher added-value than the mass tourism of the 'bucket and spade' and 'Costas' varieties. There may be geographical benefits too in switching pressures from over-developed coastal areas to rural hinterlands needing an economic stimulus. Cultural tourism, though, defines itself in terms of, and sees its benefits deriving from, its limited scale and the potential for local control of the nature and economic benefit of the activity.

Cultural tourism in rural development has evolved two interconnected rationales. The first relates to the exploitation of place-specific resources in order to generate locally-tied economic activity. These economic benefits may occur through employment opportunities where local people have unique qualifications, such as the ability to speak a local language, in-depth local knowledge to act as guides and local craft skills (Pederson 1993). The argument used by Comunn na Gaidhlig in support of their approach to Gaelic development in Scotland is that cultural tourism can generate higher status jobs for local people. In contrast to the conventionally low-paid, unskilled, seasonal employment characteristic of mass tourism, cultural tourism is said to provide opportunities for creative artists, naturalists, linguists, crafts people, local historians, etc. This ties in with the generation of local jobs in regional cultural development beyond the tourist sector (especially the arts, crafts, television, film and conservation).

The other (and intimately related) rationale is that of social development. This will be explored more generally in the next section but here we consider the particular role of cultural tourism in raising local self-confidence and socio-cultural vibrancy. Until comparatively recently, the view of cultural theorists and regionalists was that tourism represented a threat to the viability of local cultural systems, bringing with it international consumerism and the threat of cultural homogenisation . what Ritzer (1993) referred to as McDonaldization. However, the new approach argues that this may no longer automatically be the case and that a tourism sector and an indigenous culture are not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, tourism, as an explicit recognition of the worth of a local culture, can play a role in building community self-confidence which, in turn, can drive its rejuvenation.

The market available for exploitation by local tourism initiatives is an expression of a demand to experience certain values that are associated with rurality and that contrast

with modernity and the urban model. These can be any combination of ‘pace of life’ (community, conviviality), the natural environment, ethnic or wholesome cuisines and folklore practices and artefacts. The tourist may be seeking an experience that is metaphysical (for example, participating in a religious festival), or romantic (visiting places that are remote or idyllic), aesthetic (visiting localities associated with certain artists or authors), gastronomic (regional cuisines and wines) or educational (places of historical or wildlife interest).

This puts the locality — the ‘producers’/guardians — in control because the product/service, by definition, is tied to the particular locality which means that each locality has a comparative advantage: although ‘new’ tourism activity can be initiated elsewhere, this is not the same threat as the capital mobility that endogenous development seeks to counter.

The territory can also exercise control and local populations have been observed to exhibit a range of strategies in their engagement with tourist activity (Boissevain 1996). At one end of the spectrum are examples of where a product/service is ‘manufactured’ for the tourist, leaving the ‘authentic’ local culture free from being overwhelmed or even commodified by the culture of the tourists. Back places, concealed from the tourists, can be set aside where locals can be themselves. At the other end of the spectrum, local people will engage actively with visitors, and share the modern facilities provided, and view this engagement as a healthy input into the social and cultural vibrancy of the area. Furthermore, where such tourist activity is based on local participation in its design and implementation, then these local voices will often wish to limit the scale of the activity so as to minimise any social disruption.

Not only is it controllable, but cultural tourism can also function to raise community self-confidence. This sort of tourism activity can rejuvenate local cultural awareness leading to a re-assessment of the local culture as something of worth (MacDonald 1987). If visitors are prepared to travel to the territory and pay to experience its cultural, historical and environmental resources, then this can feed back to cultivate a local community’s feeling of self-worth and connectedness to a wider world. The need not to feel ‘stuck in a backwater’ is a major psychological concern. This is an important factor given that a major cause of the socio-economic decline of many rural areas was the systematic undermining of regional cultures by the institutions associated with the process of nation-state building. For rural localities to be able to generate endogenous, sustainable, socio-economic development requires that they put this process into reverse and begin to believe in their innate capacities and resources

to hold people, innovation and capital to the territory. The ultimate objective is to use cultural tourism to bring about a change in local people's consciousness so that 'the local' is no longer seen as intrinsically inferior.

#### 4.3 Culture Economy at the Community Level

In endogenous development, the local community — village, township, commune, etc. — is seen as an important, if not the key, locus through which to animate popular participation in development activity. According to this view, it is at the community level that people's voices are best articulated and 'soft' development promoted. The inference is that community level activity ensures that development rests on a foundation of participative democracy.

The culture economy at the community level emphasises the 'soft' development approach but not to the total exclusion of direct economic effects. For example, the culture economy can generate resources upon which community enterprises may be built and, more generally, community resources can support regional tourism. But central to the notion of a culture economy is that direct economic outcome does not necessarily have to be demonstrated in order for the approach to be valid.

'Soft' development is about regenerating the socio-cultural vibrancy of a locality so that local people feel good about their area. Through a raised awareness of its history and cultural resources, their feelings of belonging and commitment to the local area are affirmed and reinforced. One of the most effective means to achieve this is to create, or assist, organisations and individuals whose primary focus is the community-level. Local cultural activity thereby becomes a vehicle for locally-controlled change. If development can be imagined through the analogy of 'unfurling' rather than 'growth/competition' (Bryden 1991), then the role of the culture economy approach becomes one of promoting a participatory form of cultural creativity. This is in direct contrast with the sort of 'cultural policy' that elevates national or cosmopolitan cultural resources over those of the locality.

Just as the approach can be used to celebrate place and belonging, so it can also be used to express the identity of minority or repressed socio-cultural groups.

As Clinton and Glen comment:

artistic products are by their nature intended to be highly visible and can in turn confer visibility on those who create them; community arts can help challenge inequalities and oppressions as experienced through ageism, ableism, sexism, homophobia and racism by explicit targeting and positive action through engaging with a variety of communities of interest and identity (Clinton and Glen, 1993, p.101).

#### **Figure 4.1: Community Arts**

An illustration of the participative mode is “Portrona - a community play for Stornoway” staged in 1996 and which told the stories of Lewis people (Western Isles, Scotland) in the 1890s: the Herring industry, the Gaelic way of life, religious life. “The play ‘Portrona’ not only deals with the working out of the desires of the main characters, but shows us something of the communal solidarity of the fishermen, the fish-gutters, the town traders and the crofters. The play will celebrate the unique historical experiences of the people of Lewis”. It used the variety of local slang, Gaelic, Scots and English (East Coast Scotland and RP). Local artists and people wrote and produced the play.

(CnaG, Webpage, 1996)

## **Figure 4.2: Local History Associations**

A local rural development initiative in South Pembrokeshire (SPARC, Wales, UK) includes local history associations (LHA) as significant players in community development. As an extension of a formula that begins with a village appraisal that leads to a local action plan, a suggestion is made to the village community that it forms a LHA (unless one already exists) for which skills training is provided by the development organisation. The material uncovered by the LHA feeds not only into the area-wide tourism promotion but also into community activity aimed at tourists (interpretation material and local people wishing to act as volunteer guides for visitors) and at local residents (exhibitions of local material, and influencing village physical developments). In an area with a population of some 20,000, spread over 23 Community Councils, there were, by 1994, 120 people active in a direct way in such associations. Not only do these individuals benefit in a personal development way, they can also act as unofficial local amateurs as they enthusiastically communicate their deepening attachment to place to their fellow villagers. To quote directly from the 1994 evaluation report:

*“Our work with local history has been important for village enhancement and both have been going on at the same time. The more we know about our village history, the better we can adapt our plans for improving the village to that history”. Local history can thus also relate to ‘community development’ where the villagers are gradually beginning to relate more and more to their surroundings as a place with a unique historical identity, whose characteristics are slowly being uncovered by the local history activists.” (Midmore, Ray & Tregear 1994, p.26)*

#### 4.4 Linguistic Communities and Participatory Rural Development

Language can be a key marker of a cultural system. This section deals with the relationship between participatory rural development and ‘minority/regional’ languages. The idea explored is that a regional language can be both an objective of development policy/action and a resource to drive economic development.

The conservation of languages is primarily a manifestation of regionalist agendas (see, e.g. MacKinnon 1991). The explicit assumption is that it is possible to reverse the historical trend that has seen some languages grow at the expense of others as a result of systematic state action or local economic restructuring (e.g. the decline of traditional sectors). That assumption rests on the notion that the dynamics of language competition in a region or nation will be played out within key social ‘domains’, such as the home, the church, education, public administration and business (Fishman 1972). Thus, a regional language will lose status if it is displaced as the medium of (local) communication in, for example, the business domain. The history of many regional languages has been a retreat to the domains of ‘home, field and church’ in the face of competition from the state language that eventually assumes complete domination of public, business and media domains. As a result, the regional language comes to be seen as inferior, and lacking utility in modern life so that many local people (especially among the young and ambitious) will choose to abandon it.

Regions where there is a regional language issue can respond in two ways: they may argue that a regional language should be maintained for its function as a cultural marker; and they may promote the language as an agent for territorial economic development.

The first of these is based on the notion that a language has an intrinsic value which may be considerable for local people. It is an ethical issue whether to maintain a language as a living thing through policy intervention. Language maintenance becomes a mechanism for people “to know who they are”, a medium for their “world view” and its connections to place and history, and how they relate to others outside of the cultural group.

Thus, it can be argued that policy aimed directly at promoting the learning and use of a regional language can play a role in participative rural development. The concept of language domains has also been linked to socio-economic groups as, for example, in the identification of the agricultural sector as the ‘natural guardians’ of a language



(Hughes et al 1996). In this case, an argument can be made that cultural development could be assisted through policy aimed at these key socio-economic groups.

### **Figure 4.3: Language and a Celtic world view**

A 'language planning' approach can be justified as participatory in 'redressing historical injustice' and enabling a group to retain a cultural marker that has major symbolic value for the speakers, learners and others sympathetic to the language. In the discourse of the Celtic languages, advocates often claim that their linguistic-cultural system contains within it meanings of development/world view that are particular to the Celtic peoples (invoking a spiritual dimension, the elevation of a folk creativity such as through the poetic form, an environmental ethic, etc.). During the construction of a cultural basis for a local rural development initiative in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in 1990, these notions were made explicit (Ray 1996a).

The sense of belonging to a particular territory and culture underpins the other approach which attempts to re-introduce a regional language into the domains of business, public administration and the media. By raising awareness and the visibility of a language, the rootedness of local entrepreneurs, professionals, school leavers and local people in general to their home territory (or their adopted home territory) can be enhanced. The belief is that the resulting sense of commitment to the territory will help to resist forces behind the outmigration of people and businesses.

The approach extends into attempts to create language-based employment. The potential here is broader than just cultural. This has happened in Wales with, for example, the expansion of Welsh language radio and television and the private production companies that serve the S4C ("Sianel 4 Cymru") channel, and it has begun to happen with Gaelic in Scotland. In addition to direct employment in these cultural production companies and the associated service sector, income can be generated through export markets for products such as regional language films (with appropriate sub-titles) (Sproull and Ashcroft 1993).

Regions have also tried to extend the use of their languages into the private business sector in general through linguistic/enterprise development agencies. For most companies, this means the development of a bilingual operation. It also requires legislation in order to re-establish “language status” in terms of its legal status in contracts and in terms of the language policy of significant organisations.

The model is being developed particularly in Europe (and supported through EU rural development programmes such as LEADER and other policies relating to cultural diversity and Information Technology). Although a regional society would remain bi/multilingual in ability, there would be an ethos that privileged the regional language. The indigenous population (together with incomers who expressed a preparedness to learn the language) would thus have their indigenous language skills valorised. This is, in fact, the regionalist version of the nation-state development model in which one particular language is privileged for internal communication and where the ability to operate within that language confers on the individual crucial capital. Thus, for example, in regions that are pursuing a bilingual policy, such as Wales, local people who are able to speak the regional language gain privileged access to local employment opportunities (especially in public administration, education and the media). Indeed, the role of the public sector could be seen to be a crucial foundation for the linguistic economy model.

**Figure 4.4: An example of the policy of the Scottish Gaelic development agency (CnaG)**

“Gaelic - an Economic Motor. The economic process is influenced by the social and cultural environment in which it takes place. As the Gaelic language is a growing influence in Scotland today, policy makers are now focusing more closely on the relationship between economic and linguistic development. Gaelic is now recognised as a powerful motor for economic growth and development agencies are increasingly geared to exploit economic opportunities offered by the language.” (CnaG 1997)

Whether the causal relationship between economic growth in the industrialism/consumer capitalism model and the demise of a regional language can work in reverse is as yet to be proved. The relationship between this approach and the

‘alternative value set’ that some have suggested lies at the heart of the linguistic-cultural model is even more problematic. But even if these doubts are set aside, this study of participation in rural development has to note the further problem — that of social exclusion. The regionalist argument is that dominant ‘colonialist’ powers have historically been very ethnocentric, systematically repressing regional cultures, and that local people should now be allowed to resurrect their cultural systems as something that is important to them.

However, none of these regions is culturally homogenous. They will include both indigenous people and incomers who do not speak the language and who chose not to learn it. If local jobs are created that discriminate in favour of those with the appropriate language skills, the issue has to be faced that some local people may become economically excluded. Thus, the linguistic model may have the capacity to replace one form of exclusion with another. But, at the end of the day, the approach hinges not on policy intervention but, rather, on popular support for the notion that affairs be conducted in the language (as a conscious political/cultural act) and on popular demand for the cultural products (films, bands, literature, TV programmes, etc.)

#### 4.5 General Reflections on the Cultural Identity Approach

The cultural identity approach, as discussed above, can operate in two modes, both of which attempt to counteract the centripetal forces that over time leave certain rural areas socio-economically disadvantaged. First, cultural markers (folklore traditions, festivals, languages, cuisines etc.) can be seen essentially as commodities. The raised economic activity is different in that the activity and the benefits derived are tied to the local territory. Primarily, this means that leakage of economic benefit and demographic outmigration can be reduced as local jobs are secured, opportunities for local enterprises increased and higher status employment opportunities created. The cultural identities involved in any particular case may reflect, authentically, the lives and world views of local people, but not necessarily; they may be ‘staged’ for the visitor or customer. In other words, the perceptions of the consumer in constructing the identity are just as important. However, this increased, external interest in, and valuation of, regional cultures can work to raise the consciousness of local people.

The other mode is more akin to cultural engineering (including language planning). The argument here is that the rejuvenation of a regional cultural system as a living entity will indirectly result in social and economic benefits. The difference from the

first mode is that the primary focus is on the ‘authentic’ but modernising culture and the intervention needed in order to ensure its rejuvenation and continuation, so that local people can, once again, choose to live their lives through the forms and values of their indigenous culture. Exponents of this mode argue that participation would be enabled as the innate, historically frustrated need is satisfied.

Here, the discussion enters the area of development ethics. In the context of the Third World, there has recently emerged a critique of the bottom-up/cultural approach for perpetuating what to the liberal mind seem unacceptable repressive practices, particularly regarding the role and status traditionally ascribed to women (see, e.g. Frazer and Lacey, 1993; Nussbaum, 1995; Gasper, 1996). In the case of the rural areas of the European Union, one might assume that the value choice is less extreme as these local systems have been penetrated by modern values and cultural forms. However, to the advocates of regional identity in this second mode, there remains the feeling that they are engaged in a fight to re-negotiate their right to live according to their cultural system. Regionalists argue that the indigenous culture, albeit open to outside influences, is still a ‘natural/authentic’ system and that cultures, just like species, have a right to exist if local people choose for this to be so. Smith (1991) and Maffesoli (1996) among others have analysed this as the expression of a basic need within human society to organise itself into identity groups whose scale is smaller than the modern nation state and whose rationale can call upon resources that appear to have more meaning than those of the nation state. Without a re-assertion of this territorial culture, the suggestion is that the historical decline of peripheral areas will continue.

The promotion of a regional culture enables people to have a sense of belonging and ownership. It creates resources that can be employed to regenerate local social and economic vibrancy. This is not a matter of autonomous, nor even purely endogenous, development. It is remarkable the extent to which practitioners involved in cultural initiatives are Eurocentric in their thinking. Furthermore, in relation to the language issue, the model is a bilingual one in which the regional language cultivates a local identity and this sits within broader spheres of identity that transcend the locality. However, and especially in a study of participative development, attention has to be paid to the internal heterogeneity of these rural areas. Despite the enlightened rhetoric of the regionalist — that they are relativist rather than ethnocentrist (i.e. that they are different from, not better than, other cultures) and that they emphasise culture rather than race (thus, allowing for incomers to elect to join the group rather than having to have been born into it) — there remains the issue of those local people who would choose not to subscribe to the revived culture.

## Chapter 5

### Relevant EU Policies

#### 5.1 Evolution of EU Policies for Rural Development

In the past, the main means of support for rural areas of the European Union was the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and this still remains the case. However, whereas in the 1970s the CAP accounted for some three-quarters of total EC spending, and in the 1980s about two-thirds, by the mid-1990s it was down to about a half. Although often justified on social grounds, the bulk of this aid has been spent on maintaining commodity prices. The distribution of the aid within the farming community has been quite regressive: the main beneficiaries have not been the smaller farmers and poorer regions but the larger farmers and more prosperous agricultural regions.

Parallel policies have developed specifically to address rural disadvantage. They have been geographically targetted, reflecting concerns over regional inequalities, and until recently have commanded very much smaller shares of the EC's budget. Apart from Italy, the original member states were felt to have relatively homogenous regional economic structures, and regional inequalities were not an issue for the early EC. Matters changed after Britain's accession in 1973. Initially, the British Government saw regional assistance as a counterweight to CAP spending, and in 1975 the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Less Favoured Areas (LFA) programme were set up. Directive 75/268, under which Less Favoured Areas are designated, authorised financial compensation for farmers operating in mountains, hilly terrain and other 'less favoured areas' to 'ensure the continuation of farming, thereby maintaining a minimum population level, or conserving the countryside'. The programme operates through direct income aids to farmers based on their livestock numbers. In 1979, the possibilities of support were broadened through the introduction of integrated development programmes which formally recognised that the overall economic fabric of LFAs and not just their farming sectors was vulnerable. In 1985 the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes were introduced partly to offset what was seen as a northern bias in the CAP and partly in response to the fears of France, Greece and Italy over the likely glut in Mediterranean produce following the accession of Portugal and Spain.

The Single European Act of 1987 confirmed the principle of cohesion and the importance of a Community regional policy to flank the efforts to complete the Single

Market. Along with mounting pressures to reform the CAP, it provided the impetus for the development of a more prominent and coherent regional policy and for the formulation for the first time of a rural policy.

A Commission paper, *The Future of Rural Society* (CEC, 1988), laid out the thinking on rural policy. It emphasised the diversity of circumstances in rural Europe, the need for integration of policy, and the need for a shift from sectoral to territorial approaches. The paper argued that: “If the endogenous potential of rural regions is to be properly developed, local initiatives must be stimulated and mobilized”. (CEC, 1988, p.62). This thinking was embodied in subsequent Community initiatives, particularly Objective 5b of the Structural Funds and the LEADER programmes.

### **Figure 5.1 - The Objectives and Principles of the EU Structural Funds.**

#### *Objectives*

- Objective 1 Regions where development is lagging behind and where GDP is less than 75% of the EU average
- Objective 2 Regions seriously affected by industrial decline
- Objective 3 Combatting long-term unemployment
- Objective 4 Facilitating the entry of young people into the labour market
- Objective 5 Concerned with (a) the adjustment of agricultural structures and )b) the development of rural areas
- Objective 6 Regions with very sparse populations (of less than 8 inhabitants per square kilometre)

#### *Principles*

- Concentration of resources on areas of greatest need
- Programme approach rather than one-off projects
- Improved co-ordination between instruments and agencies
- Partnership between Commission, national and regional interests
- Additionality in the provision of resources
- Monitoring and evaluation given a high priority

Source: CEC, 1992; Roberts and Hart, 1996, p. 6; Commission of the European Communities (1995) *The Implementation of the Reform of the Structural Funds in 1993, Fifth Annual Report*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

New Regulations agreed in 1988 doubled the resources available under the Structural Funds and brought together the three formerly separate Funds (the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, and the European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund) in order to target resources more effectively. Five overall objectives were drawn up, along with a set of principles to govern the administration of the Funds (See Figure 5.1). The main effect for rural areas was to channel extra monies to support development programmes extending over several years in 'less developed' (Objective 1) regions with per capita GDP below 75% of the EC average (often embracing wide stretches of countryside, especially along the Mediterranean and Atlantic peripheries) and to designated (Objective 5b) 'rural areas', with high (but declining) levels of agricultural employment, low average incomes, and the need for alternative work. The Less Favoured Areas support was drawn into the new Objective 5a combining together the horizontal measures for the improvement of agricultural structures. The LEADER Programme was also established to create new development structures in rural areas incorporating local community organisations, private interests and public agencies.

Major reform of the CAP was agreed in 1992 essentially as a response to world market pressures. The reform involved a shift of support from market-based means to direct payments to farmers, partly decoupled from production levels. Efforts to modulate the payments so that large farmers would benefit less and small farmers would benefit more did not succeed.

In 1994 a significant expansion of the structural funds took place out of a commitment to increase the proportion of the EU's budget devoted to regional development at the expense of that devoted to the CAP. Both the budget and the geographical coverage of Objective 1 and 5b programmes were significantly expanded. Also a new Objective (6) was added to provide support for the northern regions of Sweden and Finland. The support was to be similar to Objective 1 for which these regions were ineligible (on the GDP criterion) and was justified instead on the sparsity of their populations (the criterion of designation being less than 8 inhabitants per square kilometre). The structural funds now account for a third of the total EU budget.

The promotion of participation in development projects and programmes was a feature of these initiatives.



In *The Future of Rural Society* (CEC, 1988, p.62), the Commission reasoned that:

External intervention has little prospect of success without the support of local communities. Moreover, the involvement of local and regional authorities and other social, local and regional economic interest groups in the identification of problems and the quest for solutions limits the number of errors of diagnosis that are all too common when planning is carried out from the outside (p.62).

The Commission envisaged the creation in rural regions of “a network of rural development agencies (or agents) to play a stimulating, mobilizing and co-ordinating role”. The next two sections examine how these aims have been achieved in the Objective 5b and LEADER Programmes.

## 5.2 Participation in the Regional Funds for Rural Development : Objective 5b

It is Objective 5b of the Structural Funds that has proved most significant in developing a new style of rural policy for Europe (Ward and McNicholas, 1997). Objective 5b programmes have been administered through two ‘programming periods’. The first ran from 1989 to 1993 and the second is currently running from 1994 to 1999. Areas eligible for designation for Objective 5b funds are those that exhibit low population densities, high rates of emigration, job losses, overdependence on and vulnerability to decline in the agricultural sector and the disappearance of enterprises and services. The first programming period covered regions with 16.6 million inhabitants combined, and the overall financial allocation was ECU 2 978 million at current prices (CEC, 1995, p.65). For the second programming period, the scale of Objective 5b was expanded to total ECU 6,667 million and to include 73 different programmes that together contain over 28 million people<sup>1</sup>.

Objective 5b policy was designed to be flexible and regionalised so as to accommodate the wide-ranging socio-economic characteristics of Europe’s rural regions. The policy is intended not only to allow affected rural regions to adapt better to changes resulting from the reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy, but also to strengthen social and economic cohesion across the Union as a whole.

Participation is encouraged in two respects. Firstly, the Structural Fund rules require that each Objective 5b area be administered as a partnership. Partnerships draw

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<sup>1</sup> The distribution of Objective 5b programmes is as follows; Belgium (3); Denmark (1); Germany (8); Spain (7); France (24); Italy (13); Luxembourg (1); Netherlands (5); United Kingdom (11).



together the European Commission, Member State governments and sub-national actors (such as regional governments, local authorities and other local organisations). This requirement in part reflects a shift towards a more bottom up approach to formulating and implementing rural development programmes. A Programme Monitoring Committee has to be established for each area comprising representatives of the partnership bodies, to collectively agree the administration of the funds at the local level. Local partnership arrangements have also been stimulated through the requirement that Objective 5b funds are matched with funds from other sources, public, private or non-profit. These various partnership requirements, in the main, encourage the participation of local organisations, key interest groups and economic and professional elites.

Secondly, more grassroots participation is encouraged by the way the programmes are administered, although how this is done and to what extent vary considerably between areas and countries. Some programmes have appointed animateurs and project officers to stimulate community involvement. Different methods have been used to promote participatory action, covering the range of those described in Chapter 2. Local groups have been encouraged to devise their own projects and apply for funding. Some programmes have identified social or community development as one of their prime objectives in the allocation of funds.

The first round of Objective 5b programmes was evaluated for the Commission by consultants in 1994. The Commission felt that “despite the modesty of the resources allocated, Objective 5b can at this stage be considered to have been an acknowledged success and to have given a fresh impetus to development in vulnerable rural areas” (CEC, 1995, p.65). It went on to claim that in many Member States, Objective 5b had “heralded the launch of a genuine and multisectoral rural development policy, bringing together all the partners concerned in capitalizing on the potential of the rural areas” (p.65).

However, the report by the consultants appointed by the Commission (CEAS Consultants and Centre d’Etudios de Planificació, 1995) does highlight a series of shortcomings which have limited the scope and effectiveness of the Objective 5b programmes. These shortcomings have also hampered effective partnership and participation.

Objective 5b has been an innovative policy that requires new administrative linkages and arrangements and new ways of making decisions. The novelty of the scheme, however, “created considerable initial difficulties for the different administrations

involved and these, inevitably, led to delays in starting which had a cumulative effect as the programme unfolded” (CEAS Consultants and Centre d’Etudios de Planificació, 1995, p.41). Considerable efforts have been required at all levels of government, from the Commission, through Member State governments and to the local level in co-ordination, consultation and the development of collaborative working arrangements. The distinct administrative traditions within the Member States were challenged by the new Structural Fund arrangements. The detailed requirements for planning, monitoring and co-financing of projects all contributed to significant delays which limited the effectiveness of the funds.

The consultants found that partnership was considered to be “a strong and positive feature” in most of the programmes (CEAS Consultants and Centre d’Etudios de Planificació, 1995, p.45). Some serious problems were encountered in specific cases where the principle of partnership was found to have “only shallow roots and failed to involve all the levels of the administration” (p.46). Several local authorities in France and Spain had complained of inadequate or non-existent consultation. Overall, however, the detailed evaluation confirmed the extent to which “local participation at a grass-roots level improves the quality of the programme and facilitates effective implementation, including the participation of private funds” (p.60). The role of local animateurs was highlighted as a significant contributor to the success of participation and of the programmes more widely.

The consultants concluded that

a very important factor affecting success is the generation of local interest by project promoters. Local animateurs and committed project officers can serve as a link between the initiation of ideas and their implementation and can greatly improve the rhythm of development of the programme and its quality. This is a novel approach that demands more time and resources. However, ultimately they result in far more effectiveness” (p.62).

### 5.3 Participation in LEADER

The LEADER (Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l’Economie Rurale) programme was introduced as an Initiative of the European Commission in 1991. Arising out of the reform of the Structural Funds (see “The Future of Rural Society”) to target more directly *territories*, rather than *sectors*, in need of assistance, LEADER represented a venture by the EU into participatory development at the local level. The scale of the new territorial programmes was to be smaller than the NUTS 3 level (and

less than 100,000 population) and confined to Objective 1 and 5b areas (subsequently extended to include Objective 6). In 1996, a five-year successor (LEADER II) programme was introduced, with the number of participating initiatives increasing from 217 to some 400.

The essential elements of the LEADER programme are:

- to explore innovative approaches to rural development (and that could be transferable to other areas);
- through essentially low cost projects;
- organised around a locally-controlled organisation;
- to animate the participation of local people and organisations in development projects in the social, economic, cultural and environmental fields;
- funded by a block grant from the EU but requiring matching funding from local/regional/national public and private bodies.

Each initiative begins with a Local Action Group (existing structure or newly-formed for the purpose) writing a development plan for the area based on local consultation. The LAG has to be structured around “leading figures in the local economy and society” but can be located in the public or private sector, or any mixture of the two. The plan, which must reflect the role of cultural and environmental resources in local rural development, has to demonstrate a compatibility with existing Structural Fund programmes for the region and conform to project categories set by the Commission. For LEADER I, these were: vocational training; rural tourism; local agricultural and fishery products; SMEs; and ‘technical support’. For LEADER II, categories were reformulated as: acquiring skills; innovation programmes (as for the list for LEADER I categories, plus environmental conservation); transnational co-operation; and participation in pan-EU information exchange networks.

The LEADER approach is wedded to the principle of local participation although the meaning of this is a function of the structure and ethos of each local group and of the implementation style adopted for each plan. Participation, then, varies with context.

From the experience of the ‘pilot’ first phase, LEADER has demonstrated a capacity to allow local groups to operate at locally-determined points along an ‘ethos continuum’. At one end of this continuum are the groups that put the major emphasis on strategic development projects *by the group itself*. Conceptually, this is the ethos of ‘enabling the territory’ as an entity. All LEADER initiatives must construct a territorial identity for themselves but the extent to which they go on to cultivate a ‘corporate identity’ under which local products and services (food products, tourism,

etc.) can be joint-marketed is a function of each group. In this mode, an initiative attempts to enable the territory as an entity and so enable the component enterprises, associations, communities and individuals to participate more fully in social and economic activity. Most commonly, this manifests in the territorial promotion of tourism but can also be applied to agricultural and craft products. In some cases, a strong territorial identity has been necessary in order to broaden and deepen the participation by, and commitment of, local people and organisations to the LEADER initiative. In certain other cases (e.g. LEADER in Brittany, France), the territorial identity has been a crucial tool where the LEADER group has assumed for itself a lobbying role in relation to regional and national policy as it affects the local area.

At the other end of the ethos continuum is the animation of grassroots ideas and projects. Within this, the LEADER programme has demonstrated yet further flexibility. The ethos of some groups has dictated an emphasis on the village community as the unit of participation and, therefore, the use of village appraisals/village action plans co-ordinated by community or communal associations. Other techniques used by LEADER groups include the employment of residents as local animateurs, and the employment of field officers with either territorial or sectoral remits.

Evaluations of LEADER indicate that there is a high degree of participation at the grass roots level but, again, the means varies according to context. An approach used by one initiative was to advertise the LEADER programme as extensively as possible and then to respond to whatever project ideas arose. Although this adheres most closely to the 'bottom-up' principle, it can raise questions of equity in that access to LEADER funds can become a function of who gets to hear about them first and of the differential ability to respond with the appropriate sorts of project ideas. The village appraisal approach used by many LEADER groups addresses this issue but only at the expense of confining action to those projects enjoying majority support.

The need to target directly locally disadvantaged groups has in some cases been identified as a priority in the LEADER plan or has been addressed by the LEADER group acting in strategic mode, for example, in tackling official bodies to explore the possibility of re-designing policy delivery to meet the specific characteristics and needs of the LEADER territory (as, for example, in the case of services for the unemployed, government training provision, 'minority' language groups).

There is also variety in the mechanisms available for local participation in decisions about LEADER design and implementation. Some groups are located primarily

within a local authority structure and so can appeal to a model of representative democracy. Other groups allow people from the community to become members of the decision-making structure. Many groups formalise local participation through a committee/working group format (made up of individuals, local businesses, the local voluntary sector, representatives of quango's, etc.), conforming more to a model of participative democracy. There are cases, too, where formal democratic procedures within the LEADER organisation itself are absent, relying either on utilitarianism (ends rather than means focus) or a demonstration of accountability through an openness in their modus operandi.

One explanation for the variation in the structures of participation comes from the national political ethos. Thus, Scottish (UK) initiatives were strongly influenced by the pervading contractualisation and privatisation culture of the 1990s that had brought local (private sector) development companies acting as agents under contract to the regional rural development quango. In Brittany (France), on the other hand, LEADER initiatives were firmly controlled by local authority structures within the French local-regional-state political and planning system. There was also an element of opportunism involved with those bodies more fully briefed about EU opportunities being better able to respond with an application that had a better chance of succeeding.

Thus, LEADER has enabled both local and national contexts to influence the meaning of participation. There are those who suggest, however, that the variety and indeterminacy of LEADER are too "anarchic" and would benefit from an element of standardisation in definitions and ideas of 'best practice'. The contrary view to this is that participatory rural development is more about dynamic learning in context, whereby each locality cultivates its own perspective and methods.

#### 5.4 Further Reform

Overall, of the EU policies relating to rural development, the CAP is notable for its lack of emphasis upon participation. Despite successive reforms, the CAP continues to be oriented to agricultural support, primarily through commodity price support or area payments to farmers. Policies to stimulate more integrated forms of rural development have been developed since the late 1980s which have sought to increase the participation of local and sub-national actors in the formulation of development programmes. The mid-1990s have seen new developments in European rural policy as the EU moves towards the millennium and seeks to accommodate new Member

States from the east. For example, in November 1996, the European Commission issued the 'Cork Declaration' following a large conference involving over 300 delegates from across the Union with expertise in rural development. The Declaration laid out a set of principles to inform future rural policy including the desire to encourage participation in the formulation and delivery of rural policy. Subsequently, in July 1997, the Commission published its proposals for reform of the CAP and the Structural Funds in the run up to enlargement. The proposals for CAP reform represent a continuation of the reforms of 1992. For the Structural Funds, it is recommended that the six existing objectives be concentrated into three new objectives, with none specifically devoted to rural areas but with the new Objective 2 applying to those urban and rural regions confronted with major economic and social restructuring needs. Successive reforms take place as each programmatic phase of the Structural Funds nears its end. For Objective 5b and for LEADER, these time constraints tend to serve as an important limitation on the scope for EU programmes to foster truly participatory forms of rural development.

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