

# Rural Cooperation in Europe

## In Search of the 'Relational Rurals'

Edited by

Edward Kasabov

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Edited by

Edward Kasabov  
*University of Exeter, UK*

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Selection, introduction, conclusion and editorial matter © Edward Kasabov 2014  
Individual chapters © Respective authors 2014  
Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2014 978-1-137-34888-3

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First published 2014 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC,  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

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ISBN 978-1-349-46777-8      ISBN 978-1-137-34889-0 (eBook)  
DOI 10.1057/9781137348890

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Rural cooperation in Europe : in search of the 'relational rurals' / [edited by] Edward Kasabov.

pages cm

Summary: "This collection seeks to uncover the nature and consequences of the 'relational rurals' across European contexts. It calls for a relational turn in rural studies and demonstrates the importance and distinctiveness of rural relationships, processes and dynamics. The volume introduces readers to current thinking about rural, peripheral areas and the challenges faced by organisations and individuals in Europe working in these areas with regard to policy, rural dynamics, development, cooperation, contestation, conflict and associated phenomena, many of which have remained unnoticed, inaccurately conceptualised, or inadequately depicted until now. The book explores the rural-urban divide, institutional cooperation, rural policy challenges and solutions and governing sustainable development"—Provided by publisher.

ISBN 978-1-349-46777-8

1. Rural development—Europe.    2. Rural-urban relations—Europe.  
3. Cooperation—Europe.    I. Kasabov, Edward.

HN380.Z9C6735 2014

307.1'412—dc23

2014025890

Typeset by MPS Limited, Chennai, India.

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# Preface

*Homo sapiens*, the human species to which we belong, is a social animal. Biologists tell us that working together, sharing tasks, and cooperating are some of the evolutionary advances which have allowed us to dominate the Earth. However, do we really consistently work together to achieve a common good? Or does the selfish gene dominate, preventing us from cooperating by investing time and resources in competing with one another and excluding and marginalising others? Are predictions of growing anomie and doomsday scenarios of alienation, social disintegration and estrangement materialising, or do we still interact and assist one another, out of altruistic motives or in order to achieve mutualistic ends?

Such questions have preoccupied academics and commentators, marking social science thinking and theorisations across disciplines during the past few decades. Taking such debates forward, this edited volume seeks to investigate in detail the 'relational rurals' – that is people living and working together in rural communities. The contributors to this volume observe, describe, and conceptualise rural cooperation in terms of multifaceted aspects of cooperation, collaboration, and the 'relational obverse', such as conflict, tension, dominance, and exclusion. The underlying assumption informing the contributions to this volume is that contexts, such as rural and peripheral spaces in Europe, are relational products and assemblages of interactions, positioned within and at the intersection of networks.

Relationships, cooperation, collaboration, and conflict exhibit unique features in rural and peripheral spaces, setting them apart from developments in other locations. While past research in rural studies and elsewhere has to an extent recognised this distinctiveness, comprehensive collections bringing together extant thinking around notions of cooperation, collaboration and their relational obverse are less common. Previous attempts have been made to map rural areas in relational terms by addressing a set of topics spanning the geography of rural change and rural restructuring, rural settlement, the place and role of rural townships, rural visions and discourses of rurality, or the intersection of gender and rurality. However, among the titles currently available on the academic book market, research monographs, and similar products adopting a predominantly or exclusively relational perspective

to knowing rural space are rare. Theorising cooperation, collaboration, conflict, and contestation in rural locations is growing, yet such knowledge tends to be scattered across journal articles and individual chapters within edited volumes not specifically focused on the investigation of such matters. Through this volume, we seek to bring together and integrate extant thinking on this problematic, presenting the 'relational rural' as a self-contained analytic approach, of consequence both to theory and practice.

Investigating and theorising rural phenomena, processes, and dynamics from a relational perspective should further expand and supplement the literatures on rural studies, rural geography, rural governance, and contiguous streams of scholarly work which, though marked by growth and increased diversity since the 1970s, remain at times in the shadow of the study of cities, urbanity and more 'fashionable' organisational and institutional phenomena, including high-technology, and science- and knowledge-driven institutions and organisations. This collection of analyses of the 'relational rurals' not only aims to promote a relational turn in the discipline but will also hopefully drive further the revival in interest in actors, relationships, processes, and dynamics from a rural perspective, with an attendant sensitivity to their distinctive character and contributions.

### **The edited volume aims to:**

1. observe and describe rural spaces in relational terms by attending to diverse aspects and dimensions of cooperation, collaboration, contestation, conflict and associated phenomena, some of which remain unnoticed, inadequately depicted or inaccurately conceptualised;
2. offer novel approaches to thinking about rural and peripheral spaces from a distinctly relational perspective, as relational constructs with material consequences; and
3. reflectively engage with policy solutions to cooperation-related complexities.

### **Book contents and structure**

The idea for an edited volume around issues of rural relations and cooperation grew while organising a Special Conference Track and a Special Interest Group during the annual European Regional Studies Association held in Delft in 2012. Group discussions and individual get-togethers with delegates, potential contributors, and colleagues shaped the initial

outline of the volume. In the next year, this gradually morphed into an expansive project covering an array of issues which, it was anticipated, would interest and concern not only scholars but also policy-makers working with and assisting European rural and peripheral spaces. In its final format, the edited volume contains contributions set out in the following parts:

1. Part I studies cooperation, collaboration and their observation in rural and peripheral areas, introducing the main issues, challenges, and approaches addressed in the remainder of the volume.
2. Part II considers challenges to rural cooperation and collaboration around notions of power, politics, conflict, and class divisions.
3. Part III interrogates empirically and theorises cooperation-focused and collaboration-enabled policy interventions and solutions, as well as lessons for managing rural cooperation and assisting rural development.
4. Part IV draws the discussion to a close by taking further intellectual debates on cooperation and collaboration, and considers opportunities for future theorisation in the discipline.

### **Defining features of the edited volume**

This book engages with diverse audiences, including but not limited to academics working across rural studies, regional studies and related perspectives, graduate students and researchers of peripheral and rural locations in Europe, and policy-makers and consultants working in such spaces.

By way of searching for (the) relational rurals, this project was from its inception a corrective to the hegemony of urban spaces, national-level institutions, and actors (typically populating those same urban spaces) in academic thinking and policy documents. Whereas rural populations are commonly assumed to be socially and otherwise homogeneous, backward, uninteresting, and passive, we provide them and their inhabitants with a voice and an opportunity – while listening to and documenting their perspectives – to demonstrate their relational agency, relational dynamism, relational fluidity, and practices.

Balance is a defining feature of this edited volume, first and foremost, by steering clear of simplistic descriptions of rurality in dichotomous terms either as a relational idyll or as a conflict-torn dystopia. Instead of engaging with relational binaries and opposites only, and thus failing to accurately reflect on and adequately explain rurality, the contributions

which follow this Preface grant space and significance to a host of matters of cooperation, collaboration, relational opposition, conflict, and contestation. Far from being treated as opposites, these concepts are studied as complexly interwoven in the multifarious economic, socio-cultural, and political fabric of European rural spaces. Second, contributors traverse the boundaries separating imagined and material ruralities, engaging with and incorporating research logics belonging both to the 'first' ('material') moment in rural studies and the 'second' rural, intrigued by ideational matters and focused on representations and epistemological differences. By invoking distinct visions of the rural and ways of knowing it, dominant European sensibilities have been followed alongside modernist, materialist currents of thought about the rural. This dual and simultaneous engagement with the materiality of the relational rural and with its representations and discursiveness helps unpack complex concepts and socio-economic, cultural, and political phenomena at the heart of this project.

Sensitivity has been sought and has hopefully been achieved, for we academics are often constrained by disciplinary, organisational, institutional, national, class, and other boundaries. By studying rural locations from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, by intentionally incorporating diverse cross-disciplinary approaches, and by encompassing academicians' and practitioners' viewpoints, it is hoped that opportunities will be revealed for dialogues within academia and between academics and other constituencies. Sensitivity is also sought in order to avoid, where and when possible, the colouring of our claims and discourses by our positions as academics, urbanites, and representatives of specific socio-cultural and economic groups.

# Acknowledgements

The editor is especially thankful to all contributors to this edited volume who, in spite of competing teaching, administrative, research and other commitments, made this exciting collaborative project possible. Many thanks also to the reviewers and the commissioning editor from Palgrave Macmillan, all of whom supported the project from the start and provided much-needed critical insight and commentary geared towards the production of a product reflecting the dynamism, pluralism, and innovative thinking in our field.

# Notes on Contributors

## Editor

**Edward Kasabov's** earlier work revolved around notions of clusters, regions and regional development, modelling and mapping high-technology clusters, and identifying factors behind cluster success. This has now been replaced with an interest in the lack of growth and competitiveness, notions of periphery, historical development of regions, difficulties faced by early-stage locations, entrepreneurship and rural entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial failure, cooperation and cooperatives in rural areas. In the area of marketing, research focuses on relationships, service provision, and collaborative work with Alex Warlow on a new theory of compliance businesses. Kasabov's work has been published in *Regional Studies*, *European Planning Studies*, the *European Journal of Marketing*, *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, *Environment and Planning*, *Business History*, the *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *Forbes*, and the *Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice*, among others, as well as books and invited contributions to edited volumes, handbooks, practitioner reports, and encyclopaedias.

## Contributors

**Sue Bestrick** has research interests within the discipline of sociology and environmental history which refer to man's interaction with the landscape over time. The subject area is interdisciplinary, crossing other academic disciplines such as historical and cultural geography, ecology, archaeology and art history, as well as the environmental sciences. The emphasis within environmental history is upon the concept of sustainability; the notion of 'how the past can inform the future' is a key issue when considering the conservation of *flora* and *fauna*. Rural issues are also very important to Susan's research, which includes post-war agriculture as well as species history and the perceived rural/urban divide. Susan is also involved in a rural research group at the University of Lincoln which brings together academics from the Business school, Social Sciences, and History looking at rural tourism, affordable housing, the decline of village shops, pubs and bus services as well as attitudes to wildlife, hunting, shooting and other rural issues where

town and country can have conflicting views. Prior to joining Lincoln University and academia 12 years ago as Lecturer in Sociology, Susan's long-term professional career was as an executive officer in Health Authorities, among others. The posts she has held have required a wide variety of skills, including working as part of teams, close management of financial details, and dealing with pension rights.

**Gary Bosworth** is a reader in Enterprise and Rural Economies at Lincoln Business School, University of Lincoln. As a researcher, Gary's primary areas of interest include rural development, counterurbanisation, small businesses, entrepreneurship, property and land-use planning, rural communities and the rural environment. He also chairs the Faculty Research Degrees Working Group and supervises three PhD students. Previously, Gary has worked for Newcastle University, Carter Jonas LLP Peterborough, and Peterborough City Council. He has published in the *Journal of Rural Studies*, the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, *Rural Sociology*, *Sociologia Ruralis*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, the *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development* and the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*.

**Eva Cudlinova** is an associate professor and an economist. She has previously worked for the Institute of Systems Biology and Ecology, České Budějovice, Czech Academy of Sciences. Eva is currently working at the University of South Bohemia, Faculty of Economics, České Budějovice, where she mainly teaches Ecological and Environmental Economics. Among her research interests are problems in sustainable development, resource management, and methods of valuing nature and global nature problems from an economic perspective. For the past 13 years, she has acted as the Czech coordinator of EU Framework projects. Current work includes the Seventh Framework (GILDED). She is sole author and co-author of several articles in scientific international journals and book chapters.

**Konrad Czapiewski** currently works for the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organisation, Polish Academy of Sciences. Konrad's research interests are in areas of rural geography – successful rural areas, rural development, functions of rural areas, local development, and human geography – education, human capital, intraregional differences, knowledge-transfer, endogenous growth, and methodology of geographical analysis. Konrad has held a number of scientific posts, including on the board of the Polish Geographical Society, the Scientific Council of the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization, and the Task

Force for Development of Rural Areas Committee for Spatial Economy and Regional Planning. He is a member of the editorial committees and boards of a number of journals. He has authored more than 20 scientific publications in areas of rurality, regional periphery and space.

**Maria Della Lucia** is Assistant Professor of Economics and Management at the University of Trento in Italy and a member of the eTourism research group (<http://etourism.economia.unitn.it>). She teaches Marketing, Strategy, Destination Management and Models of Local Development and is a member of the Italian Marketing Association (SIM), the Italian Research Group (GSA) of AIDEA – Italian Academy of Business Economics – on sustainable tourism development, the European Academy of Management (EURAM), the Regional Studies Association (RSA) and the Italian Association of Regional Science (AISRe). Her current research interests include local and regional development, destination management and governance, sustainable tourism and well-being, sustainable mobility, event-management and marketing, and economic impact analysis as investment decision-making tools. Field research focuses primarily on fragmented and community-based areas, particularly Alpine and rural destinations. Maria has authored more than 50 publications.

**Patrick Enright** has been a lecturer in the Department of Food Business and Development at University College Cork since 1996. Prior to this, he held various management positions in major Irish food companies. His research interests and publications focus on agricultural and rural change, food and rural policy interventions, and restructuring in the food industry. Involvement in recent projects includes: membership of the evaluation team of the Mid-term Review of the CAP Rural Development Plan in 2003, UCC project leader of TERESA (Types of Interaction between Environment, Rural Economy, Society and Agriculture in European regions), EU 5th Framework project (2007–2009), and membership of DAFF funded Rural Enterprise Development and Sustainability Research Project (2004–2005).

**Eva Fekete** is Head of Department and Associate Professor at the Department of Labour and Social Economics, University of Miskolc, Hungary. Previously, she has worked in, among others, the voluntary sector and has acted as Managing Director of the Foundation for North-Hungarian Regional Studies. She has also worked as lecturer, research fellow, and assistant researcher at various institutions. She is a prolific author, having authored about 20 publications.

**Frank Go** currently holds the Bewetour Chair of Tourism Marketing at Rotterdam School of Management and serves as senior member of Erasmus@Work, which develops insights into new ways of working, and has received the prestigious ERIM Impact Award. Prior to 1996, he served as Professor at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Haskayne School of Business, University of Calgary, and Ryerson University. An editorial board member of eight international journals, he has published independently and in co-authorship in, amongst others, the *Economist Intelligence Unit* publications, the *Journal of Brand Management*, the *Journal of Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, the *Journal of Travel Research*, the *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Tourism Management*, and *Information Technology & Tourism*. His present research interests relate to service dominant logic, governance of brand identity/image, event-marketing and partnered sponsorship. He has served as consultant, adviser, and researcher to the private and public sector, including Microsoft, IATA, and Quality Lodgings, and is an advisory board member of Media-Tenor. Frank has been invited as a speaker and conference chairman at events in more than 55 countries. He is the co-editor of the *International Place Branding Yearbook* series (2010, 2011, and 2012) and the co-author of *Place Branding* (2009). He holds a PhD from the Faculty of Economics and Econometrics, University of Amsterdam. Frank is a visiting professor at the Open University Business School (UK) and Rikkyo University, Tokyo.

**Jesse Heley** is Lecturer in Human Geography at Aberystwyth University, and is a Research Associate of the Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods (WISERD). His research interests include rural and regional restructuring, spatial planning, gentrification in the countryside and community development issues. Jesse's PhD focused on the performance of elite rural identities and the rise of the 'new squirearchy', corresponding with his broader investigations into the form and function of class relations in rural Britain. He is currently undertaking research which focuses on the ongoing role of religion and religious institutions as a part of the fabric of rural community life, and is also involved in a project which considers the relationship between the processes of globalisation and transformations in the more mundane aspects of everyday rural life.

**Miloslav Lapka** is a researcher and lecturer at University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Department of Structural Policy and Regional Development in the Czech Republic. He has previously worked in the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. His research interests are

in the areas of landscape and rural development policy, landscape and sociology, landscape perception and planning, and social and cultural ecology.

**Umberto Martini** is Full Professor of Economics and Management at the University of Trento in Italy and a senior member of the eTourism research group (<http://etourism.economia.unitn.it>). He teaches Marketing and Tourism Marketing at the Faculty of Economics, and Economics and Management at the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Trento. He is the Scientific Coordinator of the School of Tourism Management at the Trentino School of Management, a member of the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism, and was formerly a member of the International Federation for Information Technologies in Tourism. His research interests include tourism management and marketing, tourist behaviour and decision-making, and service quality with a focus on community destinations, particularly within the Alpine region.

**Tom Mordue** is the Norman Richardson Professor of Travel and Tourism at Newcastle Business School. Tom's research interests are in three interlinked areas: tourism development and management; place branding, tourism and economic restructuring, cultural development, 'urban renaissance', and sustainable regional development; and public management. Tom has published more than 20 book chapters and journal papers, including in *Annals of Tourism Research*, the *International Journal of Tourism Research*, the *Journal of Travel Research*, *Current Issues in Tourism*, *Leisure Studies*, *Tourist Studies*, *Environment and Planning A*, and *Urban Studies*.

**Robert Newbery** is Associate Professor in Entrepreneurship and Development at Plymouth University. He pursues research in various areas, including local business associations, home-based business, the outcomes of entrepreneurial education, and entrepreneurship in developing contexts.

**Mary O'Shaughnessy** is a lecturer in the Department of Food Business & Development and a researcher with the Centre for Cooperative Studies, University College Cork. Mary is a board member of the EMES European University-based research network on social enterprises, the HOPE Foundation, and a member of the National Rural Network. She is the academic director of the NUI BSc (Hons) Rural Development by Distance Learning and teaches at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Her research interests include rural development, and social

and cooperative enterprises. Publications include papers in the *Social Enterprise Journal* and *Social Enterprises: At the Crossroads of Market, Public Policies and Civil Society*.

**Martin Pelucha** is a researcher at the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Department of Structural Policy and Regional Development in the Czech Republic. He is also a Regional Studies Association representative for the Czech Republic. Martin specialises in regional policy and EU rural development and agriculture. He is currently an assistant professor and a coordinator of several research projects regarding evaluation of programmes and economic instruments. Martin has led or participated in several projects on methodology of rural development and coordination in the Czech Republic. His research interests are in rural development policy, cohesion policy, and urban–rural relationships in the context of regional development.

**Kim Pollerman** is a member of the Scientific team assessing LEADER and other programmes in the context of Rural Development Program (RDP) in seven federal states in Germany, including the regional land-use planning initiative, governance and place-making processes in biosphere reserves, and boundary conditions for an environmental-friendly, integrated rural development. Areas of research interest include sustainable tourism and regional governance.

**Mariapina Trunfio** is Associate Professor of Business Management at the University of Naples '*Parthenope*' in Italy, where she teaches Business Management and Tourism Management. She is a member of the Italian Marketing Association, the Italian Research Group of AIDEA – Italian Academy of Business Economics – on sustainable tourism development, EURAM (European Academy of Management), RSA (Regional Studies Association), AISRe (Italian Association of Regional Science), and the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism. Her present research interests include territorial governance, tourist systems, sustainable development, place-branding, new destinations and typologies of tourism.

**Alex Warlow** is an agriculturalist and engineer by training, having worked for over 25 years in marketing and product-planning for multinational agricultural machinery companies which exported worldwide. During the last 20 years he has run a consultancy business, Noridol Ltd., advising rural SMEs on management, business-planning and marketing, with a special interest in Direct Marketing. He undertakes training for private and public sector clients, and assists with grant applications,

especially in relation to SMEs, cooperatives, social enterprises, and community groups working in the Welsh rural development sector on projects funded by the European Union and Welsh Assembly Government. He is a trustee involved in the management of two rural social enterprises. He has prepared a number of reports, based on research, for the public sector. He is a guest lecturer at University of Bath, among others, and supports research projects at a number of universities. His work has appeared in the *European Journal of Marketing* and the *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*.

**Marcin Wójcik** is an Associate Professor, researcher, and teacher at the University of Łódź, Poland. He graduated in Geography in 2002, specialising in Human and Regional Geography. His PhD thesis (2006), entitled 'Social and economic transformations in suburban villages in the Łódź metropolitan area', concerned the impact of the big city (Łódź) on the transformations of rural structures in a time of rapid transformation during the post-socialist transition (1990–2004). This work also discusses a theoretical and methodological aspect, i.e. the attempt to describe the same phenomena at different spatial scales, the macro (structural) and micro (human) levels, as well as to determine the relationships that result from this. His research interests are focused on the social and cultural dimension of transformations in Polish rural areas, and the problems of the history of Polish human and social geography. His latest major study (as part of his application for the title of Associate Professor) concerns the variability in theoretical and methodological approaches in geographical rural research in Poland (from the beginning of the 20th century until now). His scientific output includes approximately 100 works, such as books, collections of articles he has edited, maps, and high school textbooks. Since 2013, he has been the chair of the Rural Study Group at the Polish Geographical Society, as well as a member of the Task Force for Development of Rural Areas in the Committee for Spatial Economy and Regional Planning (Polish Academy of Sciences). He works on the editorial boards of scientific journals, including *Studia Obszarów Wiejskich (Rural Studies)*. He is the winner of the awards of the Rector of the University of Łódź, the Mayor of Łódź, and the Foundation of the University of Łódź.

# Introduction: Exploring the Rural through a Relational Lens

*Edward Kasabov*

## **I.1 Introducing the relational**

This edited volume seeks to uncover and theorise the ‘relational rurals’, advocating a ‘relational turn’ in rural studies along the lines of previous turns and paradigm shifts, including the more recent cultural shift in European depictions and conceptualisations of the countryside. Relations, relatedness and cooperation denote various expressions of association or assistance, through working together, geared towards the achievement of some economic, social or other benefit. These should not be confounded with collaboration, referring to joint efforts of working towards the achievement of more specific and often somewhat modest objectives. It is beyond the scope of this Introduction to present a detailed and exhaustive overview of all the intricacies of relations-, cooperation- and collaboration-focused analyses which have a long history of theorisation and application across sciences. Rather, the aim here is to introduce the need for knowing (the) relational rurals, to call for a relational turn in rural studies, as well as to demonstrate the benefit from doing so. The assessment of the relevance of these notions to discussions of rural spaces, as part of a relational turn, is preceded by a summary presentation of key theoretical contributions to ‘relational turns’ elsewhere.

Cooperation and collaboration as well as ‘negative’ and ‘darker’ aspects of relating have been at the heart of multiple scholarly traditions across disciplines for some time. They have been central, for instance, to community approaches to unpacking institutional and organisational phenomena. Various community-level theorisations (Astley, 1985; Wade, 1996), including Aldrich’s (1999) influential conceptualisations, have long adopted perspectives of organising as composed of coevolving

multi-layered parts connected through cooperative and collaborative relations marked by symbiosis and commensalism. This conception, arguably capturing the 'special' character of community, plays a key role in an analytic tradition which seeks to reflect and comprehend the supposedly fundamentally embedded nature of organising and the benefits from such relational arrangements. Similar notions of relations and cooperation mark writings on cognitive communities (Porac et al., 1989) and networks, belonging to larger and developing sets of analytic traditions constituting an 'associational paradigm' which is an earlier arrival on the academic scene than the 'relational turn' in rural studies advocated here. Within separate streams of research belonging to this more general 'associational paradigm', networks are, for instance, viewed and theorised as intermediate governance forms comprising sets of individual actors and organisations engaging in lateral, recurring and well-developed relations, usually marked by intense collaboration (Ebers and Jarillo, 1998; Ritter and Gemünden, 2003). Accruing relational benefits encompass resource complementarities, information exchanges, economies of scale and scope, and reduced transaction costs. It is such benefits which are often believed to explain the longevity of complex, reciprocal and cooperative arrangements that one finds within such organising arrangements (Grabher, 1993).

Irrespective of the diversity of paradigms within earlier-mentioned fields of academic inquiry, and regardless of the focus on different relational and cooperative arrangements, writings belonging to the 'associational paradigm' are all marked by a faith in the capacity of relations, cooperation and collaboration to facilitate learning, innovation, and competitiveness. Relations are found to foster resource-flows and knowledge-accumulation, facilitate intense information-sharing, and assist the accumulation of immaterial resources (Johannisson and Mønsted, 1997). Such organising outcomes, we are assured, are possible only through close, long-term, open, and relatively stable cooperation and collaboration.

Cooperation has also inspired models of the outcomes of, and dynamics within, complex adaptive systems. Such systems are typically described as consisting of multiple interacting parts and as permeated by feedback, self-regulation, and non-linear interactions. Relational interactions within such systems produce emergent behaviours, rich structures and enabling accidents (Stacey, 1991; Waldrop, 1992; Prigogine, 1996). The importance accorded to relations and cooperation suggests that, once again, systemic and largely emergent templates are viewed as the beneficial by-products of relations, even if the agency and

collaboration described by such theorists do not necessarily assume the more orderly format in previously noted intellectual traditions.

In areas contiguous to rural studies such as regional studies, regional science, economic geography, and attendant evolutionary perspectives, phenomena have long been studied with reference to categories such as structured interactions and collaboration. Relational interdependencies and relationality have been appealed to in order to account for economic action and economic outcomes in such locations (see Evans and Syrett, 2007). Action is almost universally studied as embedded and as fundamentally relational in nature, with the emphasis laid on networks of 'shared experiences', 'mutual engagement' and relations underlying, for instance, communities and learning within regions and clusters (Bathelt et al., 2004). Relations marking such entities may be local or more distant, as part of mixed, localised and globalised innovation networks (Aula and Harmaakorpi, 2008) and systems of innovation (Torre, 2008). It is such peculiarities of social and economic organisation which explain the very recent calls for a relational turn in regional studies and the ascendancy of 'network-based representations' and 'perspectives' (Chetty and Agndal, 2008; Strihan, 2008) employing a host of relational lens and approaches as part of the post-1980s 'socio-relational' analytical focus (Cruz and Teixeira, 2010).

## **I.2 Relational rurals marked by cooperation and collaboration?**

Theorisations acknowledging relationality and adopting the precepts of a relational turn have made more regular appearances in rural studies more recently. Rural space is increasingly being portrayed in relational terms, be it with reference to embeddedness in a more general sense or mutual reciprocity, networks, and collective action in rural locations. This has been recognised to constitute a new approach to studying and describing rural spaces, as reflected in, among others, Heley and Jones' (2012) emphasis on the relational in rural locations. It is more common these days to come across suggestions that rural spaces may need to be thought of and known relationally – an intellectual position similar to conceptions of rural spaces and places as 'constellations of social relations' (Halfacree, 2007).

This relatively recent interest in cooperative, collaborative, and associative aspects of rural existence informs a growing number and diversity of accounts belonging to what could be termed a relational ontological and epistemological turn (see Woods, 2011). As yet another turn in

rural studies, and one intrigued by types and aspects of connectivity, relationality, and cooperation, it demarcates rural space 'relationally' by striving to explore such space in relative rather than absolute terms, and as being fundamentally relational as well as in a process of constant becoming. It is a conception of rural locations and of rural life 'in terms of the social fabric of the rural' (Rye, 2006, p. 410) which has been shown to assume diverse formats. Cooperation, care, cohesion and collaboration may, for instance, be geared towards the collective achievement of tangible aims. Alternatively, they may seek to address emotional and social needs of individuals and whole constituencies in rural and peripheral locations. Among the latter types of the rural relational is personal cooperation, which appears to be frequently studied alongside matters of personal trust and trust-building within rural communities. Feelings of attachment and concern, for instance, underlie dynamic interactions and coordination addressing problematic circumstances, including dependence, vulnerability, or unexpected personal developments during periods of family and personal breakdown when the need to cope with loss and change is heightened. Localised, 'actual', and 'overt' cooperative behaviours and interpersonal, social-emotional relations may strengthen one's sense of belonging and, in the process of doing so, contribute positively to individual resilience and community spirit (McManus et al., 2012). Furthermore, it is through social networks and attendant cooperation that, as shown by Sligo and Massey (2007), rural inhabitants acquire information, seek advice, and enhance individual learning.

Close, intimate relations and positive, cooperative interactions within dense and trust-based social networks are particularly visible within specific rural populations, including the elderly. These encompass community- and care-provision relations (see Shubin, 2012) as vehicles of managing everyday insecurities (Kay, 2012). Stories abound of rural inhabitants helping one another, physically assisting neighbours, providing some form of practical support, or emotional and 'interpersonal' 'caring' for others. Such are the mechanisms of coping with the 'dangers of aloneness'. Very recently the enjoyment that rural elders obtain from collaborating and from being involved in their communities has also been reported (Davis et al., 2012). Such cooperation and togetherness dominate rural celebrations of sociality, including birthdays or holidays when rural inhabitants pull common resources together (Kay, 2012).

'Civic' cooperation appears to be as commonplace as the above-described 'social' cooperation (Anwar McHenry, 2011). 'Civic' cooperation is not about informal assistance and relationship-building within

the intimate worlds of family and friendship but typically refers to the creation and maintenance of formalised formats of achieving collectively (typically) economic goals. Explored in greater depth in this edited volume are, for instance, rural cooperatives and, more specifically, agri-food cooperatives as main sources of human and social capital development (through skill-provision and skill-development, among others), provision of services, and community-development and empowerment in rural space. The search for solutions to economic problems in rural and peripheral communities has also generated innovative partnership initiatives, including producer-consumer collaborations which cover a wide range of relations, frequently combining social and ethical goals. Exemplary are local food systems promoting sustainability alongside social embeddedness, and a strong sense of cooperation and solidarity among the rural stakeholders involved. Illustrative in that sense is organic food production with geographical closeness facilitating social cooperation in the production and marketing of organic cereals and bread (Milestad et al., 2010). Alternative food networks, too, appear to be marked by collaborations and a strong shared sense of embeddedness and community (see Renting and Marsden, 2003; Cox et al., 2008). Associated relational phenomena, including short food-supply chains and community-supported agriculture, are founded upon direct and immediate partnerships between producers and consumers or upon close relations among producers; their aims are not solely economic, and such relational arrangements may be driven by motives of justice and by practices of care and responsibility. Value-creation through cooperation has also been shown to be nurtured within the context of farmers' markets (Lawson et al., 2008) where sharing equipment, referring customers, selling one another's produce, and coordinating costs attest to the multiplicity and multidimensionality of cooperation.

Cooperation and collaboration may be understood differently by different rural constituencies. Both terms are at times comprehended rather narrowly, with reference to common risk-sharing, whereby participation in cooperative and collaborative schemes has the sole purpose of reducing risk. Appropriate examples include relations formed among farmers who describe as 'cooperative' only machinery-sharing arrangements. Among such constituencies, inter-personal and even instrumental trust have often been shown to be weak or absent. Emery and Franks (2012) describe one such relational arrangement, with farmers assessing it in terms of personal benefits and drawbacks only, including opportunism on the part of other members of such schemes. Yet extant theory also demonstrates that, by preserving strong links among

farmers or between them and other constituencies in local, rural towns, rural economies may have a greater chance of avoiding permanent decline. Instructive in this respect are empirically-studied associations between a strong sense of belonging and community, cooperation, and resilience against the economic decline of rural areas, as part of McManus et al.'s (2012) investigation of ongoing engagement between farmers and other rural stakeholders in rural Australia.

Socially and politically significant are other formalised, cooperation-based rural institutions such as producer and peasant associations, and farmers' movements (Edelman, 2003). All three represent special examples of both cooperation and collaboration. Some of them, such as La Vía Campesina, seem to attract as members not 'mainstream' farming producers but marginalised, indigenous and disempowered agrarian constituencies which oppose neo-liberal incursions into production and globalisation-driven trade liberalisation (Desmarais, 2007, 2008). Desmarais' (2007, 2008) accounts attest to the manner in which cooperation helps generate further opportunities for alliance-building, consolidates collective identities, and creates effective spaces for organised resistance to incursions into fragile, liminal and peripheral rural spaces. Such forms of relating to others not only seek to re-affirm the peasant identities of small and excluded farm producers – as acts of resistance and through the construction of an identity which is often described by others in negative, pejorative terms – but also act as a corrective to food policies dictated by outside interests. Wittman's (2009) ethnographic analysis of grassroots movements seeking to redefine land ownership and land management visions and practices through land redistribution in Brazil is another such example. In the process of cooperating, Wittman notes, participating farm producers have come to advocate new participative, redistributive and transformative environmental stewardship – a new 'agrarian citizenship'.

The above-mentioned farmers' associations and rural movements are by no means the only ones actively cooperating in rural areas, for past research has shown that the rural is an 'arena' of diverse coalitions coalescing around distinct territorial identities, not all of which are necessarily transformative but may engage with reactive, nationalistic, protectionist, and 'defensively localist' politics, though all seem to be marked by similar ingredients of solidarity, shared beliefs, and collective action (Reed, 2008). It is therefore a plethora of social movements, both new and not so new, utopian-radical and more practical in character, and 'rural-identity' and 'rural-community' ones (Woods, 2008), that re-makes rural spaces and acts as a visible marker of rural politics – an

aspect of rural cooperation, collaboration, contestation and conflict explored at great depth in this edited volume. Frequently originating in recent rural restructuring and therefore reflecting dramatic shifts in power structures within rurality (Woods, 2008), what unites these forms of rural cooperation and collaboration are collectively held perceptions of marginalisation and neglect of rural interests – something which they all seek to reverse. Equally instructive, though, from the perspective of this edited volume, are attempts on the part of some such movements and associations to build bridges and coordinate campaigns – relational attempts which may at times be fraught with tensions and difference. Nonetheless, as studies of cooperation through organised resistance to global capital in British Columbia sawmills illustrate, cooperation may be judged effective even if it succeeds only in producing ‘contending’ and ‘moral’ counter-claims to dominant ones (Prudham, 2008). The impact of collaboration in such cases is measured not in material terms but with respect to its capacity to alter individual and collective consciousness, and to affect discourses about different expressions of rurality.

Some of the contributions to this edited volume explore policy solutions and policy interventions in rural and peripheral locations by building upon claims, frameworks and understandings of rural governance, partnerships, engagement and participation derived from an early special issue, in 1998, of the *Journal of Rural Studies*. In the past two decades since the publication of that special issue, research on rural governance has come to encompass a large variety of contributions on topics spanning engagement, challenges to new rural governance, the operation of rural governance partnerships (Jones and Little, 2000), governance participation (Herbert-Cheshire, 2000) and community engagement, frequently adopting a European perspective and presenting empirical material from across Europe. Accordingly, formal methods of governance through cooperation and collaboration cover a host of territorial policy and intervention approaches which mark a shift from government to governance (Goodwin, 1998). A new ‘governance approach’, figuring prominently in academic discourses and public policy documents both at EU and national levels of decision-making, arguably rests on grass-roots involvement and cooperation among diverse stakeholder groups which, through negotiation, are expected to pursue common objectives. Representing a supposedly more open form of interaction and relating, reliant upon partnering and collective decision-making, governance approaches to managing rural and peripheral spaces bring together stakeholder groups during decision-making around complicated issues and ‘wicked’ rural problems (Cooke and Morgan, 1998).

Ónega-Lopez et al. (2010) present a case study of one such planning initiative aimed at improving land management in fragmented areas of Galicia in the North of Spain. Cooperation among land owners, public-sector bodies and other interested parties is shown to be an effective 'win-win' solution – an instance of a successful local, bottom-up collaborative decision-making mechanism which addresses common and imminent dangers of excessive land-fragmentation. Governance of this type appears to provide opportunities for those socially and economically threatened to come together and cooperatively seek a mutually rewarding agreement. 'New rural governance' partnerships, though, can be complex, with blurred boundaries and with obscure authority becoming more diffused and multifaceted. Due to their make-up, the policy instruments that they generate may not reflect adequately the multiple rationalities brought along by diverse actors and stakeholder groups (Taylor, 2010).

As the above discussion and examples demonstrate, social belonging and rural engagement should not necessarily be seen as antithetical to market relations (Hinrichs, 2000) and the search for satisfying one's economic motives, be it in urban locations or in the supposedly more 'neighbourly' and 'caring' rural settings. Cooperation, collaboration and associated rural phenomena may have social, economic and other motives strongly interpenetrated, co-determining the nature of relations and the role that they play in rural locations. What subsequent chapters in the volume will demonstrate is how economic cooperation may be imbued with social and ethical motives, while personal, moral, less-obviously instrumental and seemingly reciprocal and trust-based behaviours may reveal *Homo economicus'* cost-benefit calculations as well.

No account of rural cooperation and collaboration would be complete without an acknowledgment of social and other forms of rural capital as their basis and precondition. A series of studies have recently demonstrated conceptually and empirically the richness in such capital in rural spaces (see Léon, 2005), even though such conclusions often sit alongside findings of the decline in social capital in certain locations and types of rural communities (Mills, 2012). Irrespective of one's position on theoretical debates about the meaning and utility of the term 'social capital' (e.g. Bourdieu, 1986; Woolcock, 1998; Fine, 1999, 2000, 2003; Flora, 1998; Shortall, 2008) and related concepts and indicators such as 'social infrastructure' (Flora et al., 1997; Sharp et al., 2002), the academic realm of rural studies has linked social capital to a number of rural development issues revolving around notions of economic performance (Callois and Aubert, 2007). Social capital underlying civic inclusion, civic engagement, and capacity building through participation

in partnerships is also at the heart of current EU rural policies reliant upon multi-level governance (Shortall, 2008). Such importance of social capital to relationship- and cooperation-focused policy-making informs some of the contributions to this edited volume; it has been explored in connection with rural public policy measures including the LEADER initiative, whereby rural capacity-building and local, grassroots cooperation and coalition-building are nurtured (see Shucksmith, 2000; Doria et al., 2003).

### **I.3 ... Or relational rurals of difference, conflict and rivalry?**

A relational analysis of rural space should be cognisant of the propensity of such locations to be as much about serene co-existence and actors pursuing mutually beneficial ends, as they are about contestation and fractures. Rurality is marked by a vast range of multifarious expressions of difference and conflict, ranging from non-compatibility, disengagement and mistrust in an allegedly ever more diverse countryside to open disputes, struggles, marginalisation and even exclusion. Such forces and dynamics have naturally always had a role to play in rural and peripheral locations. However, analysts have more recently observed heightened economic restructuring, reduced social homogeneity (Hoggart and Paniagua, 2001), intensified commoditisation, privatisation and associated agricultural dissociation from rurality (Paquette and Doman, 2003; Hamin and Marcucci, 2008), as well as faster socio-cultural changes (including an emphasis on cultural, experiential, lifestyle and service aspects of rural space and 'rural living') and attendant institutional instability, all of which have impacted on the composition of rural communities. Consequently, difference, dissent, and conflict have allegedly come to play a more prominent role in rural space and have been reported in an ever growing body of rural studies research. Similarly, some contributions to this volume explore the motives, processes and outcomes of relational domination, coercion, conflicting and incompatible interests, rivalry, and animosity as constitutive of a negotiated rural space.

Inscribed within rurality are inhibitors to cooperation and collaboration which have been linked for instance to conservatism (O'Rourke, 2007), opportunism (Uzun, 2005; Michelini, 2013), individualistic attitudes (Michelini, 2013), and a certain lack of readiness to cooperate and collaborate on the part of specific rural constituencies (McElwee, 2006). Power and domination have been shown elsewhere to be omnipresent

in rural space and constitutive of rural partnerships (Derkzen et al., 2008). Even cooperative arrangements analysed in the preceding section may therefore need, at least at times and at least partly, to be conceptualised as ‘arenas of power’ and difference (Derkzen et al., 2008), suggesting a more nuanced view of rural relations which transcends simplistic descriptions of a rural relational idyll or dichotomies of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ expressions of rural relations. Power seems to permeate and define some rural dynamics, rendering certain types of cooperation and collaboration problematic – if one adheres to a view of power and influence as inherently undesirable, due to the alleged debilitating and disempowering effect on some rural actors and the attendant privileging of the interests and of certain rural constituencies, at the expense of other interests and knowledge.

The transition from a productivist logic underlying the economic and social organisation in rural areas to predominantly consumption-focused sensibilities and experiences appears to have intensified power inequities among rural actors, fuelling conflicting and competing rural agendas and precluding the development of a shared interest within rural space. Difference and contested frames of reference are for instance prominent in studies centred on opposition, resentment and contestation between rural dwellers and ex-urbanites (in-comers) – a matter explored by some of the contributors in this book. Such struggles dominate Woods’ (1997, 1998) account of local rural policies in the UK involving competing agricultural and environmental discourses authored by local and incomer, ex-urbanite communities which uphold incompatible and conflicting ideals regarding, among others, local development (see also Brida et al., 2011). This line of research has produced a rich analytical heritage which includes Gallent et al.’s (2005), Van Auken and Rye’s (2011) and Rye’s (2011) investigations of economic, cultural and social contestations surrounding second homes across countryside, and Svendsen and Sørensen’s (2006) analysis of Danish rural social fragmentation and associated clashes over ‘visions’ of the countryside. Such accounts have enriched understandings of the relational rural by shedding light on the postproductionist and ‘amenity-related’ focus of incomer communities (Hamin and Marcucci, 2008) which may not be shared by rural dwellers. Rural space more generally is currently witnessing a transition marked not only by a reduced emphasis on production but also by increased diversity, seeding conflict and disagreement not only with outsider stakeholders but within the rural communities themselves. Dissonant agendas offering discordant interpretations of and solutions to problems facing rural and peripheral

locations are suitably captured in Duenckmann's (2010) case study of fundamentally contrasting and contradictory perceptions resulting in confrontations between 'the old village' and the academically educated urbanites who are accused of bringing in alien lifestyles and questioning the role of agriculture and farmers in such rural communities. Meijering et al.'s (2007) is another such story – one of rejection, inability to blend, and conflict within communities.

Almost all aspects of rural economic, socio-cultural, political and discursive organisation have actually been shown to be contested in one form or another, and at one time or another, with competing rationalities underpinning difference and resistance. Building upon an intellectual legacy of 'heterogeneity of interests', conflict and opposition involving deconstructing opponents' credibility and legitimacy (Boonstra and Frouws, 2005), mistrust and disengagement (Smithers et al., 2005), overt contestation, struggles and rivalry (Proctor, 2006), and exclusionary tendencies expressive of ideological struggles and preconceptions (Jordan et al., 2009), this edited volume probes deeper into matters of non-inclusiveness and non-collaboration, of hindrances to collective action, of the politicisation of rural interactions, and of the ever more diverse ontological and epistemological positions occupied by various stakeholders. Contestation will be shown to be residing in the same spaces where one finds cooperation, frequently inscribing rural dynamics in parallel to rural cohesion, solidarity, and engagement. The instances of distancing and dissociation exposed, documented and theorised in subsequent chapters at times depict a picture of rural space resembling Marsden's 'contested countryside' where previously (supposedly) cohesive bonds may be breaking up and, rather than uncovering consensus, one comes across problematic engagement, tension, power plays and attempts to dominate.

Instances of hostility, disengagement and conflict have, for example, been recorded with respect to the type of social capital which is typically found across rural spaces. In cases where such capital may be stronger in its bonding variety, rural communities have been empirically shown to exhibit a certain level of intolerance, conservatism, and exclusion. What we know from the more general literature on social capital is that, though most theorists seem to ascribe positive characteristics and effects to this type of capital, strong and persistent exclusionary forces are inherent in it as well. To Bourdieu (1986), social capital is 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition' (p. 248) and

is implicated in the exercise of power. Although less analytically insightful than Bourdieu's treatment of negative ingredients and tendencies of social capital, Putnam's (2000) acknowledgment of the potential of some forms of social capital (especially of the 'bonding' variety) to generate antagonism is intriguing. This 'darker' side of rural relations has been suitably explored in more recent contributions to the discipline, including accounts of rural intolerance and exclusion (Garland and Chakraborti, 2007) and politics of place (Cresswell, 1996, 2004); it will be related to matters of power, manipulation of action, and hidden and more overt conflict in subsequent chapters.

Rural difference and conflict are strongly implicated in matters of rural class. Being a dynamic category, class seems to reveal itself differently in rural than in urban communities, with class relations in rural communities possibly representing little more than yet another expression of relational difference, contestation, conflict, and power. Following the early explosion of interest in class in rural space (e.g. Cloke and Thrift, 1987, 1990; Phillips, 1998b, 1998c), debates about the place and role of class in rurality appear to have diminished in number and intellectual significance since around the mid-1990s (see Miller, 1996). The legitimacy and value of 'class' to theory and practice of rurality have been questioned by Abram (1998), Pakulski and Waters (1996) and Pakulski (2005), among others. Nonetheless, class analysis, especially with reference to the role of the working (Hoggart, 2007) and middle classes (Savage et al., 2005; Tyler, 2006) in rural space, has enjoyed something of a renaissance in recent years. Its engagement with questions of inclusion and exclusion, cooperation and competition is currently being explored from a variety of perspectives, such as the emergence of a 'new squirearchy' in the English countryside as an instance of members of certain sections of Britain's 'moneyed middle classes' engaging in boundary-making (Heley, 2010). One's involvement in activities such as 'the shoot' and 'the hunt' act as signifiers of 'passage', constructing and reproducing social identities by forming extensive though ambiguous cultures in rural areas. Such resurgence of interest in class has been sustained partly by wider calls to study class in its materiality, and not only as expressed through and expressive of identity (Hoggart, 2007). Key developments in this stream of research, such as the gentrification of rurality in developed economies, point towards class dynamics, sources, and their effects (Phillips, 2007), necessitating – as done in three chapters in this book – the unpacking of the concept by demonstrating relational divisions and by theorising the interplay among class, cooperation, conflict and exclusion.

Earlier mentioned rural governance and planning structures, which are typically described as participative, consensual, and founded upon principles of rural multi-stakeholder involvement, may also be fraught with tension, competition, and division among actors involved in these initiatives (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Chilvers, 2009). As one empirical example from cross-border Welsh-English rural tourism integration demonstrates, the strength of parochialism and competition, and the prominence of segregation, politics, and resistance to cooperation in rural governance should not be underestimated (Ilbery and Saxena, 2011). There are limitations to Habermasian communicative action, particularly in today's complex mix of rural stakeholders, with consensually reached agreements and accommodations shown to be possible, but more often than not 'precarious' and 'temporary' at best (Taylor, 2010). Such currently much-favoured governance mechanisms may therefore need to be studied not only in terms of their participative qualities, but also with respect to the power inbuilt into them (Derkzen et al., 2008).

Contestation, conflict, exclusion and oppression are frequently indirectly, though intimately, related to notions of rural idyll and utopian rurality. This is perhaps most aptly illustrated in relations between dominant rural constituencies and marginalised rural populations. A case in point is the manner in which unwanted populations such as the homeless may be challenged, driven out, or rendered invisible by locals who are keen to preserve the character of an imagined rural idyll. Homelessness may be deemed to be fundamentally at odds with, and out of place in, rural locations with their supposedly idyllic nature; the former becomes a transgression on the latter (Clope et al., 2007). Similar 'darker' relations of exploitation, inequities (Ramirez and Villarejo, 2012) and exclusion (Kay, 2011; Milbourne and Doheny, 2012; Shubin, 2012) include institutional marginalisation and organised resistance by 'othering'. This issue has been explored in accounts on rural discursive coalitions (Bulkeley, 2000; Brunori et al., 2013) which coalesce around discursive demands and representations of rural spaces. Discursive cooperation of this type is not necessarily unproblematic, and conflicts may arise out of representational incompatibilities (Woods, 2003, 2012). Historically, Woods (2006) notes, rural spaces and communities tended to be stable and coherent discursive constructions defined by solidarity, in spite of perennial intolerance and exclusion. These days, though, one finds increasing struggles not only over the material – as expressed for instance in the above-mentioned propensity to drive the homeless out of rural spaces – but also over the symbolic properties of rural areas.

Discursive struggles mark the 'second rural' in European scholarship – a set of scholarly contributions offering innovative and vigorous inter-rogations around notions of power, ideology, constructions and representations through linkages between language and power (Bell, 2007). Discursive struggles over economic and social-cultural issues define some negotiations, disagreements and conflicts over rural issues, with rival agendas addressing matters of services and service provision, housing, poverty and in-migration among others but also extending to the very meaning of 'rurality'. Such discursive struggles obviously affect not only the manner in which rural spaces are experienced, but also the way they are strategically constructed and marketed, thus revealing the interests producing such constructs. Struggles over meaning and the meanings that we assign to places and spaces are no less imbued with interests, agendas, privileging some voices while silencing other, as well as power relations than those implicated in the more material rural struggles described earlier. Discursive conflicts are deeply implicated in the politics of rural representation, with attendant complexities (Collins, 2007) and ambiguities regarding the authorships of such representations, their legitimacy, and the impact on material rural circumstances as well as on power (im)balances that one finds there. Consequently, as will be documented in some of the accounts constituting this edited volume, the rural comes to resemble a fragmented domain, 'a patchwork' of 'conflicting constructions of rurality' (Meijering et al., 2007) and opposing frames of reference, as part of the material and less tangible, 'cultural' wars fought in and over rural space (Ferreya et al., 2008).

#### **I.4 Conclusion**

Rural space appears to be riddled with complexity and contradiction, with diverse and at times conflicting developments introducing distinct challenges to knowing and theorising such locations. This also applies to concepts such as cooperation and collaboration, and the obverse of those, in rural settings, reflecting the multifarious and elusive character of rural spaces. In order to reveal and make sense of the complexities of rural place-making, rural spaces are to be approached through the prism of collective endeavours, relations, social and economic structures governed by principles of shared collective visions, but also through conflict and contestation.

All contributions to this edited volume, including this Introduction, are therefore informed by assumptions of rural constructions and imaginaries, being collective products of the interests and activities of ever

more diverse sets of stakeholders inhabiting them. In order to discover how and why social, economic and other processes help define rural places, and turn them into the places we know, the academics and practitioners involved in the project of creating this book have sought to illustrate and theorise relational dynamics which may be integrative and divisive. The thirteen contributions which follow are driven by the desire to unravel and deconstruct cooperative and collaborative processes and outcomes, as well as the economic, social, and political forces implicated in cooperation and its 'darker' obverse.

## 1.5 Organisation of the book

The book contains thirteen contributions, organised into four parts which reflect on the issues introduced in this opening chapter. A brief overview and assessment of individual chapters follows.

**Part I 'Cooperation in Rural and Peripheral Areas: Conceptual Issues, Approaches, and Challenges'** incorporates three chapters sharing a theoretical focus on and interest in cooperation in rural and peripheral spaces across areas of service delivery and cross-community cooperation within challenging rural settings.

In the opening chapter to the volume, '**The Character of Rural Business Relations**', Robert Newbery and Gary Bosworth explore theories of relationships, social networks, and trust, by interrogating questions about the rationale of business relations, their diverse origins, and the variety of parties engaging in such relations, relational transformations over time, and the contribution that they make to local business development in rural areas. By completing their conceptual discussion with empirical findings regarding rural SMEs and microenterprises in the North East of England as well as rural business associations across Northumberland and Cumbria, the authors seek to problematise gaps in scholarly understanding of the geography, sociology and dynamic of such rural relationships.

Written by Mary O'Shaughnessy and Patrick Enright, **Chapter 2 'Institutional Cooperation and Service Delivery in Rural Ireland'** traces the history of development of cooperative arrangements across sectors of the Irish economy, attending particularly to cooperative structures in low-density rural areas and solutions to service provision in such locations through the creation of agricultural cooperatives, voluntary and community organisations. Relations nurtured among rural actors involved in service provision are analysed, covering the role and place in such cooperative arrangements of the public, voluntary and

private sectors. Through separate case studies, different forms, outcomes and consequences of rural cooperation are highlighted.

In **Chapter 3 'Cross-community Cooperation in Post-socialist Hungarian Rural Space'**, Eva Fekete examines cooperation through a spatial-territorial lens. The meandering trajectory of cross-community cooperation in post-state-socialist Hungary is traced. The author theorises not only the current relatively precarious conditions of such cooperation but also outlines cooperation scenarios of relevance across rural contexts and disentangles the political rationales for cooperation. Of consequence to future work on rural cooperation may be the in-depth discussion offered by Fekete on drivers facilitating and inhibiting partnership-based cross-community cooperation, the paradoxes inherent in rural cooperation, and specific processes shaping such cooperation.

Class-focused approaches to investigating cooperation, collaboration, conflict, contestation, and exclusion mark the contribution that three chapters in **Part II 'Challenges to Cooperation: Politics, Class Divisions, and Conflict'** make.

Opening with an account on the origins of the 'rural idyll', Sue Bestwick takes the reader through the processes of formation of social structures and experiences shaping attitudes towards urban and rural spaces and the relations between rural and urban worlds in **Chapter 4 'Class Conflict and Social Change in the British Countryside, 1990–2013: Urban Values Rural Issues'**. By examining 1990s and more recent political and socio-cultural influences as well as the effect of media representations of the rural on the perceived rural-urban binary, Bestwick seeks to explain attendant conflicts and change in the British countryside through the prism of class-divisive issues. Matters of comprehension and incomprehension of visions, values, and life on the part of both rural and urban constituencies are seen as deeply implicated in domination, bias and marginalisation. Rural-urban divides, the chapter demonstrates, are inextricably linked with wider class affiliations, class discord and political partisanship, and associated discourses of rural class. They materialise in entrenched positions and in confrontations around intractable class-informed differences in perceptions, discourses, affiliations, and emotions within rural areas described as 'sites of conflict'.

A different approach to class in its rural expressions is adopted by Tom Mordue in **Chapter 5 'Performing the Rural through Game-Angling'** where, by drawing upon his empirical work on 'a seemingly innocuous' and popular activity in the UK – freshwater angling – Mordue draws a picture of a negotiated and relational rurality produced and re-produced by a complex array of actors, each following class- and

socially-determined scripts and embodied practices. The rurality which emerges in this account, as well as its sense and sensing, are negotiated; they faithfully reproduce Victorian class delineations of angling. It was during that period, Mordue contends, that social distinctions and class differentiation between 'highbrow' and 'coarse' angling emerged, with the pursuits of the gentlemanly wealthy classes – labelled as 'art' – being carefully and clearly contrasted with those of classes of lowly economic and cultural capital. Threats to the exclusivity of the angling pursuits of the wealthy classes in Victorian and post-Victorian Britain were successfully managed, with exclusionary tactics and restrictions imposed both materially and through careful discourse-management. The 'unworthy' remained excluded from elevated pursuits, and class angling spaces, structures, and hierarchies remain preserved.

Extending his earlier-mentioned work on the 'new squierarchy', Jesse Heley offers the third and final contribution to discussions around rural class, in **Chapter 6 'Reviewing and Renewing Class: The Prospects for a Twenty-first Century Rural Analysis'**, where a position similar to that adopted earlier in this Introduction upholds the utility of class analysis to our knowledge of rurality. By exploring the place and evolution of rural class analysis over the past half a century and by attending to two crises in such analysis, Heley offers a new vision for rehabilitating and re-engaging with class and attendant notions. The almost complete disappearance of class analysis from rural studies around the mid-1990s and its replacement with notions of otherness, race, and gender, among others, are problematised and are harnessed by the author into cultivating a new political economy of rurality where processes of symbolic exchange are enmeshed with relations of capital and where clashes of differing identities are implicated with the selective adoption of specific discourses. The questions that Heley poses about the relationality of class and class analysis further contribute to the overall theme of this volume.

**Part III 'Policy Intervention, Solutions, and Lessons for Managing Cooperation in Rural and Peripheral Areas'** complements the preceding conceptually stimulating interrogations of cooperation, problematic collaboration, marginalisation, and exclusion by seeking to document practical solutions and methods of government and governance of rural and peripheral spaces.

In the first of three analyses of policy and management approaches to cooperation, **Chapter 7 'Governing Sustainable Tourism: European Networked Rural Villages'**, linkages between rural political economy and tourism development are explored. The questions asked by Frank

Go, Maria Della Lucia, Mariapina Trunfio, and Umberto Martini do not revolve around more confined matters of definitional disagreements and issues of land management or entrepreneurship, as frequently done in the area of rural tourism, but are positioned within broader debates about rural social and economic regeneration and the role played by diverse stakeholder communities in rural governance. The potential of sustainable tourism and sustainable tourism interventions as solutions to problems experienced by rural and peripheral spaces is explored, through the notion of stakeholder engagement. Such engagement is illustrated with examples from the European project 'Listen to the Voice of Villages' which acts as a testing ground for novel governance approaches by bringing disparate stakeholder groups together and, in the process of doing so, constructing community.

**Chapter 8 'Rural Development Policy in the Framework of the Knowledge-based Economy: Selective Impacts and Solutions in the Case of the Czech Republic'** by Martin Pelucha, Eva Cudlinova, and Miloslav Lapka offers a different perspective to currently debated issues of rural development policy by analysing policy imperatives at the intersection of knowledge economies and territorially based rural development. By attending to the specificities of past Czech rural knowledge-economy development and its current dynamics, and in spite of trends pointing towards increasing disparities between rural and urban areas, the authors repudiate claims of passivity, irreversible degradation, and unavoidable decline of rural spaces within the EU and in the Czech republic more specifically. The specific context provides an intriguing picture of variable knowledge-economy performance in Czech rurality, fuelled by a certain degree of path-dependence and state-socialist inheritance but also by the challenging transition, financial constraints which are at least partly attributable to strongly embedded powerful interests and their effective lobbying efforts, and a regulatory and institutional regime which has not always been supportive of the development of a rural knowledge-economy in the country. The discussion closes with an account of more recent cooperation projects aimed at stimulating rural development and activating the knowledge-economy in non-urban areas of the Czech republic, the limited impact that some of these initiatives have had on the current state of the knowledge economy, and institutional constraints within EU's Common Agricultural Policy, which continues to privilege the support for agricultural activities and therefore limits opportunities for coordination among knowledge-economy projects.

The author of **Chapter 9 'Processes of Cooperation in Rural Areas: Obstacles, Driving Forces and Options for Encouragement'**,

Kim Pollerman, reflects on problematic conditions and challenges faced by rural and peripheral locations, as well as drivers of suboptimal rural performance. Pollerman presents evidence-based support measures that may need to be implemented in order to drive rural locations forward by fostering cooperation. Integrative participative approaches to rural development are suggested as a solution, alongside the mobilisation of enduring commitment and the nurturing of synergies among diverse stakeholders with divergent interests. Empirically informed LEADER experiences stimulate the discussion of lessons for shaping cooperation in rural areas. Pollerman puts forth a strategic approach to overcoming obstacles to rural cooperation predicated on principles of sustainable and not fast growth.

Empirical and empirically-informed analyses of rurality and discussions about rural cooperation, development, and conflict are revisited in the last **Part IV 'Taking Further the Intellectual Debates on Cooperation in Rurality'** which brings the debates to a close by considering ways forward for comprehending the relational rurality advocated by all contributors.

In the first discussion charting future directions for rural studies imaginaries, **Chapter 10 'Towards a Post-structuralist and Cultural Turn in Researching Rurality in Poland – A Geographical Perspective'** opens with an assessment of rural geography in the UK and USA. Its underpinnings and paradigm changes are juxtaposed with intellectual predicaments faced by its post-state-socialist counterparts. Konrad Czapiewski's and Marcin Wójcik's chapter offers commentary on theoretical debates in Polish rural geography, identifying a dualism of understanding and an emphasis on functionalist analyses focused on spatial structures and policy instruments reflecting the 'fetishism' of socio-economic transition. Socio-cultural transformations which have captured the imagination of Western European scholars appear to have been downplayed. The authors offer a new perspective of rural geography, one which is open to new theoretical interpretations and methodological instruments and one undertaken by a new generation of rural scientists with wider analytic interests and a distinct sensitivity to socio-cultural and relational realities.

In **Chapter 11 'Re-thinking Rural Conflict, Failure and Cooperation Difficulties'**, Alex Warlow and Edward Kasabov present a practical-theoretical analysis of cooperatives through the lens of conflict and failure. Drawing upon extant research in rural studies on these two concepts, the discussion theorises the nature and preconditions for conflict and failure, conceptualises distinct types of failure, and extends

on a conceptual level the understating of rural cooperation failure as well as its significance to rural communities. Theory contributions also include the identification and analysis of distinct types of failure. On a more practical-empirical level, the authors suggest approaches to managing conflict and failure.

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## **Part I**

# **Cooperation in Rural and Peripheral Areas: Conceptual Issues, Approaches, and Challenges**

# 1

## The Character of Rural Business Relations

*Robert Newbery and Gary Bosworth*

### 1.1 Introduction

Rural spaces are often associated with strong community ties (Reimer, 1997; Atterton and Bosworth 2012) but the simultaneous spread of information technology and advances in personal mobility in the ‘Network Society’ (Castells, 2005) have stretched the geography of many rural networks and relations. In this context, this opening chapter considers the role of rural businesses as essential nodes in rural networks and the value that network relations can bring to smaller, rural enterprises.

Entrepreneurs and business owners cannot function in isolation, leading to a presumption that rural economies are disadvantaged by their sparser networks. Business-to-business cooperation is commonly regarded as vital to knowledge transfer, the discovery and exploitation of ideas, and higher levels of innovation. The literature on industrial networks and business clusters is replete with evidence of how differential access to physical, human and social resources provides greater local, regional, and/or national productivity.

While rural areas may offer some natural barriers to network-formation, we suggest that the stronger social mechanisms associated with rural communities – classically articulated by Tonnies (1955) – act as a foundation or template for building and consolidating social ties. These may not entirely compensate for the challenges of sparseness and distance but we explore the distinctiveness of rural business relations and the consequent value to business owners.

Using evidence from the literature and our independent studies of small businesses in Northern England, this discussion will initially explore the theory of relationships, incorporating social networks and conceptions of trust. This leads to questions regarding what the business

relations are for, who engages in them and how they change over time. We also comment on the diverse origins of relations that contribute to local business development in rural areas.

## 1.2 Rural business relations

Business relations or relationships have been defined in numerous ways but for the purposes of this chapter, we apply the framework set out by Tiepoh and Reimer (2004, p. 430). They establish four fundamental modes of social relations as set out in Table 1.1.

Given our focus on business-to-business cooperation, we are most interested in market and associative relations. Market relations may occur daily as part of the normal operation of a business, such as with a supplier or customer, or more infrequently. They may be purely transactional or may encompass greater degrees of social engagement. For day-to-day operations, relationships revolve around explaining efficiencies and competitiveness. A classic example is the research of Piore and Sabel (1984) into Italian industrial districts. Here flexible specialisation, technology sharing, and subcontracting arrangements, occurring within a focused geography, were highlighted as small and medium size enterprises (SME) characteristics that optimised operations.

In keeping with associative relations, these relationships may also be created over and above those encountered in the day-to-day running of a firm and are intentionally held for some common purpose, such as a purposive or 'consciously constituted' (Huggins, 1998, p. 147) collection of firms. Here research is typically related to inter-firm and policy-implemented networks (Huggins, 2000) and evaluation is based

*Table 1.1* A typology of social relations

Type of relation	Explanation
Market relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Based on the exchange of goods and services within a relatively free and information-rich context</li> <li>– Tend to be short-term and based on the neo-classical assumption of economic behaviour</li> </ul>
Bureaucratic relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Impersonal and formal relationships based on a rationalised division of labour, authority structures, and regulation</li> </ul>
Associative relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Typically informal, voluntary, and surround shared interests</li> </ul>
Communal relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Typically family and close friendships</li> </ul>

*Source:* Adapted from Tiepoh and Reimer (2004).

on targeted, usually quantifiable, outcomes. Within the small business literature, a host of advantages have been attributed to 'networks', including the motivation of entrepreneurship among network members (Copus and Skura, 2006), time and money saved in information gathering (Malecki and Oinas, 1999), support for nascent small business, innovation (Camagni, 1991; Gelsing, 1992), access to training (Bennett and Errington, 1995), and providing a firm 'with its "distinctive capabilities" that help it to create and add value' (Malecki, 1997, p. 173). Totterman and Sten (2005) found that formal support groups can also facilitate access to other business networks, seemingly implying that cumulative benefits can accrue from network participation. Uzzi (1996) also mentioned the long-term advantages of reciprocation demonstrating that the value of networks can increase over time.

These relations share commonalities, and where successful industrial districts have been explained by the implicit relations within supply chains (Piore and Sabel, 1984), new networks have been set up with the explicit intention of emulating their successes (Rosenfeld, 1996). Purposive collectives may be set up by the local business community to solve a collective action problem, or to provide competitive access to services otherwise unavailable to members. Huggins (2000) suggests that these networks are popular with policy makers as a blueprint for development. One form of '*consciously constituted*' network of particular interest here is the business association, where the member 'nodes' are businesses cooperating to achieve private interests and collective goals.

Social network approaches consider the social context of relations as critical in determining the extent, distribution and value of benefits to members. As part of his theory of embeddedness, Granovetter (1985) argues that actors should not be under- or over-socialised. By understanding that the economic behaviour of an agent is embedded in ongoing networks of social relations, both the economic and social fields are given relevance. Dynamic social relations can create bonds of trust and order between individuals and these ties bind individuals into relationships and social structures such as groups and associations. Granovetter suggests that the strength of social ties is a function of reciprocity, intimacy, intensity of emotion, and time (1973).

Coleman (1988) suggested that close social networks, where actors are densely connected to one another, allow for the continuous reinforcement of trust and of group norms, resulting in strengthening ties and group solidarity. Connections built up through trust and reciprocity may provide benefits such as improved reputation and 'thicker information' (Uzzi, 1996, p. 667) and may indirectly lead to economic benefits.

These close social networks are more likely in day-to-day business operations and may overlap with wider community-based networks, especially in rural areas where embeddedness may be stronger (Reimer, 1997; Atterton, 2007). Communal relations may also support entrepreneurs at different stages of business creation and development, which can be explored through the concept of embeddedness.

Embeddedness can contribute to the success or failure of a business as a result of the social ties built up within a community. The strong and weak ties thesis (Granovetter, 1973) argues that whilst strong ties within a community may lead to solidarity and strong community spirit, they may also insulate the community from external influences, leading to atrophy. These 'lock-in' effects are detrimental to innovation and learning (Uzzi, 1996) and may isolate businesses from regional, national and global opportunities (Oinas, 1997). Moral obligations and peer pressure may override beneficial economic considerations, with preference given to embedded local ties over arms length links (Atterton, 2007) and a limited receptivity to new ideas. Indeed, failure to conform to the community norm can damage reputations and result in isolation from a network (Jack and Anderson, 2002). This relates to Olson's privileged and intermediary groups (1971), where to risk free-riding behaviour in a group with strong bonds would be to risk weakening these ties and becoming socially censured or excluded from the group.

However a foundation of trust is required between parties. Simmel (1971) defines trust as the most important condition in facilitating cooperation and social exchange, suggesting that

without the general trust that people have in each other, society itself would disintegrate, for very few relationships are based entirely upon what is known with certainty about another person, and very few relationships would endure if trust were not as strong as, or stronger than, rational proof and personal observation.

(Simmel, 1978, pp. 178–79)

Elster (1989) identifies two notions of trust: generalised and cooperative. Generalised trust is 'characterized by the predictability of social life and ... maintained by the existence of habitual rules and social norms' (Misztal, 1996, p. 63). Cooperative trust on the other hand is specific to relationships and indicates the trust which 'coordinates expectations' between actors (Elster, 1989, p. 97). The social expectations for what constitute legitimate behaviour (Abercrombie et al., 2000) originate in ethnic, racial, class, and other cultural differences (Baland and Platteau, 1996).

Thus the social norms characterising 'generalised trust' may differ between cultures and regions. Atterton (2007) found in a study of small Scottish towns that differences in the social networks of small business could in part be explained by the different cultural characteristics of local people and by the number of in-migrants in the area who took time to assimilate but, once assimilated, changed the dynamics of social networks (see also Young, 2010).

Cooperative trust is key to notions of embeddedness where it provides the mechanism for a social logic of exchange that is more efficient than impersonal economic transactions. Close ties within social networks allow for reinforcement of both cooperative and generalised trust (Coleman, 1988). Greater solidarity between actors, shared norms and higher levels of trust may be related to higher degrees of homogeneity. Thus, in applying Tiepoh and Reimer's framework for analysing rural business relations, the underlying trust must also be considered as an influencing factor for the outcomes that might be observed.

There remains a gap in knowledge regarding the geography, sociology, and dynamic of these rural business relationships. The following section outlines two complementary studies into rural business relations. Using our joint findings, we follow this with a discussion of where these rural business relationships appear to be taking place, the participants in these relationships, and how these connections change over critical stages of business development. Finally, we conclude by summarising our evidence to highlight what we believe to be the rural character of business relations.

### **1.3 The empirical research of rural business**

The subsequent analysis is based on two parallel investigations into rural SMEs and microenterprises in the North East of England (Bosworth, 2009a) and rural business associations across Northumberland and Cumbria (Newbery, 2010). The first applied a sampling frame of 40 businesses, comprising a mix of indigenous and in-migrant business owners across four broad sectors: retail; tourism and hospitality; manufacturing and distribution; and professional services. In-migrants were defined as having moved at least 30 miles as adults, and it should also be noted that the sample was intentionally skewed towards smaller rural settlements to maintain the focus on those rural areas where business networks might be most challenging to initiate and sustain.

A critical incident technique was used to analyse the significance of numerous interactions. This enabled the type of contact and the

value for the business to be examined for every incident where another individual or organisation had an impact upon the business. As Curran and Blackburn recognise, this technique can expose ‘the character and content of the linkages between small business owners and others within the social and economic community’ (1994, p. 106). Some 380 critical moments were identified from the 40 interviews and these were categorised according to the locality and the source of each contact, the strength of relationship and the impact on the business. Thematic analysis of transcripts provided data lending itself to a degree of statistical analysis, although it remains a predominantly qualitative technique and as such is supplemented with more detailed examples of how these moments occurred and created value for the businesses concerned.

The second encompasses a members survey, interviews and participant observation from 15 rural business associations, ranging from small single sector to larger mixed sector associations. These captured benefits sought and achieved and yielded a response rate of 37% with 313 respondents. The data was subsequently compared with data on non-members within a similar locale (Atterton and Affleck, 2010) and analysed using factor and cluster analysis.

### **1.3.1 What are the values attached to rural business relations?**

According to a 2010 survey of rural business in the north east of England (Atterton and Affleck, 2010), rural businesses seek advice primarily from: accountants (51.3%), other private sector advisors (27.8%), industry contacts (local 18.5% and non-local 18.8%) and family members (15%). The type of advice varies, with 30% looking for general information and 20% seeking business knowledge, financial and legal advice. They are more likely to seek advice if they are within the first couple of years of business, or if they are looking to grow, or if they are located in an area of sparse population. These businesses reported the most useful advice came from: accountants, family members, industry contacts (local and non-local), and other private sector advisors (solicitor, architect, etc) respectively.

Underlying this are the benefits that the rural business hopes to achieve through the relationships they establish. Rural business associations provide an insight here, where members gain access to a network of relationships underpinned by face-to-face contact. We found that the core benefits they seek can be classified as being part of either an instrumental or social ‘bundle’ of benefits. The instrumental bundle of benefits relates to networking for competitive advantage, which includes aspects such as increasing visibility to the customer, gaining

new customer contacts, and improving reputation. This bundle is sought by those that want to use membership to generate new business. Whilst operating at a local level, it has more in common with the 'arms-length' transactions associated with non-rural relationships, and is gained through market relations.

The social bundle of benefits relates to social networking, support, having a collective voice, and gaining access to knowledge. These benefits are sought by those that want to be informed and wish to belong; they are gained through associative relations and have much in common with Granovetter's thesis.

### 1.3.2 Who are the holders of these relationships?

Critical incident analysis identified that business owners rely on a wide range of relationships to influence their decision-making. These vary from general day-to-day conversations with friends through to professional conversations seeking advice on specific business issues. The geography of association shows that the vast majority of these critical incidents concern relations within the local area (see Figure 1.1). Breaking the data down by sector shows that manufacturing and distribution firms have wider networks at the regional and national level while tourism firms and retailers are more locally focused. There is little difference between local and in-migrant business owners, highlighting that in-migrants build local relations through their business activity.

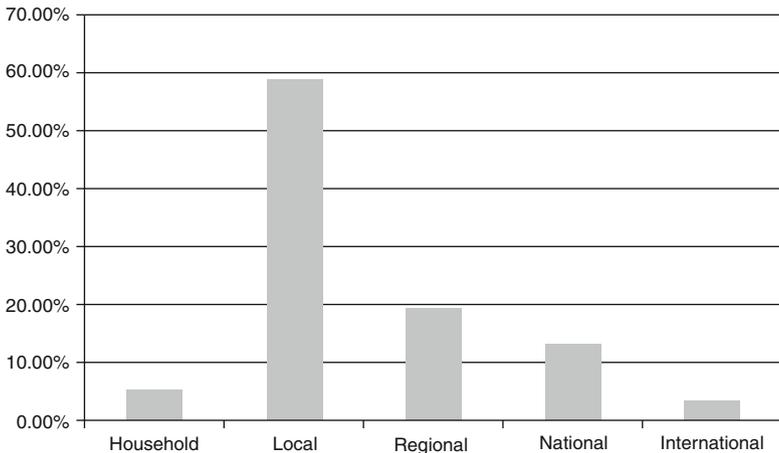


Figure 1.1 The geography of critical incidents among rural business owners

One clear distinction in the data shows that in retail, in-migrants actually have a *more* local focus while indigenous businesses owners tend to develop supportive regional networks.

Formal business associations focus around rural population concentrations, the majority being market towns with a minority drawing upon adjacent villages, although these may encompass membership concentrated within the settlement or spread across the wider district. Relationships within these associations tend to focus upon the local level, such as the Morpeth Chamber of Trade and Commerce, which aims to develop the trading environment within the catchment of the town of Morpeth.

The majority of rural business-to-business relations are taking place at the local level. Such a tendency to rely on local relations could restrict access to new knowledge and opportunities. This has led proponents of neo-endogenous development to suggest that counterurbanisation can stimulate rural economies by increasing the endogenous capacity of local businesses, not just through financial injections but also through new knowledge and network accessibility (Stockdale, 2006; Atterton and Bosworth, 2012).

Not everyone values associative relations, and 53.5% of respondents are not members of any business association. As Curran and Blackburn (1994) indicate, membership may be important for some business types, it but may be a low priority for others. It can also be a personal characteristic, with one member of an association in Rothbury stating: 'I am an association type of person, whereas my wife is not'. Where they do seek out these relations, a comparison between rural business members (Newbery, 2010) and non-members (Atterton and Affleck, 2010) shows that members are more likely to be: users of advice, smaller in size, incomers to the area, female, and educated to degree level. They are also less likely to be home-based businesses.

Table 1.2 summarises a comparison between members of rural business associations and non-members.<sup>1</sup> Membership of a rural business association gives higher odds of having made an increase in profits over the preceding five years and of having a lower annual turnover. Controlling for variations between sectors, this suggests that membership may be having optimising effects, as highlighted by the resource-based view (Barney, 1991; Parker, 2008), transaction costs theory (Williamson, 1985; North, 1986; Park, 1996) and the logic of exchange (Granovetter, 1985). This supports the view that rural businesses with associative relations are more successful than their less networked equivalents (Besser and Miller, 2010).

Table 1.2 Comparison between rural business association members and non-members

	Local association
<b>Business level</b>	
Profits increased over last five years	↑↓
Turnover	↓
Log full-time equivalent employees	—
Home-based business	↓
Local purchases made	↑
<b>Respondent level</b>	
In-migrant to the area	↑
Female	↑↑
Have sought business advice	↑↑
Degree qualifications	↑↑
<b>Sector</b>	
Retail and transport	↑↑
Accommodation	↑↑
Information, finance and real estate	↑↑
Professional	↑↑
<b>Geographic</b>	
Sparsely populated rural area	↑

Note: ↑ = Higher likelihood ↓ = Lower likelihood = No significance.

This data does not explain whether it is the membership of a rural business association that causes an increase in profits, or whether associations simply attract more profitable and outward-looking firms. They may be firms with a tendency to recognise and exploit external opportunities in general, resulting in higher profits. It follows that this same orientation would make it more likely that they would also be a member of a business association. Using propensity to seek advice as a proxy for this outward orientation would appear to show evidence of this argument. Members of business associations are more likely to have previously sought advice and it follows that they are more willing to engage in relationships in order to discover and exploit opportunities.

Local level effects also appear significant. Members of local associations are twice as likely to have some involvement with the local supply chain. This integration with the local supply chain may be helping to optimise operations (Piore and Sabel, 1984) and enhance sales opportunities where other members are also customers.

Local members are also more likely to have higher levels of education than non-members and according to Lin (2001), level of education has a strong relationship with the creation of social capital, which may

in turn enhance the ability to access network benefits (Putnam, 1993; Huggins and Johnson, 2010). We also found that membership of local business associations is more likely in sparsely populated rural areas, compared to more densely populated rural areas. It is likely that businesses in sparsely populated rural areas need to be more self- and community-reliant, as they are less likely to be within the 'service-shadow' of higher order conurbations (Countryside Agency, 2002, p. 92).

At the local level there is higher likelihood that a member comes originally from outside the area. For these in-migrants, local business associations provide a way to build market and associative relations within the local business community. For the in-migrant, the local association also provides a high visibility site to help promote their firms and hopefully gain access to local networks. It is likely that this is a two-way process, with in-migrants bringing extra-local linkages to the local association and locals providing strong ties and a pathway to community belonging for the in-migrant.

Finally, home-based businesses are less likely to be members of local business associations. Previous research has indicated that home-based businesses are particularly widespread in rural areas and that due to the nature of running a business from the home, they are likely to be more isolated from peer and social support (Newbery and Bosworth, 2010), and experience greater need for local associations and networks (Dwelly et al., 2005; Taylor, 2008; Mason et al., 2010).

Many businesses shy away from associative relationships, but these relations are more common in smaller businesses, particularly in the retail, tourism, and professional service sectors. There is also some indication that these associative relations are linked with higher levels of profit, although no causality has been established.

### **1.3.3 How do relationships change during critical stages of business development?**

To understand how new knowledge and opportunities are derived through market and associative relations, the following section contrasts key aspects of the business process: start-up, staff recruitment and business development. Evidence suggests that different relationships are influential at different stages, echoing other research that has identified that stronger ties are most influential in decisions concerning business start-up, while further developments of trade and marketing are thought to rely on more extensive and weaker ties (Chell and Baines, 2000). We also found that the background of the individual business owner(s) has a significant effect.

### 1.3.3.1 Business start-up

This mix of associative and communal relations is hugely influential at the very early stages of a business, offering essential support to overcome the liability of newness (Stinchcombe, 1965). Husbands and wives, parents, friends in a local community and friends in previous employment were all referred to by different business owners as providing encouragement, advice, financial support, or working in partnership at the outset of the new business venture. During start-up there is a particular resource focus on maintaining a regular income, gaining access to market knowledge and capital, organising suppliers, and attracting customers (Burns, 2007). For example, an in-migrant with professional experience in a certain line of work will be able to rely on previous contacts for advice and new business but is unlikely to have the local ties that can provide hands-on help and support.

Critical incident analysis highlighted a number of occasions where direct factors influencing start-up originated in the local community. These included working in a tea-room to gain experience before taking over the business, asking friends to help test out business ideas (in one case in return for butchering a cow), and developing initial ideas through informal conversations in the village pub. Once the decision has been taken, the initial phase of starting the business also relies on a range of associative and more communal types of relations to offer support. In rural communities, there is a feeling that local embeddedness enhances the level of communal support. One village shopkeeper explained, 'I've had nothing but help off people, I don't know whether that's because I'm local ... it's possibly because I've lived here all my life' (*local, retail*).

Among incomers, the mix of influences for starting the business was slightly different. They all had some connection with the local area, even if it was only a friend who could advise them on the level of competition for pub restaurants in their locality (*in-migrant, retail*). In essence, incomers purposively sought local information from associates with relevant knowledge in the same way that others would approach professional organisations for business-specific advice. There is also evidence that these incomers go through a process of embedding, where they assimilate aspects of the local business community. Even the consultant who said of networking, 'I've always resisted it, I hated the thought of it' (*in-migrant, professional services*) recognised that his decision to join a local rugby club could be considered 'networking'. When the suggestion was put to him, he responded, 'I suppose you could describe it as networking, it never crossed my mind. At the end of the day, it's law of averages, the more people you talk to the more people

you're likely to find that might have a common interest or require the services you've got.' His business has benefited from certain friends in the rugby club but the outcome was not considered at the time.

Here local business associations may be important sites for those that wish to belong to meet those that they perceive to already belong (Atterton et al., 2011; Newbery et al., 2013). For some, the relationships may only be formed with the intention of seeking instrumental benefits, for others both instrumental and social benefits are sought (Newbery et al., Under review). New relationships may become embedded by existing members vouching for new members, thereby 'ced[ing] the expectations and opportunities of an existing embedded social structure' (Johannisson et al., 2002, p. 679), and enabling new members to become part of the local business network (Jack and Anderson, 2002).

This mental separation of business and social relations was noted by many rural business owners. One explained that being recognised in a social context does have a downside if people want to 'talk shop' but he admits, 'It's a good thing because it means you're famous really ... people recognise myself and the brewer' (*in-migrant, manufacturing*). It can also influence the way that other people react as the overt networker will develop valuable business contacts but may not build up the longer term levels of trust associated with less formal interactions. One business owner commented that 'at a trade show you get two things, either people who give nothing away or the old school who will spend an hour boasting to you' (*in-migrant, manufacturing*). It is hard to imagine such a calculated assessment being made about individuals in a more social environment where personal relations develop in very different ways.

While access to these resources remains a prerequisite during growth, the focus changes to the re-alignment of resources such as systems, personnel and organisation, developing leadership and marketing skills, and using relationships to access advice (Burns and Whitehouse, 1996; Cosh and Hughes, 1998). Across these life stages a common theme is that relationships matter (Burns and Whitehouse, 1996), and that a contact network can facilitate access to resources (Bhide, 1992) and promote business credibility (Courtney and Atterton, 2001). This access is enhanced by the degree the individual is embedded within the local social milieu (Granovetter, 1985).

### 1.3.3.2 Staff recruitment

Granovetter (1974) found that over 60% of professional, technical and managerial workers interviewed obtained their jobs through personal contacts, and Department of Social Security figures for Britain in the

1990s showed that some 38% of job seekers contacted friends as a means of job search (Hannan, 1999). Essentially, 'the use of friends and kin to identify prospective employees is pervasive all over the world' (Reimer, 1997, p. 401). Thus, we explore the value of communal and associative relations in generating rural employment.

Personal contacts are consistently important for recruitment, with recommendations from other members of staff, contacts through friends and family, or simply 'word of mouth' regularly mentioned. A common sentiment was 'I don't think we've advertised at all, it's very much local word of mouth' (*in-migrant, hospitality*). Where advertising did take place, it was almost exclusively in the local newspaper, the local Job Centre, or local shop windows and indigenous people – friends and family – in the locality were more important. Findings from the critical incident analysis showed that recruitment is approached slightly differently by in-migrants, and their willingness to advertise outside of familiar social circles may help to explain why they are less likely to cite recruitment and staff shortages as barriers to growth (Bosworth, 2009b).

For local businesses, especially where they provide a service to the local community, a degree of sensitivity is required in the recruitment process, as turning down an applicant may upset a section of customers. Such restrictions, allied to strong embeddedness, are summed up in the following quote:

It's very difficult in a small business in a village because if you advertise [a job vacancy] and you get two applying and they're both customers you get onto dodgy ground, which I've been before, because you employ one and the other one doesn't come back. You've got to say 'would you like a job?' and not advertise it. You can lose friends very easily by doing that. (*local, retail*)

The family is especially important with higher level jobs. In small firms, the owner places high levels of trust and responsibility upon key staff; examples of this include a son-in-law working alongside his father-in-law and subsequently taking over the business (*in-migrant, manufacturing*), a son and a couple inheriting family businesses where the fathers continued to work for them (*in-migrant, hospitality* and *local, professional services*), and a marketing agency whose expansion was the result of the owner's son joining the business. The owner of this business explained that before her son joined, 'I just assumed I'd retire; it's different now completely' (*local, professional services*). Having also commented on the small pool of suitable labour in the area, it becomes apparent that such

expansion could only have occurred as a result of this trusting family relationship. The limitations created by thinner labour markets was further emphasised by another business owner who was attempting to recruit an individual from Sussex, preferring to wait for this known candidate rather than taking a gamble in the local labour market (*in-migrant, professional services*).

The question of trust explains why so much recruitment is done through word of mouth. Many interviewees emphasised that they have to trust their staff and some also spoke of the need for flexibility which requires employees to live locally. Trust is not only about someone's ability to work diligently, but personal trust was important in cases where staff had keys to people's houses and access to visitors' rooms (*local, hospitality*). This implies that local people are more likely to have this unquestioning trust from being embedded within their local communities, whereas an in-migrant may have to be more calculating about the risks involved. The use of these associative and communal relations in rural communities extends to the employment of sub-contractors. One business owner explained how he has used the same contractors for many years and can rely on them to provide a quality service whenever he needs them. He said,

I think if you went into the open market place looking for someone you'd get a few hiccups to start with until you found the right person to do the job ... They've been here for years these guys ... we know what we're dealing with ... it's good for them because they come here to do a job, they know they're getting paid ... neither of us want aggro ... it's better that way really. (*local, hospitality*)

Another business owner mentioned that his involvement in the local community helped him to find someone to do some casual work for his business (*local, professional services*). It is irregular and usually only very short hours, hence not the type of work that could be advertised. The value of local, associative relations are therefore apparent. Thus, returning to Tiepoh and Reimer's typology, we see that communal and associative relations can also be used to support and create bureaucratic relations through recruitment processes just as they can underpin market relations in the development of a business.

### 1.3.3.3 Business development

Beyond start-up and initial staff recruitment, an established business tends to rely on different relationships to develop and grow. It may

need new ideas and opportunity, to access extra resources, and/or to consolidate its position within the local community.

The way that benefits are consumed within local business associations may be illustrative here of what happens within the wider rural milieu (Camagni, 1991). Whilst new members seek instrumental and social 'bundles' of benefits, over time their requirements change. Instrumental benefits are depleted as businesses form and exploit new relationships. Where there is a small network of available relationships, then instrumental benefits depend on the level of churn in the available business population. As such rural businesses trying to grow need to establish market relations beyond the local community. This is further evidenced by the lower likelihood that larger businesses will participate in local business associations (Newbery et al., Under review).

Unlike instrumental benefits, the need for social benefits remains relatively constant throughout membership. Here associative relations facilitate the sense of belonging to the local business community and the rural settlement it revolves around. If instrumental benefits are allowed to run out, then purely associative relations may result in 'lock-in' – a stagnant or closed network (Uzzi, 1996; Oinas, 1997). Here habitual behaviour and social norms may negatively affect the business development of members. There is evidence within these associations that some long-term members find neither instrumental nor social benefits relevant anymore and, rather than withdraw, they become apathetic members. These members may establish bureaucratic relationships that preserve the local social structure at the expense of change.

For all businesses, relations evolve and adapt over time. The consumption of benefits through market and associative relations within local business associations provides an insight into the wider character of rural business relations. A typical progression from start-up through to maturity may involve communal, market, associative, and bureaucratic relations. Initially the owner may leverage communal relations in order to garner support and funds to establish the business. They will then form market relations for trade and seek instrumental benefits on which to capitalise. Simultaneously, they may establish associative relations to accumulate knowledge and integrate themselves within the local community, and develop bureaucratic relations to monitor and control employees and to play a more formal role in local business organisations. Not all of these actions will be 'consciously constituted', to use Huggins' (1998) phrase, but they still play critical roles throughout the life of a rural business.

## 1.4 Conclusion

Applying Tiepoh and Reimer's typology, we have identified that market and bureaucratic relations can emerge from and be sustained by associative and communal relations. We also found that the majority of incidents where key relations were influential in the business occurred within the local area. This reinforces the notion that, despite lower populations, embeddedness creates significant value to rural businesses through the character of their relations and wider networks.

By studying critical incidents from the perspective of individual business owners, as well as the relations that develop through organised groups, we see that different types of relations create value in different ways and at different stages of business development. One of the defining characteristics of all of these rural business relations, however, is that they are socially embedded in rural areas – in other words their economic or business function cannot be isolated from wider social and community-based expectations and motivations. Thus, rural business decisions are influenced by local social mores, and businesses are integral to the vitality of social relations in rural areas. Given the sparseness of both businesses and population, it is perhaps inevitable that these networks of relations overlap to a greater extent. Combined with a relatively high number of smaller businesses, there is a higher density of relations, despite the smaller number of businesses and business associations.

The higher share of smaller businesses in rural areas also heightens the importance of trust in business relations, particularly with recruitment and close collaboration between firms. The rural character outlined above, where many relations are governed by social sanctions, not just contractual arrangements, can provide greater trust for managing day to day issues but, for the most critical decisions, business owners still rely on long-held relations, whether or not these are locally based. Along with trust, the other key component of rural business networks is the fulfilment of social expectations. Trust must be reciprocal and, so to continue to benefit from the support and goodwill of a local community, a business must be shown to be supporting other community ventures, business associations and individuals. Withdrawal from an association, unwillingness to help a local charity, or the act of not employing a local person could all lead to the breakdown of key relations. In a larger urban economy, such matters would be trivial but in rural areas, with their dense networks and lower populations, the impact will be more strongly felt.

Therefore, rural business owners have to be aware of the wider aspects of their networking behaviour and continue to nurture positive relations of all kinds. Actions that may seem far removed from business activity can still play a role, either positively or negatively, in terms of the reputation of the business or in terms of the potential for future benefits to emerge. Whilst acknowledging that over-embeddedness can restrict the value of external connections, what we see here is that an individual can combine both local and extra-local connections, and those that are locally embedded can also introduce new ideas and opportunities into the denser local networks that we have identified. Chiming with earlier references to neo-endogenous development theory, such a conclusion demands that local business owners recognise the value of diverse local relations whilst also seeking new opportunities from more outward-looking behaviour in order to sustain rural business development.

## Note

1. A logistic regression model was built using data from the local business association and the rural business survey (Atterton and Affleck, 2010). Key structural variables were assessed to ensure a valid comparison.  $N = 832$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.315$ . All variables are statistically significant at or above 95%. For more detail see Newbery (2010).

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# 2

## Institutional Cooperation and Service Delivery in Rural Ireland

*Mary O'Shaughnessy and Patrick Enright*

### 2.1 Introduction

Cooperation is a fundamental aspect of everyday life; in meeting the day-to-day challenges, be they economic or social, individuals in families and communities cooperate to achieve better outcomes for themselves. In rural areas, challenges arising from a scattered and low density of population mean that the private or public sector often does not provide services that are essential in meeting the needs of rural citizens. In rural Ireland there is a long tradition of cooperation and voluntary effort evidenced by the important role of agricultural cooperatives, voluntary organisations, and community organisations in rural life. However, in some areas of service delivery, until recent decades, often unmet needs were not addressed, or there was an assumption that the community would provide such services informally. With economic and social progress and changes in rural economy and society, especially in the later part of the twentieth century, there was an increasing recognition that informal local community approaches to issues like care and transport were no longer adequate. This development also coincided with the emergence of a broader understanding of the role of rural development and new approaches to local and community development facilitating the identification and addressing of local needs. Therefore from the 1990s, new organisations emerged in rural and local development in Ireland that mobilised resources to provide services to meet the needs identified at a local level. The mobilisation of resources to meet the needs of rural citizens in this way represents a new form of cooperation involving the public, voluntary, and private sector.

In this chapter, these new forms of cooperation that have developed to deliver services in rural Ireland are examined. Initially, the evolution

of rural cooperation is explored by examining the emergence and development of the cooperative movement in Ireland. Subsequently, policy developments in the EU and Ireland that have facilitated cooperation at institutional level in the country are explored. Case studies to highlight and explore examples of organisations that deliver services in the areas of rural transport and rural elderly home care are presented; this is followed by a discussion and concluding comments.

## **2.2 Rural cooperation**

Ireland has always been and continues to be a strongly rural and agrarian society<sup>1</sup>; therefore rural cooperation has tended to focus strongly on agriculture and agriculture-related activities. Until the late nineteenth century, cooperation in rural Ireland was informal and focused on sharing labour. This indigenous form of cooperation arose out of necessity in coping with the seasonal demand for labour in an agricultural system highly dependent on manual labour. Cooperation in rural Ireland has a long history, and ancient laws dating from the seventh century and before refer to concepts such as '*comhar*' (referring to sharing ploughing) and '*meitheal*' (a band of persons engaged in a common service or occupation). The *meitheal* has remained a feature of rural life in Ireland until relatively recently; a study by O'Dowd (1979) found '*meitheal*' to be the most frequently used and recognised term in relation to cooperative work teams in the 1970s. Typically the *meitheal* involved a gathering of neighbours to undertake work intensive seasonal agricultural tasks such as hay-making, turf-cutting, harvesting cereals, harvesting potatoes, etc. (O'Dowd, 1979). Cooperation, therefore, has long been an important component of rural life in Ireland, but it is only relatively recently that it has been organised on a more formal basis.

### **2.2.1 The cooperative movement**

From the late nineteenth century, more formal means of organising cooperation emerge; in the literature this is generally referred to as the cooperative movement. In Ireland, Horace Plunkett is regarded as the founder of the cooperative movement and was instrumental in establishing cooperatives in Ireland. This coincides with the emergence and growth of cooperatives internationally in the nineteenth century: farmer-producer cooperatives had been flourishing in Denmark and consumer cooperatives had been growing in the United Kingdom. Initially Plunkett focused on establishing consumer cooperatives but it quickly emerged that the opportunity for growth of cooperatives in Ireland was

for farmer-producer cooperatives, in particular dairy cooperatives. In this section the growth and development of dairy cooperatives is examined more closely, as in the twentieth century it has been the most important feature of rural cooperation in rural Ireland.

The cooperative movement in Ireland is most closely associated with the growth and development of the dairy industry in Ireland. The Irish dairy industry has its origins in farm-produced, heavily-salted butter, which was one of Ireland's main exports until the late nineteenth century. With the invention and widespread use of the centrifugal separator to bring about the industrialisation of the dairy industry, butter production shifted from a farm- to creamery- or factory-based system, leading to the development of a dairy-processing industry. Ireland's European competitors, most notably Denmark, quickly adapted to the new production system based on the centrifugal separator and the development of cooperatives and gained a large share of the British market with their fresh, lightly-flavoured butter. Ireland was slower to adapt to the new situation than its competitors, resulting in a loss of market share to creamery butter (Daly, 1991).

In the early period of the industry there was strong competition between cooperative and private creameries; it was only in the 1920s and 1930s that cooperatives came to dominate the industry. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the creamery system operated in a very competitive environment. Creameries competed with one another for milk supplies at home and with Irish, Danish, and other suppliers in the export market (O'Grada, 1977). In Ireland, issues of ownership and control were important, as private and cooperative creameries vied for milk supplies and markets.

The spread of the cooperatives (in dairying and other aspects of agriculture) in Ireland was very much associated with the leader of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS) – Horace Plunkett. This strong influence of a wealthy individual in cooperative development in Ireland contrasts with a grass-roots development of a cooperative system in Denmark. Indeed, to Daly (1991), this 'top-down' influence in Ireland hindered the development of the industry. Plunkett later became the first Minister for Agriculture and Technical Instruction in 1900. This fostered close relations between government and the cooperative movement through the IAOS. The development of cooperatives was based on pioneering work by the IAOS and prominent local individuals, rather than coming from a strong local desire to set up cooperatives.

By 1926, of the 580 central and auxiliary creameries in the Irish Free State, 400 were cooperatives and 180 were proprietary creameries (see Table 2.1).

*Table 2.1* Irish cooperative and private creameries, 1898–1926

	1898	1905	1926
Proprietary and joint stock creameries	239	537	180
Cooperative creameries	85	254	400
Total	324	791	580

*Sources:* Compiled from O'Donovan (1940, p. 325); Bolger (1977, p. 215); and Kennedy (1983, p. 107).

*Table 2.2* Dairy cooperatives (Ireland), 1931–2005

Year	1931	1941	1951	1961	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2005
Number of dairy cooperatives	272	214	193	186	158	57	50	48	35	35	30

*Sources:* Knapp (1964); ICOS Annual Reports.

In response to the problems of the industry, in 1928 the state set up the Dairy Disposal Company Board (DDC) to manage the creameries it bought out (mostly privately-owned) until they became integrated into the cooperative system. By the 1930s, therefore, the dairy industry was firmly in cooperative or public control, and a regulatory system controlling production and entry into the industry was in place. The industry had evolved into a system of branch and central creameries with butter-making being the predominant processing activity, with Britain as the principal export market. From the 1930s to the 1950s, the number of cooperative creameries fell – from 272 in 1931 to 193 in 1951 (see Table 2.2). Bolger (1977) attributes this to a gradual process of attrition and rationalisation. Contributing to these structural changes were the difficult economic conditions of this time, as well as structural changes implemented by the DDC following its establishment.

During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a significant change as the dairy cooperatives adapted to the changing environment. As well as encouragement from the state, the changes were facilitated by the takeover of DDC creameries by the cooperatives, a rapid growth in milk supply, the building of new plants in several locations, and a change in the rules for some cooperatives from which a 51% majority vote for amalgamation was required, rather than 75% as heretofore. The structural change that took place was the result of local negotiation and arrangement. While the IAOS tried to co-ordinate the reorganisation, it

did not have any statutory power to do so and the pattern that emerged was not what the IAOS had planned.

Out of the structural change in this period, six larger dairy cooperatives emerged as well as a second group of six dairy cooperatives, ten smaller in size but regionally important, and a further 20 smaller cooperatives (O'Leary, 1983). As well as amalgamating, many of these larger cooperatives also diversified into farm input manufacture and distribution, meat processing and artificial insemination. The 1960s and 1970s were a period of rapid change, as the focus changed from autonomous local creameries to centrally-controlled, larger, diversified businesses. Therefore, what emerges in this period are multi-purpose cooperatives catering for a wide range of agricultural needs. This period also witnessed the growth of cooperative livestock marts, an important development for livestock farmers. Changes in the 1960s and early 1970s are reflected in the changing number of dairy cooperatives (though many now had diversified into other activities as well). The number of dairy cooperatives declined sharply from 158 in 1970 to 57 in 1975 (see Table 2.2). In this period the greatest decline was recorded during the period from 1971 to 1973 when the number declined from 147 to 69 (Smith and Quinn, 1974). It was during these years that many of the amalgamations took place, leading to the emergence of the 'big six' dairy cooperatives. Since 1975, there has been a steady decline in numbers, with lows of just 35 dairy cooperatives by 1990 and 30 by 2005.

An important influence on the development of the industry in the 1960s and 1970s was investment by foreign companies. Dairy companies mostly based in the UK and US became involved in the Irish industry operating independently or in joint ventures with Irish dairy cooperatives. While positive for the long-term development of the industry in relation to improving standards and technology transfer, the fact that foreign companies could take advantage of low cost raw materials highlights weaknesses in the Irish dairy cooperatives at this time.

For the dairy sector and dairy cooperatives, the introduction of milk quotas in 1984 marked the end of an era in the dairy industry. Up to this point, the industry had developed to process the continuously increasing milk supply, that could rely on EU intervention as an outlet for products. In this new regulatory environment, overseas expansion through acquisition of existing facilities has been the principal mode/mechanism for growth of the Irish dairy-processing industry. However, there has also been some internal structural change facilitated by the withdrawal of some foreign processors from the Irish industry.

Therefore, by the mid-1990s, the dairy cooperatives had maintained their dominance within the Irish dairy processing sector; however, the majority of the larger ones had adapted their cooperative structure to operate as international food companies. Dairy cooperatives in Ireland accounted for 99% of the milk supply, compared to 48% in France and 92% in Denmark. However, four of the large dairy cooperatives had changed their status to publicly listed companies (PLCs), with 51% of shares owned by the respective cooperatives. The larger processors claimed at the time that they had had to change to PLC status to get access to capital and fund expansion. An alternative view of the motivation to change to PLC status is the desire for management to free themselves of control by farmer-shareholders and to gain greater financial rewards through share options (Breathnach, 1996). The change in status of the cooperatives was very significant; it represented a switch from producer-led accumulation to investor-led accumulation. The key driving force of the industry was also changing. Maximising milk price for the producer was no longer the primary goal of those companies which had changed their status. Rather, profit, growth and share price were now important (Enright, 2006). In Svendsen and Svendsen's (2000) study of the Danish dairy cooperative movement, they consider the growth and development of the dairy cooperatives as the build-up and institutionalisation of social capital. In the Danish case, they identify the build-up of social capital as driven by economic motives but also trust and democracy. As the industry concentrated and changed into an internationally-focused food industry, this social capital was eroded and dissipated. Similarly, it can be argued that the increase in scale, the international orientation and hybrid PLC structure adopted by some cooperatives in Ireland represented a dissipation of social capital built up over many decades.

The cooperative movement has continued to grow and develop, although agricultural cooperatives continue to dominate the sector. In 2005, agricultural cooperatives accounted for 44% of the membership of cooperatives in Ireland and 98% of total turnover of all cooperatives (Forfas, 2007). Other areas where cooperatives are important in a rural context are group water schemes; in many rural areas without a public water supply, locals have come together to provide the service through a group water scheme. Of the 600 group water schemes in place in Ireland, 343 are registered cooperatives (Forfas, 2007). Community and development cooperatives are also an important aspect of rural Ireland; they are particularly important in peripheral areas such as the Gaeltacht areas in the West and in island communities. They act as

important providers of services covering such areas as transport, child care, training, heritage, and tourism. Housing cooperatives, in particular credit unions, have also emerged as important vehicles for cooperation, though they appear to be more relevant to urban contexts.

### **2.2.2 Local rural development**

Briscoe and Ward (2000, p. 65) argue that there is 'a common tendency to invoke the cooperative approach only in exceptional circumstances'. It could be argued that, in rural development terms, the early 1990s represented one of those times. In the decades preceding the publication of the OECD New Rural Paradigm Report in 2006, a variety of internal and external factors forced significant changes to the Common Agricultural Policy culminating in a rural development approach which emphasized 'territorial or place-based approaches to rural development' and advocated the 'increased use of partnerships between public, private, and voluntary sectors in the development and implementation of policies' (Shucksmith, 2012, p. 13). This emphasis on the development of networks that extend beyond the locality is explained as a 'networked' model of rural development (Lowe et al., 1995; Ray, 2001, Shucksmith, 2012). Such an approach has been described as a 'mix of bottom-up and top-down forces, characterised by dense local networks and strategic connections beyond the locality' (Shucksmith, 2012). The EU LEADER initiative, launched in 1991, with its territorial emphasis, use of local resources and local contextualization through active public participation, served to perform a 'mediating function between the bottom-up and top-down' governance principles/mechanisms (Ray, 2000; Shucksmith, 2010).

Described as the EU's first attempt to give significant support to locally-based rural development action groups (O'Hara and Commins, 1998, p. 270), the EU LEADER programme has operated in Ireland since 1991. This approach was further reinforced by the 1999 publication, by the Irish Government, of a national rural development strategy paper, 'Ensuring the Future', which sought to pursue an 'inclusive approach to sustainable development' with entailed statutory partnership with rural communities (O'Connor et al., 2006, p. 150). One of the notable impacts of this LEADER approach to rural development has been the 'promotion of the partnership structure involving the private, public, and community sectors who would otherwise operate in separate spheres to promote and engage in integrated actions' (O'Hara and Commins, 1998, p. 271). The success of this process is reflected in Moseley's (2003, p. 63) assertion that Ireland was 'endowed – *pro rata* to its population size

more than any other European state – with a plethora of local partnerships devoted to the cause of local socio-economic development'. This endowment was explained in terms of a 'willingness to address common needs and initiate common projects and a desire to involve local communities in the process of development' (Moseley, 2003, p. 63). As previously noted, rural cooperation and the cooperative approach have been, and continue to be, a significant strategy of rural social and economic development. Ireland's multi-purpose dairy co-ops' contribution to a national GDP of 6.6% in 2007 serves to illustrate the importance of the agricultural cooperatives to national economic recovery (Carroll et al., 2012, p. 3; DAFF, 2009). Therefore it is not surprising that Ireland is so 'well-endowed' with rural partnerships (Moseley, 2003) that seek to address the socio-economic problems faced by rural communities. These partnerships have evolved at both the local and regional level and are an excellent example of how the efforts of concerned local volunteers are combined with the resources of statutory agencies for the purpose of meeting a diverse range of rural community needs. The cases of rural transport and rural home care services serve to illustrate this.

### **2.3 Rural transport**

Since the late 1990s, the absence of public transport in rural Ireland has been identified as an important issue to address. As services and employment have become more concentrated in larger population centres, the need for rural dwellers to travel farther to access such services has increased. Low population density and poor demand are generally insufficient factors to sustain economically-viable bus routes, resulting in many services being withdrawn over the years. The solution for most people is to travel by car, as indicated by the relentless rise in car ownership within rural households (many having two or more cars). However, this leaves a small but important minority of people within the community who, for a variety of reasons, do not have access to a car and consequently are reliant on public transport. These people are essentially cut off from a range of necessary services and from wider social contact. This could be regarded as a form of social exclusion, which many studies have concluded is not necessarily related to poverty but concerns people's inability to participate in activities of choice for reasons beyond their control, such as inaccessibility of services and opportunities (Church et al., 2000). In addition, many studies worldwide have found that a better quality of life is enjoyed by people who have good social networks and indeed that social activity among

older people can be significantly associated with greater life expectancy (Farquhar, 1995; Bannister and Bowling, 2004; Giles et al., 2005). Since it would appear that there are real and significant social benefits for people who can participate in the life of their community, the absence of public transport for those without cars and living in isolated rural areas is a major disadvantage, a situation which pertains not only to Ireland but to remote and peripheral areas in most countries.

In 2001 the Irish government established the Rural Transport Initiative which supported the development of over thirty small local transport schemes throughout the country. Such services operate with the assistance of government funding through various social employment and training schemes. The rural transport initiatives are managed and administrated by local Partnership companies; these companies are guided by a Board of Directors representing local voluntary and statutory interests. The stated aim of such schemes is to address the issue of social exclusion caused by lack of access to transport. The schemes thus seek to fulfil local transport needs while at the same time providing employment and training opportunities.

Funding and support for the Rural Transport Initiative was originally guaranteed for a pilot period of four years and was subsequently mainstreamed in 2007 when the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) was deemed to provide rural dwellers dependent on public transport with some measure of independent travel while at the same time delivering a socially desirable service. However, in recent times and due to the economic challenges facing the country, services such as the Rural Transport Initiative have been targeted for significant budgetary cuts and/or complete cessation. The Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure (2009) called for an end to the Rural Transport Scheme with an estimated saving of approximately €11m to the national exchequer. Public outcry to date has prevented this from taking place; however the vulnerability of the service remains a live issue. Reflecting the national economic difficulties and arising out of the Value for Money and Policy Review of the RTP (2011) report in 2011, value for money has become the priority in the RTP, with a focus on controlling/reducing operating, administration costs and seeking further efficiencies.

### **2.3.1 West Cork Rural Transport case study**

The case study location, Bantry (a coastal town in County Cork), is situated on a long, indented coastline with narrow peninsulas jutting out into the Atlantic to the south and west and much higher ground and

rugged terrain to the north and east. In its hinterland, the population density is very low, in some places being less than ten per square kilometre. Despite an overall increase in Ireland's population at the 2002 Census, the population declined in some places around Bantry and the western half of the country in general, a stark illustration of the continuing drift from peripheral regions to more urban locations. In this area, there are a few smaller towns with a limited range of services and some villages which have a Post Office and very basic shopping facilities. Agriculture, fishing, and related industries form the backbone of the local economy while tourism is an important contributor to the economy of the region as a whole. However, tourism is seasonal in nature – providing only summertime employment – while many houses occupied during the summer months are vacant for the rest of the year. The scattered settlement pattern of the area means that many people live in single houses strung out along minor roads and often at a considerable distance from their nearest neighbour, ranging from a few hundred metres to several kilometres, while the local shop may be at a greater distance and the nearest town more than 20 kilometres away. It is easy to understand that the sheer physical isolation of living in such a sparsely populated landscape can lead to social isolation unless some form of transport is available to facilitate social contact.

West Cork Rural Transport has five minibuses operating approximately 19 different routes over six days per week. Most services operate two or three times per week; the routes typically bring passengers from outlying rural areas to local towns and return to the outlying areas a number of hours later. The scheme operates a flexible service which allows some deviation from the main route, thus facilitating those living along by-roads – a system which is particularly useful for the mobility-impaired who otherwise could not use the buses. It also means that, on the return journey, elderly people do not have to carry heavy bags of shopping over long distances. There is a fixed fare regardless of distance, while those with Free Travel Passes, which includes all over the age of 66, travel free of charge.

West Cork Rural Transport commenced operation in 2002. It is funded under the NDP Rural Transport Programme by the Department of Transport, Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs and by the Department of Social Protection. It is an independent company under charitable status and is a not-for-profit company. It has a voluntary Board of Directors comprising 16 members drawn from public, private and, community interests in the area. The board of 16 members is currently comprised of four members from the private sector, four from

the public sector (including two local public representatives), and eight from the community sector. In the case of some board members, there may be an overlap in that they represent the community as well as an organisation (West Cork Rural Transport, 2013).

A study by O'Shaughnessy et al. (2011) reveals that the users of the West Cork Transport service were mainly elderly, predominantly female, and that 50% of respondents lived alone, which is much higher than comparable ratios in the general population. Of this group that lived alone, more than half were women with many of these being over the age of 75. Half of the respondents to this study lived three kilometres or more from their nearest shop or Post Office, the vast majority did not drive, and less than 20% had a car available to them on a regular basis, while 45% never had access to a car. Respondents regarded the service as very valuable; it gave them independence and control over their lives. They could plan ahead and arrange their shopping. On the issue of social activities, the study by O'Shaughnessy et al. (2011) revealed that the respondents had a restricted social life because they lacked transport. This study has also uncovered major benefits for respondents in that the bus service provided an opportunity for social interactions – respondents reported enjoying the conversation, banter, and laughter. Overall, and based on this study, the service appears to have major positive benefits for those that lack access to transport in isolated rural areas.

### **2.3.2 Clare Accessible Transport case study**

Clare Accessible Transport (CAT) covers all of County Clare; County Clare is located on the west coast of Ireland, north of County Limerick and west of County Tipperary. The topography of the county is varied: from spectacular cliffs and dunes in the west to a distinctive karst landscape in the north and hills in east Clare that run down to Lough Derg. Clare is a strongly rural county with 60.4% (in 2011) of the population living outside of population centres greater than 1,500, compared with a national average of 32.1% in 2011. Population density is high in and around Ennis, the largest town in the county; away from urban centres population density is low, particularly in the west of the county. County Clare has one town with a population greater than 10,000 (Ennis), one town with a population greater than 5,000 (Shannon) and three towns with a population between 1,499 and 5,000. The total population of the county (117,000 in 2011) increased by 5.6% between 2006 and 2011. The level of old-age dependency ratio was 0.19 in 2011; although this is higher than the state average, it compares favourably with other western counties (WDC, 2012). The share of older people living alone was

29.3% in 2011, which is the same as the average for western counties but higher than the national average of 27.7% (WDC, 2012). Much of county Clare lies outside of urban centres and is distant from main bus and rail routes between urban centres; it has very little public transport – this is particularly true in east Clare.

The CAT service commenced in January 2003 and now operates six of its own low-floor, fully accessible minibuses; in addition, one private operator provides other services. Almost 40 different routes are serviced, mostly concentrated in east and north County Clare. The frequency of service varies from one to five days per week from Monday to Saturday. The network is co-ordinated by a travel dispatch centre based in Feakle, County Clare; the dispatch centre co-ordinates journeys and manages the fleet. In 2008, there were 37,674 passenger trips on the service; in that year, costs for running the service were just over €600,000. The RTP programme and Community Services programme provided direct state aid covering 73% of the costs; the remainder was made up of a health services contribution (8%), Free Travel Pass (8%) and its own income generation of 11% (Pobal, 2012). A zone system operates for fares; elderly passengers can use the free travel pass which is accepted on the service. For many elderly people in rural areas this is their only opportunity to use their free travel pass (Pobal, 2012). At grass-roots level the service works with people and agencies with local knowledge; for example, liaison with public health nurses and the North Clare Farmers Network helps to identify and support people with transport needs. CAT also provides services for local tourism and festivals; it adds to the sustainability of tourism and assists with the economic sustainability of the service.

CAT is established as a not-for-profit community company with charitable status. Any surplus generated is used for the development of the company. The company is run by a voluntary board of eight members, including users of the service, representatives from different areas of the county, and people with skills and experience in relevant agencies and local organisations. The current board includes three members who work in voluntary sector organisations, a community development worker, a youth development worker, a public sector manager, a community council member, and a member with financial management skills. This membership also ensures a geographically-balanced representation from different parts of County Clare. In the past, the company operated an inter-agency forum to facilitate cooperation between state agencies and NGOs. Capital funding is ineligible under RTP, but the organisation has had to source funding for buses. CAT is also linked

with the County Development Board (CDB) and is represented on two sub-groups of the CDB: those concerned with health and with transport. These links have had positive benefits. For example, thanks to transport links, the needs of an urban minority group were identified and incorporated into the service.

Those with unmet transport needs benefit most from the service. Almost 30% of passengers use the service to access various types of health services (Pobal, 2012). This benefits both users with health needs, in terms of accessing services that they need, and the health service, in facilitating users to access the service. In addition, it releases the health services from the burden of transport concerns, allowing them to focus solely on health-related matters. Collaboration with health centre managers ensures that medical appointments are co-ordinated with the transport service as far as possible. Elderly people, people with disabilities, and people with mental health issues all utilise and share the same service. This facilitates community integration and cohesion and social interaction among individuals and groups that might not otherwise be in contact. The service also benefits those seeking to access training and employment without transport. For example, 40% of Clare Supported Employment Services (CSES) clients in the county used CAT in 2008. The service is also important for employment in the local area: 21 staff are employed in the service – the equivalent of 13 full-time staff. The service also serves as an example of environmental sustainability, with two of the buses using bio-fuels, and with the option of using local resources to generate the bio-fuels having been examined but not deemed feasible (Pobal, 2012).

## **2.4 Rural elder home care services – CareBright**

Older people (aged 65 years and older) constitute approximately 12% of the national population (CSO, 2011). This is predicted to grow to almost 22% by the year 2041. Consequently, the demand for elder home care services has risen and there are many examples of locally based partnership arrangements which have evolved to assume responsibility for a range of locally based social services provided 'by the state, by religious institutions or by investor-driven businesses' (O'Shaughnessy and Briscoe, 2006, p. 140). One such example is CareBright, a rural-based social enterprise that delivers a range of home care services to the elderly and to people with a range of disabilities, with an estimated client base of 500 dispersed across a variety of rural locations across four counties – Limerick, Cork, Kerry and north Tipperary. In addition

to the provision of care services, CareBright also offers healthcare training courses through the CareBright Academy. CareBright emerged from a regional social economy initiative launched in 1997 under the name of the Rural Community Care Network (RCCN). It illustrates how institutional cooperation at a regional level can give rise to successful social economy initiatives designed to meet the needs of rural residents.

#### **2.4.1 Rural community care network**

Established in 1997, the RCCN originated as a network of 14 organisations, including representatives of statutory, voluntary, and community sectors. The initiative received funding under Articles 10 and 6 of the European Economic Regional Development Fund and one of the original objectives was to create jobs and enhance rural social service delivery in the field of child and elder care. The RCCN was a regional social economy initiative, servicing dispersed peripheral rural locations, based on an institutional partnership between a variety of statutory, community, and voluntary sector representatives. This included representatives from two County Enterprise Boards, two Regional Health Boards, two Local Authorities (county councils), four LEADER companies, and a number of other statutory agencies. The RCCN also developed strong networks with local, regional, and national third sector/civil society organisations including national organisations such as the West of Ireland Network for New Sources of Jobs, the National Council of Ageing and Older People, Combat Poverty, Age Action Ireland and the Conference of Religious of Ireland. Networking with similar international organisations was also a feature of the RCCN in its formative years. Four Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) were created within the RCCN network. These are described below.

#### **2.4.2 Rural Refurbishment Ltd.**

This company has charitable status and provides a house repair and maintenance service for elderly persons within the area. The central objective of the company is to improve housing conditions for elderly people and, in turn, to offset the demand for residential care amongst this target group. A working partnership with the regional statutory agencies and a local, church-based charity was formed early in 1997. The work of the company involves the provision of training to long-term unemployed persons (LTU) or others categorised as at risk of social and economic exclusion, as well as identifying housing stock in need of repair. Local community voluntary activists work very closely with both the statutory agencies and the social enterprise to identify at-risk

households and liaise with the elderly to negotiate a nominal monetary contribution and access to the house by the social enterprise.

### **2.4.3 Duhallow Community Food Services**

This social enterprise deals with an ageing and dependent rural population. It focuses on providing a 'meals on wheels', a subsidised meal service, to the elderly people living in geographically peripheral locations. The social enterprise benefits from a local food centre which had previously been developed by the local LEADER company, Integrated Rural Development (IRD) Duhallow. The social enterprise relies on a combination of voluntary efforts to deliver these meals to a dispersed rural population and avails itself of active labour-market programmes to staff the service. In recent years the social enterprise has diversified its product portfolio to generate additional traded income, including the development of a bakery and contract-catering for family and community events such as funerals and christenings.

### **2.4.4 Blackwater rural community care network**

A central objective of this initiative was maximizing community participation in the design and implementation of a community care service. A consultative public meeting was organized in 1997 to identify and prioritize community needs. A community advisory team was established, including the voluntary sector, public health nurses, community police, carers, representatives from local charities, and representatives from the LEADER company in the area. Based on this exchange of ideas and information, it was decided to focus on two specific areas: locally-based respite care for people with special needs, and day and home care services for isolated elderly people. A Saturday Club for children with special needs was also formed. The service was delivered by a combination of trained staff and volunteers. The social enterprises benefited from a variety of other resources as a result of their partnership with the LEADER company, in the form of free office space and free mentoring.

### **2.4.5 RCCN Ballyhoura – CareBright (Rural elder home care service)**

CareBright evolved from the Rural Community Care Network (RCCN) which was initiated, in 1999, by the local development company Ballyhoura Development Ltd. (BDL), which operates the national Rural Development Programme. It provides home-based elder care services in counties Cork, Tipperary and Limerick. CareBright is a company limited by guarantee which has a voluntary board of ten directors, holds

charitable status and derives income from a combination of sources including: the Health Service Executive (HSE), the national lottery, philanthropy, and client contributions for homecare provision.

Initially, the RCCN provided a home visitation service and concentrated on providing Red Cross-accredited training to the unemployed through specific active-labour training programmes. In 2002, the RCCN became part of the national Social Economy Programme and established a new company called RCCN Caring Ltd. Four nurse-managers were appointed to deliver homecare services. The CEO of BDL, who was also the chairperson of RCCN Caring Ltd., initially managed these nurses and coordinated the work. In 2005, the social enterprise became involved in a Health Service Executive pilot scheme to deliver home care to older people in their homes. Since 2006, the company has expanded its profile of services to a fully professional home and personal support/care service. In 2011, it had a turnover of €4m with reserves of approximately €2.4m, and provided an estimated 213,000 home care hours to 500 clients. It had a combined workforce of approximately 260 workers including a general manager, six senior managers, chiropodists, and approximately 250 carers.<sup>2</sup> BDL continues to provide mentoring and business support to the social enterprise at board level.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Cooperation in a rural context in Ireland has evolved from informal customs to the formal cooperative movement that emerged in the late nineteenth century and which has become highly influential in the agri-food sector. However, a significant portion of this sector has adopted a hybrid PLC/cooperative structure and has evolved as international food businesses with a focus on growth and internationalisation. Consequently, there has been a shift in focus from the local to global. This raises the possibility of a gradual dissipation in the social capital traditionally associated with the movement.

However, another form of cooperation has evolved which impacts more directly on the more vulnerable groups in rural Ireland. The case studies that have been presented above illustrate how local, formal systems of cooperation, and rural partnerships have emerged to meet elderly home care and rural transport needs. These services are important and have significant impact on the lives of rural citizens. The role of local development companies in meeting such needs, by mobilising and linking local and state resources, is evident. These case studies serve to illustrate the potential and value of cooperation at a number

of levels. Firstly, cooperation is evident in the structure and operation of these companies. At board level, the relevant stakeholders have come together to access resources and facilitate provision of services. Secondly, cooperation with local key community figures is also evident; this is important in identifying those with needs and facilitating their access to the services.

A cooperative approach to problem-resolution is evident here; this is a key component of collective efficacy which is linked to social capital. There are positive associations between social capital and the efficacy of public administration (Atherly, 2006) and an outcome of social capital formation may be the development of collective efficacy, i.e. the shared confidence that a diverse group has to achieve common goals (Sampson et al., 1999). Therefore, the institutional cooperation evident in the case studies described above may be the basis for the formation of social capital, which can only bode well for future cooperation in rural Ireland. McDonald et al. (2013) in their study of partnerships in rural Tasmania point to the importance of the dense networks that arise from new partnership arrangements; these dense networks facilitate collective efficacy and the capacity for co-ordinating and mobilising resources.

In both cases of rural cooperation discussed in this chapter, the role of the state has been important. In the case of the agricultural cooperative movement, the state, through its regulatory influence, supported and facilitated the agricultural cooperatives' dominance in the sector. In the more recent example of institutional cooperation, the state has endorsed the cooperation and actively encourages it through its agencies. These developments have also been facilitated by EU support of partnerships and area-based, local development initiatives. However, the support comes at a cost: dependency on and vulnerability to the state for financial support, and the need to constantly seek ways to maintain viability.

## Notes

1. In 2011, 38% of the population was classified as rural, a reduction from 43% in 1991 (CSO, 2012).
2. Includes part-time and full-time workers.

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# 3

## Cross-community Cooperation in Post-socialist Hungarian Rural Space

*Eva Fekete*

### 3.1 Introduction

One experiences a wide variety of cooperation in rural space. Individuals, families, businesses, institutions, and authorities are all urged by economic, environmental, and social goals, or a combination of them, to think and act together. Rural cooperation can be examined from the perspective of its goals, actors, scale, and attitude to other types of cooperation, etc. This chapter has adopted a spatial/territorial approach.

A geographical approach is based on the fact that some cooperation reaches beyond rural areas and strives to fit into a broader, let's say global context; other types of cooperation outline the relationship between rural actors and, hence, rural space itself. The latter include the types of cooperation between social groups with attachment to the various localities in rural space which are the building blocks of the social and economic space, and shape geographical space. Cross-community cooperation helps resolve the problems facing local communities and creates the structures which determine the future operation of cooperation.<sup>1</sup>

Cross-community cooperation is an important tool for creating space. Studying cooperation and its conditions and effect-mechanism is important for spatial processes to be understood and influenced purposefully and, in a broader perspective, for the possibilities of livelihood for those living in the country to be shaped.

I propound the assumption that a state socialist past and its legacy offer a special context for cooperation. Paradoxically, they both facilitate and, to an even larger extent, inhibit partnership-based, cross-community cooperation. This past and this legacy have, even within the single rural policy of the EU, led to a content and a form that differ from what is experienced in Western Europe.

My chapter addresses four issues: the reasons underlying cross-community cooperation and its anticipated benefits; the processes shaping cooperation in Hungary; the current situation of cooperation and how it differs from its counterpart in Western Europe; and a few future scenarios based on the information and experience gained from the first three.

## **3.2 Reasons for cross-community cooperation**

Alongside the reasons that stem from the very essence of rurality, political reasons also underpin the need for cross-community cooperation, while creating a framework for this cooperation.

### **3.2.1 Inherent characteristics of local rural communities**

By a 'local community' we mean a group of people who live in the same locality, form a community in order to satisfy their daily needs, and are able to govern themselves. Social geography has identified seven functions to be performed so that the needs of local residents are satisfied. The functions to be performed are the provision of (1) housing, (2) jobs/income-earning opportunities, (3) education facilities, (4) shopping facilities, (5) communications (including transport), (6) leisure time (recreational) facilities and (7) conditions for living as a member of the community (Partzsch, qtd. in Berényi, 1997). Local needs are satisfied predominantly within (inside) the localities themselves. In line with the principle of subsidiarity (Pius XI, 1931), it is the local governments' duty to arrange, in accordance with the applicable regional and national regulations, for the functions linked to those needs that neither the family nor the neighbourhood can satisfy (Pálné, 2008).

Hungary is characterised by a large number of small-size localities, each with a large population. Eight percent of Hungary's population inhabits localities with a population of fewer than 1,000 persons, accounting for 54% of Hungary's total number of settlements. Towns with a population of fewer than 10,000 persons represent a high (45%) share of the urban network. In terms of its settlement structure, Hungary's rather small (93 km<sup>2</sup>) territory can be split into four regions: (1) the Alföld (the Lowlands), characterised by a small number of large villages and (market and farming) towns, (2) the Dunántúl (Transdanubia) and (3) the region of the North Central Mountains (with both Transdanubia and the North Central Mountains characterised by a large number of small villages and towns alongside industrial cities with an artificially-inflated population), and (4) the middle of the country, dominated by

the agglomeration of Budapest. The reason why this bears relevance to our topic is that Hungary's settlement structure is closely reflected in its public administration system, such that each locality has its own local government. In Hungary, the totality of the residents living in the same locality can be regarded as a local community.

The existence of legitimate local government recognised by the state is a necessary, yet not an adequate condition for local residents to be able to organise their lives effectively and successfully. According to Shortall and Shucksmith (2001) and Lister (2000), basic conditions for successful cooperation are trust, complementary strengths, joint decision-making, a two-way exchange of information, and mutual accountability. Lister also stresses the importance of shared pre-defined goals, an equal share in costs and benefits, a clear delineation of responsibilities, and a long-term commitment to shared work. Furthermore, first of all, local residents must be motivated enough to shape their own fate and make the changes required for their needs to be satisfied from a wider selection of places, goods and services. Secondly, they should have a clear idea of what exactly they want and of the goals they want to accomplish. Thirdly, they must also have a clear idea of the ways and means to reach their goals. Fourthly, they need to have adequate resources for implementation, including their right to dispose of their own resources, and must be able to exercise control over local resources. Finally (fifthly), support from other local rural areas, or the absence of impediments at least, is an additional asset (Figure 3.1). The above five requirements can also be regarded as basic conditions for that type of local development that can be interpreted as a territorial intervention based on local resources and implemented with the participation of local residents, under local control (Fekete, 2007).

Among the conditions for cross-community cooperation, motivation based on reasons originating from an objective situation and awareness of such reasons is the most important.

The very essence of local communities and the circumstances in which they operate are already reason enough for neighbouring communities to cooperate. This especially holds true for small localities in rural areas.

Reasons for cross-community cooperation originate from each of the four fundamental aspects of rurality (Fekete, 2009):

- (1) Owing to the small size of the localities and low concentration of population, businesses, institutions, and buildings, certain functions are not worth operating, either because performing the

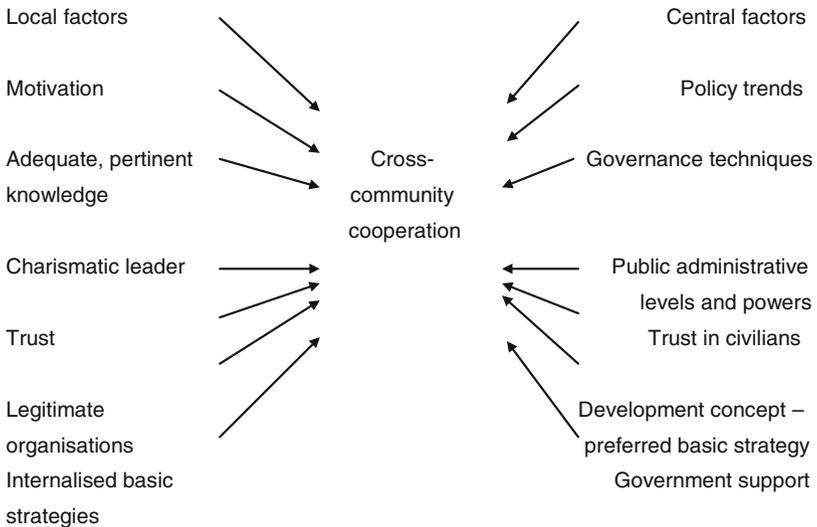


Figure 3.1 A model of cross-community cooperation

function does not make economic sense or because the necessary funds, labour, and intellectual resources (knowledge-base) are not available. In order for this difficulty to be overcome, a number of communities need to cooperate.

- (2) Proximity to nature, reflected in both business activities and lifestyle, underscores the significance of cross-border environmental impacts. Natural factors are only rarely restricted to one single locality; the sound management of natural resources and ensuring environmental sustainability require cross-community cooperation.
- (3) Periphery-related issues arising from remoteness from centres affect neighbouring localities to an equal extent. Infrastructure (transport and communications) capable of bridging such a 'remoteness gap' (geographical periphery), representation needed for the enforcement of interests (social periphery), and markets required for joining the global economy (economic periphery) presuppose territorial integration.
- (4) It is easier to raise awareness of the cultural heritage preserved as a result of a relatively slow cultural transformation if communities sharing similar heritage join forces, or if cultural singularity is reflected in the diversity of a broader community. Cultural heritage and diversity are both economically utilisable resources and

cohesive forces which, as bases for local identity, solidify communities. The latter, i.e. cultural diversity, as a force shaping local societies, plays a key role in the selection of residence, the keeping of the existing population in place, and making a place attractive for prospective in-comers. Given the rules of the market, cross-community cooperation is needed for the economic utilisation of cultural heritage, for highlighting diversity stemming from different local identities, and for supplying goods and services in a concerted manner.

### **3.2.2 Political rationales for cooperation**

Owing to the most recent changes in the territorial role of locality and rurality, the above reasons for cross-community cooperation have become more emphatic, now including political rationales as well.

With modernisation having become full-fledged across Europe, politics assigned local communities a lesser role to play in spatial development<sup>2</sup> and attached less importance to rural resources (Polányi, 2001). This was attributable to the fact that the need for higher concentration and better organisation of industrial production, which is the basis of modernisation, was at variance with a low concentration of population and an agricultural legacy in rural space. However, from the 1980s onward (in some countries even earlier), something changed (Woods, 2010). This change brought with it a rediscovery of the role of social and ecological factors (Ray, 1994; Gibbs, 1998), an increased emphasis on local levels of social and economic organisation (Cook, 1990), the strengthening of localities, and re-evaluations of the countryside and urban-rural relationships (Buller and Hoggart, 2001). One of the basic factors responsible for changes in paradigm in territorial policy (Barca et al., 2012) is the increased role of the local dimension and participative type of development, which went hand-in-hand with the broadening – based on the integration of local communities – of the meaning of the term ‘locality’.

From the 1980s, the state’s attitude to locality underwent a fundamental change. The earlier policy of industrialisation became ineffective and untenable, and new regional policy objectives were set so that small enterprises could be established and existing businesses could be rationalised (e.g. product-development and marketing). In the 1980s, the penetration of the welfare state into the provision of public services also slowed down, budgets came under extraordinary pressures and a large number of jobs created earlier predominantly in villages were threatened. ‘Utilisation of local resources’ was now the buzzword in both economic policy and public services (Oksa, 1991). A way out was

the application of alternative strategies. One such strategy is the model of 'self-reliant development', which intends to satisfy local needs by mobilising local resources and the local control over external investments (Galtung et al., 1980; Brugger, 1986).

International development policy also started to emphasise locality. Development relying on localities' own resources and international trends led to the emergence of new national territorial (spatial) policies in the 1980s, with the decentralisation of spatial, development-related decision-making, subsidiarity, and the recognition of the importance of local initiatives as their fundamental principles (OECD, 2010). Community programmes and organisations aimed at developing local economies and providing services also gained ground in advanced economies. Local development was supported by national governments as well as EU and OECD programmes. Among such programmes, Initiatives of Local Employment (ILE) groups aimed at facilitating employment, LEADER groups aimed at rural development and, more recently, cross-border European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) groups have achieved particularly impressive results in local development. It is local initiatives that give momentum to these groups; within the support programmes, success depends mainly on local reception and innovativeness.

### **3.2.3 Typical areas and paradoxes of cooperation**

Cross-community cooperation increases the geographical expansion of local development, presented above, and of locality itself. It is also likely to influence the shaping of the environmental, social and economic space and affect all fundamental community functions listed earlier.

It follows from the duality of local development (Pike et al., 2007) that cooperation serves both regional subsistence and intensive integration into globalisation. These two fundamental local development strategies (i.e. subsistence and integration through globalisation) are included in the objectives, and activate local communities to a varying degree. If stress is placed on subsistence, the main areas of cooperation are close collaboration and the division of labour in the production and sale of local products, the strengthening of local communities and local identity, and the establishment of an internal market and internal communication networks. If, however, the aim is global integration ('entering the space of flows' (Castells and Henderson, 1987)), cooperation focuses on competition and competitiveness, thus, external communication and business relations, the attraction of external capital and the introduction of the most state-of-the-art technologies.

Cooperation may be hindered if neighbouring communities adopt a different fundamental development strategy to each other, and fail to identify their shared interests. (Adopting a fundamentally different strategy alone is not an impediment to cooperation; nevertheless, it renders the challenge of the formation and operation of partnerships tougher.)

As a result of politics setting greater store by locality, we face two paradoxes that affect cross-community cooperation.

- (1) The localisation of political and cultural activities occurs against a background of the 'dislocalisation' (i.e. globalisation) of the economy and the operation (and, in part, in response to this operation) of 'the space of flows', which is based on the interconnectedness of people, activities and decisions (Castells and Henderson, 1987). The place-based experience of the organisations operating locally and local movements is at variance with interests at higher regional (territorial) levels. It follows that the more global factors dominate locality, the more local institutions, organisations and people work in order to present and enhance the singularity of locality (Stöhr, 1988). Regional and local identity grows concurrently with global orientation (Brugger, 1986). The development-related activities of local communities also branch off. Eager to join the mainstream of globalisation, one serves the specialisation-related interests of globalisation. The other strives to strengthen locality in order to fend off the harmful effects of globalisation. As both fundamental strategies go beyond the boundaries of locality, the above duality leaves a lasting mark in shaping cross-community collaboration.
- (2) The other paradox is that local organisations which participate in local development most actively can adapt themselves to both national and international policies most effectively, conforming to the principles of concentration and partnership, receiving an increasing priority in EU's development policies. They manage to meet the expectations of related programmes and, as a result, succeed in obtaining support funds, though risking the loss of their local legitimacy. As they are constantly compelled to satisfy one condition or another, in order to access external funds, they may disengage from local communities. As a consequence, local organisations can no longer fulfil their original duty in the long run and lose their greatest strength: local legitimacy (Galtung et al., 1980; Green et al., 1993).

### **3.3 Developments and trends in cross-community cooperation in Hungary**

#### **3.3.1 The pre-regime-change era (the 1980s)**

From the 1980s, organisations of local development were established in rapid succession in the countries of Western Europe; in contrast, there were only a few shifts in priorities in the centrally-controlled spatial policies of the state socialist regimes. The totalitarian state, with its theory of monolithic development and dictatorial arrangements, did not tolerate the strengthening of local communities. In fact, it outright hindered it.<sup>3</sup> With the totalitarian rule gradually softening, in the wake of the social debates in the 1980s and due to dwindling state funds earmarked for development, the central government finally had to admit the importance of local community-initiatives and went as far as to require that development-related decisions be legitimised locally.<sup>4</sup> This 'concession', no matter how small, was enough for local groups, often with support from the professional classes,<sup>5</sup> to organise themselves and articulate their own development goals. However, in the absence of financial resources they could not do much to achieve these goals. They had to confine their activities to, and even disguise them as, cultural events and the protection and preservation of folk traditions.<sup>6</sup> Although the system of councils under top-down control did not allow local initiatives to be integrated into the shaping of living conditions and, in particular, into the development of the economy,<sup>7</sup> the battles fought locally anticipated the post-regime-change era when local organisations and associations were at last free to transform themselves into legitimate civil organisations/associations.<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, infrequent, pre-regime-change local development initiatives were characterised by their place-based nature and resultant spatial isolation, strong links with cultural life and exclusion from mainstream development policies. Strangely enough, in the final stage of state socialism, local development initiatives were no longer hampered by either prohibitions or direct hurdles embedded in the system but, rather, by the indirect hurdles that had evolved over 40 years. The most important among these was the loss of independence and the ability to put forward initiatives, as an outcome of a paternalistic fashion of exercising powers by the state and the persecution of middle-class values. As a consequence of 40 years of indoctrination, people gave up independent thinking and lost the knack of offering strategies relying on their own resources.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the existence of hostilities that had evolved between cities/towns and their environs, central villages

and their satellite villages as well as localities and county councils, in response to a settlement and area-development practice adopted within the framework of a shortage economy, proved to be an oppressing legacy.<sup>10</sup> A third component of the legacy was a system of settlements with rather significant spatial disparities and without fundamental infrastructures, which had evolved as an outcome of the former area policy.

Although in the early twentieth century Hungarian rural space was interwoven with the familial, economic and community relations that had evolved among individual settlements, in the pre-regime-change era, due to the characteristics of the state socialist system, there was no cross-community cooperation based on voluntary equality in the rural space. Institutional relations controlled by the state were the protagonists. A number of mechanisms had evolved that were to determine (until today) both motivation for and the nature of cooperation. These mechanisms are, *inter alia*, (1) the unfeasibility of local development, (2) regionalisation and (3) paternalism.

### **3.3.2 Spontaneous movements in the post-regime-change era (1989–1996)**

The main ambition of the government implementing the regime-change was to right the wrongs of the 40 years of communism and to compensate those at the receiving end for what they had had to suffer at the hands of the totalitarian state. In light of the legacy mentioned earlier, democracy and, within that, the autonomy of local communities could only be restored on a regional basis. Hostilities between neighbouring settlements precluded the maintenance of the administrative regions (units). All of a sudden, local governments began to operate in over 3,000 places in Hungary.<sup>11</sup> In addition to independence, powers and authorisations – significant even in a European comparison and independent of the size of the place at issue – were also granted (Pálné, 2008). Although funds in amounts higher than before were allocated to the individual tasks, they failed to cover implementation (Horváth, 2002). The regime-change created and granted competences to local governments, one of the actors of local development. (Under the applicable law, local enterprises and civil associations had been allowed to be established already, before the political regime change; this was a characteristic specific to the Hungarian transformation.)<sup>12</sup>

The first democratically elected government had clear and ambitious visions regarding social and economic development, but none concerning regional policy. As a result, local development was only put on the political agenda as late as 1993. Instead, large infrastructural development projects favouring small settlements and aimed at remedying the

major deficiencies of basic infrastructure were launched, often with local governments as project-owners.

The collapse of state- or council-owned and cooperative businesses left a gap in its wake in local economies, with a fundamental impact on employment and the integration of small-scale farmers. As there were no other economic operators, local governments had to assume this role. The idea of local governments either operating on a business basis or operating businesses themselves was further promoted by the need to accrue revenues of their own.

The next milestone in respect of the development of local economies was the introduction of tenders as a means to the allocation of central development funds. This widespread allocation of funds from a central budget was soon to become the only way of accessing the financial resources needed for the implementation of local development ideas. However, owing to a scarcity of capital, the financial resources earmarked for the implementation of local ambitions only existed on paper. The attraction and involvement of private capital remained pie in the sky, and local governments hardly had any revenues of their own.<sup>13</sup> Ultimate dependence on funds from the central budget resulted in a growing dependence on contracting authorities announcing tendering procedures. The objectives, institutions and means of local development in Hungary are still subject to the priorities of those providing funds.

Aimed expressly at the strengthening of local development and, within that, the development of local economies, the small regional programme of Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies (PHARE)<sup>14</sup> was launched in 1993. The programme provided financial support for innovative initiatives if they were based on the voluntary cooperation of local governments, entrepreneurs (businesses) and civil organisations of several settlements, and fitted in with longer-term strategies. In response to the programme, over 70 new small regional development organisations sprung up and put forth strategies of their own. The process set on course by the PHARE programme was strengthened by the National Employment Foundation (NEF),<sup>15</sup> by providing support for the working-out of local development strategies. Alongside other organisations, approximately 130 small regional cooperation initiatives received support.

### **3.3.3 Institutionalisation of regional development and rapid growth in the number of cross-community cooperating organisations (1996–2001)**

In 1996, the Hungarian National Assembly enacted the Regional Development Law.<sup>16</sup> This marked the completion of a paradigm shift

in regional development. As part of this paradigm change, economic development and, within that, the development of local economies increased in significance. Functional small areas were now the basic units of regional development and statistical regions were those where planning and statistical data was to be collected.<sup>17</sup> The law enshrined the right of representation in county development councils, as well as the preparation and legitimation of own-development concepts for multi-community associations, which included local governments as members. In order to avoid the overrepresentation of small regions, the number of representatives was pegged to the number of regions established for the purpose of statistical data collection.

The implementation of the Act led to strange excesses. One was that organisations of small regional development comprising all types of local actors as their members either excluded those that were not local governments or established new organisations. The other was that regional adjustment to statistical districts was initiated. All new organisations were set up on this regional basis, exclusively with local governments as their members.

The concept of small regions soon became popular not only in regional development, but also with management bodies responsible for various (e.g. educational, employment, social and rural development) areas, because neither efficient cooperation, nor the operation of an efficient regional management system was possible with 3,200 independent local governments.

A series of ministries announced their respective programmes promoting multi-community cooperation. Applications for funds to open tourist offices and business centres, and to create jobs for youth administrators were accepted. Behind each tendering procedure there was a group of local governments, either with a local government as gestor or with a formalised small regional association at the helm.

Although there was a 50% rise in the number of the civil organisations, there was no similar increase in the number of the small regional civil organisations of local development.<sup>18</sup>

The Regional Development Act was modified in 1998, restricting the number of small regional representatives in county development councils. There remained no meaningful activities for the organisations established earlier for regional development, and small regional activity lost momentum. There was no motivation for any new organisations to be set up. Those already operational strove to access funds under the tendering arrangements described earlier.

In 2000, promising to strengthen local development capacities but, in reality, driven by purely political considerations and completely ignoring local opinion, the government of the day established a network of small regional commissioners, which led to a further halt in local development initiatives. People with hardly any expertise in regional development or willingness to join local organisations were appointed in each of the 150 statistical small regions, mainly in order to ensure the flow of information between the centre and the small regions. The local organisations were disappointed by this measure, for they had expected support with their work and staffing levels; instead, a new actor, alien to them and often in need for help from them, entered the arena.

In 2000, measures aimed at improving the community nature of small regional organisations were taken. A planning process covering rural society in its entirety was launched in preparation for the Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD) pre-accession fund. As part of this process, at the initiative and with the support of the newly established Department of Rural Development Programmes of the Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development, over 200 small regional development groups were set up and started to work out their own strategic and operative programmes aimed to fit in with the SAPARD programme.

### **3.3.4 Increasingly tight control and standardisation (2002–2010)**

Although fragmentation became increasingly hard to sustain under the regional management system, territorially-overlapping, small regional associations often undertaking different missions and often failing to cover the entire country did not provide a workable solution. No more than 180 non-overlapping regional units of a similar size covering the entire country were needed at a national level.<sup>19</sup> The districts established for planning and statistical data collection and the regional development associations of local governments adjusting themselves to these public administrative units came in handy. The focus of the public administration reform shifted to small regions. Experts and decision-makers agreed that small regional organisations capable of managing issues that would otherwise be the responsibilities of regional authorities, in terms of supplying various public services in a regionally co-ordinated manner and of directing regional development, were needed.<sup>20</sup> Due to the strong autonomy awarded to local governments by the Constitution and the Act on Local Governments, and owing to the fact that the two-thirds parliamentary majority needed for the

alteration of the above laws was impossible to achieve, these types of small regional institutions could only be established through the voluntary associations of local governments and the voluntary transfer of some of their rights and powers.<sup>21</sup> The government could only persuade municipal governments to establish multi-purpose small regional associations. In the first phase, 72 multi-purpose small regional associations were set up.

In 2004, an act establishing multi-purpose associations of local governments<sup>22</sup> was announced. By early 2005 there were already 123 multi-purpose associations. Under the law, they took over the regional development functions of earlier associations. 2004 remains memorable in the history of small regional development from another perspective as well: the Act on Regional Development was amended for a second time. This amendment affected small regions fundamentally, as it stipulated that small regional development councils be set up in each statistical small region that was promoted first to a NUTS IV level region, then a LAU I level region. The responsibilities of the councils included working out the regional development concepts and programmes of the small regions, inspecting their implementation, expressing an opinion regarding tenders submitted by the small regions, voicing a standpoint on county and regional programmes, raising funds, and coordinating cooperation among small regional development and operating professional associations. Their members are the executive officers of local governments and representatives of trade chambers, regional development councils in counties, employer and employee organisations, the national advocacy organisations of craftsmen and merchants, civil organisations, the county offices of public administration and the Hungarian Treasury.

These two measures taken in 2004 seemed to seal the fate of small regional development organisations, with local governments as their members for a long time. A uniform, well-regulated system had been set up at a national level. The government did not leave the establishment of small regional development councils and their offices to chance or local players. Support for operation was pegged on meeting clear-cut requirements related to small regional offices constituting part of the public administrative system and being supervised by local administrative offices of towns and cities. Strong central pressure led to institutionalisation, as a result of which the local pillars of a national regional policy were integrated into the system of public administration.

In the meantime, the Ministry for Rural Development continued to operate a network of rural development managers. The updating of

210 small regional development programmes worked out in 1999 to suit a post-accession situation meant a financially eligible assignment for 190 local managers. Although constituting a mere fraction of their salaries and operational overheads, the financial support granted was reliably provided and helped to keep them in place, which, in turn, secured the necessary human resources for local development in rural areas. However, central decision-makers soon detected misalignments in the networks assigned to the individual local working groups and set alignment with statistical districts as a requirement. Such alignment was performed in the hope of receiving financial support; however, the support scheme was gradually phased out.

Centrally-supported small regional development capacities became both simpler and more standardised, in response to streamlined support schemes. There had been a major overhaul, as a result of which only the associations of local governments belonging to the same statistical small region survived. Increased dominance of local governments also affected the development of local economies: infrastructural projects continued to outweigh those aimed at directly promoting employment and improving living conditions.

After Hungary's accession to the EU, in order to secure Structural Funds, strong local/small regional capacities had to be augmented. This required a professional background and organisational skills that were beyond local government capabilities and resources. Such capacities therefore had to be embedded in the respective communities. Help from NGOs (Kuti, 2008), whose numbers grew rapidly after the regime-change only to experience a steep drop later, was also needed. The LEADER programme outright stipulated the centrality of local partnerships and a majority of non-local government actors in decision-making committees (Kováč, 2000). This was expected to ease the dominance of local government. Furthermore, those 'excluded' were also expected to 'get a move on' sooner or later. The only question that remained in this respect was the extent to which this could be hindered by the inevitable continuation of public administration reform and the government's distrust in civil society. In response to the latter, relative to the organisations based on community cooperation, non-profit economic companies established by local governments (Bocz, 2009) started to play a more significant role in cross-community cooperation.

The organisational spectrum of cross-community cooperation had become more drab, and more dependent on tender arrangements. The last straw was a system of local governmental associations which became operational by 2007 and which discriminated against other forms of

cooperation.<sup>23</sup> By 2010, hardly any actors other than multi-purpose local government associations and the organisations established or controlled by them remained in the cross-community organisations of cooperation. This had three implications: (1) cooperation became bureaucratic; (2) the strong settlement focus remained: there were hardly any regional initiatives; rather, the initiatives of individual settlements (localities) existed side by side, unrelated; and (3) tendering procedures and the central ideas and concepts mediated by them continued to play a pivotal role in shaping regional cooperation among individual communities.

### **3.3.5 Further deepening of centralisation (2010–)**

The 2010 change in government brought about radical changes in numerous areas in Hungary. One of the most unmistakable features is centralisation. 1 January 2013 marked a new chapter in the history of regional public administration. District offices with no self-governmental status assumed tasks and powers from local governments and the multi-purpose small regional associations were either discontinued or were no longer supported. Primary education was either centralised or placed under the control of the church or local governments. As government support was no longer granted to the associations that had become the sole organisers of cross-community cooperation, they stopped operating in a number of places. The remaining organisations of local governmental cooperation based on voluntary association transformed themselves into project organisations in order to implement the projects still in progress.

As a consequence of the processes outlined above, the form of rural cross-community cooperation was further streamlined and fine-tuned, with the local action groups of the LEADER programme (Figure 3.2) remaining the only organisations of cooperation. Of the very first organisations that were strong enough to survive, hardly a dozen operating as civil organisations remained.

## **3.4 Changes in the characteristics of rural cross-community cooperation**

Of all the characteristics of institutionalised forms of cross-community cooperation, only the following are analysed in this chapter: organisational forms, geographical areas, sizes and main activities.

### **3.4.1 Form-related characteristics of cooperation**

*The scale of cooperation* shows increasing concentration relative to the size of both locality and population. Over three quarters of the very

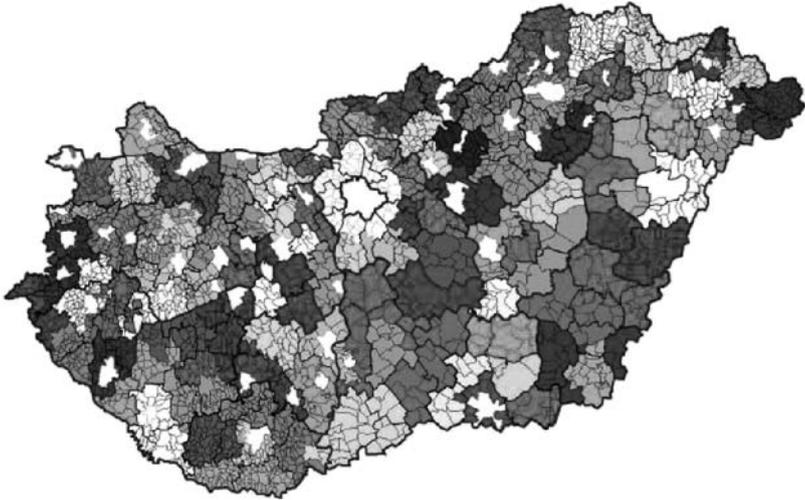


Figure 3.2 ÚMVP LEADER local action groups between 2007 and 2013  
 Source: ÚMVP Monitoring Committee (2010, p. 106).

first small regional associations established as spontaneous initiatives covered fewer than 20 settlements; later, as a rule, they comprised 15–25 settlements. LEADER LAGs came to comprise 30. Initial average population was 46,000, increasing to 34,000 and finally to 40,000 under the LEADER programme.<sup>24</sup>

Over time, *the geographical framework of cooperation* was fully adjusted to correspond to that of administrative districts. The first organisations were set up in homogeneous or functional regions. Before 2002, only 18% of local governmental associations complied in full with the criteria of the statistical district classification, whereas 37% covered a smaller geographical area (Table 3.1). In contrast, multi-purpose associations came to be fully aligned with administrative districts. The operational area of only 20% of the LEADER groups corresponds to that of a statistical district. However, 40% comprise two and a further 40% three or more districts.

*Classification by organisational form* has not only administrative significance. Organisational frameworks also affect the tasks undertaken in local development and the methods applied in the course of development. Those operating as social organisations usually operate broader based social partnerships. In contrast, more formal cooperation involving fewer activities is more common among local governmental

Table 3.1 Overview of organisational changes in cross-community cooperation

Criteria	1995	1999	2001	2008	2011
<b>Dominant form of cooperation</b>	<b>Spontaneous associations</b>	<b>Regional development associations</b>	<b>Programming areas of rural development</b>	<b>Multi-purpose local governmental associations</b>	<b>LEADER groups</b>
Number of organisations	134	184	210	175	96
Size/average population (thousand persons)	46	34	28	47	40
Size/average number of settlements	10-20	15-25	10-20	20-25	30
Relative to administrative districts (%)					
Lower		37	50	0	0
Equal		18	40	100	20
Higher		45	10	0	80
City is member (%)		70	40	100	40
Organisational form %					
Not a legal form	29	0	80	0	0
Local governmental association	39	66	0	100	0
Social organisation	32	34	20	0	100

associations. However, willingness to cooperate with the government is stronger in the latter. As opposed to associations comprising local government members only, LEADER organisations have mixed membership and operate as social organisations. It should be noted, however, that entrepreneurs and civilians among the members were often mayors 'in disguise', i.e. mayors who had not been elected into the presidium (steering committee) due to limits stipulated in the programme.<sup>25</sup> The number of members in the same organisation is still considerable despite a high number of recent drop-outs. On average, one settlement is represented by three members in an organisation, which may mean several hundred members per organisation (Kassai, 2012).

### **3.4.2 Changes in the content of cooperation**

The development of settlement and regional infrastructure, the co-ordination of settlement development, and the development of regional tourism have always been key topics of cooperation.<sup>26</sup> (Table 3.2) There was a marked change in the role of planning and advocacy between 1994 and 2001. After 1996, thanks, in part, to the Regional Development Act and, in part, the financial support that was made available under the Act, planning took the lead and, relative to the previous era, the proportion of planning and capital projects reversed.<sup>27</sup> This was closely related to the fact that focus gradually shifted from 'entrepreneurial local governments' to 'entrepreneurship-friendly local governments'. Accordingly, infrastructural development attracting and strengthening businesses, and marketing and PR activities promoting regions took an increasingly high profile. The role of planning had lost its importance again by 2000, but after Hungary's EU accession it regained its former significance.

After 2007, there was a shift in the activities of multi-purpose small regional associations towards the joint organisation of local governmental tasks (e.g. the provision of medical emergency services, schools, facilities of public education and internal control/audit) and the related settlement development programmes. The fact that only local governments were allowed to become members and therefore access funds from the central budget made regional communities and non-local government relationships unnecessary or even undesirable; as an outcome of further changes<sup>28</sup> in the institutional system of regional development, advocacy had also lost its former importance.

Understandably, the key content of LEADER cooperation is rural development. Within that, joint infrastructural development, the joint organisation of nature protection, the establishment of business

*Table 3.2* Changes in focus of small regional development activities between 1994 and 2001

1994 (a sample of 99)	1997/98 (a sample of 110)	2000/2001 (a sample of 118)
Development of regional and settlement infrastructure	Planning	Coordination of spatial development
Coordination of spatial development	Coordination of spatial development	Implementation of regional tourism-related programmes
Implementation of regional tourism-related programmes	Advocacy	Development of regional and settlement infrastructure
Business development and incentives	Development of regional infrastructure	Planning
Advocacy	Marketing and PR activities	Establishment and operation of a regional information system
Planning	Implementation of regional tourism-related programmes	Nature and environment protection
Nature and environment protection	Establishment and operation of a regional information system	Business development and incentives
Joint organisation of employment programmes	Business development and incentives	Training and education
Establishment and operation of a regional information system	Nature and environment protection	Marketing and PR activities
Marketing and PR activities	Professional assistance for local governments	Settlement rejuvenation
Heritage protection	Joint organisation of employment programmes	Joint organisation of employment programmes
Establishment of international relationships	Heritage protection	Community development
Professional assistance for local governments	Community development	Youth programmes
Joint fulfilment of local governmental tasks	Joint fulfilment of local governmental tasks	Heritage protection
Implementation of social programmes	Implementation of social programmes	Implementation of social programmes
Community development	Establishment of international relationships	Professional assistance for local governments

cooperation and the co-ordination of social development play significant roles.

Current projects based on cooperation are, as a rule, related to the development of the social economy, the production and sale of local goods and products, boosting tourism, or training and education enabling those living in the same region to achieve common goals. These topics logically follow EU programmes. The very essence of cooperation is aptly reflected in the survey results that show what local action groups (LAGs) consider their most important tasks. (Table 3.3)

### 3.4.3 Changes in methods of cooperation

During the spontaneous phase of cooperation, actors planned and organised activities covering several communities instinctively, relying on volunteers and input from persons in charge of other tasks. Over time, thanks to research on the topic and the specialist training that had been gaining ground, professional managers entered the arena. Local communities and their officials were soon to engage regional organisers to organise cooperation.

Local experts did not sit back for long. Central political control over regional cooperation also entailed central control over professional issues. Furthermore, professional control served as a basis for political

*Table 3.3* Tasks of LAGs in accordance with their order of priority

Ranking	Designation of task	Average scores
1	Provision and award of support funds	2.2
2	Boosting local economies through information flows	2.9
3	Strengthening regional relationship and the establishment of partnerships among regional actors (common platforms for local actors)	3.3
4	Encouraging local actors to establish joint projects and perform multi-sector activities, triggering synergy effects	3.9
5	Capacity-building of local actors	5.1
6	Providing for the possibility of discussions and exchange of opinions	5.3
7	Dissemination of the concept of sustainable development, promotion of its implementation	5.4
8	Sharing and dissemination of good practice	5.6
9	Networking with action groups operational in other regions	6.9

*Source:* Kis and Köteles (2011).

control, which involved hiring and firing, as appropriate, local experts from time to time. Local actors adopted central methodologies in planning and management tasks as these tasks were determined by central policies through centralised financing of operations. (Typically, local action groups in Hungary were of the opinion that the application of the principle of subsidiarity (i.e. local decision-making and control) in their work ranked the worst in Hungary among EU member states).

As regards development, similarly to other activities, social/community activities came second to the management activities of 'hard' development and infrastructural capital projects. This situation had not changed.

Zsuzsa Kassai has studied regional development partnerships and the causes for the current unfavourable situation as part of a PhD (2012). Her research has revealed that low willingness to cooperate within the LEADER LAGs may be attributed to the following:

- a) There is no tradition of community cooperation in the regions; the majority of the partners had not even known one another before LAGs were formed; trust needed for cooperation had not evolved.
- b) Conflicts among members precluded cooperation. A small group monopolised LAGs to pursue their own aims, leaving other partners reticent to cooperate with them.
- c) With statutory regulations and bureaucratic obstacles interfering with or foiling their operation, members lost their motivation for cooperation. Benefits were perceived as low, compared with funds and time invested and efforts made to establish the partnerships (Kassai, 2012).

In another survey, unwillingness to cooperate ranked immediately after the lack of capital and financial support among the factors impeding the development of the regions covered by LAGs. This was followed by lack of knowledge and statutory barriers (Kis and Köteles, 2010).

The vulnerability of LEADER communities, which are the only surviving form of cross-community cooperation in rural areas, is reflected in the fact that three quarters of the LAGs are convinced that they will have to discontinue operation without further financial support. LAG members do not believe that they would be able to tap into other funds, to finance their operation. Among all those interviewed, only one LAG expressed faith in its survival prospects, due to its ability to secure funds from other sources needed to finance its operation (Kis and Köteles, 2010).

### **3.4.4 Scenarios for future developments in cross-community cooperation**

Considering the model outlined below of local and central factors shaping cooperation (Figure 3.1), future scenarios for cooperation are affected by responses to the following questions:

On local side: Can local actors realise and understand the need for cooperation? Can they identify strategic areas for shared action? Can they find a charismatic person to lead their cause? Can the civil sector, independently from both central and local governments, recover? Can it articulate independent strategies tapping into social capital? Can it ensure that there are adequate intellectual and financial resources and social capital, locally, that are needed for the consistent implementation of decisions?

On central side: What kind of internal governance model will be adopted by national governments? Will reduction in powers of local governments and centralisation processes be continued? Can the distrust on the part of the state towards the civil sector be changed? How; the government's attitude to the EU will be formed and whether it supports the exogenous (globalisation) or the endogenous strategy as a basic strategy for local development?

Due to the paternalistic legacy of the state socialist era and centralisation, the will of national administrations plays a deciding role in the development of cross-community cooperation in Hungary. There are two variables which are likely to affect future scenarios: a mode of governance ranging from centralised to decentralised, and the preferred model of development ranging from endogenous to complete integration through globalisation and from economic isolation to a completely open economy (Figure 3.3).

There are four possible scenarios along the two axes:

Scenario of 'crowding out': Only forms of cross-community cooperation linked to central development programmes and directly controlled by the state are allowed. Their objectives and tasks are determined by programmes strengthening economic opening and adjustment within the EU. Their operation is standardised and bureaucratic and, hence, less innovative. Centralised governance and the paternalism it maintains reduce regional autonomy, crowding out strong local communities. Communities prioritised by the centre strive and prosper, those less prioritised lag behind. The only chance to catch up for those lagging behind is cooperation with those with a competitive edge; however,

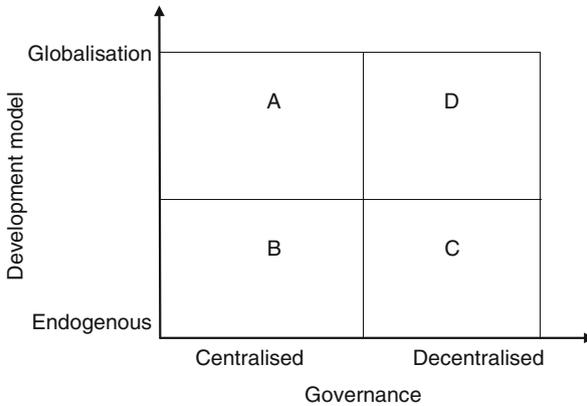


Figure 3.3 Scenarios for cross-community cooperation, dependent on changes in intentions of central administrations

this may not be in the interest of the latter. It is only central pressure that may persuade the latter to network with the peripheries. Cross-community cooperation consequently evolves into a vertical system (towns/cities and their environs, centre and peripheries), creating and sustaining a hierarchical relationship. However, centralisation, coupled with the strong need to compete, may also trigger resistance from local actors. Similarly to the situation characterising the early 1990s, spontaneous new processes demanding strengthening decentralisation may evolve in order to create cross-community relationships that benefit local communities.

‘False LEADER’ scenario: Strong central governance prefers endogenous development and subordinates cross-community cooperation controlled by it to such development. In order to utilise local capacities to the largest possible degree, it needs strong local communities that cooperate in groups covering the entire territory of the country. However, an increasingly closed central policy turning its back on European integration and rejecting the development funds that could be raised as part of such integration may weaken cooperation. Local communities propped up through the involvement of domestic and international funds may not tolerate centralised governance for long and may opt for another scenario.

‘LEADER’ scenario: Local communities opt for endogenous development and design their own strategies. They are likely to realise that the conditions for development reliant upon internal resources are

not available at a local level, and may therefore choose communities with which to cooperate. The central government supports cooperation itself, but it does not stipulate a geographical framework for it, nor does it lay down the rules of cooperation. Cross-community cooperation crystallises into a horizontal system based on partnership, in cooperation with, but not controlled by the government.

'Competition-oriented CLLD (Community Led Local Development)' scenario: Communities work to improve their competitiveness and look for potential partners towards this end. Competition may preclude the evolution of cross-community cooperation and may even harm it, attaching greater importance to vertical relationships. Cooperation of the 'town/city and its environs' nature that promotes and facilitates integration into a larger space may become more prominent.

As political trends and directions are rather volatile and prone to frequent changes, all four scenarios are equally likely, though currently scenario 'B' seems to be the most likely choice. Time will tell which scenario(s) materialise(s), and in what order.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Given that natural and socio-economic characteristics spill over settlement boundaries, with issues arising from this fact requiring coordination, cross-community cooperation is inevitable. In the state socialist era all kinds of community systems not controlled by the state were prohibited, and cross-community relations were shaped by forced administrative alignments, spatial division of labour, and marriage customs. Following the collapse of this system, bottom-up, cross-community cooperation aimed at local development gradually evolved. However, it was soon placed under state control again. The manner and form of the institutionalisation of cooperation and the content of cooperation were influenced most strongly by public administration reforms, the ministries' regional integration steps and, in keeping with them, state and EU tenders.

As an outcome of gradual centralisation, only LEADER LAGs have survived as the only common form of cross-community cooperation. These take on a rather peculiar form in Hungary, though. The LEADER principles have been violated in many respects, and nearly all the problems encountered in Europe are encountered in Hungary as well. The large size of groups, excessive central governance, party political influence, excessive bureaucracy, the lack of funds financing operation, low levels

of innovation, and scarce local social capital hinder operation predicated on an area-based approach, decentralisation and subsidiarity, partnership, innovation, integrated measures, and networking (jointly: the LEADER principles). Communities play a less-important-than-expected role in the shaping of such spaces, however.

Meanwhile, a number of cross-community cooperation groups that started operating in the early 1990s remain excluded from processes of institutionalisation initiated by national authorities. They are being kept alive with all kinds of tricks, resulting in low levels of civil organisation. Some such groups owe their survival to their strong local commitments and their participation in some (green, cross-border or social exclusion) EU programmes. Their strongest common feature, which has also made their survival possible, is their activity, coupled with focus away from narrow community interests, facilitating groups' survival across several political cycles.

Although nearly all levels of rural cross-community cooperation are ridden with conflicts, those living in these communities may not necessarily label them as 'conflicts'. It is the conflicts, not even acknowledged in a number of cases, between elected representatives and civilians that make cooperation difficult *within the individual communities*. As regards *cross-community cooperation*, it is conflicts stemming from both old and new hierarchies, the latter strengthened and solidified by the transformation of the system of public administration, and the centralisation of institutions that weaken cooperation. *Town-and-country-type conflicts* have led to the exclusion, also strengthened by the LEADER programme, of cities and towns from regional cooperation, i.e. to the evolution of regions 'with holes in the middle'. The cause of conflicts encountered *in cross-community cooperation* is dependence on central /EU development funds and the resultant competition. Although such competition is less pronounced in the LEADER programme, as it expressly promotes and encourages cooperation between LAGs, only few localities avail themselves of the opportunity that this programme offers. The toughest conflict is the one *between cooperating communities and the state*. However, in reality, this is not a conflict proper because only forms of cooperation that conform to the central will can exist (and survive) and because paternalism is accepted on both sides. Nevertheless, a *status quo* like this hinders the evolution of new, more self-reliant cooperation types, capable of overcoming old conflicts.

Future developments in cross-community cooperation are shaped by the internal characteristics of the communities, the fact and degree of decentralisation of central control, and the choice of endogenous or

exogenous course of local development. Any one of the scenarios are possible in post-2014 Hungary.

## Notes

1. I consider the papers by Myrdal (1956), Galtung (1980), Brugger (1986) and Stöhr (1988) as authoritative studies as regards the definition and the treatment of the theory and West European practice of bottom-up development.
2. Spatial development means a change in the abilities of a region/area which help satisfy the needs of those living in the region/area in a manner such that there is either a broader spectrum of supply (i.e. a wider selection of goods and services, and places where they are provided) or a larger social group whose needs are satisfied, with the proviso, however, that this does not compromise or restrict opportunities for others (including future generations) (Burton, 1990).
3. The spatial policies of both Western democracies and state socialist regimes were 'top-down' policies. However, the latter outright impeded local movements and communities, treated them as a source of threat to the centralised power of the state and, hence, prohibited their establishment. In contrast, the former strove to rely on local resources and have decisions accepted ('legitimised') locally in an attempt to use resources effectively (Böhm, 1988).
4. In the 1980s, the depopulation of small villages called attention to the errors and mistakes of a central development policy focusing exclusively on the development of centres. Debates involving a wide spectrum of society were conducted regarding the appropriateness or otherwise of a spatial policy based on the theory of growth poles. One of the outcomes of the debates was the strengthening of the community development movements that aimed to empower local communities, an ambition which, at the time, clashed with the official mainstream politics at a number of places and on numerous occasions (Varga and Verseg, 1991).
5. In Central Europe, where bourgeois revolutions came with a lag and were coupled with colonial oppression, the professional classes had a particular role to play. To be a member of the professional classes meant having not only good, higher-level education, but also a mission for the nation.
6. The most frequent programmes/events/activities of the time included the re-discovery of folk music and folk dancing through the *táncház* (folk dance clubs) movement and clubs that could be fitted in with community education. It is no mere coincidence either that it was *népművelők* (in a word-for-word translation, 'educators of people') working in community centres who were the very soul of local associations/movements/organisations, and that community centres became the hotspots of local political life.
7. Development occurred through the primacy of industrialisation, while public services were provided in such a manner that they were linked to places where industries were established and their supply was subject to the rank that a locality had in the settlement hierarchy (Enyedi, 1997).
8. The Act on social organisations, providing for the possibility of their establishment, came into force in 1989.
9. This phenomenon is not a socialism-specific 'achievement'. British community developers often complain about a similar outcome of paternalism (Gilchrist, 2000).

10. The 1970s saw extensive regionalisation in Hungary; as a consequence most localities were given a satellite village status. The status of localities and their place in the settlement hierarchy came to play a key role within a development policy that allocated development funds in accordance with the rank of the individual localities in the settlement hierarchy. Those living in small villages often thought that central localities, which, by definition, developed and were often earmarked for development centrally, snatched resources from them. The omnipotent master in charge of the re-allocation of resources was the county council, in their eyes (Vági, 1982).
11. Act LXV of 1990 on Local Governments.
12. Act VI of 1988 on Business Associations; Act II of 1989 on the Right of Association.
13. The share of local governments' own revenues is usually 30–40%, but it is below 10% in smaller places (Temesi, 2000).
14. The pre-accession programme of the EU from 1989 for Poland, Hungary, and two more east European countries.
15. The NEF was created in 1992 in order to strengthen innovative initiatives aimed at triggering labour-market processes and expanding the range of actively-used tools of employment policy by financing projects.
16. Act XXI of 1996 on Regional Development and Regional Planning.
17. The Central Statistical Office delineated regions of the catchment-zone type with a population of between 30,000 and 60,000, for the purpose of planning and statistical data-collection. In the first phase there were 150 of them, then, when it became clear that they were the regional bases for the allocation of funds, their number rose to 168, in response to pressure from localities.
18. In 1998 there were already nearly 260 small regional development organisations of different sizes and with competences in overlapping areas, two thirds of which identified themselves as associations of local governments under the Regional Development Act. The share of social associations founded in 1996 or later was a mere eight percent. During this period there were 16 small regions where organisations with different legal statuses and with the intention to facilitate regional development operated alongside each other in order to facilitate regional development (Fekete, 2001).
19. It should be noted that there existed a similar regional level called *járás* (district) between the end of the 13th century and 1984.
20. The French model played an important role. In France, where the integration of associations and local initiatives into state-run structures is a long-standing tradition, local governments are often members of dozens of associations simultaneously. After special-purpose associations had become common, the time was right in the early 1990s to organise associations that were willing to carry out complex development tasks at a regional level and were vested with some of the powers of local governments. Under this popular arrangement, some of the tasks and powers of local governments were transferred to associations of this type, the latter being completely separate from the former, institutionally. One of the powers handed over was the right to levy taxes. Associations tap their own tax revenues in carrying out duties linked to regional development and the operation of institutions. Amongst all the regional development tasks, designing and

implementing projects incorporated into such programmes is especially important.

It should be noted that local actors in France identify three fundamental conflicts under the French model:

- conflicts between elected office-holders, professional developers and voluntary developers;
  - differences between the delineation of administrative regional units and functional regions;
  - inadequate involvement of the economy and civil society in local development processes and related decision-preparation.
21. Until 2012, local governments in Hungary enjoyed autonomy at a scale that was unprecedented even in Western Europe. They had to carry out the majority of the tasks that arise from providing public services for local residents and exercising powers locally. The responsibilities of municipal governments included the operation of institutions which individual settlements could not afford and which performed regional functions in connection with regional development, the preparation and approval of the spatial planning of the county, voicing an opinion on the spatial development concept of the county, and the establishment and operation of a county information system.
  22. Act CVII of 2004 on Multi-Purpose Association of Local Governments.
  23. The Hungarian National Assembly adopted the amendment of Act CVII of 2004 on the multi-purpose associations of local governments on 10 September 2007. As a result, with the exception of Budapest, where it is the Metropolitan Municipality Government that tends to these duties, multi-purpose small regional associations comprising all the settlements of a region sprung up in all 173 small regions. A system that could be regulated and financed in a standardised manner thus evolved, with the voluntary, though somewhat nudged, participation of local governments.
  24. The size of the geographical area could justify an even higher population; however, towns/cities with a population of over 10,000 cannot participate in LEADER cooperation.
  25. The composition of action groups must meet the requirements set forth in Paragraph (b) of Article 62 of Council Regulation 1698/2005/EC.
  26. We conducted surveys on the weight of the tasks and responsibilities in small regional work in 1994, 1997 and 1998, and 2000 and 2001.
  27. In the initial period, 77% of joint projects were capital investment projects. This figure dropped to 33% later.
  28. Small regional representation, first, at county (municipal) development councils, and second, at regional ones was reduced.

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## **Part II**

# **Challenges to the Rural Idyll: Politics, Class Divisions, and Conflict**

# 4

## Class Conflict and Social Change in the British Countryside, 1990–2013: Urban Values, Rural Issues

*Sue Bestwick*

### 4.1 The urban-rural 'divide', a chasm too wide?

The Industrial Revolution in Britain was responsible for radically changing the lives of the working classes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; they migrated from the countryside in their thousands in order to seek work in the rapidly expanding industrial cities such as London and Manchester. This enormous demographic shift ensured that the urbanisation of the landscape was largely responsible for creating clear distinctions between rural and city life. It was during this period of rapid change that the concept of the 'Countryside Ideal' or 'rural idyll' emerged, which was in direct response to the unsanitary and overcrowded conditions of the heavily industrialised cities. So, the urbanisation of the landscape in the nineteenth century helped to engender the construction of the 'rural idyll' and, as Bunce argues, four conditions were necessary to promulgate this 'ideal'

1. It produced the social structures and experiences within which attitudes towards the country and the city could develop.
2. It created a political economy which redefined rural-urban relationships.
3. It sustained the intellectual and cultural climate in which ideas about the country and the city could flourish.
4. It forged the landscapes and living environments around which differential values have formed.

(Bunce, 1994, p. 11)

These conditions are fundamental to the understanding of how rural and urban relationships have developed over time and it is a requisite of

this chapter to examine the concepts of conflict and change within the British countryside. However the chapter is not intended as a historical study; the time period in question will be from the early 1990s to the present day and will be divided into two main sections. The first will cover the political influences upon the perceived rural/urban divide, especially those of the New Labour government elected in 1997. Within this section there will also be in depth analysis of class-divisive issues such as foxhunting, modern farming methods, and the 'right to roam'. The second part of the paper will specifically focus upon social and cultural influences, as well as class representations of the rural. Within this section the controversial in-migration from towns to villages will be discussed and media representations of the rural will be considered, particularly the news media, as this is crucial in terms of the reporting of countryside issues. The second section will also briefly consider public reactions to the catastrophic events of Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) ('Mad Cow disease') and foot and mouth disease, which destroyed farming incomes from the late twentieth century into the twenty-first century.

The election of New Labour in 1997 and subsequent political rural policies will be central to the understanding of 'the most pervasive of geographical binaries, the urban and the rural' (Woods, 2011, p. 3). It is the intention of this chapter to consider in detail some of the political decisions taken over the last 30 years, regarding rural concerns, especially the extremely controversial hunting ban which came into force in 2005. This was also a period when the Countryside Alliance was formed in response to the perceived 'anti-countryside' sentiment displayed by Blair and New Labour. The Countryside Movement argued that 'there was a general urban incomprehension of rural life and values, and that urban domination of British politics, government, the economy and national culture was leading to a systematic bias and marginalisation of the countryside' (Burchardt, 2002, p. 199). These are strong words indeed and there will be an in-depth analysis of the issues raised by the Countryside Alliance from the first demonstration in 1997 to the later marches in the twenty-first century. Therefore, because '[t]he countryside has long occupied an enigmatic position in discourses of British governmentality' (Woods, 2008, p. 10), it is the intention of the chapter to begin with the political construction of rural Britain particularly from New Labour's standpoint. Class affiliations will form an important part of the study as the complex issue of an urban/rural divide cannot be discussed without specific reference to the discourses of class. The Conservative party has traditionally been the party that upholds rural

'values', thus attempting 'to embed a Conservative electoral hegemony in rural areas under the mythic guise of the "apolitical countryside"' (Woods, 2005), but it also critically positioned the Labour Party and socialism as among the key threats to the countryside' (Woods, 2008, pp. 10–11). This narrative, which positions the Labour party as being the 'enemy' of the countryside, became further exacerbated after New Labour came into power in 1997 and subsequent rural policies such as the 'right to roam' and the cull of millions of animals during the foot and mouth epidemic ensured that confrontation between rural dwellers and the government was inevitable. This will be discussed in detail as well as perhaps the most contentious issue of New Labour's rural policies, which was the bill introduced to ban the hunting of wild animals with dogs. Class divisions were never more apparent than during the passing of this extremely controversial bill, thus forming a crucial part of the study.

An important area for discussion regarding possible conflict between rural and urban dwellers is the issue of in-migration from town to country and the subsequent social changes which have inevitably occurred. There will be consideration of the effects upon the so-called 'village way of life' in terms of affordable housing for local people and particularly the conflict of 'values' between rural and urban, such as a countryside of recreation as opposed to a working landscape. There has been a fundamental shift from the nineteenth century mass-migration from country to town to a more recent phenomenon of the town moving to the country, and 'it is already evident that counterurbanisation has played a significant role in the rural restructuring of many parts of Britain' (Champion and Watkins, 1991, p. 22). So, the influx from town to country will form an important part of the study as it often 'resulted in major conflict between idealised expectations and the often dissonant and incompatible realities which increasingly obtruded upon them' (Burchardt, 2002, p. 167). The social and cultural aspects of in-migration will be analysed in detail, especially the effects of the influx of middle class professionals to villages, which has created discord between rural working classes and urban newcomers. One of the main reasons for this class conflict is the creation of inflated house prices within village locations, often due to the social/cultural capital of middle class in-migrants – a phenomenon which will be discussed in detail as well.

The chapter would not be complete without close analysis of media representations of the countryside; these will include consideration of newspaper articles on issues such as hunting, as well as looking at other

forms of media such as TV, film, and websites. The media tend to produce 'sanitised' versions of the countryside, especially in TV advertisements where animals in particular can be represented as having human traits, such as the Saatchi & Saatchi commercial for Anchor Butter showing Jersey cows 'playing football' (<http://www.coloribus.com/adsarchive/tv-commercials/anchor-butter-football-283905/>). Although these 'human' representations of animals are clearly false, they can perpetuate the concept of a 'rural idyll' and often represent an idealised version of the countryside which in turn can be at odds with rural perceptions of the 'country way of life' succinctly described by the Countryside Alliance thus: 'This is real life, not the Archers' (Hart-Davis, 1997, p. 70). Therefore it will be crucial to consider media representations of rurality in order to assess whether they can be responsible for 'fuelling' the perceived urban/rural divide. However, the media does represent the countryside in ways other than TV or film – namely, the news media, particularly in the form of the national newspapers which are responsible for disseminating rural issues and events in specific ways. The myth of the 'rural idyll' is a popular representation within the news media but most broadsheets do have a distinctly political stance to their reporting; for instance, the *Daily Telegraph* is politically right wing, whereas the *Guardian* is a markedly left-leaning newspaper. This is important when considering class affiliations within the concept of the rural; therefore, there will be a comparison of both these broadsheets in terms of sympathetic/negative reporting of middle-class and working-class rural issues.

## 4.2 Political influences and class divisions

The election of Tony Blair's New Labour government in May 1997 was an unprecedented success particularly in terms of the gains made in rural constituencies, as 'the election of Labour MPs for seats such as North Norfolk, Falmouth and Cambourne, Forest of Dean and Shrewsbury reflected a considerable incursion into the British Countryside' (Woods, 2008, p. 3). However, it was not long before discontentment within the rural community began to surface with the implementation of some of New Labour's rural policies. The catalyst for this shift in rural attitudes happened when 'not even three months into Blair's administration, Hyde Park was filled with 120,000 demonstrators primarily motivated by the perceived threat of a free vote on a ban on hunting promised in Labour's election manifesto' (Woods, 2008, p. 3). It was to be eight more years before the hunting ban became law but it could be argued

that the Private Members' Bill seeking to criminalise hunting triggered the growth of an increasingly militant rural population which thought 'their jobs, traditions and very way of life were being threatened by the uncomprehending dogmatism of urban politicians' (Hart-Davis, 1997, p. 2). So, it was the birth of what became known as the Countryside Alliance in July 1997 which gave an important 'voice' to the concerns of rural people in what they perceived as an 'essentially antagonistic urban world which did not "understand" country life' (Howkins, 2003, p. 225). The urban-rural divide appeared to be growing ever wider during the late 1990s and the early twenty-first century with the Countryside Alliance organising more marches staged through London, with '250,000 demonstrators marching through London in March 1998' (Woods, 2008, p. 4). However, by far the largest countryside march took place on the 22 September 2002. This was known as the 'Liberty and Livelihood March with 408,000 demonstrators in London' (Woods, 2008, p. 5). This march took place after New Labour was re-elected in June 2001 and was initially in response to the proposed ban on hunting with dogs, but it quickly became a protest against many other issues including 'the crisis in farm incomes ... as a result of the fall in real prices for farm products within the European Union' (Burchardt, 2002, p. 199). There were also many other serious grievances being voiced by rural people, such as: 'the decline in rural services provision, including public transport, health, education, post offices and commercial services (notably shops and pubs) as well as government plans to build more new houses on "green field" sites in the countryside' (Burchardt, 2002, p. 199). However, it was still the proposed ban on hunting which remained a key issue in terms of the attitudes of the country and the city reaching an impasse. It would seem that hunting was essentially a country pursuit which urban dwellers did not understand, as Baroness Mallalieu suggested; for 'those who do not understand hunting (urban), no explanation is possible, and those who do (country), no explanation is necessary' (qtd. in Hart-Davis, 1997, p. ix). The rural pursuit of hunting will be considered in both an urban and rural context in the next section, alongside the matter of rearing of animals for meat and farming methods. However, the political ramifications of rural policies are not as straightforward as they may seem between the Conservative Right being the champions of the countryside as opposed to the 'anti-rural' stance apparently adopted by New Labour. Tony Blair delivered a keynote speech in Exeter in 2000 where he 'challenged the assertion that Labour was an urban government which did not understand the countryside' (Woods, 2007, p. 227). Blair argued that similar problems

can affect town and country as well as some being specific to each, as he said: 'There are those on the political right who seek to divide town and country, to say that because you live in a city you neither know or care about those who live in the country. But there is more that unites us than divides us, there are more common challenges, common values and indeed common solutions, than there are things that divide us' (Woods, 2007, p. 227 [Tony Blair speech Exeter 2000]). This was a 'gauntlet throwing down' exercise by Blair to assure the countryside that New Labour understood the problems it faced, and even though 'Labour's rural policies had polarised the electorate, the polarisation had occurred not between town and country but within rural areas – between an embittered and beleaguered minority and a less vocal majority, whose political concerns more closely reflect those of the country as a whole' (Woods, 2007, p. 227).

Foxhunting has been a country 'sport' for centuries; although it was 'originally regarded as a socially inferior activity to deer hunting, [it] had gained steadily in popularity with the gentry during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' (Thomas, 1984, p. 164). It was after enclosure was complete that foxhunting became an important 'pastime' for the aristocracy and riding to hounds was considered as a 'manly' pursuit in the fresh air and in the company of good friends. So, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were synonymous with the 'emergence of the most notable hunts, the famous Grafton hunt began around 1750, the Pytcheley in 1761' (Williamson, 2002, pp. 45–46). However, hunting with dogs has always been a contentious issue, even in Victorian Britain. In 1869 there was a very heated argument which took place in the *Daily Telegraph* between Anthony Trollope and the celebrated historian Edward Freeman regarding the 'Manliness and Morality of Field Sports'. This national debate was aired publicly in the *Telegraph*, with Freeman questioning Trollope's attitude to cruelty: 'Mr Trollope's morality, I must say, seems a little like the prudence of the ostrich. The cruelty is done with Mr Trollope's knowledge and sanction, and for his gratification, for the fox is "done to death for the gratification of a hundred sportsmen"' (Boddice, 2008, p. 19). Freeman was very vociferous in his condemnation of foxhunting and his retort was in answer to Trollope's charge 'that "milkshops and bookworms" would not know what "manly sport" was' (Boddice, 2008, p. 19). So, it would appear that foxhunting generated very strong feelings on both sides of the debate in the mid nineteenth century, and the argument has continued unabated for the last 150 years. However, in the twenty-first century it has taken different forms to the very patriarchal attitudes of hunting

being a 'manly' sport which was almost a rite of passage for upper class men in Victorian Britain. Today's arguments about foxhunting are still very firmly entrenched around the issue of cruelty to a wild animal, but rather than it being a question of morality it is often centred upon the rural/urban debate and the ensuing attitudes on both sides. Since the formation of the Countryside Alliance various discourses have been constructed about the importance of hunting to the creation of jobs, the rural economy, the stewardship of the land, and even a so-called 'traditional way of life.' The official magazine of the Countryside Alliance often addresses the issue of foxhunting, and in 1998 it was responsible for constructing the meaning of hunting in a variety of ways. The overriding theme was one of the erosion of a 'country way of life', with urban populations represented in a very negative light, including, in the March 1998 magazine, reporting: 'The British countryside and its way of life are under threat. What urban man wants is a gigantic theme park in which he can walk where he wants, ride his motorcycle, park his car, throw away his beer cans and generally do what he damned well likes' (qtd. in Wallwork and Dixon, 2004, p. 27). This statement was a direct attack on city dwellers and it certainly promotes the binary oppositions of urban/rural, recreational countryside/working countryside, in an attempt to claim the 'authentic' voice of the countryside. The article goes on to uphold the 'freedom' and 'right' to hunt, as is suggested: 'Freedom to pursue our country way of life is a right British people hold dear' (ibid.). This is a very profound stance to take in terms of the meaning of 'Britishness', since there is a suggestion that only the rural population understand what it means to be British and urban: 'supporters of the "Hunting with Dogs" bill are cast not merely as anti-hunting, but also, more heinously, as anti-British' (Wallwork and Dixon, 2004, p. 27). These are nationalistic sentiments which reveal the 'countryman' as the stalwart supporter of the 'nation' and the upholder of supposed 'traditional values'. However, it is far too simplistic to assume that the foxhunting debate is just about the conflict between rural and urban attitudes to country 'sports'. It is a much more complex issue, particularly when considering party politics. A YouGov poll conducted before the ban became law revealed some remarkable results, such as: 'on whether hunting foxes with dogs should be made a criminal offence, men are evenly split, but women by a wide margin, favour a ban. Young people want a ban by a clear margin, but most over-50s oppose criminalisation' (King, 2002). These findings reveal how the contentious issue of foxhunting can divide Britain, but it is also clear that political affiliations can reveal some striking results.

From the same poll: '77% of Conservatives oppose any legal prohibition on foxhunting, 69% of Labour supporters take the opposite view, as do 60% of Liberal Democrats' (King, 2002).

So, it is clear that political partisan disparity has a significant bearing on how people view contentious issues such as foxhunting and, of course, hunting with dogs, which has often been associated with generations of the upper classes. So class divisions have featured largely within the debate, with John Prescott arguing for instance that foxhunting is: 'one of those kind of tally-ho, tally-ho [issues that have] nothing to do with modern Britain' (Carlin, 2004). The media itself represents political affiliations and it is interesting to note that the *Guardian* published the findings of a Mori Poll which was 'commissioned by the pressure group Campaigning to Protect Hunted Animals, and found that 80% of British people think that hunting with dogs is cruel' (Watt and Allison, 2002). So, if 80% of British people thought that hunting was cruel, the majority of those would of course be urban dwellers, which brings the debate back to the difference in attitudes between rural and urban, but also more importantly, the differences between Conservative and New Labour voters, and '[i]n 2004, the political gulf between town and country has probably never been wider – and it is polarised along party lines' (Wheeler, 2004). So, it could be argued that party politics was the major driving force behind the implementation of the 2005 Hunting with Dogs Bill, which is still disputed along party lines: 'It wasn't based on evidence, it was based on a class attack by a party that thought it was getting rid of the toffs' (Prince, 2010). But the Countryside Alliance presented their case for rural autonomy on the basis that 'foxhunting remains under threat, not only from the Government, but from Britain's mainly urban population' (King, 2002). However, it would be misleading to simply take the Countryside Alliance's claim 'that "town" and "country" were separate and opposed entities' (Burchardt, 2002, p. 204), as there are many other complex issues within the debate on foxhunting. The difficulties faced by New Labour in actually getting the bill passed were largely due to differing opinions of Labour MPs themselves, ensuring a 'reframing of the hunting debate [which] first implicitly undermined the rationale behind the Middle Way option by suggesting that constructing the hunting issue as a problem of animal welfare missed the point. Second, it challenged the representation promoted by the Countryside Alliance of the hunting community as an "oppressed minority"' (Woods, 2008, p. 108). Indeed, Blair's speech in 1999, on '[t]he forces of Conservatism' actually 'positioned hunting supporters as a privileged elite seeking to cling on to power'

(*ibid.*). So, entrenched political stances on both sides of the debate were largely responsible for the hunting ban taking approximately eight years to become law from the first reading, and issues of left and right wing politics along class lines played a more significant role than the construction of a rural/urban divide.

### **4.3 Social and cultural influences, and class representations of the rural**

Rural Britain has undergone many changes since the 1980s, manifested economically, socially, and culturally. Unlike during the nineteenth century, the shift from rural to urban in the late twentieth century has seen a remarkable upsurge in urban dwellers moving to the countryside. It could be argued that 'the economic recovery and property boom of the late 1980s led to an acceleration in population movements away from larger cities to smaller towns and the countryside' (Champion and Watkins, 1991, p. xi). A major factor for this in-migration to villages has in part been the 'buoyant market in retirement homes and holiday cottages, in 1988 the predominantly rural counties of East Anglia (that is Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk) formed the fastest growing region in Britain with a population increase of more than a million over seven years, or 7.4%' (Sinclair, 1991, p. 61). So, this migration into rural communities does have some resonance with wealthier city dwellers acquiring 'weekend retreats', but the desire for cheaper housing was not the only driver behind this urban/rural shift. The most popular discourse associated with the countryside is the concept of the 'rural idyll' and the idea of recreational and lifestyle opportunities in a supposedly 'unspoilt' countryside, representing a positive choice for country living. However, this idealised view of the country is not always what city dwellers encounter on moving to a village and it is 'partly because of Britain's long standing anti-urban culture that it is necessary to challenge the image of the "rural idyll" of peace and prosperity, which many of the nation's 80 percent of city dwellers hold' (Champion and Watkins, 1991, p. xi). Counterurbanisation has presented many problems for life within villages, especially of social harmony, and indeed 'the reality is one of increasing diversity and conflicting interests' (Champion and Watkins, 1991, p. xi). In-migration to villages has to a certain extent created class divisions which may not have existed before. Rural populations have witnessed property prices rising inexorably in the last two decades, mainly due to the influx of middle class professionals into villages, and 'the purchasing power of middle class in-migrants means that

they have been able to out price working-class rural residents in rural property markets' (Woods, 2011, p. 187). The cultural capital of middle-class rural newcomers has therefore ensured their dominance within the rural housing market and 'the resulting displacement of rural working classes may be presented as a process of gentrification, which has material effects in changing rural communities' (Woods, 2011, p. 187). The 'colonisation' of villages by what is sometimes known as the 'service class' has had serious repercussions for the rural working class because 'planning policies are reinforced by an increasing infiltration of service class representatives into local politics' (Champion and Watkins, 1991, pp. 39–40). This 'infiltration' into local politics (including parish councils) thus ensures that middle-class newcomers are involved in decision-making about issues such as local housing developments: 'keeping other classes and class fractions out of the locality' (Champion and Watkins, 1991, p. 40). A specific housing scheme which would benefit the rural working class would be an 'affordable housing development' but 'in-migrants can mobilise politically to protect the middle class character of their adopted communities, opposing new housing developments that would increase supply and potentially reduce property prices' (Woods, 2011, p. 187). There are also many other issues where the town and country 'values' come into conflict with each other, a crucial one being the countryside as peaceful and idyllic and a source of leisure and recreation, juxtaposed with a working landscape which generates noise with ever-larger agricultural machinery, unpleasant smells and of course livestock. Unfortunately, much of British society 'has long been removed from their agricultural roots (and) idealises farming with its chickens in the farmyard and the jolly farmer ploughing his small fields and the dairymaid caring for the cows she knows by name' (Sissons, 2001, p. 59). The reality of a working landscape is very different, 'with its vast fields and huge tractors that apply fertiliser differentially with phenomenal accuracy' (Sissons, 2001, p. 59). However, new technology used in modern farming or 'agribusiness' has in recent years had the effect of alienating 'many people [who] are deeply sceptical of modern farm practices' (Sissons, 2001, p. 23). This distrust developed from the mid twentieth century with the increasing use of pesticides and herbicides resulting in severe damage to wildlife and in some instances the threat of extinction. Farmers were seen as 'Farmer Greed and Farmer Whinge' (Sissons, 2001, p. 23). These negative comments about farmers were also voiced within the political sphere when Elliot Morley, the agriculture minister in 2001, commented: 'The point I would make is that no one in this country has a guaranteed right to an income or

a living and that businesses change all the time (and added) I sometimes think that farmers are a pretty ungrateful lot' (qtd. in Foggo and Bentham, 2001, p. 75). So, it could be argued that urban attitudes began to harden from farmers as 'custodians' of the countryside to perceptions of greed and exploitation. However, conflict between urban incomers to villages and landowners was further exacerbated when the controversial Countryside and Rights of Way Act was passed in 2000 which gave unrestricted access and the 'right to roam' on thousands of acres of land around Britain. Some argued that this was an ill-thought-out Act, where 'One of the least helpful attitudes on the urban side of the conflicting value systems is the one that places the recreational value of the countryside above all else' (Sinclair, 1991, p. 150). The overriding assumption of the 'right to roam' was that more people had leisure time and the countryside was seen as integral to the increasing demand for recreation. However, the Countryside Review Committee did recognise the potential areas for conflict, since urban dwellers moving to the countryside did not always necessarily observe the 'country code': 'people all too often leave gates open, letting sheep and cattle stray, drop dangerous litter, or trample crops' (Sinclair, 1991, p. 151). Perhaps the most distressing aspect of countryside access is the possibility of pet dogs killing livestock and wildlife: '*Unrestrained dogs* worry livestock and disturb nesting birds' (Sissons, 2001, p. 151). This issue has been an ongoing problem for farmers and dog-owners alike as there have been cases of dogs being shot by farmers for alleged worrying of sheep as well as of dogs which have been seriously out of control on farmland. Fields containing public footpaths often contain livestock, so walkers whose 'dogs weren't that well trained would, for safety's sake, have to remain on a lead' (Craze, 2004, p. 26).

So, it would appear that the 'rural idyll' is an elusive concept for urban dwellers migrating to villages, highlighted by the differing discourses of the countryside as having 'amenity' and recreational value juxtaposed with the countryside as a working, 'industrial' landscape. However, it must be remembered that: 'in 1999 under four percent of the employed population in rural England worked in agriculture. At the end of the twentieth century therefore, the great majority of people in the countryside had no significant connection with agriculture. On the contrary, they worked in office or industrial jobs, often actually in towns and cities' (Burchardt, 2002, pp. 204–5). This reveals the social and economic changes which have taken place within rural communities in recent decades, rather than perpetuating an urban/rural divide: 'town and country were inextricably economically intertwined in the

late twentieth century' (Burchardt, 2002, p. 204). However, perhaps one of the most significant social changes which has taken place within villages is the in-migration of middle class urbanites, resulting in class conflict, with the rural working class in many cases being 'priced out' of their locality due to inflated house prices.

The Countryside has played a significant role within British society, and 'the media, in its broadest sense, has always played an important part in the propagation and dissemination of ideas of rurality' (Woods, 2011, p. 34). The film industry, television and literature (especially children's) have all contributed representations and images of the countryside which have taken many different forms. One of the most popular media discourses of rurality is the representation of animals, both wild and domestic, and both usually given human traits of speech and the power of reason, such as Basil Brush (fox, *Basil Brush* – television programme) and Hazel (rabbit, *Watership Down* – novel). These images are obviously false but they do have the ability to influence people's perceptions of the role of animals within society because 'misrepresented animal characters have the capacity to inspire social practices that serve the best interests of their actual counterparts' (Anderson and Henderson, 2005, p. 303). This is most apparent when considering urban attitudes towards fox hunting, where the issue of cruelty to a wild animal is abhorrent, and 'Simons (2002) argues that instances of "strong" anthropomorphism (Basil Brush perhaps?) have the ability to challenge the way we think about the human-animal dynamic' (Anderson and Henderson, 2005, p. 303). These media-generated 'fantasy' images of animals are promoted regularly through the discourses of film and television and can profoundly affect human attitudes towards farming practices such as the rearing animals for meat: 'the realisation that animals are not like the characters from the stories which we are attached bears consequences' (Anderson and Henderson, 2005, p. 304). So, it could be argued that the media perpetuates an unrealistic, almost mythical image of animals, and 'when expectations engendered by misguided representations are not met, the way we relate to real animals – in all contexts – is affected' (Anderson and Henderson, 2005, p. 304).

However, the role of the media is not just confined to producing discourses of rurality within film and television. The news media are also responsible for 'framing perceptions of contemporary rural issues through reportage and commentary' (Woods, 2010, p. 215). Newspaper reporting of rural issues has tended to portray the countryside 'through the prism of the "rural idyll": as a safe, comfortable, tranquil, unhurried and untroubled place' (Woods, 2010, p. 218). However, this media

representation of the 'rural idyll myth' can sometimes have the effect of 'disguising the existence of rural poverty and class conflict' (Woods, 2010, p. 218). The British newspaper industry is centralised, 'with ten London-based national titles accounting for three-quarters of all daily newspaper sales' (Woods, 2010, p. 219). Included in these daily sales are the tabloids and the broadsheets. They tend to have a different readership, but it is the broadsheets which can be defined by either a mainly rural or urban readership. This is apparent when considering that '[t]he *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail* have a disproportionately large readership in significantly rural regions, whilst the readership of the *Guardian*, *Independent* and *Times* is more strongly urban' (Woods, 2010, p. 219). The journalists who report for these newspapers write from a distinct political left or right perspective, with the *Guardian*, *Independent* and *Times* being on the political left, whereas the *Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* come from a distinctly right-wing perspective. Inevitably when political affiliations enter into newspaper reporting, class loyalties are never far from the surface. This is evident when comparing the reportage of rural issues in the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Guardian*. There have been numerous calls to repeal the hunting ban recently and the *Telegraph* has run articles on the issue. In 2012, the newspaper's political correspondent reported an interview given by Alice Barnard, head of the Countryside Alliance, including her views regarding the reasons behind implementing the ban. Barnard remarked that '[t]he Act just hasn't worked, it wasn't based on evidence, it was based on a class attack by a party that thought it was getting rid of the toffs' (Barnard, 2010, n.p.). This article is clearly in support of the Countryside Alliance. The *Telegraph* is even active in sponsorship deals with the Alliance; in what is known as 'The Rural Oscars, The Daily Telegraph is sponsoring the best traditional business category' (Moore, 2002, n.p.). So, the article makes specific references to the idea that left-wing ideology ensured that the hunting ban became law, with the ban representing an attack on the middle and upper classes. Other articles in the *Daily Telegraph* have been just as scathing about left-wing attacks upon the rural population (namely middle-class farmers). Charles Moore commented that '[w]hen they won in 1997, Labour's class warriors thought they could carry all before them on their pet issue of hunting – and take it out on farmers into the bargain' (Moore, 2002). Equally, the *Guardian* is just as vociferous about what it sees as the 'hijacking' of the countryside by the middle class, much to the detriment of working-class urban dwellers. An article written in 2007 by a *Guardian* journalist focused upon the apparent disconnect between working class urbanites and the countryside

which, according to Bunting, is reinforced by the cultural capital of the middle classes: 'The urban disconnect is not an inevitable consequence of urbanisation and industrialisation. It is a peculiar English story of the power of the middle/upper classes' (Bunting, 2007). So, the purchasing power of the middle classes appears to have effectively prevented the poorer urban class moving from the inner cities to the countryside, and 'the hijacking of the countryside by the middle class who used both conservationist and environmentalist arguments to defend their self-interest is an untold story of the past century' (ibid.). This article in the *Guardian* certainly looks at the concept of class in the countryside from a typically left-wing perspective, accusing the middle classes of having 'used the planning system and, latterly, the housing market to create the kind of picture-book zones that cover large areas of Hampshire, Sussex, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. They have become gated communities in all but name' (ibid.). This is indeed a strong criticism of middle-class England which, when juxtaposed with comments made in the politically right leaning *Daily Telegraph*, reveals the complex attitudes of newspapers and other media towards countryside issues.

Alternatively, the news media have also been accused of focusing on urban issues whilst ignoring the countryside. This may 'help to reproduce discourses or rurality as much through silence as through active representation' (Woods, 2011, p. 35). So, it would appear that rural issues are marginalised both in newspapers as well as in other forms of news media. The countryside was generally regarded: 'as an essentially apolitical space' (Woods, 2010, p. 220). However, this began to dramatically change at the end of the twentieth century, largely due to the Countryside March and rally which took place in London on 10 July 1997. The march was triggered by a Member of Parliament in the recently elected New Labour government putting forward a Private Members' Bill to criminalise hunting with dogs. Suddenly the countryside became the focus of media attention and 'journalists came to see and speak to the marchers' (Hart-Davis, 1997, p. x). Newspapers were central to the reporting of what became known as the 'countryside in crisis' and the broadsheets in particular commented regularly upon rural issues: 'they carried news reports, feature articles and commentary pieces following the political struggles over hunting, the future of farming, as well as other issues affecting rural communities' (Woods, 2010, p. 216). As already discussed, the political stance of the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Guardian* is well-documented but when reporting on the rural protests, their comments in most cases did not differ significantly, particularly in terms of their sympathy for the rural marchers. As Ferguson,

for the *Guardian*, commented, '[t]he awkward fact remained that something was wrong with Britain. Even some London liberals began quietly to conclude that there might well be something faintly, well, illiberal about banning fox hunting' (Ferguson, 2002). Similarly, the *Telegraph* reiterated why the proposal to ban hunting was problematic, with Moore suggesting that '[t]he fact that we have now had five years of Labour government without the ban on hunting that most of the party's MPs want suggests that he [Blair] might like a way out if one could be found [and] if people took it into their heads to pursue a fox, it really didn't bother him that much' (Moore, 2002). So, it could be argued that the left- and right-wing news media reported the countryside protests in a similar way, both expressing sympathy for the rural marchers. However, this apparent media consensus evaporates when urban/rural divide between the poorer urban working class and the relatively affluent rural middle classes is reported: 'with a code of belonging – green wellies and Barbour jackets and the result is that the countryside becomes foreign territory for an urban working class population. London inner city children equate country with posh' (Bunting, 2007).

The news media were also largely responsible for influencing public opinion about the BSE crisis and the foot and mouth epidemic of 2001. Although BSE has been an identifiable disease 'which was first diagnosed in cattle in 1984' (Howkins, 2003, p. 218), it is possible that it was present before this date, due to the practice of 'the recycling of animal protein in ruminant feed [which] went unchallenged over decades' (ibid.). The resulting slaughter policy adopted by the government was intended not only to stop the spread of the disease but also to reassure the public that beef was safe to eat, as 'mainstream scientific opinion, the farming lobby and the government continued to insist that there was no danger of the disease passing from animals to humans' (ibid., p. 219). Sadly, of course, this was not to be the case, as the human form of BSE known as Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) became prominent, with 'the first known victim in May 1995' (ibid., p. 221). General public opinion about farming practices hardened during this period and newspapers in particular were responsible for apportioning blame which was often directed towards the government of the day as well as the farming community. The complete findings of the report into the crisis were reported by the *Guardian*, which stated that 'lack of communication, indecision and "team failure" were among the most serious shortcomings' (Meikle, J., 2000) So, the news media ensured that the government was vilified for its inactions and that farmers were targeted for their unacceptable farming methods, as 'BSE developed into a disaster

because of intensive farming, and the feeding of cow and sheep remains to cows' (ibid.). The growing economic plight of farmers did little to dispel the distrust of farming methods, and during the 'crisis the general (and overwhelmingly urban) public had little sympathy for the farming community' (Howkins, 2003, p. 224). However, public opinion about the disastrous foot and mouth outbreak in 2001 was strikingly different to that of the BSE crisis, mainly due to the government response to the epidemic, which was one of large-scale culling of both infected and uninfected animals. The news media reported extensively on the crisis and described the: 'Great Foot and Mouth Disaster of 2001 [as] one of the worst social and financial catastrophes to befall peacetime Britain' (Booker and North, 2001, n.p.). So, newspapers vehemently criticised the government which, in turn, hardened public attitudes and 'Within a few days the government had taken the unprecedented step of "closing down the countryside"' (Burchardt, 2002, p. 206). This decision had very serious repercussions not only for the farming community but also for the public, as the restrictions effectively barred people from visiting the countryside because 'thousands of miles of footpaths and many tourist attractions, remained closed' (ibid.). These contentious governmental policies ensured that the public was overwhelmingly sympathetic to farmers and: 'many people in both rural and urban areas continued to see the government's handling of the epidemic as exemplifying the unfair treatment of "the countryside" by an uncomprehending urban-dominated establishment' (ibid.).

#### **4.4 Conclusion: Urban and rural cooperation – the way forward?**

The terms, 'country' and 'city' have evoked very strong emotions for both rural and urban dwellers: 'Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation' (Williams, 1985, p. 1). However, these associations are perhaps more suited to describing the city and country of the Victorian Age than modern, twenty-first century Britain. This paper has revealed how the espousal of urban values can create sites of conflict when applied to country issues. The changes which have taken place within the countryside in recent decades are a reflection of the profound effects of political decision-making as well as significant in-migration from town to country. It could be argued that there is clear evidence of an urban/

rural divide within the contentious debate of foxhunting, but this issue is also resolutely defined along party political lines with both voters and politicians alike. The relatively recent phenomenon of 'counterurbanisation' has presented many difficulties for urban migrants seeking the elusive concept of the 'rural idyll'. The expectations of people moving into the countryside have often been centred upon a place of 'peace and quiet', a site of leisure, recreation, and a friendly community. However, for some this idealised view has not materialised, partly due to excessive noise from farm animals and machinery, as well as the realisation that 'that community, idealised in popular culture, barely existed, and where it continued it was increasingly hostile to the new countrymen and women' (Howkins, 2003, pp. 181–182). Yet, despite the disillusionment with rural life for some in-migrants, there are still significant numbers of urban dwellers moving to the country: 'Migration within England saw 75,000 leave cities in 2009–10 and another 61,000 in 2010–11. The biggest increases in rural populations have been found in villages which have grown by 6.7% – more than twice the rate of increase of some urban areas between 2001 and 2010' (Ross, 2013, p. 73). This represents a major increase in the urban-rural shift, ensuring that many rural dwellers have: 'been born and brought up in cities and could be considered as rural in virtue of one quality only: that they happen to live in the countryside rather than in a town' (Burchardt, 2002, p. 205). Therefore, for many living in villages today, there is no real connection with the land or farming, subsequently blurring the idea of a rural/urban divide when considering what is meant by a country 'way of life'. Indeed, some historians have already suggested that '[r]ural Britain had become thoroughly urbanised in terms of the cultural values which held sway there, and in terms of its socio-economic structure' (Burchardt, 2002, p. 205). It is also clear that the in-migration of the middle classes into the countryside has created a class divide between the resident rural working class and the more affluent urban newcomers. This, of course, has paralleled inflated house prices within villages, with local people (especially the young) being out-priced and left with no real prospect of buying within their local rural area. Not surprisingly, ensuing class conflicts between the 'new' rural and local inhabitants have created palpable resentment within rural communities.

The extent of the 'chasm' between rural and urban is subject to the shifting values and ideals of both city and country dwellers. There is now a rural population which is not easily defined as having a 'country way of life'. Many people live in the country but work in the town, the

proportion of rural dwellers working in agriculture has decreased dramatically due to profound changes in farming practices, such as the use of modern technology. The solution to social and economic harmony in the countryside should not just lie in the hands of politicians, whose policies may at times be destructive, as revealed in the handling of the BSE and foot and mouth crises. Perhaps the answer to greater cooperation in the countryside lies with the totality of the rural population, whether they live and work on the land or work in the city and live in the country. There is also a need for a dialogue between rural and urban: 'We need to harness the interest and enthusiasm of our majority urban population into a genuine desire to learn about our living, working countryside and all its many different parts' (Sissons, 2001, p. 166). The education of young people is a vital area for changing misconceptions about rural issues such as an understanding of where our food comes from, especially in terms of the rearing of livestock, as '[w]e no longer shop in small butchers shops with carcasses hanging in full view, but in large superstores where meat comes in cellophane wrapped packages that bear no resemblance to anything that might have lived. For the majority of families, their only contact with live animals is with pets' (Sissons, 2001, p. 157). Town and Country are, and have always been, inextricably connected, 'but in the sophisticated and diverse economy of late twentieth-century Britain myriad threads which linked the two were more numerous and complex than they ever had been before' (Burchardt, 2002, p. 204).

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# 5

## Performing the Rural through Game-Angling

*Tom Mordue*

### 5.1 Introduction

It is through the relationship between an array of characters playing out particular roles, and the spaces in which they perform, that ruralities are routinely produced.

(Edensor, 2006, p. 484)

This quotation captures neatly how rurality is a negotiated, relational thing which is brought to life in what we would consider to be the countryside by particular actors acting in particular ways. Game-anglers produce their rurality in this way, and this chapter focuses on how they, as a distinct set of rural actors, have produced and continue to reproduce rural Britain in ways that are consistent with the scripts, social relations, and embodied practices that have underpinned their sport since Victorian times. Moreover, examining how the seemingly innocuous activity that is game-angling combines the visceral and the social reveals much about society/nature interactions; and using a performative approach provides a useful way of understanding how social and natural forces can work together to produce an extremely popular participant sport that upholds and produces a negotiated sense and sensing of the rural.

Performance, as it is used here, is a dramaturgical metaphor that has gained much currency in the social sciences in recent years. Broadly, performance is deployed as a means of analysing human actions that are difficult or even impossible to fully apprehend through social constructionist approaches, which rely on textual and discursive representational analyses. That is not to suggest that social constructionism is

wide of its intended targets in this regard but it is to say that 'performativity', as Thrift (2003) calls it, is more concerned with thinking about the ways in which personal agency and social structures interact in an embodied as well as a discursive way. Social constructionist approaches emphasise how discourse represents and prefigures the reality of people's relationship with the structures, spaces, and environments within which they are located. However, such relationships are not only practices produced and reproduced through discourse but are also corporeal experiences that can be visceral, emotional, apparently illogical and subjective, wondrous, prosaic and seemingly pointless in ways that are not simply matters of social construction. Understanding these relations as performed encounters can help bridge the gap between analysing discourses that represent and prefigure how people engage their worlds and the embodied materiality of how people act and live their everyday lives.

As Wood (2010, p. 34) tells us, studying rurality in this way is about showing 'how discourses of rurality are enacted and routinized with material effects, and showing how practices and performances of rural actors in material settings contribute to the production and reproduction of discourses of rurality'. Thus the rural is something we produce through our thoughts, communications and actions, both planned and spontaneous, in and on rural space. Through telling what we do in rural spaces, especially in any consistent way, the triad of thought, action, and place comes together to produce routinized rural performances. Such performances can vary depending on who is doing the acting and scripting, why, and upon which rural stage the performance is set. Therefore, as Edensor (2006, p. 486) tells us, 'different rural performances are enacted on different stages by different actors: at village greens, farm-life centres, heritage attractions, grouse moors, mountains, long distance footpaths and farmyards and in rural spaces identified as "wilderness"'. In this case, the rural stages are rivers and streams that hold game fish such as trout and salmon, and the actors are game-anglers who fish for them as a sport and leisure pursuit.

It may be questioned: why choose one branch of freshwater angling instead of angling *per se*? Angling is not a single activity but a set of activities that are performed differently on different stages – e.g. rivers, lakes, ponds, canals, and the sea etc. – using different techniques and premised on differing sporting codes. Therefore, different angling codes produce varying ruralities, and as such it is not appropriate to lump all angling together in a singular analysis. That said, in terms of the embodiment of angling there seem to be elements shared across

different branches of the sport and this will be touched upon later. At first, though, the chapter introduces a social constructionist analysis of some key moments and representations in the history of game-angling, focusing particularly on significant discursive practices that are and have been key to the development and maintenance of its sporting codes. Then the chapter moves toward considering how game-angling, and angling *per se*, is embodied. In this regard, it considers how angling taps into certain human impulses that are primeval, and, for many, even spiritual. The chapter is not, and cannot, be an exhaustive insight into the performed rurality of game-angling, however it does offer something of a window through which the performance can be gazed and studied.

## **5.2 British game-angling as social construction**

Almost 10% (4.1 million) of all people over the age of 12 in England and Wales went fishing in 2006, and 20% (8.3 million) went freshwater fishing in the preceding 10 years. Indeed, freshwater angling accounts for 80% of all angling in the UK (Environment Agency, 2008). Men dominate the sport, though the number of women taking up angling is growing (Mordue, 2009). In general, angling requires a good degree of skill, practice, and knowledge before the angler can become successful on any consistent basis. The demand for angling knowledge means that there is a wealth of literature instructing practitioners on how to perform their branch of the sport skilfully and, as important, appropriately. This is particularly the case with game-angling, with attendant literatures replete with instruction and doctrine on what the sport is about and which repeatedly celebrates its history and the rural spaces where it is ideally practiced. Thus, to understand the importance and impact of such writing, one needs to understand how it tells of a history and geography that authenticate game-angling's sporting codes and produce the rural stages upon which those codes are performed most appropriately.

Up until the 19th century angling was a fairly catholic sport within which all fish and fishing methods were considered relatively equal. The Victorians changed this by delineating angling along the strict lines we have today that, broadly speaking, consist of game-angling and coarse angling, with the latter about catching freshwater fish other than salmonids, mostly by bait fishing. This delineation was, and still is, in a symbolic sense at least, fundamentally social in that game-angling became highbrow and coarse angling was to be practiced largely by the

lower echelons of society in the rivers, streams, canals, and lakes that the Victorian gentleman angler had little value for (see Mordue, 2009). By association, fish species such as chub, bream and roach became cast as being more lowly than trout and salmon, and the sport of catching them was labelled as 'coarse' by the 'gentlemen' classes to reflect its, and its practitioners', inferior status in relation to game-angling and its practitioners (see Lowerson, 1993). The concomitant to this is that the southern English chalkstreams and the salmon rivers of Scotland, where prime trout and salmon fishing could be had, were dominated by wealthy gentlemen [sic] who used social, cultural and economic capital to build boundaries that were, and still are in large part today, impenetrable to the masses. In economic terms, the best rivers were controlled by landed interests, and only the upper reaches of society were able to access such waters either through personal ownership or membership of elite syndicates and game-angling clubs. One notable club is the Flyfishers Club, which was established as a gentlemen's club in London in 1884, about which in 1894 Basil Field, the first club president, wrote in its 'Fortnightly Review':

The Club owes its origin to a widespread feeling that there is something in fishing beyond the mere catching of fish, or, as the legend of the Club book-plate tersely puts it, 'Piscator non solum piscatur.' ... It consists of over three hundred members, British and foreign, representing the House of Lords, the House of Commons, Art, Science, Literature, Medicine, Diplomacy, the Church, the Army, the Navy, the Bench, the Bar and the legal profession in general, Manufacture, Commerce, and Trade, wholesale and retail.

Field also recounts the Club's original prospectus saying that it is primarily a social club which aims:

To bring together gentlemen devoted to fly-fishing generally.

To afford a ready means of communication between those interested in this delightful art.

To provide in the reading-room, in addition to all the usual newspapers, periodicals, &c., catalogues, and books, foreign as well as English, having reference to fishing, particularly to fly-fishing so as to render the club a means of obtaining knowledge about new fishing places and vacancies for rods, and making it a general medium of information on all points relating to the art.

These passages are extremely telling, in that they indicate how the membership was in a position to create a systematic focal point for the production and reproduction of flyfishing, and in so doing prescribing and canonising its codes, culture, and the spaces where it could be best practiced. Flyfishing was thus elevated to an art and a science that could only be accessed in any authentic sense by those with the economic and cultural capital to do so. Specifically, this was about affording the specialist equipment needed, gaining access to the best streams, and being schooled in the art and science needed to master flyfishing's protocols, whilst appreciating its mysteries. Given this didactic element, writing about game-angling exploded in Victorian times, and its most famous pioneers were dedicated flyfishermen who had the sporting and social capacity to author, and authorise, what flyfishing was and how it should be practiced. Men such as F.M. Halford, G.E.M. Skues, and G. S. Marryatt rose to the top of the sport during this period through their ability to spend inordinate hours on southern England's chalkstreams practicing and experimenting, and then publishing their considerations in what are now seminal texts on flyfishing. The scholarly tone of such writings is evident in much game-angling writing today, as are the relative merits of these pioneers themselves discussed, dissected, and debated still. For example, on Halford and his approach, Lapsley (2003, p. 29) writes

Clearly he saw himself as a researcher, studying trout and their diets. He spent countless hours analysing the contents of trouts' stomachs and examining natural flies in minute detail.

Though not too impressed by Halford's dogmatism as a 'dry fly only' man, Lapsley (2003, p. 29) lauds some of Halford's contemporaries for their greater scientific pragmatism. For example, on Marryatt he says:

Rated by many as the greatest fly-fisher in England, Marryatt was a gifted entomologist and a great observer of nature with a remarkable capacity for thinking himself into the fishes' minds. He was pragmatic, experimental and innovative.

On Skues, Lapsley (2003, pp. 30–31) describes him as 'A Winchester scholar' who 'was a superb fly-fisher – observant, analytical, adaptable and inventive'.

Knowing game-angling and its rurality however, as the Flyfishers club's founding principles dictate, is not simply about learning the

technicalities of catching game-fish on fly but understanding that there is much more to game-angling, something mysterious and magical as well as artful and scientific. Even the very earliest books on angling conveyed such sentiments to their readers, seeing it as an holistic pastime that allowed retreat from the toils of everyday life whereupon the angler enters into communion with nature's wonders, and thus with God himself [sic]. Izaak Walton's seminal *Compleat Angler: Or, the Contemplative Man's Recreation* (1653) describes angling in this way and also angling not as an individualistic pursuit, as is so often the case in game-angling, but as one that should be enjoyed in the company of fellow anglers in their collective escape from urban life (Franklin, 2001). However, the predilection to contrast sublime rurality with profane urbanity in certain angling quarters holds as true today as it ever did, most particularly in game-angling quarters (see Paxman, 1995; Washabaugh and Washabaugh, 2000).

A notable modern tale that is shot through with this rural/urban dichotomy, and which has been popularised way beyond game-angling circles, is Norman McLean's fiction, *A River Runs Through It*. Published in 1976, the book tells the story of a pastor's and his two sons' love of flyfishing in the pristine trout streams of Montana. Though the setting here is not Britain, the flyfishing lore and codes espoused are those borne in Britain and transported to this US setting (see Mordue, 2009). That the tale and the values and aesthetics therein touched an Anglo-American cultural nerve is further evidenced by the fact that it was turned into a motion picture in 1992 which became a box office hit that was an Oscar winner. Indeed, Bratzel (2006) tells us that *A River Runs Through It* stimulated a fresh demand for flyfishing all over the United States. The book's first line sets the scene and the tone by saying: 'In our family there was no clear line between religion and fly-fishing' and that 'all first-class fishermen on the sea of Galilea were fly-fishermen and that John, the favourite, was a dry-fly fisherman' (Maclean, 1976, p. 1). The favourite son in the book is Paul, who personifies both the ills of modern urbanism and the beauty and holiness of pristine rurality. Paul is an outstanding flyfisher who finds peace when he is on the water but who also has a dark side in that he is addicted to gambling and is something of a womaniser in his everyday urban life. As Hesford (1980, p. 38) puts it: 'Within his art, he disciplines himself, lives by the rhythm preached by his father, makes himself worthy of grace', but away from the waters he 'entangled himself in affairs and in gambling debts'. Thus the war between good and evil is fought between the rural and the urban and Paul is in the

unfortunate position of embodying and performing both, depending on what he is doing and where he is.

As alluded to, such rural purism is strong in game-angling writing, and seems to be stronger the more upmarket the outlet for that writing. For example, the most widely read game-angling periodical in Britain, *Trout and Salmon* magazine, has an upmarket positionality but is carefully crafted, in that it is chock-full of articles and features that entice its readership with a mix of didacticism and lyrical reverence for the codes, history and geographies of its sport. The more upmarket *The Field* magazine, which is the oldest field sports periodical in the world, wastes little time on instruction. Rather, it is a publication for those already initiated in things rural, and when it features articles on game-angling it does so with a certain expectation of knowledge on behalf of the reader; instruction and tactics are certainly off the discursive agenda. For instance, in a piece entitled 'Arcadian Chalkstreams' (Rangley-Wilson, 2012, pp. 38–41), Charles Rangley-Wilson paints a verbal picture of what it is like to flyfish on such hallowed waters, and that the idyllic chalkstream

has the stream turning easy curves through wild meadow of orchids and sedge, withy beds weeping springs. Barn owls hover over the drier ground. Snipe shimmy away from damp, cattle-poached pools. The water flows brimful with the meadow and the margin between them blurred ... From where I stand on the rickety bridge that crosses the stream, I can see under the tussock on the far bank a brown trout rising every once in while ... In a minute I'll slide into the water and try to catch him.

(*ibid.*, pp. 39–40; in Mordue, 2013, pp. 109)

This picture of trout-fishing perfection is a careful assembling of natural things, yet it places them within a highly aestheticized, very human-centred stage. In a wave of patriotism, even English superiority, Rangley-Wilson goes on to suggest that there are many such scenes existing in reality in England. This, of course, *places* rural England as the spiritual as well as the geographical homeland of this ideal vision. On this, however, it is important to remember that, as the Victorians were cultivating the 'art' of game-angling and constructing its rural stage, massive industrial developments were underway in Britain that created a landscape which contrasted vividly with the Arcadian rurality depicted above. One significant development not only impacted greatly in driving forward Britain's industrial growth but also expanded the

capability of how and where the Victorian angler could pursue his [sic] sport, and that was rail transportation.

By the end of the nineteenth century rail transportation in Britain was established well enough to knit together a national network that drew the chalkstreams of southern England within daily commute of the capital, London (Mort, 1998). Train transportation also brought further-flung game-angling destinations closer to London's elite, as Berry (2011, p. 78) describes:

If one journey typified the travels of adventurous Victorians, it was the grand tour of Scotland. These were ... extended excursions for the moneyed gentleman hunter. Shotguns, servants and rod boxes with Pall Mall addresses would be loaded on to the north-bound trains, with stags and salmon waiting dutifully at the end of the line ... The Grand Tour was as much a part of a wealthy gentleman's life as his London club, his alma mater or his mistress.

While rail transportation was expansive for the leisured Victorian gentleman, it also carried a threat in that, as it expanded, it became more accessible to the masses. They too were becoming more mobile than before. Thus the ability to travel deeper into rural Britain was not enough for the gentleman game-angler to preserve their sport and the rurality of Arcadian exclusivity upon which it was staged. Other restrictions needed to be deployed. These came in a complex assembling of spatial regulations in terms of ownership and regulations of the best game-angling rivers and streams, the social makeup of flyfishing club membership, and the mystification of discourses about game-angling practice as something of a science and an art for those 'in the know'. Taken together, such tactics proved very effective at locking the unworthy out of the discourses and the knowledge that made game-angling as a sporting code, as they also ensured the preservation of the most treasured game-angling rural spaces for the initiated and the invited.

Today, market forces have to some extent expanded the tight exclusivity of game-angling. For example, the massive development of the transportation and communications infrastructure over the last century has helped to democratise travel further, providing more varied opportunities for those wanting to catch game-fish at home and abroad; game-angling equipment is now mass-produced to the extent that many can afford good quality tackle; there is also a proliferation of fishing books, magazines, and latterly TV, video, DVD, and internet

media, making game-angling knowledge more available and accessible; there are many purpose built game-fisheries in Britain available on a day-ticket basis; and the reclamation of many of Britain's rivers damaged and polluted by the industrial practices of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has provided further game-angling opportunities. Although it is true that these developments have expanded game-angling to make it more accessible, they have also diverted the masses away from the elite spaces and ruralities of game-angling, which are as unavailable as ever. For example, the best chalkstream waters on rivers such as the rivers Test, Itchen and Kennet in Southern England, where Halford et al. fashioned their sport, remain highly restricted. Access to such waters tends to be subject to one or more of the following: being prohibitively expensive, being available through a closed club membership basis only, and being available only through the invitation of riparian owners.

### **5.3 British game-angling as embodied practice**

That game-angling is socially constructed in the ways discussed above is clear. However, the raw appeal of game-angling, as with all angling, cannot be explained so readily by social constructionist accounts, because angling is quite a universal practice in that its appeal cuts across class and cultural lines as well as prescribed spatial and temporal barriers. We need to ask then, what is the nature of this appeal, and why do people go fishing when for all practical purposes they do not need to?

This is where it is important to consider the physicality and embodied nature of angling practice, and think about how it is performed in a non-representational way. Franklin (2001), for one, argues that angling, alongside hunting, is a much more profound form of leisure – and tourism – than any other because it demands such physical closeness to nature, where instinctive as well as intellectual and emotional responses are brought to bear in its doing. Indeed, angling can mean not only catching wild fish but killing them and eating them, suggesting that angling appeals to our 'killer ape' instincts. On this Bauer and Herr (2004) assert that both fishing and hunting are elemental behaviours ingrained in our genes through millions of years of evolution. While it is difficult to deny the elemental nature of angling in this way, what we are concerned with here is, as Franklin (2001, p. 67) argues, exploring the way nature is 'objectified or triangulated through the senses'. In this, the angler needs to engage the quarry and its natural habitat through physical sensation, touch, feel, and instinct; otherwise there

is no chance of success or enjoyment. Without these, angling is pointless. In more technical language, angling requires greater kinaesthetic, somesthetic, and proprioceptive sensual engagement than other rural activities because the angler has to enter the wild, watery world of the quarry on their terms in order to catch them.

This physicality is not only elemental, it is also deeply impassioned. What is more, a passion for angling is something of a recurrent theme in the angling literature as being a core motivation for those who fish for leisure and pleasure. In the game-angling literature stories of passionate encounters are often told where, for example, a catch of a lifetime has been had in some idyllic place or where overcoming particularly difficult natural circumstances resulted in success. Such narratives appear frequently because, as tropes, they speak to the wonderment, excitement and sheer exhilaration so many game-anglers experience when fishing, and indeed hope to experience when preparing for a fishing trip. Moreover, the passion for angling is most realised at the moment when a fish is caught. On discussing flyfishing for trout, Preston-Whyte (2008, p. 53), describes this impassioned moment:

At the moment of the strike, and while the fish is being fought, the fisher passes from a state of patient expectation to excited activity. Deeply buried primeval urges surface that glory in the lust for the hunt. Time comes to a standstill. The fisher inhabits a liminal space between the moments before the fish takes the hook until after its successful capture.

He goes on to say that the passionate involvement in game-angling, in particular fly-fishing, stems from

interweaving the sense of abandonment to an external force at the moment the fish strikes and during the fight for its life, with the delight and satisfaction afforded by casting virtuosity, hunting skills, and local environmental fish lore.

(Preston-Whyte, 2008, p. 53)

Therefore, the moment of the catch is both one of self-abandonment and universal connectedness in which the surfaced 'primeval urges' of the angler are electrified and unified with the natural world, but that unification has to be prepared for and anticipated in the social world from which the angler comes.

Talk of a passion for angling is also writ large in coarse angling, even though its literature, by and large, tends to be much more pragmatic and much less lyrical than so much writing on game-angling. One noteworthy attempt to relay this universal passion, and thus worth discussing here, is the BBC's seminal TV series, entitled *A Passion for Angling* (1993). The series crosses all freshwater angling divides, from coarse to game, and engages in certain evocative as well as provocative discourses on each. A book was also published from the series, and below is a review of the book written for Amazon.com that attempts to articulate its popular appeal. Given that the review is authored by a member of the public, it does so with an authority that only an 'ordinary' voice can command:

The book, and the film series, sets out to capture the very essence of fishing. That almost intangible thing that draws grown men [sic] to the river bank, in the manner and wonder of a small boy, every weekend. That undefineable, certain something that we as anglers all know, but can never put our fingers on. The book does not elucidate what this something is, to do so would be to destroy the magic, but it does show the beauty and wonder remains for years and years. Ephemeral, and elusive like many of the quarry species, but real and vibrant nonetheless.

If you are an angler, or you require to develop an understanding of a husband, boyfriend, or brother that fishes you could do worse than read this book. The answer is not there, but it will give you a measure of understanding as to what drives them. Maybe, the only way to really understand is to grip the rod yourself and follow the dream. To adopt and embrace the Passion for Angling.

(<http://www.amazon.co.uk/>, 2011)

This quotation proclaims that anglers are driven by something beyond explanation, and exclaims that while the book can give 'a measure of understanding', true understanding comes only from doing. By doing, we engage our bodies, minds and spirits in an act of angling that is both real and magic. This sits well with an embodied perspective, as it does with the writings of Walton and others who emphasise the combined spiritual and physical union with nature that angling affords. Furthermore, the necessity of doing indicates how each angling trip is a necessary upward step in angling mobility. With every expedition a

small 'rite of passage' is performed where immersion in nature coupled with real angling experience and learning come together to advance individual practice, and with that comes greater capacity to influence other anglers (Stebbins, 2007; Hannam and Knox, 2010). Indeed, and as already alluded to, through such practice and through the telling of its doing, game-angling's codes and embodied practices are choreographed, as are its hierarchies and structures, which are all with the angler every time he or she is lost to her own passionate, elemental and natural encounter at that moment a fish is caught.

#### **5.4 Conclusion: the rurality of game-angling**

As this article demonstrates, the performance of rurality in game-angling is at once social and natural. It has a particular history, a particular geographical disposition that favours the ruralities of the chalkstreams of southern England and the wild salmon rivers of Scotland. Furthermore, while not all of game-angling's practitioners will be middle and upper class, especially now that market forces have expanded the accessibility of game-angling, its mores and codes are those of its upper class pioneers and current day practitioners who dominate the sport and who play leading roles in visioning and constructing what the rurality of game-angling is all about. Nonetheless, regardless of these historical, geographical and social factors, game-angling, as with all other angling, touches the humanness of the angler in deeply fundamental ways that are neither edited nor altered by social factors. Elemental forces that are hardwired into the way anglers pursue their sport with passion and gusto and are surfaced at their most intense when a fish is caught and is fighting for its life. Therefore, the rurality of game-angling is both socially constructed and deeply embodied. It is highly choreographed on the one hand, but on the other it is instinctively felt in ways which are beyond description and representation here other than to say it is about connecting with nature through physically entering the idealised rural worlds of the game-angler. Moreover, and like him or her, it is about hunting down, capturing and sometimes killing the wild quarry that resides therein, but, and most importantly, doing so within the sporting codes set down since Victorian times. What Edensor (2006, p. 491) says on rural performances more generally holds true for the rurality of game-angling:

In the countryside, as elsewhere, distinct structures of feeling are wrought through a feel for the tasks at hand and for the environment

in which they are performed, as repetitive interaction with tools, space, humans and other animals is carried out.

To fully know the rurality of game-angling, then, is to learn its lore, repeatedly take up the fly rod and line and cast to the rivers and streams that sustain wild stocks of game-fish, and in catching a game-fish let oneself be caught.

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# 6

## Reviewing and Renewing Class: The Prospects for a Twenty-first Century Rural Class Analysis

*Jesse Heley*

### 6.1 Introduction

A practice that has alternately been at the centre and fringes of rural studies, class analysis continues to evoke heated debate regarding its ability to unpack socio-economic relations in the past and present. Taking the position that the concept of 'class' continues to have something useful to say, this chapter explores the evolution and place of class analysis in rural studies over the past 50 years. Calling attention to two identified 'crises', the chapter goes on to consider the ways in which rural class analysis is being implemented at present, and with particular reference to the influence of concepts of performance and embodiment. In so doing a strong emphasis is placed on the corporeal aspects of inter- and intra-class collaboration and contestation, whereby the personification and 'playing out' of moral codes and conventions constitute a determined basis for on-going tensions in contemporary rural communities. Finally, a number of suggestions are made regarding current and future gaps in the literature.

### 6.2 The first 'crisis' and the ascendancy of rural class analysis

In their introduction to *The Rural Sociology of the Advanced Societies*, published in 1980, Buttel and Newby drew explicit attention to what they determined as a plague of parochialism blighting rural sociology at the time. Allied to a longstanding concern with the relevance of the discipline, the pace and complexity of rural restructuring was such that scholars were, by some accounts, unable to keep up – either empirically or theoretically (for example Warner, 1974; Lowry, 1977). Precipitating

a crisis of academic faith, Buttel and Newby identified the root of the problem as a very basic, fundamental one: the very 'definition of what constitutes rural sociology in the first place' (1980, p. 3). Even at the time, this quandary was far from new, having persisted for decades. However, the late 1960s and early 1970s had played host to some strident challenges to the ontological status afforded to the condition(s) of rurality in many texts, and particularly within the pages of the journal *Rural Sociology*. Here critiques provided by the likes of Wakeley (1967) and Copp (1972) put paid to any notion of there being a concrete, *a priori* 'rural landscape', 'rural community', or 'rural economy'. Rather, they emphasised the role of the 'rural' as a short-hand, (albeit useful) rhetorical device, and highlighted the fallacy of the assumption that rural society operates according to its own unique set of processes, rules and circumstances (Pahl, 1966).

For Buttel and Newby (1980) a foundation and articulation of this crisis in rural sociology was the lack of a critical Marxist perspective at work across the discipline as a whole. This situation rendered the translation of ideas and arguments between empirical studies problematic, and rural scholars were, it was argued, collectively failing to adequately integrate their research into wider narratives on the restructuring of society and the state under the shifting conditions of advanced capitalism. As a means of overcoming this predicament, Buttel and Newby outlined a requirement for an increased level of theoretical complexity in rural studies, building on a small number of identified cutting-edge contributions to the discipline, and allied to the varied re-conceptualizations of political-economy then emerging in the social sciences.

These approaches included structuration, acknowledged as an important tool for unpacking the instrumental relationship between state apparatus, policy elites, and capital investment in agriculture (Hightower, 1973; Block, 1979). Dependency and internal colonialism were also introduced as potentially fertile conceptual devices, deemed capable of accounting for regional inequality and the polarization of rural economies and interests; not only in a developed/developing world context, but also in respect of the operation of 'core' and 'periphery' interests in advanced societies (Hechter, 1975; Fox, 1978). A third, potentially profitable, avenue of conceptual development concerned ecological politics. Writing at a time when the environmental movement was facing a critical backlash on the grounds that it might overwhelmingly represent the interests of a privileged few, environmental considerations were nevertheless taking root in debates on land use, leading Buttel and Newby to raise the prospect of progressive

reformation of agricultural practice and production in the mid-to-long term (Schnaiberg, 1975; Buttel and Larson, 1979).

Each of these research frameworks were taken forward over the subsequent decade, and collectively served the purpose of developing a comparative rural geography of advanced capitalism which had been largely absent. This was manifest in the shift to a political-economic approach to rural development, wherein analyses tackled the inter-related set of social, economic and political features of rural society in conjunction with each other, rather than as separate phenomena. The role of the State also became an important area for research. Rejecting the notion of a neutral state which serves the community as whole, the political-economic approach instead characterised the State as being semi-autonomous within the structural constraints of the capitalist mode of production. In this view, the State also becomes shorthand for the arena where different classes compete for political power, and the reconstitution of rural space is cast as a reflection of the interests of the dominant class (see Phillips and Williams, 1984).

Protagonists of rural political-economy included Howard Newby, whose studies explored the connections between property and social relations in rural East Anglia (Newby, 1977, 1979; Newby et al., 1978), and Ray Pahl, whose critique of the rural-urban continuum emphasized the importance of social class as the single most important influence on people's lifestyles and experience (Pahl, 1966, 1968). Whilst differing somewhat in their perspectives on the connection between social structures and geographical milieus, these texts played a fundamental role in driving forward the theoretical and methodological transition from rural sociology to a more expansive rural studies, and for identifying important research subjects (Hillyard, 2007). Set against the declining role of agriculture and the attendant reduction of power held by landed agrarian elites, the middle class emerge as a powerful force driving the reconstitution of the countryside and, therefore, as a cohort ripe for further investigation. On this point, Pahl specified that it is the middle class which maintained sufficient resources to be able to pick and choose places in which to live (1968, p. 270), and with which to shape and mould these communities in keeping with the 'village in the mind' (Pahl, 1965). On a more structural footing, Newby (1979) argued that declining agricultural job opportunities in many rural areas in post-War Britain had triggered a steady outmigration of the lower-class workforce, thus creating an opportunity for middle-class commuters, retirees and second home owners to settle in these parts of the countryside.

The seminal studies undertaken by Newby and Pahl placed class analysis at the centre of Anglo-American rural research throughout the 1970s and 1980s. During this period an interest in the middle class gave way to more nuanced accounts of the middle classes, and these commentaries did much to destabilize the popular assumption that a middle class (or any class) has a singular, unambiguous relationship with the countryside. In parallel to this critical shift, and from an operational perspective, analyses of rural social relations grew to encompass travel and leisure practises, alongside the traditional focus on employment and residential patterns. This point is made by Urry, who also highlights an increased awareness of the manifold ways in which the countryside is implicated not only in food production, but also in recreational pursuits and the politics of identity (1995, p. 205).

### **6.3 The rise of the service class**

Within this evolving disciplinary context, the so-called 'service classes' or 'new middle classes' have materialized as a foremost force for rural refashioning in a number of influential accounts of class politics in the (then) contemporary English countryside. Leading the way, Paul Cloke and Nigel Thrift challenged the hitherto preoccupation with issues of authenticity, and the tendency for portraying the theatre of rural social relations as a play-off between a 'local', indigenous working class and ex-urban middle class 'incomers'. Rather, they posited intra-class (as opposed to inter-class) conflict as a 'significant motive force in the economic, social and cultural constitution of rural areas' (Cloke and Thrift, 1987, p. 321), and identified the service class as being particularly important in this regard.

Neither the owners of capital nor blue-collar workers, the service class are called as such because they serve the interests of capital through the application of specialist skillsets and managerial abilities. Found in both private and public sectors, where they fulfil such functions as lawyers, accountants, teachers, and doctors, this subdivision of the workforce has been characterized by its rapid rate of numerical growth (Urry, 1995, p. 209). Coupled with relatively high levels of educational attainment, elevated levels of income, substantial autonomy within the workplace environment, good promotional prospects and relative residential freedom, these credentials, it has been argued, have enabled the service class to move into the countryside and become a formidable (if not dominant) force in local rural politics. This interest in the service class during the 1980s was in turn set against a background of wholesale

changes in the socio-economic circumstances of capitalist nations from the early 1970s. With much academic discussion revolving around the conditions of post-industrialist, post-Fordist, and post-modern society, research began to evaluate the mutable nature of rural economies in these terms. More specifically, a considerable number of scholars advocated a regulationist approach as a means of framing the reformulation of production and consumption regimes in the countryside (Marsden and Murdoch, 1990; Cloke and Goodwin, 1992; Goodwin et al., 1995; Goodwin, 2005).

The turn to regulation was bound up with a series of observations and accepted changes in some (but not all) rural localities in Britain; some of which have been allied to the growing influence of the service class in the countryside. Firstly, the decentralization of production facilities into rural locations, coupled with the general shift away from heavy industry to technological production, has created many managerial and technical jobs in rural localities. Secondly, the relocation of corporate administrative functions into rural areas has given rise to increased job related in-migration and new employment opportunities for relocated residents. This has been augmented by major improvements in information technologies and communications in the last quarter of the twentieth century, which have rendered remote working ever more viable. Thirdly, the cumulative expansion of public service infrastructure and outsourcing of many practical and administrative functions has led to the creation of many more service-class positions. This superfluity in employment prospects has, in turn, translated into a comparatively high level of residential freedom; leaving (some) elements of the service class relatively well able to pursue the 'quality of life' motivation which is living in the countryside (Woods, 2005b, pp. 85–86).

In their influential discussion of the impacts of shifting modes of regulation on rural localities, Cloke and Goodwin emphasized the inevitable (and often prerequisite) transformation of social and cultural conditions in tandem with economic restructuring (1992, p. 328). Drawing attention to the forced nature of some remodelling, for example through the political realigning of public-private sector relations via privatization and deregulation, they also call attention to process of change through persuasion. In particular, they cite the commodification and sanitized reproduction of rural landscapes and lifestyles, the use of the countryside as a theatre of consumption, and the pursuit of the (now) conceptually-ubiquitous notion of the rural idyll. Here they note that the reproduction of the old relies very much on the creation of new structures and coherences in rural space, and posit the service

classes as key agents in this process, particularly in the south-east of England:

These class fractions have appropriated the means of consumption by capturing key skills in the new divisions of labour in the service dominated labour markets of London. They have sought to colonize particular rural places which conform to their view of a rural idyll and they have either taken over or developed particular styles of rural housing in places within reach of other theatres of consumption. Having colonized they have dominated local politics and used their power to pursue their own sectional interests which represent very particular ideologies of what rural community development should be. Such ideologies include sentiments of patriotism, traditional familism, anti-development, pro-self-help and pro individual liberty. (Clope and Goodwin, 1992, p. 328)

The apparent influence of the service classes was such that Cloke and Goodwin regarded them as 'emergent historic blocs' in some regions of the countryside, such that they were effectively driving forward a discernible form of idyllic commodification as part of shifting modes of regulation in localized contexts. This viewpoint chimed with other accounts of the residential choices and lifestyle trajectories of the service class, and particularly those provided by Thrift, whose portrayal of this cohort hanging 'Laura Ashley' prints on cottage walls, investing in stripped pine furniture and collectively working to exclude developments that do not adhere to their tastes on the grounds of conservation (Thrift, 1987, p. 79) quickly took root in the rural studies viewfinder.

#### **6.4 The second crisis and the cultural turn**

Just as the concept of a collectively identifiable middle class was destabilized in the early 1990s, so too was the prospect of a broadly discernible 'service class' as a conceptual or empirical phenomenon. Hoggart et al. (1995), for example, pinpointed an evident uncertainty within the literature as to what the service class actually is, arguing that the vast range of situations and lifestyle choices adopted by such individuals made it unfitting to talk of a service class on the grounds of supposedly unified consumption practices. Far from having a solid basis in research, Savage et al. (1992) suggested that claims regarding the new middle class' attachment to the 'chocolate box' countryside

and their collective moves to promote and protect these landscapes were not based on a tranche of informed survey work, but rather upon loosely collected impressions. An opinion shared by Phillips (1998b) and Hoggart (1997), they stressed the evident incongruity in connecting the cultural significance of the countryside with the emergence of a service class elite. Clearly, the concept and ethos of the rural idyll pre-dates the emergence of the service class by some considerable margin, being manifest in the fabricated landscapes of the aristocracy and mobilized in opposition to the urban squalor of the industrial revolution (Howkins, 1986).

Where the service class could be usefully be characterised as willing and able to cooperate for the purpose of effecting particular types of countryside development (or not) in some scenarios, this was not necessarily to be expected. Reflecting on class politics in the countryside in the early 1990s, for example, Terry Marsden and colleagues (1993) were keen to point out the relationship between various actors and agencies in rural spaces differed to the extent that the social regulation of the UK's countryside was consistently incoherent:

The new rural middle class have exhibited, too, a curious relationship with the Conservative Party. They are supportive of its national policies and governments, as reflected in the results of the past four general elections (1979, 1983, 1987, 1992), but less reliable in their commitment to it in local and European elections. Although infrequently prepared to support the Labour Party, rural voters often elect candidates from other parties who may be conservative in outlook but not convinced of New Right policies for their areas ... Throughout southern and eastern England this bit deep into Tory majorities. The increasingly amenity-minded middle classes were revealed as being both highly fractured and unevenly reconstructing their rurality around different collections of positional goods.

(Marsden et al., 1993, pp. 183–84)

This passage reflects the central position of the new middle class in accounts of rural restructuring in the early 1990s under Thatcher, but also the growing acceptance of the lack of a singular politics to match (Peck and Tickell, 1992).

While evidence indicated that the service class could be providing a significant proportion of the membership of such bodies as local councils, rural planning agencies and environmental pressure groups, it does not follow that they were perennially acting in unison to achieve

specified goals. Certainly, it was deemed likely that the full spectrum of institutions active in rural politics contain elements of the service class(es):

In reality, the numerical strength of the service classes has grown at the same time as (some) commentators report their increased fragmentation, so commonality of actions and values has lessened. Quite apart from personal or family interests, considerations of an organizational, community and friendship kind detract from a direct relationship. Organizationally we see this in competition between institutions, in conflicting goals for decision spheres and the priorities of those with a similar embeddedness in a locality. This makes for a complexity that mitigates against unified assumptions over who controls countryside change.

(Hoggart, 1997, p. 258)

For Hoggart, the sheer number of disparate and complex agencies working towards countryside change made it injudicious to consider a service class as being dominant at a local level; let alone the regional and national scales. Raising significant questions for rural class analysis, this came at a time when a growing cross section of researchers were coming to appreciate other social relations such as race, gender, and ethnicity as being of equal or greater importance in the politics of everyday rural life (see, for example, Buller et al., 2005). Some accounts went further and questioned the ongoing relevance of traditional class analysis as a tool for exploring contemporary social relations across the board (see Miller, 1996a).

Against this critical backdrop – or, indeed, backlash – class analyses had all but disappeared from rural studies by the mid-1990s. In its place debate focused on such subjects as sexuality, otherness, gender, race, performance, and the relational construction of society and nature, seemingly leaving studies of class formation, in the words of Cloke et al, ‘to be something anachronistic, best left to a few loony quantifiers and some sad, old social critics’ (1995, p. 220). Elsewhere, Miller (1996a, 1996b) claimed that rural studies was at a metaphorical crossroads: one path being the continuation and development of political economies of the countryside, the other being constituted of postmodern narratives on rural space. A bold claim, it was, nevertheless, the case that postmodernist thinking and poststructuralist approaches had come to dominate sociological accounts of rural change, and did much to transform the praxis of rural studies.

This change of course came at a time when the rapid refashioning of the economic order in western society was causing widespread misgivings on the ability of class analysis to keep pace and remain relevant. Tied up with the so-called 'cultural turn' in the social sciences, this argument is put forward by Shucksmith, who notes that a preoccupation with occupation as the key axis of inequality had become highly problematic given the restructuring of society around differences in consumption, as opposed to production (2012, p. 381). This is articulated in the statement that 'you are what you do' has become 'you are what you buy', a transformation in mind-set which has arguably occurred in western economies (after Ransome, 2005). Furthermore, the long-standing analytic focus on class consciousness among the working class was becoming increasingly problematic given the growing affluence of certain echelons of this cohort, while predominant depictions of the service class as uniform and politically dominant were now largely cast aside on the grounds of reductionalism (Shucksmith, 2012, p. 381, after Ransome, 2005).

Faced with these seemingly insurmountable problems, class analysis all but disappeared and the turn to culture effectually left material and economic conditions absent from many surveys undertaken by social scientists (Reay, 2011, p. 1). However, class did not completely disappear from rural studies, and a number of researchers continue to advocate the value of class analysis; albeit in a substantially revised fashion.

## **6.5 The resurgence of (rural) class analysis**

Among that limited number of scholars responsible for carrying forward and cultivating class analysis in rural studies over the past 20 years, Mark Shucksmith (1990, 2000a, 2000b, 2012; Shucksmith and Chapman, 1998), Martin Phillips (1993, 1998a, 1998b, 1998d, 2001), Clive Potter, and Mark Tilzey (Potter and Tilzey, 2005; Tilzey, 2006; Maye et al., 2012) have been foremost. Of the opinion that class analysis still has something to say about the processes of social change in the countryside, these authors have challenged the constructions of political-economism and poststructuralism as being profoundly incompatible. Conversely, they highlight the interconnections between political-economic and poststructural approaches in their work and, in so doing, have made a robust case for a 'third way' (Phillips, 1998b, 1998c) which combines an understanding of the relevance of class as an expression of exploitation in society with issues of recognition, identity, and cultural difference.

With an empirical focus on agri-environmental change, the work of Potter, Tilzey, and associates has developed a form of analysis which takes on distinctly poststructural edge. Considering the historical development of agricultural policies as pursued by the WTO and EU, they position the reconstitution of the neoliberal agenda as a political project variously proposed and opposed by discrete classes and class fractions. Of a more distinctly sociological bent, Shucksmith and Phillips draw heavily on the work of Mike Savage and associates (Savage et al., 1992, 2001, 2005; Savage, 2000, 2002), who have spearheaded a new manner of class analysis which is strongly influenced by Pierre Bourdieu's take on class, and his 'theory of practice'. Specifically, Bourdieu's theoretical position is cited as having the potential to overcome two of the key problems associated with post-war class analysis; namely, those of class consciousness and individual agency:

[I]n contrast to Marx and Weber, Bourdieu expects class-consciousness to be lacking; it is the very non-recognition of the power and significance of class which leads to deep rooted and enduring inequality ... In addition, Bourdieu's theory of practice transcends the dualism of structure and agency inherent in earlier class analysis, while offering a more fluid, reflexive notion of class as manifested in culture, identities, lifestyles and everyday life.

(Shucksmith, 2012, p. 382)

Shucksmith, then, establishes the added value of Bourdieu's critical stance for class analysis in terms of moving beyond a narrowly materialist appreciation of inequality and power. This is achieved through reference to different forms of capital, inclusive of: the ability to 'consume' artistic forms in such a way that demands skills of appreciation derived principally from family and educational background; symbolic power, which leads on from cultural capital and is derived from the power of certain cadres to legitimize these 'natural' tastes; and economic capital (Bridge, 2004, p. 60).

It is the circulation of these forms of capital which constitutes the power relations at work in social space, and determines an individual's position in a class structure. Crucially, the class structure does not exist on 'paper', but is constantly being negotiated through the process of 'socialization'. This is to say that dominant modes of thought and experience are internalised by people according to their everyday situations or 'life-worlds'. In this way, actors do not tend to consciously reflect on their behaviour, but instinctively know what actions are appropriate

in a given situation. This is not, however, to suggest that these actions are without purpose. On the contrary, Shucksmith connects actions with the pursuance of goals and interests, which are in turn tied to the varying forms of capital and the inter-generational transfer of these assets (2012, p. 383, after Bourdieu, 2005). These strategies tend to come together in persistent combinations, inherited dispositions, and conditioned movements, which are together referred to by Bourdieu as 'habitus'.

The notion of habitus has been widely taken up by sociologists, and by geographers in particular, who have – to paraphrase Bridge – routinely and sometimes lazily deployed the model as a means of explaining culture in socio-spatial contexts (Bridge, 2004, p. 61). A prominent case in point being literature on gentrification, which initially connected the appropriation and modification of select city neighbourhoods with the rise of a new franchise of middle class urbanites, inspired by the discursive ideal of 'loft living' (see, for example, Jager, 1986; Zukin, 1989; Podmore, 1998). More recently the concept of gentrification has been applied in rural studies, where it has been utilised as a framework for understanding the recomposition of the rural class structure, and the restructuring of the local property market such that lower income households are displaced. Studies of this type have been carried out by (amongst others) Nelson and associates (Nelson et al., 2010; Nelson and Nelson, 2011) and Darling (2005) in the United States; Bryant and Pini in Australia (2009); and Stockdale (2007, 2010), Smith (Smith and Phillips, 2001; Smith, 2002, 2007; Smith and Holt, 2005) and Phillips (1993, 2002b, 2004, 2005; Phillips et al., 2008) in the United Kingdom.

As is made clear by this string of references, Martin Phillips is among the more prominent (and prolific) academics working in the area of rural gentrification and, as discussed previously, has done much to put class analysis back onto the rural studies agenda. Akin to Shucksmith, Phillips takes ample inspiration from Savage, but is more cautious in respect of the value and application of Bourdieurian theory to class analysis. Appreciative of the debt owed to Bourdieu in terms of reinvigorating debates on social stratification and inequality, Phillips nevertheless considers the notion of cultural capital as the 'missing link' between class and culture as being something of a false turn. Alternatively, he draws more directly on the work of Michèle Lamont (itself a largely sympathetic critique of Bourdieu's output) regarding the relationship between self-identity and class relations.

Taking a lead from critiques by Dreyfus and Rabinow (1993) and Cloke et al. (1995), Phillips (1998b) underscores a problematic, tautological

position evident in many Bourdieurian class analyses: namely, that that all human activity revolves around the pursuit of capital, and that capital is defined as being whatever people pursue. Therefrom, Phillips is drawn to Lamont's (Lamont, 1991; Lamont and Fournier, 1992) take on class, which furthers a comparatively subtle take on the relationship between self-identity and class formation. Determining a need to actively connect these processes, Lamont highlights the importance of symbolic boundaries – i.e. the types of lines people draw when they categorise people – and high status symbols – i.e. the markers people make use of in their social evaluations. Additionally, and in reference to boundary construction, Lamont argues that the connection between class identity and class formation is neither straightforward nor automatic, but frequent and often without intention.

The 'culture' a person holds, then – is more than the cumulative product of interests, resources and group structure, but also an expression of the 'cultural resources' made available to them (Phillips, 1998a, p. 421). These resources take the form of collective values, identities and knowledge, and are the result of life histories and experience as played out, manipulated and passed on within the everyday social environment. Disparaging of the tendency among sociologists to over-emphasise the importance of socio-economic factors in relation to 'moral signals', Lamont offers a three-tiered 'boundary approach' to issues of difference. Differentiating between (i) moral boundaries concerning such characteristics as honesty, work ethic, and integrity; (ii) socio-economic boundaries centred on indicators of wealth, power, and professional success; and (iii) cultural boundaries drawn on the basis of education, intelligence, tastes, and the of command culture, Lamont maintains that – in many situations – moral and cultural values outweigh economic status symbols. Here for example, and in a rural context, we might think about the principles of 'patriarchy', 'stewardship' and 'nobility' which, alongside property, were all crucial aspects of the discourse of the 'Country Gentleman' and equally vital in securing the political ascendancy of the landed elite in the pre-nineteenth century British countryside (Woods, 2005a).

Common to the relatively recent reappraisals of the (potential) of rural class analysis, as provided by Phillips and Shucksmith, is the recognition that different forms of capital are neither universally recognised nor equally valued across society. Furthermore, the notion of consumption as a motivational force behind such processes as buying a 'place in the countryside' is positioned within these texts as a

manifestation of lifestyle and lifecycle-specific performances. In keeping with this culturally informed, 'performative' view of group formation, class becomes the practical context in which collective action occurs, and acts as a shared comprehension of how resources, attitudes and attributes are dispersed and utilised. A significant re-think in terms of how we approach (rural) class analysis and restructuring, it reflects a recent trend within rural studies where researchers have moved beyond perceptions and representations of rural life, and are attempting to grasp the ways in which rurality is dynamically constituted and 'played out'.

## **6.6 Performing class**

Embracing the performance in rural studies has allowed researchers to move beyond thinking of the countryside as a spatially fixed entity, and to focus on the ways 'in which rurality (or particularly ways of being rural) is embedded in social practices' (Woods, 2005b, p. 302). It is important to be mindful, however, of the fact that transition has neither prompted nor required the abandonment of representation as a pivotal component in the production of rural space. Rather, efforts to comprehend how different communities define and 'know' the rural have become more refined through reference to the interactions between lay discourses and embodied practices of cultural exchange (Heley and Jones, 2012).

Early advocates of a performance-orientated approach included Little and Leyshon, whose paper 'Embodied Rural Geographies' (2003) makes a comprehensive case for the consideration of the body as a platform for better appreciating social relations in the countryside. Focusing on the relationship between changing femininities, masculinities and the performance of sexuality, they forcibly argue that a deeper exploration of embodiment in rural contexts provides a vital avenue through which to address the construction and reproduction of identity, and thus inform 'key debates on social exclusion, marginalization and, indeed, the cultural construction of rurality' (Little and Leyshon, 2003, p. 269). In this respect, Little and Leyshon use action as a frame of reference for the relationship between subjectivity, identity and agency, and (after Dewsbury, 2000; Gregson and Rose, 2000) position space as a manifestation of performance and articulation of power. By extension, they illustrate the 'centrality of the space of the rural (and the meanings associated with such spaces) to bodily performance,' whilst acknowledging

that 'the material practices of the body are ... important in the creation of rural space itself' (Little and Leyshon, 2003, p. 258).

Set against this conceptual backcloth, a plethora of studies have addressed the manifold relations between rurality and performance. These include research on the associations between rural landscapes and the fit and healthy body (including Edensor, 2001; Little, 2012), and the physicality of extreme sports and adventure tourism in 'wild' locations (including Cater and Smith, 2003; Gyimóthy and Mykletun, 2004). The embodied countryside has also been examined in the context of gendered and sexual identities, and academic enquiries have, for example, explored conceptions of masculinity and femininity in relation to agriculture (including Liepins, 2000; Campbell et al., 2006; Norman et al., 2011), and experiences of and attitudes towards homosexuality in rural communities (inc. Bell, 2000; Little, 2007).

In spite of this growing interest in experiential ruralities, there remains a relative paucity of critical considerations of the body in the everyday social spaces of the rural community. A deficit identified by Little and Leyshon (2003, p. 265) and again by Woods several years later (Woods, 2005b, p. 302), a limited amount of work has been undertaken with this purpose. Significant here is further work by Tim Edensor, who has discussed the differentiated ways in which people dwell, work and socialize in (rural) spaces in the manner of quotidian performances that produces 'serial sensations via daily tasks, pleasures and routines' (Edensor, 2006, p. 491). Elsewhere, Carolan (2008) has used a case study of Iowa farmers and their relationships with the countryside as a springboard for subverting the mind/body dualism, arguing for a 'more-than-representational' understanding of (rural) social milieus. Taken together, these contributions highlight the value of performance-orientated research in rural studies which recognize the significance of social interactions and communal practises to the constitution of community, and of embodied practises in the process of individual and collective identity-formation (see also Woods, 2010). Inclusive of gender, sexuality and ethnicity, this also embraces class as something which is actively produced and reproduced. However, to date, a limited amount of work has dealt explicitly with the performative orchestration of class in rural communities from these conceptual standpoints.

Those papers which have implicitly or explicitly pulled together class and performance together in research on rural social change include Willis and Campbell's (2004) study of the 'chestnut economy' in France. This space, identified as standing aside from mainstream agrarian spheres, is inhabited by participants who are drawn into a set of

practises that have a distinctly contingent quality, and which constitute the alternative lifestyle as lived by a collective referred to as Néos:

It is their day to day activities that anchor them, that sustain them, and that significantly determines the social meaning of the landscape. The Néos have become the key producers of patrimoine. They are the ones who rebuild ruined farmhouses in authentic fashion, and they are the ones who carry the vision of patrimoine.

(Willis and Campbell, 2004, p. 327)

As the principal manufacturers of 'patrimoine', this collective identity is centred on renovation, small-scale farm production, an informal local market and economy, deployment of artisan skills, and the creative manipulation of available subsidies and benefits. Moreover patrimoine is identified very determinedly as embedded in discursive contexts, and as a clear example of 're-inscribing rural space with a new set of (old) meanings' (2004, p. 320). As such, Willis and Campbell's description of this phenomenon refers extensively to the mobilization of historical, symbolic and moral traits, and the deployment of economic capital.

Gosnell and associates' (Theobald et al., 1996; Gosnell and Travis 2005; Gosnell et al., 2006; Gosnell and Haggerty, 2007) more recent studies of ranch land ownership in the American North West also focus on the varied relations of capital and the processes of symbolic exchange within rural communities. Charting a growth in large ranch purchases by 'amenity buyers,' this body of research calls attention to a narrative of 'city slickers' buying into rural space for the purpose of 'getting back to the land' and 'living the cowboy dream,' without the need for profit. Greatly concerned with ecological sustainability and preservation, and employing financial, intellectual and social capital to these ends, the actions of these 'new ranchers' are set in contrast to the motives of traditional ranchers, with the tension between these user groups construed as one of a clash between post-productivist and production-orientated self-identities.

These themes are also picked up in a British context in Heley's considerations of gentrification (Heley, 2008, 2010), which highlight the selective, practical adoption of the discourse of the 'Country Gentleman' among a select group of affluent, middle-class in-migrants. Aspiring to the lifestyle of the old landed elite, this 'new squirearchy' purchase substantial properties, participate in shooting, horse riding and hunting, engage in hobby farming, and buy into a country aesthetic through donning wax jackets and tweeds and driving prestigious four-wheel

drive vehicles such as Range Rovers. Beside material and leisure markers, this cohort is also a visible presence in community events, and displays paternalistic attitudes through acts of patronage and sponsorship, although this falls short of the obligatory duties allied to the traditional rural upper class. Indeed, and on this basis, moral codes concerning patriarchy, loyalty and longevity have been rhetorically employed by the 'old guard' to set apart the ancient regime from a disruptive influence brought forth to the countryside by financially robust, but culturally suspect, *nouveau riche*.

Of all those spaces which provoked differentiated, class-orientated performances in Heley's, the village pub is foremost. In this arena, acts of speech and specific turns of phrase demarcated members of the New Squirearchy from other residents of Eamesworth. In this way pub 'locals' – a group of regular drinkers with longstanding family ties with the community – differentiated themselves from members of the pseudo-gentry, middle-class incomers, through the use of particular linguistic labels. Including 'plastic farmers' and 'wannabe-Hooray-Henries', these tags operate along both cultural and moral axes referring as they do to material conditions (for example, owning agricultural property) and the appropriation of an identity which does not rightly belong to them (i.e. is one historically conferred on those who derive their income and status through agriculture, as opposed to business). Extending out of the 'Six Tuns' pub, other identified acts of boundary-drawing included choice of vehicles and styles of dress (such as Range Rovers and tweed), participation (or not) in rural sports and pursuits (including shooting and hunting), and sponsorship of local events (including the annual village fête), the coming-together of these elements constituted the basis upon which people were associated with 'gentrification' or not. They also served as a frame for political sentiments more generally, and as a credo for conflict and tension in the village. In this way the working and lower-middle class collectively defined themselves in opposition to the presence and affectations of a New Squirearchy, whose members were classified as brash incomers of dubious taste and conscience, and whose activities were in need of being monitored (for example, in regard to planning applications and estate management) by those who were seemingly more grounded in country life.

In focusing on dissonant moral codes, class consciousness and the varied appropriation of rural spaces, Heley's study draws upon Martin Phillips' work and also resonates with Michael Mayerfeld Bell's eminent text, *Childerley* (Bell, 1994). Focusing on the day-to-day lives of those living in and around a small village outside of London, Bell

demonstrates the ways in which villagers interweave their country and class identities; and how they think, talk and act class (1994, p.105). Notably, Bell's text gives prominence to the role of four general measures used by Childerleyans when considering their own identity, and that of other residents: Localism, referring to the length of time people have lived in the village; ruralism, concerning the amount of time people have resided in rural locations and undertaken a 'rural job', such as farmer or labourer; the measure of countryism, pertaining to a person's knowledge of and participation in country activities such as hunting and botany; and communalism, which corresponds with personal ties to the community through commitments to the church, local council, sports teams etc (1994, pp. 103–4). Taken together these measures are used to distinguish 'proper' working-class villagers from moneyed, middle-class incomers, and serve as a moral basis for understanding the associations and activities of these differentiated cohorts (for example, in which pub one drinks, and with whom).

Elsewhere, Cynthia Duncan's (1996) work on experiences of poverty in rural Texas also brings together class and performance. More specifically, this study allies the persistence of inequality with the allocation of opportunities and the exercise of moral judgements. Demonstrating the practical basis through which indigence continues across generations in the same places, Duncan shows how upward mobility is (or at least was) effectively blocked by the regional education system and employment structures. As such, the elite are characterized as effectively working together for the purpose of denying opportunity to elements of the lower classes on the back of a cultural perspective which holds that 'poor families pass on bad values and norms of behaviour that prevent successful participation in mainstream social institutions' (Duncan, 1996, p. 103).

## **6.7 Conclusion: future directions in rural class analysis**

In light of the analyses provided by Bell (1994) and Duncan (1996), then, it would clearly be inappropriate and inaccurate to suggest that the critical connection between class and the performance of contested moral, socio-economic and cultural discourses is anything particularly new. However, and common to both studies, there is little by way of reference to theoretical debates on embodiment. Given the extent to which these debates have burgeoned in the interim period, it follows that there is considerable potential for further studies which marry considerations of class collaboration and contestation in the countryside

with a more contemporary, conceptually-nuanced appreciation of performance. What is certain is that class analysis continues to be relevant in rural studies, and that theoretical melioration is possible insofar as overcoming the dualistic choice between political-economism and post-structuralism, as identified by Phillips (2002a).

Some, however, will inevitably remain unconvinced by these developments and will hold with the view that class theory and analysis have had their day, and they are – after Pakulski and Waters – ‘proving impotent in undertaking the very task for which they were originally constructed: discovering the “rules of motion” of society and manipulating them to improve the human condition’ (Pakulski and Waters, 1996, p. 147). Proponents of this perspective refer also to the apparent death of class ideologies, the withering of class politics and the rise of a ‘post-class capitalism which defies all the predictions of class theory, social criticism and liberal apologia’ (ibid.). And yet, class remains present in the public psyche – if not more so than in preceding decades, when such critiques were ascendant (see Crompton and Scott, 2000). In Britain, this can be attributed in part to a vastly different socio-economic landscape, where financial austerity has diminished the capacity of successive governments to address problems of universal healthcare, affordable housing, low wages and job security. A point made by Owen Jones (2012, p. 245), this failing has sparked a renewed interest in the experiential geographies and social rhetoric surrounding the working classes, and in the growing gap between the working class and middle class in terms of power, resources and ability for collective action (for example Mount, 2004; Holmes and Manning, 2013).

Commentaries such as these demonstrate the meaning and value of class for research, and the shift to a relational model of class analysis. This comes with the realization that it is not possible to determine how classes form as a social collectivities on the grounds of changes in labour markets and housing markets, nor that it is helpful to argue that there are a definite number of classes with clear boundaries around each (Savage et al., 1992, p. 211). Moving from what Klaus Eder refers to as ‘hierarchal’ model to a ‘network’ model of class relations, this allows us to make sense of the ‘interdependencies between classes, the dependency of the exploiter on the exploited, the ruler and the ruled, the cultured and uncultured’ (Eder, 1993). In taking these steps, researchers have ensured that class has returned to the mainstream of rural studies debate, and have given class analysis renewed credibility.

However, there is a danger that old mistakes will be repeated. Put simply, there is the risk that a new rural class analysis will revolve around

middle-class experiences, and that there will remain a critical lacuna of studies of upper- and lower-class milieus in the countryside. Notable exceptions to this include Roberts and Schein's study of privilege, wealth and horseculture in rural central Kentucky, which has arguably become a privately-owned landscape created by and for elites through protection schemes which advocate the 'rural gentility so favoured by super-rich thoroughbred farm owners' (Roberts and Schein, 2013, p. 148). Elsewhere, Michael Woods (2013) has considered the refashioning of the countryside through the engagements of a transnational super-rich, whereby the shifting geographies of this clique within the global countryside are tied to corporate and personal networks, and influenced by the cultural cachet of the pseudo-aristocratic lifestyle. By comparison, there are few studies which directly refer to the experiences of the non-urban working classes. As such and without this part of the picture being adequately filled in, the project of developing a relational class analysis of rural society will be severely hampered.

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**Part III**  
**Policy Intervention, Solutions,  
and Lessons for Managing Rural  
and Peripheral Areas**

# 7

## Governing Sustainable Tourism: European Networked Rural Villages

*Frank Go, Maria Della Lucia, Mariapina Trunfio, and  
Umberto Martini*

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the relationship between the rural political economy and the development of tourism, including new media, as a policy intervention and potential solution for the socioeconomic development of rural and peripheral areas. Academic attention in the field of rural tourism has been largely self-referential. The field remains particularly focused on definitional issues, land and access management, and entrepreneurial development, as opposed to the broader rural context within which tourism serves as a policy intervention aimed at rural economic and social regeneration. From this current state, we try to draw lessons for governing rural and peripheral areas across the boundaries of diverse stakeholder communities, each with its distinctive identity, agendas and interests. Information and communication technologies and high speed passenger transportation have enabled managers to redraw a multitude of boundaries, simultaneously – a process which is accompanied by new forms of regulation, the connection of spaces and emerging patterns of poly-inclusion. At the root of poly-inclusion is the ‘issue [of] whether humankind should encourage alienation or participation’ (Go and Fenema, 2006, p. 71).

Poly-inclusion patterns involve complex processes at the multi-level, multi-sectoral and multi-actor scales, where economic institutions and networks of power (Massey and Jess, 1995) govern social, spatial-environmental and political affairs and by extension tourist markets. Most European countries have an Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) and other multi-actor networking systems. But review shows that these remain often fragmented and irresponsive towards new challenges and opportunities, many of which emerge from the conflicts

that exist between the imperative for sustainability and the world's increasing demand for food, water and energy. Within this framework we try to advance theory by comprehending the failures of different actors and sub-systems to connect with each other, exchange knowledge, and engage in collaborative learning. Firstly, by looking at sustainable tourism as a new actor entering the rural and peripheral domain bringing with it new values, solutions, and opportunities, particularly the formation of social capital contributing to 'creative destruction'. Secondly, by extending governance theory, thereby putting emphasis on the interrelations between space and market for shaping stakeholder engagement in boundary-spanning and intercommunity knowledge processes. Heightened rivalry among economic clusters characterised by regional specialisation has led to state fragility and governance failures at the socio-cultural and political levels, and acts to widen the economic and spatial disparity further between the core and periphery; thereby reinforcing vicious cycles of decline in rural areas, resulting in poverty, economic dependency, and social exclusion. This is in stark contrast to the interconnected world cities, which compete with each other to attract transnational corporations as purchasers of local labour. National governments also compete in this with the usual tax breaks and other set-up subsidies. Through these dialectical processes a new global network matrix of unevenly developed cities and peripheral rural areas has created economic imbalances at the national scale, driving national population migration patterns and making processes of decline of national hinterlands more pronounced. The outcome is a vicious cycle of extractive political and economic institutions (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013): a face of the rural idyll perceived as a 'siloe heritage destination', highly likely to harm its local economy. Seen through the 'new rural paradigm' lens, the issue of agricultural diversification into tourism in pursuit of a sustainable development approach (Inskip, 1991; Swarbrooke, 1999) is addressed, hinting at questions of governance and institutionalisation building.

This chapter is organised as follows. Section 7.1 introduces the theoretical background, treating Deficiencies of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and place-branding research, Challenges for sustainable tourism, and Governance: failures, opportunities and approaches. Section 7.2 elaborates these theoretical constructs within a cross-border context of the case study of the European Project 'Listen to the Voice of Villages,' using social capital as an analytic testing ground of the governance model for building an umbrella-branded, supra-national community. Section 7.3 presents a discussion on policy to help rural

stakeholders cooperate in transnational knowledge transfer partnerships and engage in sustainable tourism. The chapter concludes with limitations, recommendations and possible avenues for future research.

## **7.2 Theoretical background and conceptual deficits**

Our attempt at theorising sustainable tourism development in rural areas is justified by the observation that, though academic interest has paralleled the growth in rural tourism, this attention has focused on definitional issues, land and access management challenges and rural business development. As opposed to the broader issue of managing rural resources, the role of rural tourism in socio-economic regeneration is in coping with the spatial disparities and dualisms associated with marginal rural areas (Go et al., 2013).

Most of the so-called 'theoretical solutions' provided by past research on this subject have been rather parsimonious, i.e. scaled solely at co-located levels of analysis, based on a limited set of variables, generating scant evidence. The literature has treated tourism largely in a self-referential manner. Today, collaboration with a variety of stakeholders is probably even more relevant as a driver of synergetic sustainable development than the sector's internal logic. Following Castells (1996, p. 428), heritage tourism in rural and peripheral areas might represent a link between the 'space of flows' and the 'space of places', which become fundamentally divided from one another under the tensions of a globalising society.

This chapter is problem-driven, managerial in scope and considers the debate about challenge and governance for sustainable tourism involving two broad knowledge domains, ICTs and place branding, often isolated from one another, taking either an 'outside-in' or 'inside-out' disciplinary perspective. Unpacking their deficiencies is relevant to comprehending changing realities, particularly the dynamic interaction between supply and demand within an e-democratic destination strategy, which enables researchers to advance theory to underpin the 'smart destination' claims (Trunfio et al., 2012).

### **7.2.1 Deficiencies in ICT research**

ICT and Web 2.0 have transformed tourism organisations and destinations (Gursoy and Umbreit, 2004; Buhalis and Law, 2008; Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009; Munar, 2012), redefining consumption and production processes (Musser et al., 2007; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Ayeh et al., 2012). As rapid Web 2.0 technology enables social media diffusion

to take up root in individual consumer space, it transforms strategy and marketing of tourism organisations and places, furthering e-democratic destination strategies by engaging tourism stakeholders (Munar, 2011, 2012; Hays et al., 2012). The ICTs-oriented literature shows deficiencies regarding, amongst others, standards in the digitalised cultural contents of e-Heritage (Go et al, 2003) as a sub-system for diversification, delivery and support of innovation and transformation through AKIS. However, the theoretical development of ICTs in tourism 'is still in its infancy and there is a need for further development and strengthening of theoretical and critical approaches' (Munar, 2012, p. 117).

### **7.2.2 Deficiencies in place branding research**

The shift in power from sectors like agriculture and forestry to integrated, sustainable rural tourism renders the branding of the rural context increasingly relevant. However, place branding studies typically refer to the context of cities, countries and regions. The scant research on rural area branding raises a question: What exactly is being branded when we refer to rural area branding? From a managerial perspective 'region', usually defined as 'an administrative division of a country' or 'a unit for geographical, functional, social or cultural reasons', is often used to assist processes of economic development (Cooke and Leydesdorff, 2005, p. 6) and place brand building. Though neither of these definitions does justice to the complexity of the 'rural area' concept, the latter evokes a two pronged question consequent on possible 'distance dispersion' (Fenema 2002, p. 21) that is relevant to defining what is meant by 'local'. First, do inherent rural area characteristics represent either a co-located situation (e.g. a workplace) or one involving considerable distance between a rural area (i.e., the periphery) and the core? Second, to what extent are the interests and agendas of local stakeholders compatible with collaborating in the place branding process and its perceived outcomes? Yi-Fu Tuan positions place, theoretically, as 'a break or pause in the movement, a pause that allows a location to become a centre of meaning with space organized around it' (1977, p. 14). However, Doreen Massey (1997) rejects Yi-Fu Tuan's theory as an introverted and exclusionary notion of place. Instead, she insists that researchers should consider places in a global sense, as the product of processes that extend beyond the confines of a specific place rather than in terms of boundedness. Following Michel de Certeau (1984, p. 117) we define place as 'the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which the elements are distributed in relationships of co-existence, ... a place is thus an instant configuration of positions'.

### 7.2.3 Challenges for sustainable tourism

The 1987 vision to 'meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet present needs' (WCED, 1987) failed to delineate specific human and environmental parameters for modelling and measuring (Go and Govers, 2012, p. 10). Nevertheless this vision attracted substantial academic attention, thereby channeling attention through the rather narrow lens of rural tourism itself. The research focus on definitional issues, land and access governance, and tourism enterprise development issues took priority over the mapping of the broader rural context. It also led to the rural tourism theme becoming dominant in its multitude of concepts, topics, examples, and definitions, also drawing attention to claims of 'tourism sustainability' or 'sustainable tourism development' (WCED, 1987; Weaver, 2000; Goodwin and Francis, 2003; Weaver and Lawton, 2007; Balmford et al., 2009). However, as Buckley (2012) observes: 'Sustainability is shorthand for human and planetary future, yet tourism research treats it as a small sub-discipline. Tourism journals routinely publish rankings of research outputs, yet only one such ranking includes sustainability (Park et al., 2011); and that is based only on publications in top-tier tourism and hospitality journals, ignoring other social, environmental and sustainability journals' (p. 537). Therefore, the main challenge researchers in the social science domain must overcome appears to be their self-referential viewpoint of sustainable tourism. Particularly because such a view is likely to lead to patterns indicative of the failure of taking advantage of developmental opportunities at critical junctures in the broader realm of both cores and peripheries (Miossec, 1976; cited in Pearce, 1995). These concepts refer to the spatial 'centres of attention' and the spatial edges of economic flows, respectively. Miossec's juxtaposition considered only the spatial aspects of development. Against the backdrop of an intensively competitive market it is relevant to extend his viewpoint with political economic discourses. Thereby, we broaden the analysis of the core as the 'seat' of power over development and the periphery as a 'traversed space' and 'supplier region'. The 'core/periphery' binary is evident, for instance, in tourism development. Therefore, it is relevant to comprehend why failures occur in stakeholder cooperation and how small differences and critical junctures (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013) that once linked to appropriate approaches might result in inclusive political and economic institutions. These represent a precondition to capturing good governance opportunities aimed at sustainability. Configuring the supply side with demand side perspectives (Della Lucia and Martini, 2012; Martini and Buffa, 2012) in a single developmental

framework helps to shape the conditions for creating the destination's competitiveness, while simultaneously sustaining its attractiveness and distinctiveness in the long run (Inskeep, 1991; Swarbrooke, 1999). With respect to demand, sustainability refers to an ethical tourist behaviour in both the holiday choice and experience, as part of postmodern consumption (Pine and Gilmore, 1998) in the '4Ls' tourism experiential context (Franch et al., 2008): leisure, landscape, learning and limit. The existing institutions, rules and regulations at the supply side typically lack incentives, which communities need, due to a lack of alternative pathways for the effective allocation and use of local resources geared towards the advancement of social and economic development.

## 7.2.4 Governance: failures, opportunities, and approaches

### 7.2.4.1 Failures

Governance is a mechanism for monitoring the actions, policies and decisions of organisations, aimed at aligning the interests among stakeholders while reflecting social, regulatory and market environments. Governance consists, in part, of an overlapping relationship within a precedent context and legislative framework of government (at the national, regional and local level). The governance failures in the EU were not limited to countries as Greece, Italy and Spain that 'have been forced by the crisis to address problems their leaders ignored in rosier times' (*The Economist*, 2011, p. 94). Britain and the Netherlands, too, had to implement deep reforms and deficit cuts to reduce their debts and regain the trust of the markets (*Newsweek*, 2011, p. 12).

The effects of governance failures have been far-reaching, with harmful consequences. Interestingly, though, these failures of governance caused Greek citizens to move from the cities to rural areas for economic reasons.

Transnational networks unleashed *multiple* institutional forms for empowering regional groups to bypass the power of national bodies and deal directly with their counterparts in other member states (Anderson, 1996, p. 150). Nevertheless, hitherto rural stakeholders, amongst others, have failed to reverse the established legislative power of policymaking embedded in the core which is cognitively distant from rural areas (Perkmann, 2002). Though the distinctly established top-down planning approach is considered bankrupt (Richards and Hall, 2000; Caalders, 2003), rural stakeholders remain trapped in a cycle of extractive political and economic institutions (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013). Debating similar failures in relation to territorial cluster-building, Kasabov observes: 'scholarship appears relatively reluctant to engage

with the question of failure, negativity and disagreement in clusters', forgetting that cluster is based on 'the development of community in clusters' (2010, p. 1464).

#### *7.2.4.2 Opportunities*

Only a tourist cluster of diverse stakeholders that contributes positively to the sustainable development of a rural area represents a successful community (Kasabov, 2010). In that sense, we argue that diversification of the agricultural sector provides opportunities; first, to introduce tourism as a new actor, bringing new knowledge, solutions, and opportunities for engaging traditional rural stakeholders to meet, in part, the diverse challenges that they face; second, to shape community-based rural development for the generation of trustworthy relations, income and employment.

However, evolutionary theory (Nelson and Winter, 1982) indicates that stakeholder organisations accumulate routines and knowledge, and in the process of doing so turning into repositories of distinctive and 'unique' competencies that are often difficult to alienate or imitate. Consequently, it may be through the coordination of partnerships for knowledge generation and sharing (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Storper, 1993; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Morgan, 1997; Scott, 1998; Inkpen and Tsang, 2005; Prytherch and Huntoon, 2005) and the formation of social capital through community participation that socio-economic regeneration in rural areas could be achieved. Particularly, private-public stakeholder collaboration can provide for wealth creation while sustaining growth in rural areas. It offers opportunities to bridge barriers, firstly, between stakeholders' different aims and characteristics with unevenly distributed power (Murphy, 1985; Kaspar, 1995; Laws, 1995; Bieger, 1998, 2005; Keller, 1998; Flagestad and Hope, 2001). Secondly, it may assist multiplying the sources and centres of knowledge generation (Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999) by investigating new forms of institutionalisation and governance which are capable of fostering the coordination of cooperation among all relevant stakeholders involved at the vertical (local-global) and horizontal/diagonal (local-local) scales (Tuan, 1977). The complex patterns of multi-level, multi-sectoral, and multi-power actors (Massey and Jess, 1995) influence political affairs, spatial-environmental, social processes, and tourist markets. Chances are that such patterns reveal a sense of consistency in the past behaviour of stakeholders that, when recognised, can be used to 'craft' a strategy (Mintzberg, 1989, p. 38) most appropriate for achieving the broader rural developmental objective of governing networked tourism partnerships as a way to meet the challenges of rural area sustainability.

### 7.2.4.3 Approaches

Ambiguity in the debates over the definition of sustainable tourism has led to an excess of theory and strategic formulation that has limited its practical application (Garod and Fyall, 1998). To this end we referred earlier to the need for delineating the limits of what is deemed sustainable or not. Kasabov found, in the case of high-technology clusters, that in academic and policy circles are 'treated as the key to national and regional innovation and competitiveness' and 'typically assumed to be successful communities,' but often are not (2010, p. 1447). Therefore, it is imperative to explore next four generic approaches to strategy formulation and implementation (Whittington, 1993) and select one which we feel is best capable of stimulating participative processes for sustainability in the relevant territorial and social context.

The *classical approach* is based on economic theory aimed at positioning the organisation in those markets where profit can be maximised. The underlying assumption by its proponents such as Porter (1985) is that strategy must be created through a rational, top-down approach needed to take control over both internal and external environments. Policy makers apply the classical, top-down hierarchic approach treating strategy formulation and implementation as separate phases in the policy making process in support of political and economic institutions.

Similar to its classical counterpart, the *evolutionary approach* holds that profit maximisation is the primary organisational objective. However, proponents like Williamson (1999) differ from the classicists, by assuming that organisations cannot control the environment in which they operate, with markets being rendered more powerful than organisations.

The *processual approach* adheres to the idea that every organisation consists of a coalition of individuals with their own objectives and ambitions; therefore organisational objectives emerge during bargaining processes driven by profit and non-profit motivations and values. Mintzberg (1989), one of its main proponents, argues that strategy is a craft as opposed to a science and best created by a series of small steps that slowly emerge into a pattern and require that the proper competencies must be in place for strategic implementation.

Finally, the *systemic approach* is based on the belief that a single strategy model that is applicable to all organisations does not exist. Rather, strategic objectives and the strategic process are driven by the social and cultural background of the strategists and the social context within which they operate. These must be accounted for before an organisation can formulate and implement strategy. The main systemic approach proponents, such as Whittington (1993), caution that strategy must

be sensitive to the sociology of the organisational context if it is to be successful.

In the post-Fordist era (Morgan, 1997; Storper, 1997; Scott, 1998), economic geographers, institutional economists, and economic sociologists view regions as focal points for knowledge creation, learning, and innovation. This perspective opens a window for emerging polymorphic and multidimensional socio-spatial relations (Jessop et al., 2008) for the formation of 'relational regionalism' (Harrison, 2008) within 'unusual regions' (Deas and Lord, 2006), 'cities-regions' (Hamedinger, 2011), and cross-border regions (Ilbery and Saxena, 2010).

Recent literature shows a defining structural shift, from the classical approach toward the systemic approach, in support of integrated development (Hall, 1998) and engagement of stakeholders (Stokes, 2008) within interactive governance systems (Kooiman, 2003; Kooiman et al., 2008) for strategy co-creation (Healey, 1996; D'Angella and Go, 2009). These are vital ingredients for a Coexistence Strategy Design (Go and Trunfio, 2011a), developing network-centric analyses (Ford et al., 2003; Lemmetyinen and Go, 2008), and territorial governance, based on, for example, 'centre/periphery' and 'national/international' dichotomies (Ward and Brown, 2009).

### **7.3 'Listen to the Voice of the Villages' project**

The modern era introduces challenges to rural villages located in EU member countries to reframe their traditional rural development model (Dwyer et al., 2009; Weaver, 2012) within a cross-border context (OECD, 2001, 2006; Ward and Brown, 2009; Ilbery and Saxena, 2010). It is within this framework that the case of the European Project 'Listen to the Voice of Villages' is examined (Della Lucia and Martini, 2012). The programme consists of a three-year-long project (2008–2011) financed within Priority Four of the 2008 Central Europe Programme. The project identified, in particular, tourism and the new media as driving forces of socioeconomic development of peripheral rural areas. Its funding served to support inclusive cooperation aimed at enhancing innovation, accessibility, and competitiveness to bridge the impediments caused by geographical, economic, and social marginalisation. These are manifest in the fragmentation, unemployment, demographic ageing, and outmigration characteristic of Central European rural areas. Simultaneously, markets demand that farmers lower transaction costs, and thus operate in an organised manner.

Though policy initiatives such as the 'new rural paradigm' (OECD, 2006) appear to offer a promising organisational structure for rural

tourism policy, there are substantial divides to overcome to bring about trustworthy relations among rural stakeholders manifest in networked cooperation and in boundary-spanning knowledge sharing processes.

Earlier in this chapter, the authors listed various approaches to supporting producer organisations in terms of providing service to their networked members, with a focus on rural tourism. Increasingly fragmented by value chains, markets may exclude rural producer organisations altogether. The 'Coexistence Strategy' design (Go and Trunfio, 2011a) analyses these dynamics in the case of transnational, networked cooperation, particularly LISTEN's European rural villages project, both as an illustration of and a testing ground for the embedded governance model and a coordination mechanism for social capital formation.

The presentation of this case incorporates three sections. The first and second cover the analysis of the characteristics of the villages involved in the projects by adopting a social capital-based perspective (Inkpen and Tsang, 2005). The villages' network type (intra-corporate network, strategic alliance and industrial district), revealed by the nature of their social capital, is used to identify and implement governance systems suitable to generate processes of sustainable development. The third section presents an embedded governance model as a mechanism to coordinate the development of villages simultaneously at both local and transnational scales.

### 7.3.1 Characteristics of LISTEN's European rural villages

Figure 7.1 depicts the six partner countries involved in the LISTEN project and the 14 rural villages, three of which are situated in Trentino, one in Piemonte (Italy), one in Burgenland (Austria), one in Franconian Switzerland (Germany), one in Bohemian Switzerland, one in the Ústí Region (Czech Republic), three in the Opolskie Voivodeship (Poland), and three in the area of Litija (Slovenia).

LP Autonomous Province of Trento (I)

PP 2 University of Trento (I)

PP 3 Development Centre, Litija (SI)

PP 4 Bohemian Switzerland, public benefit corporation, Krásna Lípa (CZ)

PP 5 Marshal's Office of Opolskie Voivodeship, Opole (PL)

PP 6 Regional Authority of Ústí Region, Ústí (CZ)

PP 7 Local Development Agency, Langhe Monferrato Roero, Asti (I)

PP 8 District Office, Forchheim (D)

PP 9 University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Wien (AU)



Figure 7.1 The LISTEN project partners

Each selected village is defined as a geographically delimited territory, bounded by natural and administrative borders, and culturally distinguished by the anthropological notion of ‘place’, understood as a historical and relational identity and a local system. This is a *local milieu* where stakeholders work, draw on specific resources, and establish and maintain socio-cultural relations and partnerships that evolve and serve as an input into productive processes, material and immaterial infrastructures, social culture, and organisational skills. In this way, the territory represents a *cognitive multiplier*, which generates and transfers knowledge aimed at value-creating processes. Despite their belonging to different countries, these villages converge around common territorial and structural characteristics. Each village:

1. is bounded, for example by a valley, a district and can be considered as a single unit of analysis;

2. is a community-based destination (Murphy, 1985; Bieger, 1998, 2005; Flagestad and Hope, 2001) where the economic and environmental resources are held by a plurality of different stakeholders who have diverse powers, interests, aims, competencies, and values. This fragmentation renders coordination and decision-making difficult;
3. has an unexploited tourism potential in terms of natural and cultural resources. Tourism is neither yet developed nor in the early stages of the destination's life cycle and is part of a diversified economy – based on traditional sectors such as forestry, agriculture, zoo-technics, wood art, and crafts – or of a declining economy. For example, these villages are destinations away from major tourism areas, and are destinations without strong attractions or without efficient governance. However, in some of these villages, local community has the potential to undertake a process of tourism development, with private and public stakeholders capable of facilitating the process of development by arranging incentives, financial support, and competencies;
4. has a low receptive capacity which attracts mainly domestic and family-oriented real estate, which could be converted into accommodation; for example, private houses, chalets, community-held properties, and farmhouses;
5. is in the early stage of tourism development and lacks proper Destination Management Organizations (DMOs).

The 14 project territories also meet methodological assumptions and expectations that without the presence of a coordinating structure, understood as an overarching managerial organisation which respects the interests of both the private and public sectors, it would not be possible to take effective tourism-development decisions. Viewed through an operational lens, their organisations must coordinate cooperative responsibilities, including:

1. boosting local players' participation in the strategy of tourist development, by credibly highlighting the benefits and by overcoming resistance on the part of individual entrepreneurs;
2. formalising the relationship mechanisms among members;
3. selecting new members to enter in the cluster and possible release of others;
4. defining control mechanisms to share performance results among players.

In addition to the coordination tasks, the local DMO was responsible for:

1. the creation of products directly linked to specific targeted markets;
2. the development, sharing and transfer of competencies among local stakeholders to achieve better results through innovation;
3. the definition of quality standards in order to improve tourist services;
4. the application of sustainability indicators to the tourism projects in order to guarantee respect for carrying capacity limits and the preservation of the social and cultural heritage of the area, and;
5. the integration of tourism policy at a regional and/or national level.

### 7.3.2 Social capital of LISTEN's European rural villages

Results of the structural and destination governance landscape are reflected in rural villages' social capital and network type. Following the matrix designed by Inkpen and Tsang (2005), these villages can be assimilated to the industrial district type (Della Lucia and Trunfio, 2012; Go et al., 2013). A network comprising independent small and medium-size firms operating in the same or related market segment where institutional economics result from both spatial agglomeration and productive specialisation is one way to define the industrial district. But such a definition ignores the crucial interaction between institutions and social capital formation (Becattini, 1979; Granovetter, 1985; Putnam, 1993; Fukuyama, 1994), both serving as the sources of its vitality.

Building upon such an understanding, Table 7.1 summarises three dimensions of social capital in the European rural villages studied. The *structural dimension* of social capital (network ties, configuration and stability) reveals non-hierarchical and dense ties present in these villages. Community members' relationships are direct, informal, and long-term. These social ties feed and consolidate a strong sense of belonging to the places where these communities live and work and are the base on which inter-member economic ties and knowledge sharing are developed. Presently, they are represented by professional associations, including hotel/restaurant owners, agricultural cooperatives, and mountain/rural estate owners. This contiguity between society and economics enables the integration of local products, traditions, and folklore. For example, in the rural villages of Trentino (Italy), temporary mountain/agricultural/cattle settlements (*Masi*, *Baiti*, *Cà de Mont* in the local language) provide evidence of how these traditional buildings were transformed into tourism facilities for satisfying modern experiential demands. In Bohemian Switzerland, sacred monuments

*Table 7.1* Social capital dimensions in European rural villages and conditions facilitating cooperation in knowledge transfer processes

Social capital dimensions	Rural villages' characteristics	Conditions facilitating knowledge transfer
Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Non-hierarchical and dense ties exist among the local community members</li> <li>– Social ties as a foundation for inter-member economic ties (professional associations) and knowledge sharing</li> <li>– Members leaving the villages undermines the network stability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Proximity results in interpersonal interactions among community members and inter-firm interactions</li> <li>– Weak ties and boundary-spanning to maintain relationships with various cliques</li> <li>– Stable personal relationships</li> </ul>
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The fragmentation and heterogeneity of local stakeholders raises barriers to collaboration and goal sharing (different interests, aims and competencies)</li> <li>– The strong sense of the place and of local culture comprises a collective identity, shared values and behaviours, and a distributed tacit knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Interaction logic derived from cooperation</li> <li>– Norms and rules to govern informal knowledge trading</li> </ul>
Relational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Individual trust is a core element developed in interpersonal relationships</li> <li>– Trust serves as a interpersonal driver to promote relationships and skills needed for knowledge sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Commercial transactions embedded in social ties</li> </ul>

*Source:* Authors' elaboration on Inkpen and Tsang (2005).

were restored in association with local stakeholders and experts, providing visitors with new cultural experiences while returning important components of local communities' traditions and everyday life to local people. However, such positive initiatives, impacting on structural dimensions of social capital, are threatened by the continuous exodus of community members which erodes network stability by dissipating not only personal relationships but also tacit knowledge and the

opportunity to reinforce inter-member economic relationships. This is true in particular for smaller, more isolated, sparsely populated or demographically older villages, for example the Valle dei Mocheni or Tesino-Vanoi in Italy and Slovenia's villages.

From a *cognitive dimensional* perspective, social capital suffers from the fragmentation inherent in the heterogeneity of local stakeholders and sectorial diversification. Diversity of aims, interests, and competencies renders the establishment of a critical mass for group decision-making among the local stakeholders difficult. This implies that stakeholders do not share a cooperative logic for local development. This impedes local DMOs from taking effective actions to prove the advantages of developmental cooperation. Information and education could help increase the awareness that networked knowledge sharing facilitates inclusive economic institution-building and the emergence of a virtuous cycle of value-adding processes. The Italian village Tesino-Vanoi, for example, proved to be one of the most critical areas in areas of weak collaboration and potential conflicts, due to the presence of two contiguous territories with divergent approaches, governance models, and tourism strategies, resulting in difficulties in and scepticism about joint planning initiatives. These difficulties resulted in weak participation on the part of local stakeholders during the initial phase of the project development, in terms of both number of actors involved and individual contributions to the tasks. In order to overcome these obstacles, the project partners provided local stakeholders with educational and training tools, devoting specific seminars and meetings to discussing problems and finding solutions. These training courses enabled the involvement of other stakeholders unaware of the project, who subsequently played a decisive role in terms of their contribution to the design of the pilot project and its realisation. Study visits to other partner areas provided opportunities to enhance mutual knowledge, socialisation and trust, to exchange experience and expertise, and to learn from best practice in seeking solutions to problems and conflicts from other areas. Each village involved in the project benefited from the training sessions, with specific responses suggested to specific training needs expressed by local stakeholders (awareness, competencies, skills, new ideas) and with team-building assisting the conversion of scepticism into trust and enthusiasm for new perspectives of development or, at least, communication among different interest groups. Despite the fragmentation of the stakeholder landscape, the shared cultural lifestyle of rural villages manifested in the identity of place, tacit knowledge, and shared values and norms has been helpful in assisting trust-building

and collaboration, at least within small groups of actors, as in the case of these rural villages. But markets demand that rural producers lower their transaction costs and engage with non-consensual and political actors, on the transnational scale, to gain knowledge needed to re-frame their agenda to be more in tune with the new rural paradigm. Positive signs were detected in that respect. As the following examples demonstrate, the LISTEN project has been crucial in assisting with and reinforcing such changes. In the Valley of Chiese village (one of the Italian villages of Trentino) the involvement in the EU project of strategic stakeholders, an Ecomuseum, and the local hydrologic basin presented them with both opportunity and a methodology. In particular, to transform their intention to develop a new participative place governance system into a strategic plan, which met the interests of other local stakeholders, boosting their engagement during the stages of planning implementation. In the villages around the town of Alessandria, citizens, volunteers, and especially young people wanted to join the project, with the latter demonstrating a high capacity to promote their territories by leveraging social networks.

The *relational dimension* of social capital focuses on the character of connections, which serve to reinforce not only an organisation's internal logic, but also trustworthy relations and reciprocal behaviour, bringing about the institutional conditions amenable to participation in knowledge transfer processes. Although interpersonal interactions may exist in the territorial realm, these often lack efficacy due to inadequacies in the organisational structure of rural tourism policy. Governance processes require a common agenda, which not only reflects various objectives and interests but also specifies the roles and tasks of different network members at various levels, including the transnational.

### 7.3.3 The governance model of LISTEN rural villages

The LISTEN project aimed to transform the dominant ideology in development policy ('inside-in' vs. 'outside-in') by integrating policies for tourism development in the setting of the rural villages into the broader rural development policy. While the latter varies from one country to another, all suffer from a lack of organisational structure of rural tourism policy bringing together the significant variety of organisations and stakeholders (public administrative agencies, private stakeholders such as local enterprises, producer associations, credit associations, conservation bodies, and voluntary organisations). Particularly in the fragmented context of rural villages, matters of 'power, legitimacy and contestation' are inconsequential (Kasabov and Sundaram, 2013, p. 540)

as the variety of stakeholders' interests and agendas can act as a powerful divide within and across village communities.

The model formulated for the governance of heterogeneous and fragmented contexts of such rural villages was inspired by destination management studies and best practice examples internationally (Bieger, 2005; Martini, 2005; Pechlaner and Raich, 2005; Beritelli et al., 2007). This logic resulted in the formulation of an embedded governance, which unites political/institutional actors, businesses and the local community (Go and Trunfio, 2011b). The Task Forces in our case provided platform support for the rural area development processes. Here, top-down and bottom-up drivers of local development converged to establish a balance between the local innovation capability and external resources, including knowledge and skills. The combination of the 'inside-in' perspective and the 'outside-in' thus enhanced:

1. the creation of new businesses, occupations, and income-generation for resident populations;
2. innovation in and improvement of the territorial offer, attracting ideas or businesses from external economies;
3. communities' quality of life;
4. the communities' awareness of the value of local identity in relation to developmental processes.

A separate, public administration body represented by the Board of Mayors supervises and legitimates the Task Force's actions, while the Local Guide Groups (LGGs) serve as bottom-up drivers of local private or public stakeholders. In this manner, the local community's voices, including local businesses, organisations, associations, municipalities, etc., are manifest through their participation in the formulation of the pilot projects' content. The composition of each group varies according to stakeholders' engagement and competencies, which are required for the LISTEN project exploitation in each village. Some of these villages have proven to be particularly effective in promoting their development by combining the 'inside-in' and the 'outside-in' perspectives. For example, the rural villages of Trentino (Italy) are positive examples of the transformation of local identity and place-specific resources into experiential tourism products (Martini and Buffa, 2012). Tesino Vanoi turned its First World War cultural heritage into *Mountain Storytelling*, a tourism product based on thematic trekking and cultural initiatives to experience this historical event. The Valle dei Mocheni pilot leveraged the richness of water resources in these wilderness areas to

develop *Vision H2O*, a tourism product of water-based special events and educational workshops to experience traditional activities based on this resource. In Valle del Chiese, *Rural Experience* provided tourists with rural estate accommodation, participation in traditional activities, and educational workshops. Within the LISTEN Project, the Austrian Project Partner (the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences of Vienna) developed in collaboration with local players (tourism, regional development, politics, private businesses, and education) of the Güssing region (Burgenland) the concept VISIONe – Vital Solar Innovation energy for promoting awareness of the use of renewable energy. This concept resulted in the development of experience-oriented energy tourism, and the application of renewable energy sources in the tourism sector with attractive programmes devoted to young people, families and adolescents. The success of these products in improving the critical mass of sustainable tourism is reflected in the number of tourists taking part in the initiatives (laboratories, guided tours, and cultural events) promoted by the pilot projects, starting from the latest phases of the LISTEN projects.

#### 7.4 Discussion

There has been a tendency among tourism researchers to focus on rural tourism itself, wherein the intention to persuade other rural stakeholders to change their behaviour appears rather outdated, for two reasons.

Firstly, evidenced by the new paradigm, the political context of Europe's agricultural system has changed, seeking sustainability and aiming to respond to both consumers and rural communities. This implies that research has to address a range of issues at the 'meta-level', including environmental criteria, socio-economic changes in rural communities, place branding, landscape management, biodiversity conservation, public transport access, training and research facilities to spread knowledge and skills. Secondly, agricultural systems have diversified and become blended with other activities, such as tourism, generating new knowledge and skills. However, the concept of agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKIS), which is so central to the policy discourse, has proven 'unable to absorb and internalise the fundamental and systemic shifts that have occurred' (EC, 2009, p. 95) for two reasons. First, the inability of local institutions to apply an interactive model of networked systems aimed at knowledge generation, transfer and application; second, the failure to focus on ethical issues such as 'well-being' and social issues to attract national and international markets in a sustainable way.

Researchers who try to identify the potential contribution of tourism to rural development typically highlight the need for a collective approach. For example, in our case study the Project Partners (universities) and Destination Management Organisations (local development agencies) were driven largely by a scientific perspective and a linear top-down approach when defining the governance model needed to harness knowledge and share the expertise. In contrast, the rural villages represented through political and economic institutions such as the Local Guide Groups (LGGs) served as the bottom-up drivers, with their emergent role of public-private 'guardian' of the destination. The present study indicates that it is hardly likely that any stakeholder, stakeholder community, organisation or cluster could control their environment. Therefore, a systems approach is more appropriate for sustainability. Within this framework, transnational networked partnerships and community engagement are vital mechanisms for rural tourism development. But in this context, wherein coalitions emerge for cooperative knowledge sharing, Burton (2004; quoted by Murphy, 2012, p. 94) suggests that 'too much emphasis is placed on the role of attitudes in the role of decision making and that there are two other important elements to the theory: "subjective norm" and "perceived behavioural control"'. The former outlines how networked stakeholders regularly check 'their behavioural intentions against the actual and perceived behaviour of others' while the latter 'suggests that when a person does not feel that a certain behaviour will achieve the desired end, he/she is less likely to engage in that behaviour' (Murphy, 2012, p. 94). Both the 'subjective norm' and 'perceived behavioural control' provide legitimate reasons for leveraging social capital (Inkpen and Tsang, 2005) to craft the relevant conditions and local factors identified in the industrial district network type within which the villages have been assimilated (Table 7.1) for the facilitation of knowledge transfer.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has tried to justify the presentation of the embedded governance model, based on a Coexistence Strategy Design (Go and Trunfio, 2011a), in consequence of social transition towards a policy of poly-inclusion i.e., the 'issue [of] whether humankind should encourage alienation or participation' (Go and Fenema, 2006, p. 71). We have introduced such an embedded governance arrangement as part of the thesis that economic institutions and networks of power (Massey and Jess, 1995), accompanied by new processes at the multi-level,

multi-sectoral, and multi-actor scales, and new forms of self-regulation and co-creation, result in poly-inclusive patterns. It is in this fashion that, far from relying on a company's internal logic, markets generate creative energy and drive knowledge transfer. These, however, matter only when balanced by the democratic governance of social, spatial-environmental and political affairs within inclusive, as opposed to 'siloed', forms of decision-making.

We have used the case of European rural villages as both an exemplary illustration and testing ground for the analytic embedded governance model and policy recommendations for a networked transnational stakeholders' community. First, it is clear that the social capital of these European rural villages reveals many weaknesses. In particular, weaknesses in cognitive (shared aims) and relational dimensions (trust) seem to affect structural dimensions of social capital negatively, causing a vicious cycle of extractive economic institutions to endure, manifested in marginalisation, unemployment, and depopulation. The positive effects of social capital, shared culture, tacit knowledge and trustworthy relations, on the other hand, appear to remain largely confined within interpersonal interactions in the LISTEN project villages studied.

Secondly, there may have been a failure to understand that the effective use of heritage requires appropriate inputs of knowledge, skills, and ancillary facilities, if the stakeholders' cooperation, based on local heritage and cultural resources, is to contribute, effectively, to sustainable rural development.

Thirdly, the empirical research reveals that rural areas are all elements of a complex and dynamic European network of multi-stakeholder relationships, including tourists, suppliers, business partners, and governments. Hence, destination management organisations and institutional stakeholders must engage in boundary-spanning, intercommunity learning processes.

Fourthly, embedded governance has been shown to contribute to social capital formation, and by extension to trustworthy public and private actors' relationships – both being a precondition for co-creation of 'value-in-context' (Vargo and Lush, 2008), particularly in order to sustain development. Put in other words, embedded governance enables destinations to overcome their cluster limits and transform into successful communities (Kasabov, 2010).

This case study also reveals limitations regarding the achievement of the programme mission, which sought to train partner territories in principles of sustainable tourism; support their collaboration, knowledge sharing, and best practice exchange in a sustainable rural tourism

domain; and promote the creation and development of Destination Management Organisations needed to facilitate the implementation of pilot projects of sustainable development.

These limits include, firstly, the prevalent supply perspective adopted in the first stage of project development by the project's participants. Secondly, the Vital Villages Association sought to introduce a set of standards concerning networking and branding to international target markets to be adhered to by its members. However, the plan failed during implementation, due to budgetary constraints. Thirdly, inadequate association and coordination among the project partners (DMOs of LISTEN rural villages) and the research centres (University of Trento, Italy (eTourism research group; Boku University of Applied Sciences, Vienna)) with respect to monitoring and issuing the process of 'responsible and sustainable tourism in Europe' certification further inhibited progress.

Future research may seek to interrogate the balance between local and transnational agendas and interests involved in projects aimed at promoting effective governance and maximising the benefits of sustainable development. Weaver's model (2000) offers a possible framework to deal with these issues. In accordance with this framework, which classifies destinations into four ideal-types on the basis of the relationship between tourism intensity (high or low) and the level of regulation of the sector (high or low), European rural villages can reasonably be assimilated into the CAT destinations (Circumstantial Alternative Tourism). The CAT ideal-type is typical of the exploration phase of a destination's life cycle (Butler, 1980) and the knowledge-based platform (Jafari, 1989). In these niche destinations, the small scale of tourist flows impedes the achievement of economic sustainability, while inadequate tourism regulation precludes progress beyond Butler's 'exploration' stage. Fragmentation and diversification of stakeholders and their interests impedes collaboration needed to promote tourist attractiveness of rural villages, accommodation capacity, and tourism product and services development. Different developmental paths can prevail in the transition of these destinations to sustainable ideal-types (niche or mass destinations). These have diverse management implications. The post-CAT evolutionary impulse, in fact, can initially be dominated by considerations of growth (organic path), regulation (incremental path), or both (induced path) (Weaver, 2012). Such differences in approach impact governance systems, forms of community participation in planning processes, and the main benefits (economic, social, environmental, reputational, etc.) from local development. Although the

participatory approach produces greater, more balanced benefits both of economic and non-economic nature, induced participation is the most common form in developing countries – a top-down regulated, passive, and indirect participation (Tosun, 2006). The development of embedded governance may provide host communities with a voice in tourism development processes. This voice serves to ensure that their evolutionary developmental path will be characterised by a social transition towards a policy of participative decision-making, including the host communities and powerful interest groups to maximise the benefit of development rather than one resulting in the former's alienation.

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# 8

## Rural Development Policy in the Framework of the Knowledge-based Economy: Selective Impacts and Solutions in the Case of the Czech Republic

*Martin Pelucha, Eva Cudlinova, and Miloslav Lapka*

### 8.1 Introduction

Rural development policy is facing a number of partial problems, for instance in terms of its contextual definition, and has an unclear position, particularly in connection with sectoral policies. This affects, among others, transport, environmental, and employment policy. The most important problem is related to the prevailing perception of rural development, with an emphasis on 'agriculture'. This emphasis is particularly pronounced in the EU (see Mahé et al., 1999; Lowe et al., 2002; Dwyer et al., 2007; Marsden and Sonnino, 2008). However, in the last two decades rural space has been significantly influenced by globalisation trends, information technology, reduction of transportation costs and the increase in importance of non-agricultural activities in rural areas (OECD, 2006a, p. 12). These influences have had multifarious impacts on rural areas.

While pressures do exist, as part of globalisation, for the polarisation of economic growth and the concentration of economic activities, economic development is noticeable not only in urban areas but also at regional and micro-regional levels, particularly in the hinterlands of large cities and along arterial transport corridors (through processes of suburbanisation and urban sprawl). In connection with the above-mentioned development of services and ICT, the economies of various regions are becoming increasingly interconnected and accessible, even in outlying areas. This trend has significantly strengthened urban-rural relations.

Changes have also been brought about by digital regions characterised by the availability of infrastructure for information and communication technologies (ICT), including in rural areas, which are not necessarily problematic. In fact, current international trends suggest a turnaround in rural development policy conditions, driven by, among others, globalisation and gradual liberalisation of world markets, changes in the perception of availability and space in processes associated with ICT improvement, reduction of transport costs, and diminished importance of agricultural activities in advanced countries' rural areas.

All these trends are closely related to the growth of knowledge-based economy – a term which is rather elusive and difficult to define. Authors offer multiple, often incompatible definitions. The OECD's (1996, p. 7) definition emphasises production factors of the knowledge economy, i.e. labour and capital, and their harnessing in the development and application of new technologies. Such a definition has two drawbacks. First, it lacks an explicit conceptualisation of 'knowledge'. Second, the main goal of the definition is problematic, with the knowledge economy emerging when applying new technology. In a broader sense, this complex term encompasses education, professional skills (know-how), availability of technology and ICT on a specific territory, and levels of research and development (R&D) as one main source of the knowledge economy. However, not all research and development activities (i.e., levels of aggregate R&D expenditures or number of employees in R&D) automatically bring about innovative activities which strengthen the economic growth of the state or region.

Generally, authors agree on the origins of the knowledge economy development. Cooke et al. (2007) state that knowledge has been a constituent part of economic growth for a long time, with innovation in the form of new ideas transformed into new products, processes and organisation of production having acted traditionally as a part of economic development: 'The knowledge economy in its more recent understanding has to do with a continuing transformation towards more knowledge-intensive activities rather than a radical change and rupture of economies and societies' (Cooke et al., 2007, p. 26).

The main purpose of this discussion is to investigate the above connections that have affected and still affect the shaping of rural areas in the context of the 'knowledge-based economy' as part of territorially-based rural development policy. On the one hand, such policy focuses on the support for rural areas through cooperation among key local stakeholders. On the other hand, this policy is contradictory from a rural areas support perspective, with agriculture still privileged in local

socioeconomic development. The context is Czech rural areas, their settlement structure, ICT infrastructure, localisation of new innovation spillovers, and innovative approaches applied in rural areas of the Czech Republic.

It is necessary to emphasise that this discussion presents only one among various perspectives from which rural areas can be viewed in the context of the knowledge-based economy. The authors aim to point out not only issues related to the territorial characteristics of Czech rural areas but also existing experience in development of the knowledge-based economy under the conditions specific to the Czech Republic. The authors call for a change in the paradigm of development of rural areas in the context of the existing trends that directly affect such areas. In particular, we assess globalisation, technological development processes and the increased importance of the knowledge economy for the competitiveness of states, regions and rural areas. In conclusion, it is suggested that these processes reinforce the thesis that rural areas are not and cannot be a synonym for declining or merely disadvantaged localities.

## **8.2 Specifics of rural areas in the Czech Republic within the EU**

Rural areas in the Czech Republic underwent significant transformations during the twentieth and the first decade of the twenty-first century. Bičík and Jančák (2005, pp. 75–76) note that Czech rural areas have been influenced by a variety of political and socio-economic changes, the most important of which are agricultural reform in 1924, changes in the political and economic situation in Czech border areas in the pre-war and post-war periods, socialisation of the countryside and collectivisation of agriculture during the 1950s, transition to a market economy and transformation of agriculture and re-emergence of small municipalities which broke away from central municipalities during the 1990s.

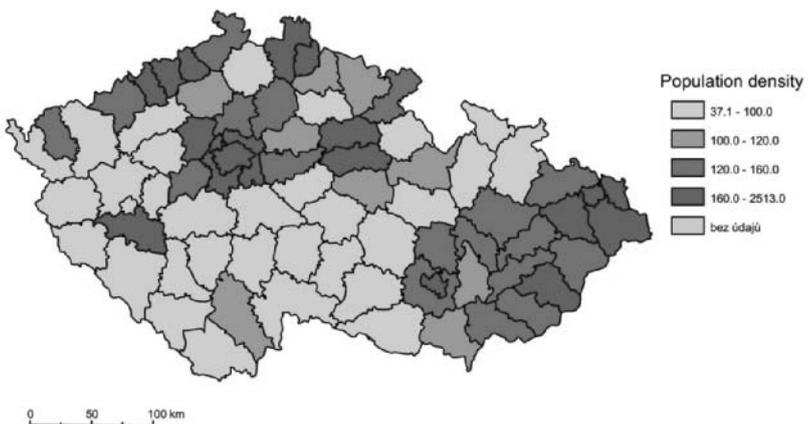
The above mentioned transformation of agriculture during the 1990s had a negative impact on so-called selective migration. During the transformation period, the number of economically active workers in the agricultural sector dramatically dropped from about 550,000 to about 130,000. With regard to the structural characteristics of rural areas, i.e. distance, scattering, and activities based on natural resources, selective migration associated with an outflow of people (especially young people) from rural to suburban areas grew in importance, leading

to the degradation of intermediate and especially remote rural areas in the Czech Republic in terms of socio-economic development.

Additional processes noticeable in the early 2000s and influencing the Czech countryside include accelerating suburbanisation and urban sprawl during the second half of the 1990s, and general change in perceptions of rural areas after the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU and regarding EU CAP reforms, globalisation, technological and IT development.

The above-mentioned factors and processes have had a significant impact on small rural municipalities in the Czech Republic which represent about 60% of the total number of municipalities in the category under 500 residents. This specific character of the Czech settlement structure is reflected in the population density in Figure 8.1, which shows the situation at the level of districts (LAU I). Municipalities in these areas are natural residential units with a strong historical identity coupled with a weak functional basis.

Table 8.1 compares statistical indicators of the Czech Republic and EU-27. The proportion of the population living in rural areas (see Table 8.1), as defined by the OECD, is significantly higher in the Czech Republic (88.5%) compared to the EU-27 countries (53.7%). A similar dichotomy can also be seen in indicators of the total area, gross value added, and employment. Using these indicators, we can conclude that



*Figure 8.1* Rural areas in the Czech Republic (less than 100 inhabitants per sq km at LAU I – district level)

*Note:* LAU = Local Administrative Units.

*Source:* Own elaboration based on data of the Czech Statistical Office (2013).

*Table 8.1* Proportion of rural areas (according to OECD classifications NUTS 3 for selected indicators in 2005)

	Predominantly rural		Intermediate		Predominantly urban	
	ČR	EU-27	ČR	EU-27	ČR	EU-27
<b>Total area</b>	8.8	52.6	90.6	37.6	0.6	9.7
<b>Total population</b>	5.0	16.7	83.5	37.1	11.5	46.2
<b>Gross value added (GVA)</b>	4.2	12.0	71.7	29.7	24.0	58.3
<b>Employment</b>	4.6	17.0	78.6	35.6	16.8	47.4

*Source:* Modified data from DG-AGRI (2008, p. 74).

the Czech Republic has a certain uniqueness in terms of its population and spatial arrangements.

### 8.3 The knowledge economy in rural areas – trends and contextual issues

Differences between rural and urban areas have long been increasing; however, this trend has been coupled with a relatively significant increase in disparities across rural areas. Johnson (2001) describes these processes in the context of the USA as well as other parts of the world, attributing them to ongoing processes of technological change, globalisation and localisation. To Johnson, technological change is probably the most important among the factors influencing the current re-shaping of rural areas. Johnson clarifies that ‘no sector has been so fundamentally affected by technological changes as agriculture. As a result of technological changes, the production of goods has separated from the employment rate which led to a situation when the production of goods grew while the employment rate was declining’ (Johnson, 2001, p. 23) due to lower work demands. Therefore, strong structural changes are evident in the countryside where agriculture is no longer the dominant sector.

**Technological changes** positively affect the degree of mobility of residents, who are ever more flexible in terms of employment and housing. The development of information technology at the end of the twentieth century has also affected spatial perceptions of distance between individual locations. Malecki (1996) considers **globalisation trends** and technological changes, particularly changes in information technologies, to be relatively highly linked in their effects on rural

economies. Another process, **localisation**, is a determinant of the prosperity of local communities. According to Sugden et al. (2003, p. 16), the terms globalisation and localisation are highly interconnected and closely related, with the coexistence of these trends known as 'glocalisation'. In his view, functionally-defined regions currently have a better competitive position than administrative regions based on politically defined borders. If we compare localisation forces with the possibilities available in urban areas, rural areas emerge as disadvantaged, to some extent. It can be concluded that rural areas may always be at a disadvantage in terms of quality and accessibility of infrastructure, however, there are objective reasons for this situation.

One of the conclusions of the OECD conference, which focused on investment priorities of rural areas, was as follows:

Evidence from across the OECD shows that the capacity of regions, whether urban or rural, to support processes of learning and innovation is a key source of competitive advantage. Innovation in rural areas can be about doing traditional activities in a new way, about starting up new businesses or about changing the way government interacts with citizens. In all these cases innovation is strongly linked with social processes such as the creation of networks, the strengthening of local identities, and the creation and dissemination of knowledge.

(OECD, 2006b, p. 3)

Therefore, this chapter selectively analyses the following aspects of the knowledge economy and their effects:

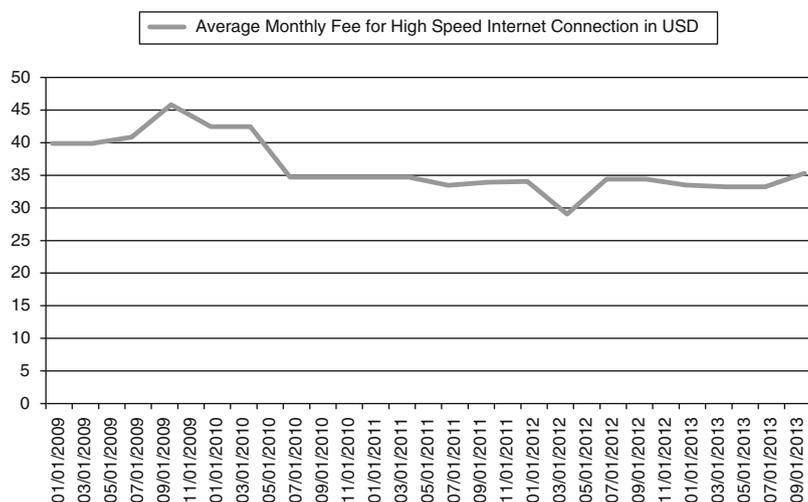
1. Accessibility of ICT infrastructure in the Czech Republic and its regional context;
2. Localisation of new innovation spillovers in rural areas of the Czech Republic in recent years;
3. Innovative approaches applied to rural labour markets in the Czech Republic.

#### **8.4 ICT infrastructure accessibility in the Czech Republic and its regional context**

Competitiveness of rural regions of the Czech Republic under conditions of the knowledge economy depends on a number of different factors. One of them is accessibility of ICT infrastructure, and its cost

is considered as a knowledge input (see Pěluha et al., 2012). Before we focus on the accessibility of ICT, it is necessary to draw attention to the long-term characteristics of knowledge infrastructure in the Czech Republic in terms of its affordability. Corey and Wilson (2006, p. 22) identify the Czech Republic as one of the most expensive among OECD economies in terms of the affordability of ICT infrastructure. To them, this negatively affected the e-accessibility of the Czech countryside in the first decade of the new millennium. Kislingerová et al. (2008, p. 30) also mention that one of the major barriers to territorial e-development is the price of internet connection, because 'relatively high costs of telecommunication technologies are still specific for the Czech Republic and the number of households with internet access has been rather low'. This context was accompanied by (see Calzada and Martínéz, 2013, p. 5) a significant decrease of prices for broadband Internet access in EU countries due to the possibility of a consumers' allowance, on migration, at no cost to the other company. On the other side, the change in development of the average monthly price for high-speed Internet was rather slow in the Czech Republic (see also Figure 8.2).

As shown in Figure 8.2, the situation improved slightly at the end of the first decade of the new millennium in terms of the minimum



*Figure 8.2* Average monthly fee for high-speed internet connection in the Czech Republic (2009–2013)

*Source:* Adapted and compiled from Czech Telecommunication Office (2014).

monthly fees for high-speed Internet connection, yet the Czech Republic still belongs to the set of countries with high average prices for Internet connection.

Figures 8.2 and 8.3 reveal the positioning of the Czech Republic among the below-average EU countries, with respect to high-speed internet connection. On the other hand, the number of households with such a connection has been increasing very quickly – a situation similar to that concerning wireless internet connection. Nonetheless, the dominance of low-speed and dial-up internet connections steadily decreased in the 2005–2010 period. In terms of the development potential of so-called digital regions in Czech and Moravian rural areas, high-speed internet coverage was above-average in 2009 compared to other EU countries.

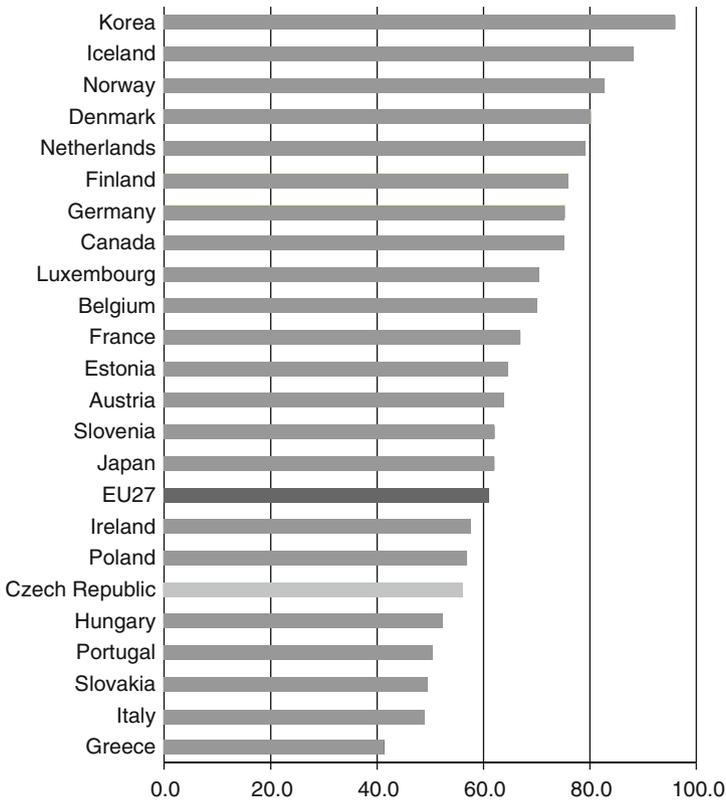
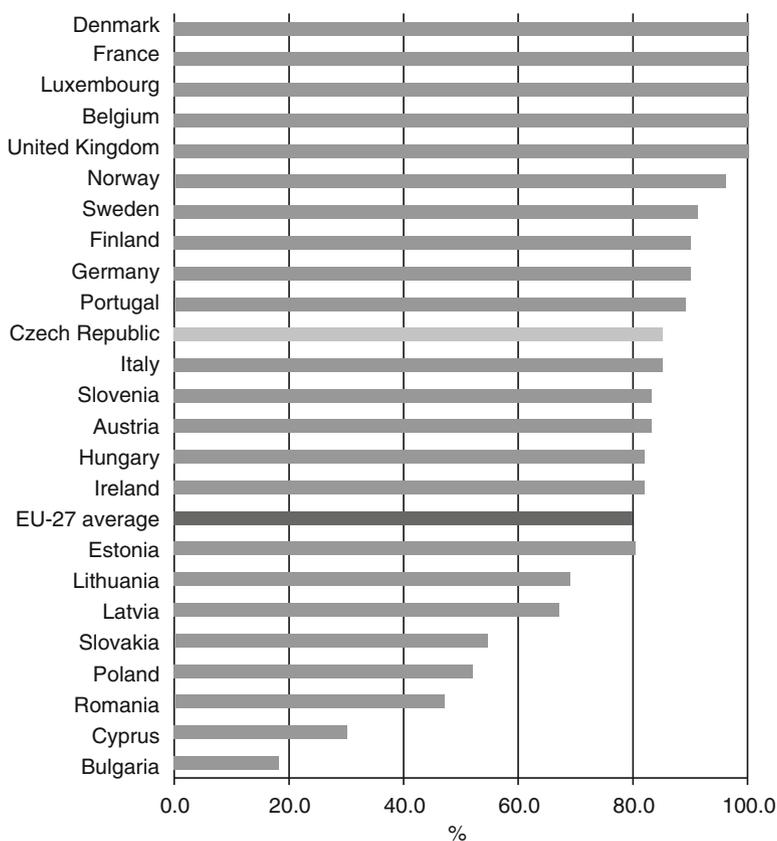


Figure 8.3 Households with high-speed internet access in 2010  
 Source: Adapted and compiled from OECD Communications Outlook (2011).

According to Eurostat (2010) data, 85% of Czech rural areas were covered with accessible high-speed internet in that year (2 Mbps for 98% of households since 2012). Such positive developments benefit from dense residential structures and the high number of small and medium-sized towns forming natural rural development centres (see Figure 8.4).

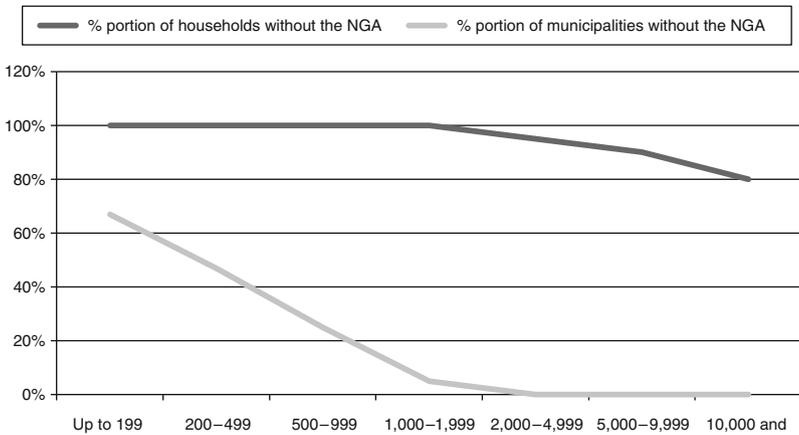
Based on available data, the Ministry of Industry and Trade has compiled a model of the availability of broadband Internet access via a fibre optic network speed of at least 30 Mbps, i.e. next-generation access (NGA) (see Figure 8.5). This figure illustrates the very low penetration



*Figure 8.4* DSL Coverage in rural areas (end of 2009)

*Note:* DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) is a technology which uses existing phone or cable TV infrastructure for purposes of high-speed data transfer.

*Source:* Adapted from Eurostat (2010, p. 14).



*Figure 8.5* The availability of high-speed internet access through NGA (2012)  
*Source:* Adapted and compiled from Czech Telecommunication Office (2014).

of optical networks in the Czech Republic. Most problematic, however, are small towns and rural areas with low population density, as return on investment for the private sector is very limited in areas outside of urban locations with high concentrations of people.

What are the main reasons for the limited connection of rural households and rural municipalities to the NGA? This issue was largely discussed at the national conference ‘Digital challenges of the Czech Republic’ in December 2013. The conference was organised by the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MIT, 2013b). The low level of NGA internet is caused by the very slow pace of construction NGA networks in the Czech Republic. Another problem is the return on these investments. For investment in fixed fibre optic networks in sparsely populated regions (rural areas), the financial participation of the state will be necessary, which should also positively encourage private investment. Administrative and local taxes are also very high, and the role of municipalities in land-use planning is unclear. The existing land-use planning is not defined as an integral part of the creation of corridors for electronic communications networks and hotspots, including all objects. The impact of the slow construction of NGA networks is clear: extending the period of their construction, and also their price. Therefore, at the present time in the Czech Republic, there are proposals being discussed to deal with this situation, such as the inclusion of electronic communications in local plans, harmonisation of legislation,

and the proposal to limit the possibilities of a community 'rejecting' the location of buildings on public lands.

The Czech government responded to this situation in 2011 by approving the 'National Policy Electronic Communications Plan – Digital Czech Republic' (MIT of the Czech Republic, 2011), which was further updated in 2013 by the strategy 'Digital Czechia v. 2.0: Way to the Digital Economy' up to 2020. The main priority of this policy is to promote access of residents of the Czech Republic to high-speed Internet. The main objective is reducing the so-called 'digital divide' between rural settlements and cities. The strategy defines 'rural settlements' as municipalities with up to 2,000 residents. To meet the objective in the area of high-speed Internet access in rural settlements and cities, in accordance with the European Digital Agenda, the Czech government has set a target of high-speed access to the internet and the development of high-speed access networks to the Internet to allow a transmission speed of 30 Mbps by 2020 for all residents and 100 Mbps for at least half of the households (MIT of the Czech Republic, 2013a, p. 5).

In the Czech Republic, problems of Internet access and accessibility to high-speed Internet are also reflected in rural development policies financed under EAFRD. The Rural Development Programme for the period 2007–2013 (Axis III, Measure III.2.1, Village Renewal and Development, Public Amenities and Services) supports ICT development through infrastructure and the establishment of high-speed Internet in municipalities with up to 500 residents in the Czech Republic. The objective is to improve basic services, ensure investment development and thus increase the attractiveness of rural areas, including improved quality of life. However, the mid-term evaluation of this programme suggests that the objective of the current support will not be achieved, probably due to very low financial allocation. DHV, Tima (2010) suggested a reduction in the target number of new people in rural areas using Internet access from 75,000 to a maximum of 23,000 persons, provided that the allocation will be increased or the aid will be better targeted only at increasing the use of information technology. Furthermore, and in relation to such aid, DHV, Tima (2010) conclude that 'the actions taken have no direct effect on the elimination of economic and social decline and depopulation of rural areas. The results of the analysis of the impact of aid on reducing the unemployment rate in supported areas did not show, on the contrary, there is an apparent increase in the unemployment rate in the affected municipalities by more than 4%, what means that, executed projects do not contribute

to the development of business activities in the affected areas' (DHV, Tima, 2010, p. 189).

The current situation illustrates Caballero's well-known paradox (Caballero et al., 2005, p. 282) which concerns the discrepancies among objectives, scope and results of rural development. On the one hand, most experts agree that rural development policy should be aimed at specific locations (*place-based*), it should have a multisectoral character and should be based on integrated projects involving multiple levels of public administration (*multilevel governance*) (see OECD, 2006b, p. 144). On the other hand, according to Caballero, generally weak and limited results of rural development policies can be seen in any state because, in his opinion, multidisciplinary approaches pose a very serious threat and can be criticised as inaccurate.

A main driver of the current situation is the uneven distribution of funds between rural development and the agricultural sector. According to the OECD, the Caballero paradox is caused mainly by the influence of a 'strong agricultural lobby in all states compared to the rather weak and unorganised actors of non-agricultural rural areas while the dimension of rural development policy focuses rather on formulating objectives than the applicability of the real contents of this policy' (OECD, 2006b, p. 144). Although there is, for example, the Association of Towns and Municipalities in the Czech Republic representing a certain lobbying sub-group of actors in rural areas, only medium-sized municipalities and towns play significant lobbying roles. This should be contrasted with the situation in small rural municipalities which have not received much support from this association for a long time. Therefore, in conclusion, there appears to exist evidence of the Caballero rural development policy paradox in the context of rural areas in the Czech Republic.

## **8.5 Localisation of new innovation spillovers in rural areas of the Czech Republic in recent years**

The 'Digital Czech Republic' strategy emphasises the centrality of accessibility of high-speed Internet to foreign investment, with such accessibility often being a condition for FDI entry into the Czech Republic (MIT of the Czech Republic, 2011, p. 7). Similar conditions apply to the establishment of science and research centres. Participants of the OECD conference (2007) agreed that low-cost and reliable ICT infrastructure is essential but not sufficient for rural development. There are some necessary conditions for rural areas to benefit from ICT, e.g. intelligent use of technology by government, an institutional framework, business

structure, and minimum level of R&D capacities, among others. 'Once technology is properly deployed in rural areas, many innovative applications can take place' (OECD, 2007, p. 5). Such claims are reflected in Kramer and Diez's (2012) conclusion that innovative activity tends to be highly agglomerated, due to technological spillovers.

Two significant innovation spillovers have been recently uncovered in rural areas in the Czech Republic during the programming period (2007–2013). They are science and technology parks financed through the Operational Programme 'Enterprise and Innovation', with the Ministry of Industry and Trade acting as a coordinator:

1. ***Science and Technology Park Mstětice*** (CzechInvest, 2008). The location of the Science and Technology Park (STP) in the municipality Zeleneč-Mstětice, where there are only 29 houses, is significantly affected by the geographic proximity to the metropolis of Prague (about 15 km). This project can be described as the largest of its kind in the rural areas of the Czech Republic. The STP provides facilities for developers, scientists, and start-up entrepreneurs in transportation technologies and related fields. The project, costing EUR 6.4 million, was co-funded by the EU (ERDF) and the Faculty of Transportation Sciences at the Czech Technical University in Prague, and is executed by Eurosignal, a subsidiary of AŽD Praha (Automation of Railroad Transportation). Besides acting as a science and technology park, this institute also serves as a centre for technology transfer and a business incubator. The Business Incubator is part of the complex and is intended primarily for students and graduates of technical disciplines whose business ideas and objectives are assisted by the centre. Among other advantages, the students and graduates in question have the opportunity to rent space on favourable terms and access modern science and technological equipment made available by the incubator. The aim is to support small and medium-sized enterprises and the development of new technologies, especially in areas of transportation.
2. ***Research and Development Centre for Medical Nanobiotechnology – Dolní Dobrouč*** (CzechInvest, 2012). The Contipro Group has focused on research, development and biotechnological production of active ingredients for the cosmetic and pharmaceutical industry for over 20 years. In 2010, this company established a new research and development centre in Dolní Dobrouč for EUR 4.7 million with the help of subsidies from OPEI (MPO). Through this investment, the company seeks to enhance its long-term competitiveness and

investment in R&D. Thanks to the success of the project, future research and development activities have been promoted.

Statistical information on STPs in the Czech Republic is collated and recorded by the Science and Technology Park Association of the Czech Republic. Figures suggest that STPs are located in rural areas mainly in the Central Bohemian Region (total of four<sup>1</sup>) due to the proximity to the Prague metropolitan region. Outside the Central Bohemian Region, only one STP, founded in 2003 and located in a rural area, can be found, in Nové Hradky in the South Bohemian Region. In other regions of the Czech Republic, STPs are found only in cities. Construction of STPs supports the development of local infrastructure; with skilled labour available mostly in urban areas, it is hardly surprising that most STPs tend to be concentrated in urban areas.

## **8.6 Innovative approaches in rural labour markets in the Czech Republic**

As regards STP developments, it is necessary to highlight the importance of human resources. The OECD Conference (2007, p. 2) concludes that ‘investments in human capital can not only foster the creation of innovation but also, and most importantly for rural areas, the assimilation of innovation that is often produced elsewhere’. The European Social Fund (ESF) attends to this issue as part of the support provided for international cooperation projects under procedural and organisational innovation for the 2007–2013 programming period.

The main objective of these international cooperation projects (financed by the Operational Programme Human Resources and Employment, Priority Axis 5) is direct support for innovation through the exchange of experiences and skills, verification of policy proposals, and disseminating best practice. Therefore, these projects provide a basis for international comparisons. Through international cooperation, the aim is to increase the efficiency of the implementation of ESF and its labour market instruments at local, regional and national levels. Some international cooperation projects in the Czech Republic under this programme have been specifically aimed at rural areas in the Czech Republic. In the Czech Republic, these projects have focused mainly on the exchange of experiences among regions in areas of rural population involvement and social engagement, networking among actors in rural areas, support for lifelong learning opportunities, and transfer of know-how in improving the employability of people living outside the main

settlements in the region. The objective of these activities is to support rural development and employment rate growth among target groups as well as to maintain traditional and typical business forms in rural areas, such as the production of high-quality regional organic food and crafts.

As part of the international cooperation projects, there are a total of seven projects focused on rural areas in the Czech Republic in the current programming period (2007–2013). We assess them next in terms of their innovation and added value:

1. ***Project – Alternative work arrangements in rural areas (ESFCR, 2013a)***. The main objectives of the project are, first, the transfer of know-how from an international project partner that has many years of experience and knowledge in the labour market in rural areas, and second, improving the employability of people living outside the main settlement in the region. Within the project, the methodology and methods regarding assessment of the labour market in rural areas in general, identification of its risks, creation of sustainable job positions with local employers, and assisting local residents through alternative work arrangements, are implemented with a view to the local conditions (i.e. the rural area of Týn nad Vltavou). The international partner (Caisse Centrale de MSA, France) has been using alternative work arrangements for various types of employees (ranging from parents of children, people with disabilities, to people of retirement age) for a long time as a tool suitable for enhancing the employability of people in rural areas. Its methodology (i.e. methods of implementation in practice) is formed of cooperation with employers, and the ability to analyse the labour market in rural areas is especially applicable to the Týn nad Vltavou region. A methodological centre will be established within the project and will provide individual assistance to the target group, ensure the spreading of all project outputs, and manage cooperation with participating organisations and the international partner.
2. ***Support for employment in rural parts of the Ústí Region (ESFCR, 2013b)***. The project has the ambition to improve the labour market in rural areas of the structurally affected region, i.e. the Ústí Region. Specifically, it addresses the status of persons with lower qualifications in rural agricultural areas through the exchange of experience with an international partner and the introduction of process innovation in the preparation of educational programmes with the international partner. The Ústí Region has been consistently the region with the highest unemployment rate in the Czech Republic, with

a low number of vacancies in agriculture and increasing demands of employers on employees in the agricultural sector. The project is expected to impact mainly on the districts of Litoměřice and Louny – agricultural areas characterised by the high dependency of the local economy on agriculture. The aim of the project is to find examples of good practice with the help of the international partner that would be suitable for the local conditions of the Ústí Region. A new educational programme was designed, especially in agricultural livestock and plant production, focused on the Binding Standards of Agricultural Practice, modern trends in agriculture – plant and animal production, diversification of agricultural activities, and income.

In relation to the above examples of international cooperation projects, it is necessary to draw attention to one important fact. At the turn of the millennium, ‘copying examples’ or examples of good practice had become a fashionable approach to designing development concepts for rural areas. However, the knowledge economy is highly complex and contingent upon a number of different interrelated factors, the unique combination of which creates conditions for success, which tends to be location-specific. Rural areas are not homogeneous, and therefore it is usually impossible to apply examples of good practice elsewhere, without modification of approaches which may differ when compared to the successful original. Moreover, in practice, we also encounter the proviso that ‘it is always about people’ who implement the approaches with personal inventiveness, enthusiasm, and an interest in developing something in the given location. Therefore, the above examples of international cooperation projects are very important in the sense that they illustrate modifications being explored to match the conditions of Czech rural areas.

Within EAFRD, Axis I, while innovation and innovative approaches are supported in the Czech Republic, these subsidies focus only on agricultural entities and not on other actors in rural areas (i.e. outside the agricultural sector). The mid-term evaluation of the Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 showed

that there has been a decrease in interest in cooperation with scientific research institutions. Some cooperation in the implementation of agricultural production innovation can be noticed, however, the vast majority of it is only in the form of consultation at the beginning of innovation considerations. In the implementation phase of the innovation, however, agricultural products rarely accept the risk

of uncertain results of innovation in their own development of a specific solution. Therefore, they select an already proven technology in most cases which they only adjust to their own needs at best. Agricultural businesses thus clearly prefer ready-made products and 'turnkey' solutions from suppliers compared to cooperation with scientific research institutions in the development of a new solution. (DHV, Tima, 2010, p. 90)

Therefore, rural development policy has had a limited impact only on the development of the knowledge economy, particularly due to its primary focus on agricultural entities. It is clear that rural development policy should be better coordinated with other sector-oriented policies, taking us back to a problem mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, i.e. the need to clarify the definition of rural development policy and its links to employment policy. The existing agricultural emphasis in EU rural development does not incorporate significant support for the development of the knowledge economy in rural areas. An appraisal of all existing approaches is needed, and their application should be better coordinated, to greatly increase the synergistic effects of implemented projects.

## **8.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, we focused on the assessment of the fundamental issues associated with ICT infrastructure, localisation of new innovation spillovers and past experiences with the application of innovative approaches in human resources development in the labour market in rural areas of the Czech Republic. These issues were considered with a view to EU rural development policy and current trends related to rural knowledge economy.

There are a number of instances where rural knowledge economy policy in the Czech Republic explicitly incorporates aspects of cooperation, collaboration, or the lack of these, as well as lobbying interests and contested views of rural development across the EU. The main problem lies in inequities in the distribution of funds to rural development and agriculture as the main driver of the Caballero paradox. This current situation regarding rural development policy is caused by the presence of strong agricultural lobbies across the EU. The main financial instruments for rural development are allocated to the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) which formally declares a two-pillar system, i.e. support for production agriculture, on the one hand, and support

for rural development, on the other hand. However, the importance and role of the second pillar is marginal within the CAP. The incorporation of rural development policy as part of the CAP could be considered an 'avoidance' manoeuvre during negotiations on further liberalisation of the agricultural trade at the WTO level. The formation of the second pillar should thus in the future focus on allocating significant funds to a multifunctional agriculture.<sup>2</sup> Two separate pillars are often mentioned in expert literature and at the level of policy makers in the EU; however, the reality is fundamentally different due to the unclear extent of the overlap between the need to support multifunctional agriculture and the structural characteristics of rural areas. From a practical point of view, rural development is a more complex and territorially-based issue (see also Pěluča et al., 2013).

Therefore, the term 'agricultural concept' of rural development policy under the CAP represents a limiting factor in enhancing the knowledge economy and overall territorial cohesion. For now, the 'structural' concept of rural development plays a marginal role under the CAP, in terms of funding, although its role and importance increase over time. With regard to strengthening the knowledge economy, the Caballero paradox is still visible. This is owing not to the discrepancy between objectives, scope, and results of rural development policy but to the uneven distribution of funds to rural development and agriculture (emphasis on the above 'agricultural' concept of rural development).

The current dynamics of global economic development create social and economic transformations which fundamentally change not only the business environment but also the space for the formulation of traditional area development approaches and tools. Rural areas are mostly affected by trends associated with the increased availability of information through the development of ICT infrastructure in an area. In expert terminology, this is referred to as strengthening the so-called 'digital regions' that represent one of the input factors of the knowledge economy. The importance and level of innovation in economic development of regions and rural areas has grown in connection with the expansion and development of ICT and its general accessibility. Therefore, the perception and understanding of space and distances as problematic aspects of rural areas are affected by this concept. In a digitally connected era, rural areas may be accessed almost immediately. Based on these assumptions, it would thus be possible to develop not only rural areas, but also links between urban and rural areas.

The high-speed Internet coverage of rural areas of the Czech Republic is not problematic because of the dense settlement structure and the

high number of small and medium-sized towns representing natural centres of rural development. On the other hand, there is a low rate of Internet connections in rural households (especially NGA). The main reason for the limited connection of rural households to the Internet is relatively expensive access to this type of infrastructure for its residents due to a very fragmented settlement structure which is costly to maintain. As regards the localisation of innovation spillovers in rural areas of the Czech Republic, except for the two examples discussed in this chapter, most new innovation spillovers were located in urban areas over the 2007–2013 period. While this is not surprising, with innovation and R&D having a natural tendency to be located in cities, the problem lies in the lack of cohesive rural development policy instruments to support further development of the knowledge economy in rural areas where these new innovation spillovers are located. In this chapter, a number of ‘soft’ examples (caselets) of positive collaboration were also presented, including the international cooperation projects – cooperation with scientific research institutions. It is appropriate to ask ourselves how these elements supporting the knowledge economy in rural areas are linked with the EU rural development policy in the Czech Republic. What are the main limitations of rural knowledge economy policies? The problem lies in an inadequate coordination with other innovation support policies, and the frictions between those policies and ones focused on knowledge-based economy support (cohesion policy). We argue that there is no targeted coordination among these supported activities, due to the separate implementation of the cohesion policy and rural development policy in the second pillar of the EU CAP. Furthermore, there is no comprehensive evaluation of the support for the knowledge economy, with distinctions drawn between urban and rural regions. Therefore, the development of the knowledge economy in rural areas is highly limited within rural development policy, with a real possibility that it will be supported only in connection to other instruments within EU cohesion policy. In reality, however, there is no evidence of overall coordination and synergy of supported links. Therefore, the knowledge economy has had rather selective geographic and territorial impacts that are not too positive as far as rural areas are concerned.

## Notes

1. Innovative Technology Centre – VÚK, Panenské Břežany; Science and Technology Park Řež, Husinec – Řež; STP Mstětice, Zeleneč – Mstětice; VYRTYCH – Technology Park and Incubator, Březno.

2. The term 'multifunctional agriculture' includes not only the production and provision of food supply at a sufficient quality, but also the maintenance and preservation of landscape, environmental aspects, the issue of renewable natural resources, protection of biological diversification, and development of rural areas.

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# 9

## Processes of Cooperation in Rural Areas: Obstacles, Driving Forces, and Options for Encouragement

*Kim Pollerman*

### 9.1 Introduction

The *challenges and problem situations* in peripheral rural areas are quite diverse. Some areas have a successful development. But in disadvantaged regions possibilities for attractive employment opportunities are often few and inhabitants may feel less connected to their area. Also, their willingness to invest time and capital to improve the 'liveability' of their habitat deteriorates. Highly educated persons are often the first to leave, which contributes to the persistent underdevelopment of rural areas with low potential (Stockdale, 2006; Wellbrock et al., 2012).

General *factors of economic performance* of rural regions are related to the interplay of local and global forces, in which territorial dynamics, population dynamics and globalisation are main determinants (Agarwal et al., 2009; Terluin, 2003).

One important aspect is the role of *social capital*. Empirical and theoretical work about the concept of social capital suggests that, in the face of similar economic challenges, those regions with high levels of social capital will be likely to fare better than comparable areas with lower levels of social capital (Woodhouse, 2006). This is especially relevant for cooperative development approaches: When people know and trust each other, have an expectation of cooperative give and take, and a history of working together to solve problems, they have a powerful mechanism for collective goal achievement. Past research documents a variety of collective outcomes attributable to social capital (Besser and Miller 2013, p. 187).

To learn more about driving factors behind the economic performance of peripheral regions is not only of scientific interest, but also of high political relevance to the design of evidence-based *support measures*

(Ray, 2000; Terluin, 2003). In this context it is more problematic for policy to influence economic performance by overcoming problems associated with poor accessibility and peripherality. In contrast, improving rural economic performance by raising skills is more amenable to policy intervention (Agarwal et al., 2009, p. 318). Also, it should always be questioned to what extent lasting, self-contained processes develop and /or to what extent funding can really contribute to the achievement of objectives. Projects and measures should be conceptualised in such a way so that they are durable (functional, staff, financial) and stable after the expiration of support (Neumeier and Pollermann, 2014). The success of support depends on the arrangement of effective, cooperative and operational partnerships between diverse actors (Wellbrock et al., 2012).

Overall an *integrated approach* seems to contribute more to a highly complex task like influencing rural development than approaches focussed solely on different sectors. Thus rural development has to deal with multi-functionality (Gallent et al., 2008, p. 19). Thereby *participative processes* and collaborations are useful vehicles to involve different groups of actors and to create new ideas for rural development. One example for a place-based participation approach is LEADER (Pollermann et al., 2013; Rizzo, 2013).

The mobilisation and enduring commitment in such processes is strongly dependent on people's ability to develop *sustainable structures* (Lee et al., 2005; Banaszak and Beckmann 2006). Three elements are essential for an enduring and trusting relationship in such structures: longevity, consistency, and regularity of contact (Fisher, 2013, p. 20). Organisational structures such as a framework for cooperation have to *connect different actors with sometimes divergent interests*. From a thematic point of view one can, for example, differentiate actors from agriculture, tourism, nature conservation or local trade and handicraft. Another distinguishing factor to be taken into account is the sphere of society to which the actors belong: state, private sector or civil society (Pollermann, 2005).

The aim of building such structures is to foster synergies from different sectors and to use the specific potential of a rural area through *cooperations in different fields* within a long term development approach. Possible collaborative arrangements include for example the establishment of food chains with a common local brand, in urban-rural partnerships or in connection with tourism.

A common approach – especially in peripheral areas – is to use the potential of rural tourism; and if a region wants to use *tourism* as a

vehicle for economic development, working together is a key element (Neumeier and Pollermann, 2014). That means a tourism destination must offer a variety of products and services (Haugland et al., 2011), which are constantly being adapted by the different regional stakeholders to reflect changes in demand (McAreavey and McDonagh, 2010). For tourism development, coordination and cooperation between local government and businesspeople is crucial. Tourism requires different types of businesses to work together because, by its nature, tourism has been closely related with and conditioned by diverse businesses such as shops, hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions (Wilson et al., 2001). Furthermore, tourism is place-oriented, and the areas surrounding a tourist attraction are important as well. Hence high-quality tourism involves not just individual businesses, but the environment and the community surrounding these tourism businesses (Murphy, 1985; Wilson et al., 2001; Brandth and Haugen, 2011).

Beyond economic ends, cooperation also plays an important role in *social development*. For example, community nonprofit organisations play a leading role in addressing social issues and in building up community identity, whereby collaboration enables society to draw on the creative energies and human and financial resources of all sectors (Snaveley and Tracy, 2000).

Altogether there are a lot of ideas for *synergies across different sectors*. Although conflicts between agriculture, tourism, and nature conservation are commonplace, collaborations and win-win situations are also possible, because under some conditions different groups need each other. For example, nature and landscape are basic ingredients of tourism, attractive landscapes are made of, or shaped, by agriculture, and tourists bring additional income for farmers, which is crucial for the survival of agriculture especially in disadvantaged mountainous areas. Therefore, practical solutions for cooperation include win-win solutions through marketing of environmentally-friendly products or environmental education activities in connection with visitor guidance (Pollermann, 2004; Ackermann, 2013).

So in general it can be recommended to 'strengthen the cooperation of local actors and the cooperation of actors inside and outside the region. This cooperation facilitates the creation and maintenance of networks and public/private partnerships and may result in local synergy ... In addition, a cultural-territorial identity may also serve as a main catalyst in raising local consciousness towards cooperation' (Terluin, 2003, p. 342). But it has to be considered that such cooperation and associated collaborative planning approaches take place within specific social

and cultural contexts and networks of social relations, which are different in every region (Bruckmeier and Tovey, 2008; Neumeier, 2011; Bock, 2012).

Although there is much promise in synergy and cooperation among different groups, it has to be pointed out that extant research identifies a *gap between the initial goals and the reality* of their implementation for many projects, in spite of examples of impressive success stories (Pollermann, 2006, p. 382).

## 9.2 Questions and methods

The research question addressed in this contribution is as follows: what are obstacles and driving forces for cooperation in peripheral areas (addressed in the following section). As cooperation processes are not static, motivation changes are typical over time, explored in the fourth section of the chapter. This is followed by an analysis of options for encouragement. In this context, experiences from the LEADER approach (a funding opportunity which is part of the European agricultural fund) will be elaborated in the fifth section, followed by an overview of lessons for shaping processes of cooperation in rural areas.

Several research results are used to discuss these questions:

1. A review of (German-language) literature about success factors and obstacles to cooperative processes, mostly in connection with rural tourism development and general community development in rural areas (Neumeier et al., 2011; Neumeier and Pollermann, 2014).
2. Empirical investigations into cooperation between agriculture, tourism and nature conservation as part of a research project carried out at University of Hanover (financed by the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt) to generate knowledge of planning strategies. This includes detailed evaluations as heuristic case-studies in two regions (Weissensee in Austria and Dahner Felsenland in Germany), a written inquiry into 37 processes of different kinds of rural cooperation in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy, and an expert survey (guided personal interviews with planners/practionieers) (Pollermann, 2004, 2006, 2008).
3. The findings of the evaluation of Rural Development Programs (RDPs) in seven German 'Länder' (federal states). The evaluation of these RDPs started in 2007 and will end in 2015. The LEADER evaluation is conducted by the Thünen Institute for Rural Studies. Thereby 98 LEADER areas and 23 other regions with Local Development

Plans are examined. A mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods has been used, depending on the specific research questions posed. The results presented here are primarily based on case studies (nine regions) and two surveys with written questionnaires (1,500 members of the Local Action Groups (LAGs); 100 LAG-managers of LEADER-Regions) (Pollermann et al., 2013).

### 9.3 Obstacles and driving forces to build up 'potential of success'

To discuss relevant obstacles and driving forces, first some experiences with rural cooperation will be shown, followed by the discussion of general 'potential of success'. Regarding the results from case studies on cooperation among agriculture, tourism, and nature conservation, the following driving forces and obstacles can be identified (Pollermann, 2004):

1. **Driving forces:** Positive experiences are attributed to (flexible) bonus schemes, via which farmers are rewarded for an environmentally-friendly extensive agriculture. This was the case in Weissensee, where money from tourism was used to fund an own programme. As a result, 100% of the farmers in this area cooperated. Another option is guaranteed sales (through gastronomy, for example in Moorbad-Harbach) of agricultural products produced under environmentally-friendly conditions. Besides a professional economic concept, an open and – above all – continuous participation of regional actors (especially key influential actors) and farmers' involvement, specifically, are crucial.
2. **Obstacles** to achieving the goals can be psycho-social, such as personal pettiness and competition. Furthermore, low environmental consciousness amongst decision-makers and an insufficient continuity in planning may cause a lack of proper evaluation and a too-short period of external consultation.

Planning processes also had an *impact on the participants*. Readiness for cooperation among different groups was subject to a noticeable change in the examined 37 processes. During the planning process improvements in the relations among groups were normal, and deterioration was very rare. Learning processes induced by the planning procedure and implementation were the rule – clearly a positive outcome (Pollermann, 2006, p. 383).

In order to be able to properly coordinate collaborative developments, a strategy that builds upon *factors* such as the *potential for success* is advisable. Such potential not only influences the results of planning processes, but is itself changeable. This kind of strategic thinking and planning has its origin and scientific roots in the field of corporate planning. An associated planning strategy can be defined as the design of the planning process, carried out in a systematic way and from a long-term perspective (Pollermann, 2004, p. 41).

The elaboration of strategic success potential in rural cooperation and attendant assumptions is based on empirical research and a broad review of the German-language *literature about success factors* of participatory planning, which was also verified by expert interviews in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (originally derived by Pollermann, 2004; for further details and a updated summary see also Neumeier et al., 2011; Neumeier and Pollermann, 2013).

In order to combine the determinants of success in rural cooperation planning, the following six main strategic potentials of success have been identified:

1. Quality of professional concept;
2. Organisational structure;
3. Commitment of the participants;
4. Abilities of the participants;
5. Level of acceptance and cooperation;
6. Access to material resources.

A summary of factors and actions which influence success potential is shown in Figure 9.1.

In the planning process, the initial conditions specific to a region need to be determined, in order to adapt the strategy to specific local conditions ('strategy-fit'). In addition, the specific interactions among success potentials have to be considered. For example, the level of acceptance and cooperation depends also on the abilities of actors to communicate and solve conflicts. Furthermore, one has to take into account the 'minimum-factor': a single potential of success, which – if especially unfavourable – can damage the whole cooperation process. For example, if the commitment of actors is low, success is unlikely even if the other five success potentials are favourable and well-developed.

Therefore, creating a strategy should take into account the specific needs and interests of the relevant groups of actors. Regarding the *specific*

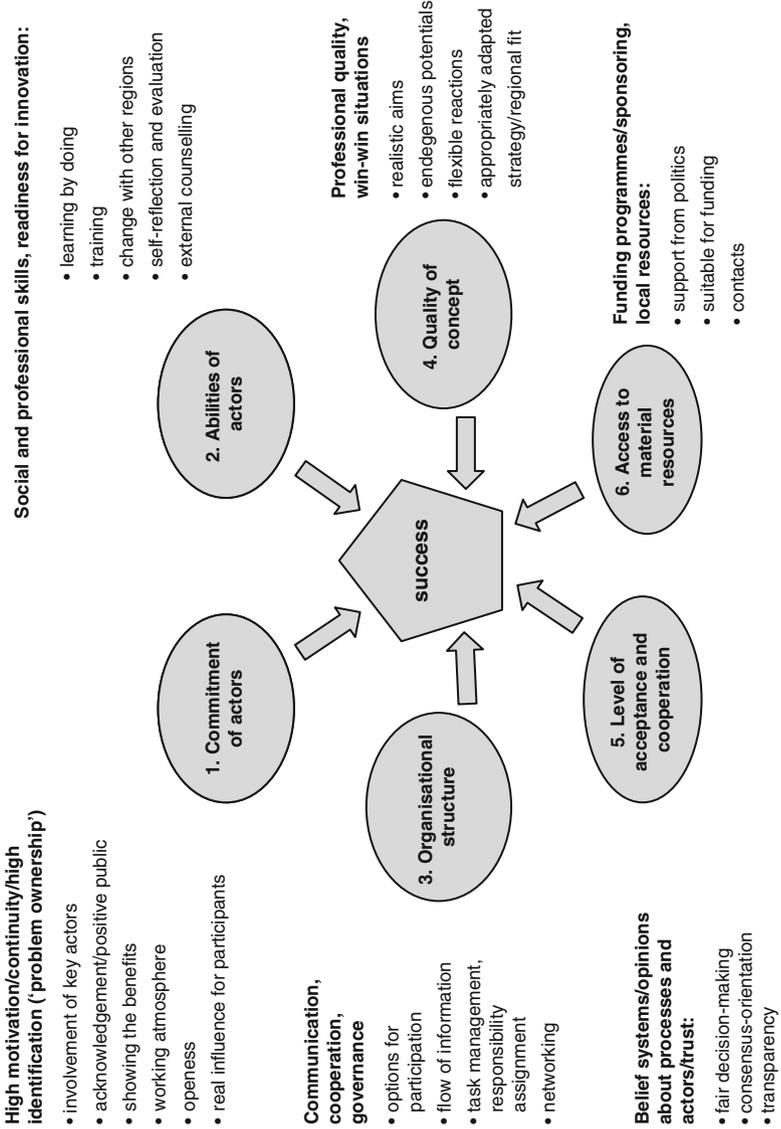


Figure 9.1 Areas of potential success of cooperative approaches  
 Source: Neumeier and Pollermann (2014).

obstacles of *different sectors* working together, the following aspects have to be taken into account (Pollermann, 2005; Fürst et al., 2008):

1. **State:** public authorities are restricted by a bureaucratic framework. Politicians often act for their 'own' region, or small part of a region (generating obstacles to larger collaboration).
2. **Economy:** an over-emphasis on economic ends; 'time problems' ('business being too busy'). Business people often prefer single projects and do not favour long discussions.
3. **Civil society:** such actors are used to having longer negotiations, but dislike hierarchical decision-making and are not always familiar with market rules, which affect economic outcomes of cooperation.

When integrating the above mentioned groups, they can *support cooperation in different ways*. For example, while farmers and tourism enterprises from the private sector may form a cooperative economic network, the state could participate by funding it in the initial phase (for example, managing costs of coordination or obtaining financial support from funding schemes). Actors from civil society, such as environmental interest groups, can be involved in discussions about environmental schemes, thus generating reputation and credibility, and supporting the marketing of such schemes (Pollermann, 2004). For the performance of such networks, two dimensions of *social capital* are necessary: (a) partners' reputation and (b) trust among partners. While trust is associated with future actions, partners' reputation is an assessment of their past actions, therefore these dimensions may be seen as two sides of the same coin (Jobin, 2008, p. 451).

#### 9.4 Development of motivation through time

As already mentioned, highly motivated participants are a fundamental precondition for the success of sustainable rural cooperation. Motivation and commitment to such processes can have very different sources. For example, economic pressures may play a crucial role in pushing actors to act (if agricultural incomes deteriorate). Usually there may be *changes in motivation* over time, depending on external as well as internal cooperation-related factors.

In practice it is possible to detect very different motivation dynamics. To illustrate *typical variations*, the empirical results from a written inquiry in projects/processes of different kinds of rural cooperation in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy are shown in Figure 9.2. Each of the lines

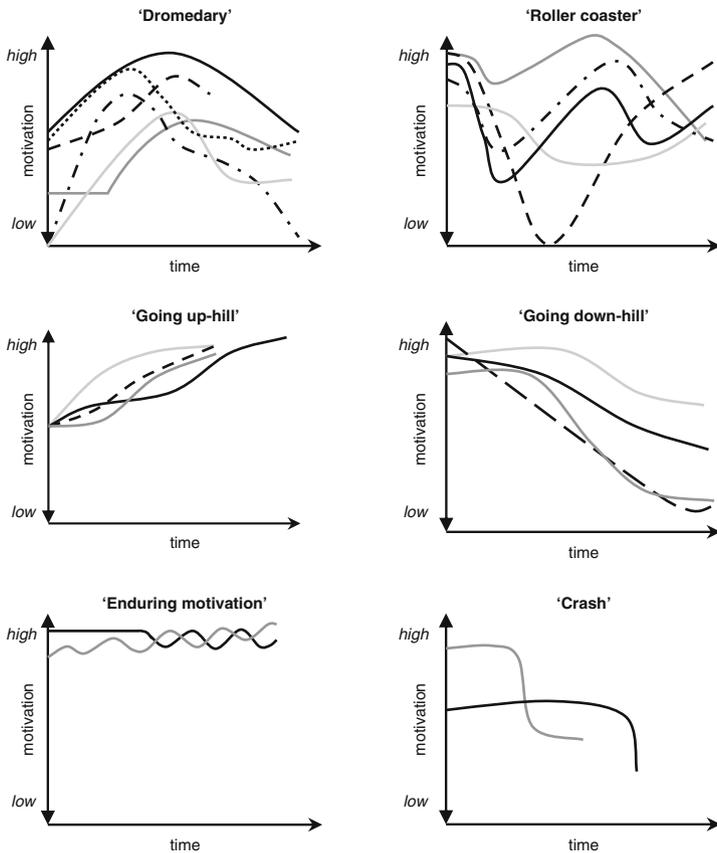


Figure 9.2 Variations of motivation development

*Explanation:* All interrogated actors were asked to draw a line in terms of motivation and time. Every line was drawn by one person and represents one case of a cooperation process. The six different types were grouped afterwards to show similarities.

*Source:* Pollermann (2008).

represents one case, respectively one motivation development. The six different types in this figure were differentiated to illustrate similarities.

The lines were drawn by one key actor (usually from the process management or the executive director of cooperation), so each is a general estimate only. It is also obviously a simplified description, because the motivation of a single actor varies from the average motivation. Experiences of the examined processes are also quite different: some rare cases show an 'enduring motivation', while elsewhere the motivation is

more like a 'roller coaster', while in third cases there are straight motivation developments 'up-hill' or 'down-hill' (Pollermann, 2008).

As regards the sources of oscillations, typical factors include for example 'a drop after a euphoric start', which is especially relevant if there are high expectations and little in the way of visible success following planning. Another possible reason for a drop in motivation is 'the first hassle', which can happen if there are no real exchanges and clearing processes concerning the different expectations and interests.

Looking at the readings for *correlation between motivation and overall success* on a 10-point scale (10 = very high, 1 = very low), it is obvious that while high initial motivation is no guarantee for success (in the nine cases of high initial motivation, the average success estimation by surveyed actors was 7.4 [median: 7], while in the other 12 cases the average was slightly higher: 7.6 [median: 8]), there is a strong correlation between motivation towards the end of the planning process and success (in eight cases of high motivation, at the end the average success rating was 8.7; the eight cases of medium motivation at the end scored only 7, while those of low motivation – 4.8). In fact, there is mutual influence between these two variables (Pollermann, 2004, p. 200).

A certain degree of oscillation is not necessarily negative. However, it is very important that there are not such drops that too many actors use the 'exit option' (rather than exercising the 'voice option') and leave the network.

Motivation *can be influenced* in different ways. Besides offering real benefits to participants, 'soft factors' are especially important. These include the pleasure of working together, celebrating together, and empathy.

Regarding *place-based approaches*, relatedness and association with a particular area is an important factor. In successful cases, there is an ongoing interplay between the two. On the one hand, high level of relatedness favours motivation and commitment ('I want to do something for my local area'); on the other hand, relatedness growth occurs following cooperative work ('I have spent time and contributed to improvements in my local area'). Thus, rural cooperation leads to higher place attachment among participants, with such place attachment favouring future commitment (Fürst et al., 2008).

## 9.5 Options for encouraging cooperation – the case of LEADER

There is no blueprint for rural development.

(McAreevey and McDonagh, 2010, p. 5)

There are different avenues for external support available to promote cooperation in rural areas (Wellbrock et al., 2013). There are funding schemes targeting single enterprises, as well as integrated place-based approaches. For example, the Rural Development Programmes (RDPS) funded by the European Union support a wide range of activities. LEADER is one of their elements.

LEADER works as a bottom-up-oriented, participatory approach to cooperation among local actors in rural places (LEADER-Regions). Stakeholders from different institutions and of diverse origins come together in a Local Action Group (LAG) as a public-private partnership and make decisions about the financial support for projects. Participation and networking are crucial within this context. The LAGs in Germany deal mainly with tourism, diversification of the rural economy, environmental matters, demographic change and quality of life. Innovation and cooperation are thereby important aims. The qualification of rural actors is also relevant. A general assumption of this funding programme is that networking and working together among stakeholders from different sectors play an important role in promoting cooperation, generating new ideas, and advancing innovation. LEADER is also viewed through the prism of assisting the development of regional identities as a common 'sense of place' and the mobilisation of the commitment of local actors and endogenous resources. One objective of LEADER is to bring public, private and civil organisations together to create methods and knowledge for cooperation in order to achieve common goals (Pollermann et al., 2013).

In order to empirically test the effects of LEADER on cooperation, results from a survey of LAG-members are next assessed, with positive results (see Figure 9.3) dominating: overall, LEADER seems to engender improvements in 'cooperation beyond administrative borders' (such as narrow village boundaries), in 'improving of understanding views from other groups' and 'cooperation between different groups'. One may therefore conclude that LEADER is an example of how an external programme can connect actors across different interest groups who, without this programme, would otherwise in some cases not have met at all. Cooperation results in the exchange of knowledge, the development of new ideas, and new ways for sharing information (Pollermann et al., 2013).

What is also worthy of consideration is that, though a funding programme may not create success as such, it can provide support for increasing the probability of success (Neumeier and Pollermann, 2014). By observing the effect of LEADER on such 'potential of success', it is

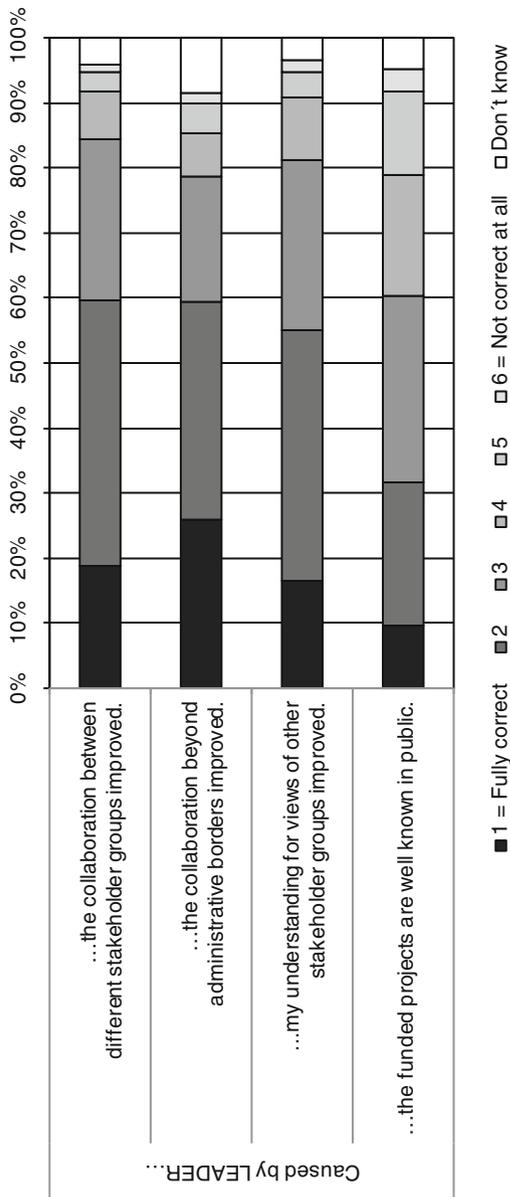


Figure 9.3 Estimations about the impact of LEADER  
 Note: n = 1428.  
 Source: Poltermann et al. (2013).

possible to judge whether LEADER can contribute to successful development. More specifically, LEADER has been shown to positively affect all six areas of potential success, albeit in different ways (see Table 9.1).

Regarding flexibility, a major strength of the LEADER approach is that it is actors who are familiar with local needs who make their own decisions at a local level. On the other hand, some bureaucracy may be caused by the framework set up by European regulations and the programming authorities in the member states. For the development of creative solutions and new ideas, it is often advantageous when narrow administrative limitations are not imposed. The possibility of funding experimental or innovative projects via LEADER depends very much on the extent to which the RDPs are able to create a suitable framework to fund projects outside the standard menu of measures. In theory, innovation plays an important part in LEADER, but in practice it may be limited. This assumption is underpinned by the results of the survey

*Table 9.1* Six areas of potential success

Potential of success	Options for encouragement via LEADER
1. Quality of concept	Regulations about key contents of Local Development Strategies; guidelines with checklists to foster high quality
2. Organisational structure	Financing staff: LAG-manager to set up participative structures; the 50/50% regulation (based on EU framework) for the decision-making body (LAG) makes sure that there is participation on the part of civil society and/or the private sector
3. Commitment of the participants	Support through LAG-management (important for volunteers that somebody is writing invitations, developing target-group specific possibilities for participation)
4. Abilities of the participants	Options for learning by doing; learning about specific views of other groups of actors; special measures for qualification, rural networks (seminar, publications); exchange among different LAGs (also internationally)
5. Level of acceptance and cooperation	Possibility to learn more about each other can create better understanding; additional money supports collaboration (because LEADER-funding is additional, it makes negotiations easier)
6. Access to material resources	Money for projects and staff; LAG-management could also give support for the acquisition of further funding from other funding schemes or private sector sources

of LAG managers, who note a decline in opportunities, in comparison with the possibilities for funding during the previous funding period (LEADER+). Within the survey, innovative projects were defined as 'projects with new approaches within the region which do not necessarily fit existing measure regulations'.

The restrictive rules of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) lead to limiting and, especially in the beginning, vague conditions and administrative obstacles such as time lags in approval procedures, no advance payments to the beneficiaries, and demanding documentation requirements. These obstacles featured in the results across empirical examinations: surveys with LAG members and LAG managers, interviews with beneficiaries and with the administrative staff responsible for project approvals. In light of the above mentioned limitations, improvements have already been made during this funding period by some federal states in Germany, and there are already signs that conditions for innovation will be better in the next funding period from 2014 (Pollermann et al., 2013). One essential improvement is the fact that the basis for project approval will change from schematic measure-orientation to target-orientation: whether an idea is funded will depend predominantly on whether it fits the targets of local development strategies which are designed by the LEADER-Regions themselves.

## **9.6 Conclusions**

Once you have missed the first buttonhole you'll never manage to button up.

(J.W. Goethe)

A strategic approach is recommended to overcome the obstacles to, and foster the success of, rural cooperation. Rural cooperation should focus on developing qualitative and sustainable growth instead of concentrating on fast growth. The LEADER approach is in line with such considerations, although there is a need for higher target-orientation of local development strategies, which is already evident in next funding period 2014+.<sup>1</sup>

During the planning process there are several decision points which are crucial for target-oriented steering: following the analysis of the situation, there is a need for a common vision to be agreed upon within a cooperation framework. Once the partners agree on common objectives, during the next step they must examine and single out the type

of governance that is most suitable to their partnership. The governance structure provides a framework within which they will make strategic decisions (in relation to the objectives), organisational decisions (regarding the use of resources) and operational decisions (regarding the delivery of outputs) (Jobin, 2008, p. 441).

Some basic recommendations for a planning strategy to design more effective cooperative processes include (Pollermann, 2006):

1. For the *development of the planning strategy*, the initial conditions specific to the region need to be examined, to adapt – at an early stage – the strategy to these conditions ('strategy-fit'). The actor-constellation and the acceptance conditions are therefore particularly important. Areas of relevance to such an analysis depend very much on the aims of cooperation (don't collect data which you don't really need).
2. For the *optimisation of the strategic success potentials*, numerous opportunities to improve individual success potential are shown in Figure 9.1. It is advisable to improve them continuously.
3. For the *design of planning procedures*, an overlap of planning and implementation is recommended, so that a dynamic approach with continuous self-reflection is created, rather than a classical approach with schematic sequential chronology (see Figure 9.4). To take advantage of the dynamic approach and in order to minimise its disadvantages, it is vital to first concentrate on pilot projects which are easy to implement and for which there is considerable consensus among various stakeholders. Such initial success may generate motivation and foster the growth of social capital among actors. The

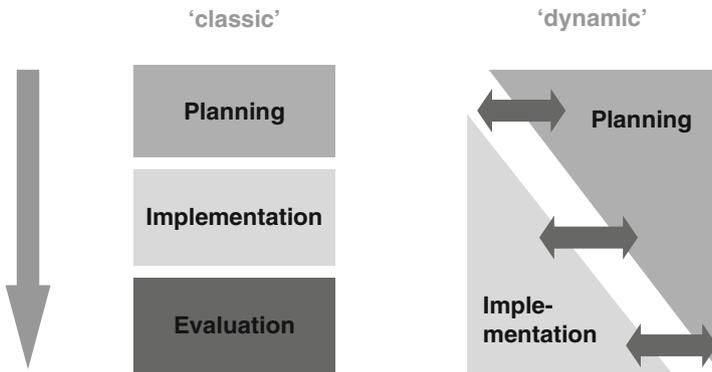


Figure 9.4 Classical and dynamic planning approaches

evaluation of the approach and its achievements should not assume the format of an ex post analysis, because it may be too late to influence negative developments. Necessary corrections are often much easier and cheaper at an early stage, so there should be an evaluation preceding implementation.

4. Finally, *process-integrated evaluation* of planning and implementation processes is crucial to establishing a self-learning system. This should contain elements for the establishment of an evaluation programme with contents, methods, and time intervals, as well as proposals for concrete steps of the evaluation of progress. Furthermore, it is advisable to do a meta-evaluation (an evaluation of evaluation) to question the effort of the evaluation in relation to the effect on improved steering of cooperation development.

In summary, key to the effective implementation of rural cooperation is the work of local actors. As the example of LEADER shows, there are various options available to encourage rural cooperation through external funding. For promising future policy design, it is important to set up a framework which supports the areas of potential success. Funding conditions should enable working, self-learning organisational structures, and may stimulate the commitment of local actors.

## Note

1. For an overview of future guidance on Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) see: [http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/themes/clld/policy-and-guidance/en/policy-and-guidance\\_en.cfm](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/themes/clld/policy-and-guidance/en/policy-and-guidance_en.cfm)

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## **Part IV**

# **Taking Further the Intellectual Debates on Rurality**

# 10

## Towards a Post-structuralist and Cultural Turn in Researching Rurality in Poland: A Geographical Perspective

*Konrad Czapiewski and Marcin Wójcik*

### 10.1 Introduction

Rural geography has developed and expanded with vigour in the last 30 years, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States. Theoretical approaches to two great traditions in the social sciences – the political-economic approach and the cultural approach (see Woods, 2005, 2009) – were of particular importance in shaping new research tracks and programmes. The root of the theoretical transformation in this field can be found in the multiple broad interpretations of the terms ‘rural’ and ‘rurality’ in the changing economic and political circumstances of the world (e.g. the ideology of globalisation, metropolisation, consumerism, environmentalism), as well as in deeper reflection on and attention to the links between rural geography and other social sciences (mainly sociology, cultural anthropology, and political economy). Though geographical studies of rural areas do not play a leading role in social science research in any country, they do have a tradition that stretches far back and have registered undeniable successes in both scientific theory and practice (see Bunce, 2005; Cloke et al., 2006; Woods, 2009).

Explaining the genesis of rural geography in the United Kingdom and the United States, and identifying factors that have transformed geographical thinking on the topic of the rural environment are vital to the development of this field of study in post-socialist countries. For post-socialist as well as for other states undergoing rapid structural transformation in the modern age (e.g. the economies of the BRICS countries) and their respective scholarly programmes on rural development, it is important to fish out and break down the specific theoretical

and methodological underpinnings created in English-speaking circles that would be useful and transposable to local research programmes, and to know how to develop them so that they are compatible within settings marked by entirely different cultural conditions. This is because the fundamental concept of rurality has a special, idiosyncratic character depending on the country as a result of its rural history, village structures, property rights, the modern-day needs of society and social groups and – most importantly from a geographical point of view – the vast differences in the environment of different countries, and its changing role in shaping the cultural and geographical specificity of the village. Our predecessors, the fathers of human geography, understood this perfectly, with prominent figures like P. Vidal de la Blanche (see e.g. Martin, 2005) basing their studies on the concept of heterogeneity of environment (*milieu*) and their corresponding 'lifeways' (*genres de vie*).

The path of methodological development has also had an important effect on geographical studies of rural areas in the countries in question. In this respect, we cannot ignore the influence of the scientific model that took shape under very distinct political and ideological circumstances, nor the development of scientific schools and research programmes, how they flourished and how they evolved (Wójcik, 2012). In the history of human geography in Poland, one hallmark of the period that spanned from the 1950s to the beginning of the 1990s was the division and compartmentalisation of sub-areas (agricultural geography, industrial geography, transportation geography, population and settlement geography), the predominance of quantitative methods, and the creation of ties with economics and spatial planning (and its application in practice). This was partly a result of the Soviet economic model that was imposed on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (characterised by the dominance of industrial production) and the subjugation of science and research to the study of economic structures.

The primary goal of this article is to analyse the scholarly discourse pertaining to the 'peripherality' of the countryside and rural collaboration or contestation in Polish geographical literature in an age marked by a post-structuralist turn in research on rurality. In social and scientific discussions alike, the rural periphery does not garner much attention in Poland. In the period of post-socialist transition, the dynamic, impressive reinvention of villages surrounding cities (suburbanisation) has been more popular as a topic. Contemporary interpretations of rurality in British and US literatures are much more 'lenient' in their assessment of the importance of peripheral rural areas, and uncover in them many values that may not necessarily be quantifiable in economic

terms (see Bunce, 2004). The English-language literature emphasises the complex mosaic that forms the image of the modern-day countryside. Some authors emphasise its qualities as a 'rural idyll', drawing links to its physical (e.g. open landscapes) and social (community and social bonding) traits. Others reveal stereotypes that are deeply embedded in society and which see the countryside predominantly as an area of generalised backwardness (see Halfacree, 2009). Regardless of these divergent viewpoints, the goal of geographical studies has been to identify the links between the human being and their – natural, cultural and economic – environment as well as forms of institutionalisation of social and economic life. This institutionalisation is expressed in collective action, therefore what is assessed is the ability of individuals bound by various kinds of relations to cooperate for the betterment of the environment in which they live, work, and execute ideas.

Geographical studies of the Polish countryside have traditionally privileged a neo-positivist conception of space (formalism) and have long lacked a centralised perspective based on the anthropocentric model. The body of work published to date has generally limited itself to presenting (economic) issues of production with some elements of planning and management techniques as applicable to rural areas. Consequently, quantitative and cartographic methods have predominated. In the last two decades – due in no small part to the dynamic processes brought on by regime change – this pattern has become relatively consolidated, which in turn is connected to the renewed demand for studies conducted by geographers that would exhibit the dynamics of on-going economic and demographic changes. This has involved a certain degree of reformulation of the notion of spatial development policy at both national and regional levels.

Most geographical studies also tend to inadequately incorporate social and cultural perspectives, especially those that illustrate the mechanisms by which different institutions – both formal and informal – work in the rural environment, or offer an assessment of the on-going transformation of the country's villages by their own inhabitants (their positions, opinions, and preferences). Developing such studies would entail reorienting them both theoretically and methodologically as part of a generation shift that has spurred a whole new education model in the area of Polish geography. The creation of new research programmes does not only depend on the constant search for new problems to tackle, but above all on a change in the paradigm (model) of scientific research. This, in turn, entails observing and taking note of the changes that have taken place in rural geography, especially in English-speaking countries.

In recent years, traditional, formal approaches have come under fire from a younger generation of Polish scholars who have instead begun experimenting with social and anthropological methods in their studies of rural areas and landscapes. The prevailing current in studies of spatial variation is shifting towards a model that examines variation of places. As a result, case studies (e.g. one village case studies) are becoming an increasingly popular methodological approach, complementary to the study of spatial structure. The gradual evolution of civil society in Poland and the increasingly nuanced understanding that citizens have of the direction of change (through the increasingly important role of local self-government structures) go hand in hand with the increasingly nuanced understanding that researchers have of their own methodologies. The theoretical and empirical works referring to and applying these changes mark a post-structural and cultural shift in geographical studies of rurality and the rural environment in Poland – a shift akin to similar past trends in English-language (mainly British) literature.

This article is made up of two complementary parts. In the first, we describe and interpret the changing paradigm of research on rural geography in English-speaking countries, expressed primarily in terms of the rise of poststructuralist and cultural approaches. Using these considerations as a springboard, we then move on to point out the historical, cultural and economic circumstances of the problems surrounding the development of theory and methodology in Polish rural geography, which can largely be identified within a wider web of issues affecting this subfield in most post-socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The second part of this study aims to present selected, representative empirical studies that illustrate the problems of research on rural geography in Poland in the context of its theoretical and methodological transformation, core-periphery concepts and role of rural collaboration. At the same time, the problems we chose to present allow us to uncover a double dualism in Polish research on rural geography.

The first ingredient of such a dualism pertains to differences in models of explanation. The goal is therefore to cast a bit of light on Polish rural geography in transition – a field in search of its own theoretical foundations and a methodology that would help identify and interpret many new research problems (both social and cultural), which had not been touched on before 1990 for ideological reasons (e.g. issues of identity, active citizenship, social inequality and deviance, etc.). On the other hand, such an approach allows us to illuminate the attachment of Polish rural geography to scientific approaches and viewpoints, particularly spatial analysis and mapping, which is largely a product of the

demand for such studies on the part of governmental institutions and self-governing bodies that focus on regional development and planning.

The second dualism pertains more to the subject matter itself, as it forms part of the problem of the interpretation of territorial discrepancies in development and their underlying causes. In the Polish paradigm, researchers studying rural areas were somewhat fated to take the unavoidable path of marginalisation and social and economic peripheralisation in their work – an outcome of the privileged status of research on industrial topics and urban growth in the socialist era, and metropolitanisation and globalisation in the period of transition and transformation. These competing drivers relegated studies of the rural context to an inferior, subordinate role in geographical research. For this reason, the concepts of centre and periphery played an important role – both positive and negative – for rural geographers in Poland, whose formal study area covers 90% of the country's territory. Its positive aspect lay in the perception of change on the rural-urban continuum, which allowed geographers to highlight the role of such change as an inherent characteristic of the countryside (modernisation). Negative repercussions included the tendency to assign rural areas the role of the city's 'poorer sister' who is always a few steps behind trends in social and economic transformation. Modern-day transformations not only modify the general perception of the countryside (through the re-evaluation of and renewed appreciation for a peripheral position in society), but also elevate rural geographers themselves to the status of 'discoverers', 'explorers' and interpreters of processes that, in a way, have fought their way back into the sphere of interest for human geography. It is therefore important to ask 'how and why' the interpretation of the rural periphery is changing, and on what level changes in perceptions of the role and importance of the countryside are taking place in a post-socialist society.

## **10.2 On rural geography**

### **10.2.1 The rise of poststructuralist and cultural approaches – the Anglo-American perspective**

Rural geography is a relatively young branch of geographical research (see Cloke, 2003; Woods, 2005). Its genesis, however, has to be viewed in the context of the theoretical changes in human geography that defined the late 1960s and early 1970s (see Cloke, 1989). Explaining the genesis of rural geography, particularly in the work of English and American researchers, requires us to outline a basic set of problems

related to theoretical and methodological transformations in human geography, particularly with reference to the development of social and cultural approaches. The evolution of critical perspectives in human geography stimulated the arrival of a whole 'new' set of fields in research such as 'new' cultural geography, 'new' economic geography, 'new' regional geography, and social geography as a methodologically innovative field that describes and accounts for social inequalities by area, their causes and consequences at different levels – from the local to the global – especially in the context of the urban transformation (e.g. Knox and Pinch, 2006). Social geography as a branch of human geography sprung from the soil of criticism of the naturalistic approach to social sciences. The factor that most decidedly defined the space of examination and interpretation of social geography was the rise of the global neoliberal economy of the 1980s, and its diverse consequences for societies that form as a result of the global circulation of capital and restructuring of labour markets worldwide (e.g. Massey, 1998; Harvey, 2005). From the beginning of the 1980s, rural geography has followed its urban counterpart, taking a similar path of theoretical and methodological development and engaging new research problems as the latter had taken in the 1970s, following the publications of Harvey (1973), Peet (1978) and others. The last 30 years of development of rural geography proved to be fertile ground for scientific discourses of inequalities in social development, moral aspects of spatial transformation, social distinction (including class), conflicts, marginalisation, social deviance etc. (see Cloke and Little, 1997). Today's landscape of rural geography is an outcome of the following developments (Wójcik, 2011):

1. theoretical and methodological advances in human geography, primarily based on a critical approach to naturalistic approaches – particularly traditional empiricism – and the development of critical currents of thought. This change is tied to the infiltration of social science methodology into human geography, in particular political economy, sociology, and cultural anthropology;
2. the reaction to changes in geographical research on cities (and metropolitan areas), especially as pertains to the development of urban social geography. Rural geography makes use of experience gained in urban geography in terms of readapting social research methods;
3. demand for geographical insight within interdisciplinary research teams, which is simultaneously a symptom of the strengthening of the field's identity in relation to other social sciences such as sociology or economics;

4. the decreasing importance of agriculture to national economies and as a source of income for rural populations, and the simultaneous appearance of new functions, unrelated to production, in rural areas; this results in a search for other approaches and methods of research that could recognise and account for these changes (primarily qualitative methods).

The development of the sphere of interest in rural geography can be traced by comparing the range of topics taken up in academic textbooks. Since the 1970s, agricultural geography has been drifting towards rural geography, for which agriculture is one of many research interests. New approaches to and directions in research have interpreted the changes taking place across national economies through the use of social science methodologies, particularly sociology. In the 1970s, the concept of rural geography was largely limited to presenting demographic and economic topics, and some techniques in planning and management of rural areas. This was the period in which the influence of the division of human geography into subfields was most conspicuous. Until the mid-1980s, geographical problems related to rural development were presented from a functionalist perspective, while social and geographical transformations were tackled in the context of urbanisation (social, economic, tourism etc.). Research methodology was driven primarily by qualitative methods and the presentation of the spatial structure of different processes (see Pacione, 1984; Phillips and Williams, 1984). Textbooks from the 1980s offer a more well-rounded and diverse set of topics, which is mainly a reflection of the expansion of rural functions, e.g. the development of the residential, tourism, recreational, service, and landscape protection functions, and consequently a greater interest in the conditions and quality of life, as well as local politics, on the part of rural geography (see Woods, 2005).

Current textbooks incorporate an expanded list of rural geography topics, including cultural topics. Changes are also visible in the differing interpretations of certain processes within the framework of a new research model (critical currents). The innovative nature of these positions comprises:

1. tackling rural transformation in a global context;
2. explaining the specific character of today's rural reorganisation, particularly in highlighting local (endogenous) factors of change;
3. emphasising cultural heterogeneity (e.g. in ways of living) as an important condition for variability and differentiation in rural areas and societies;

4. reflective descriptions that refer to the different categories of social reality (scientific, everyday, media) in explaining different processes.

The development of the critical current in rural geography is undoubtedly connected with changes that urban geography underwent following the publication of Harvey's (1973) work and that of other social geographers (e.g. Massey, 1984, Gregory, 1985), all of whom contested contemporary interpretations of social change as seen by neo-Marxist political economy. In the late 1990s North American and especially British literature, researchers visibly took a critical stance towards socio-geographical processes occurring in rural areas as a result of the rising importance of forms of professional activity not related to production among the inhabitants of the villages, as well as reverse migration flows from the city to the countryside. Consequently, de-emphasising of quantitative approaches to problems in favour of qualitative and normative approaches that direct attention toward the growing social and cultural heterogeneity of rural landscapes has become a key feature of geographical interpretations of rurality. This post-structuralist approach to social transformations is expressed through the renewed emphasis not on subjects and objects, but on the relations that bind them – a familiar tendency in the post-structuralist world (Murdoch, 2006). One research perspective that has gained relevance in rural geography is the description of social perspectives on the countryside, and the different ways of presenting rural areas (cultural representations) in the media, politics, development plans, and everyday conversation (Halfacree, 2009). Research on social impressions of the countryside reveal that citizens' picture of rural areas is selective, partial, and dependent on the cultural characteristics of the population (Halfacree, 2009). Perceptions of the rural sphere are tainted by deeply rooted stereotypes, both negative and positive. Positive perceptions of rural contexts stem from stereotypes of the rural idyll. In this view, countryside life is a harmonious, quaint, folksy, idyllic experience in a beneficial environment, particularly in contrast to the rapidly expanding and increasingly heterogeneous urban areas. The idealisation of the rural environment encompasses a number of aspects, both material (e.g. an open landscape, aesthetically pleasing surroundings, proximity to nature) and social (such as perceptions of social unity within community, local aspects of life, safety etc.) (Halfacree, 1993, 1995).

Negative perceptions involve portraying rural areas as backward, incapable of keeping up with urban social transformations, populated by an uneducated mass that is firmly attached to the rules that govern patriarchal societies. This negative view of the countryside is most commonly

felt in the urban societies of the industrial era, a period that featured the rapid expansion and rise in importance of cities (Halfacree, 2009). In the contemporary world, this vision of the countryside is gaining sway in developing countries, which almost invariably experience significant migration from rural areas to the cities, intensive and dynamic industrialisation, and cultural transformations that exemplify a departure from the tradition of agrarian development and local cultures in favour of models promoted by mass culture (Halfacree, 2009).

In the early 1990s, discussions took place among rural geographers, especially in the United Kingdom, on the issue of the contemporary identity of the countryside and the prospects for furthering studies on such issues (Philo, 1992; Murdoch and Pratt 1993). The elusive nature of the definition of the countryside in the contemporary era is a consequence of the individualisation and differentiation of social life, both in terms of human activity (everyday practices and routines) and the more figurative, symbolic (perceptual and representational) sphere. Modern-day studies of rural areas in the social sciences take great pains and make great efforts to prove that there are still significant differences between the urban environment and the rural, while the processes of transformation that take place in the rural context are not quite as universal and homogeneous as some supporters of urbanisation and metropolisation would like them to be. On the flip side, there is no dearth of voices calling for the abandonment of the countryside as a pre-determined mode of representing and explaining certain processes, in favour of broader and more relative concepts such as, for instance, local structures, localism, small social structures etc. (Hoggart, 1990). In many countries whose societies are entering the post-industrial stage of development, the process of counter-urbanisation, first identified in the social sciences, encompasses not only urban-to-rural migrations and the transformation of social structures, but also the arrival and creation of different (local) cultural forms, which arise in opposition to the models set by mass (global) culture. In geographical studies of rural culture, the idyllic image of the countryside is often contested as fabricated by the media and solidified in the perceptions of part of the population (Philo, 1992). The cultural aspect of such studies is characterised by considerable interest in, among others, the interrelated problems of marginalisation, social exclusion, discrimination, social deviance, homelessness, and the diversity of lifestyles (see Cloke and Little, 1997).

### **10.2.2 Polish rural geography in transition**

The new approaches, championed mainly by British rural geographers, should be filtered through processes of constructive criticism within

the context of post-socialist countries – a claim which of course does not seek to belittle or take away from the Anglo-American contribution to the development of this subarea. This is a logical call, because the positions adopted by British and North American rural geography arose from a different historical and cultural context, a different perspective on the problem, and a different tradition in the evolution of the social sciences. To Polish rural geographers, of greater consequence are issues of spatial structures and the influence of instruments of regional and agricultural policy of the European Union, while social and cultural changes, especially in their local dimensions, are of lesser interest. Rural geography, especially in United Kingdom, usually constructs its concepts in relation to the whole, which is society. As such, research problems like changes in class-based heterogeneity, conflicts among interest groups, exclusion, or the situation of minorities, always maintain broad ties to the notion of general condition of society and to lay discourses.

In Polish geography, and particularly in approaches derived from the notion of rural areas as a multifunctional space, the entirety is examined from a functional or economic perspective (Kostrowicki, 1976). This is a consequence of the scientific, strongly functionalist model that prevailed, thrived and was heavily promoted following World War II (Leszczycki, 1953; Kostrowicki, 1954), as well as of the emphasis on quantitative methods and the ties with planning both at national and regional levels. Within this model, the countryside is essentially reduced to its material, technical sphere (physical space). Studies investigate external, palpable aspects, and describe features that are presented as a consequence or corollary of human activity (Wójcik, 2012).

Another important difference lies in the historical circumstances of the region, and associated, differing views of national, regional and local identity. Societies, and the researchers that form part of them, often have different perspectives on the role of history in weaving the fabric of social reality, and a different estimation of their influence on contemporary processes of change. Polish human geography is marked by the fetishisation of post-socialist social and economic transition. The geographical interpretation of rural transformation tends to avoid radical stances or critical perspectives, usually assuming instead an idiographic or nomothetic model of science; conversely, it means rarely engaging in assessments of the spatial effects of change, e.g. increasing inequalities in the quality of life of rural populations or forms of local collaborations or contestation. Geography and other sciences that deal with society have a harder job in post-socialist countries than their Western counterparts: accounting for changes requires a combination

of three transformational perspectives: the national, the European, and the global. This situation can easily be contrasted with recent work by British and North American academicians marked by connections drawn between local transformation and global influences, with the latter being viewed as instruments and factors of social change (social classes, labour markets, social and spatial mobility).

The history of nations that were not battered to such an extent by devastating wars, mass displacements, and social engineering experiments typical of totalitarian systems provides a different perspective on these problems from that of nations that were alternately defending themselves from extermination and going through the cultural drought of the communist system (destruction of national, regional, and local identities). In geographical research conducted in post-socialist countries that are only beginning processes of re-building or reconstructing their identity, especially at regional and local levels, the first course of action is to establish a degree of territorial identification. This is also a result of the greater clarity afforded by such an approach to identity, as opposed to avenues of social identification that are difficult to interpret, especially in an age of significant class polarisation (Rembowska, 2002).

We can also point out other conditions that underlie the specific character of research in Poland. The first of these is the large contribution of agriculture to the national job structure, particularly in eastern and southern Poland. The difficult task of reorganising this sector of the economy and the problems in social development that accompany it constitutes an important topic of political and scientific discussion (Kolarska-Bobińska et al., 2001). This matter also resonates historically and culturally with the value that agricultural workers attach to space and territory. 'Land' and 'earth' as symbolic values, and the nature of territorial identification related to them, continue to be an important component of the general value attached to the rural environment. In the socialist period, Poland was unique among the countries of the Soviet bloc, with a private sector that enjoyed greater importance and clout than state-owned agricultural holdings. Therefore, the possession of land is often seen in Poland to have not only economic but also emotional and sentimental value. Moreover cultural urbanisation in Poland is not high in comparison to many other nations (Bukraba-Rylska, 2008).

In the twenty-first century, most geographical research places emphasis on heterogeneity in economic, infrastructural, and demographic terms. An interesting, yet unexplored issue in rural geography in Poland is the social and cultural transformation of space. The Polish

countryside is increasingly taking its focus off production, and revamping itself as a part of the country that caters to many social groups – consumers of the rural space. It would therefore seem advisable and worthwhile to develop avenues in research that incorporate analysis of cultural landscapes and identify relations between community and its social and environmental surroundings.

### **10.3 Rurality and the concept of core-peripheries in Polish human geography**

#### **10.3.1 Theoretical foundations**

The fundamental objective of functional theories is to define the role of an element in a given system (Suliborski, 2010). Szacki (1983) contended that the specificity of functional explanations lies in assuming, first, that a given element (or elements) possesses a distinctive, intrinsic function (i.e. has a noticeable effect on the maintenance of the system), and second, that determining this function is synonymous with explaining a given process. Geographical functionalism is characterised by the assumption of the objectivity of structures and a preference for statistical, systematic, and synchronising perspectives (Suliborski, 2001). According to functionalist perspectives, the approach to a given research problem is primarily driven by the use of tools – that is, the bulk of existing research is conducted under a methodology and interpretation of results that are both derived from statistical databases or physical inventories (empirical scientism). Among the key products of this line of geographical research are maps describing the distribution and reach of social and economic processes, often created by synthesising the partial results of previous research (typological and regionalising methods). In the social sciences, including human geography, one of the most influential of the theories that explain the heterogeneity of spatial structures is the concept of ‘core and periphery’ and its derivations, e.g. polarised development or nodal regions. Most published work that assumes a research model derived from scientism and a functionalist research program interprets changes in the concentration and dispersion of specific goods, products, resources, capital (economic, social, etc.) based on the division of space into areas of growth (centres) and areas of stagnation or lagged reception (peripheries).

The fundamental assumptions of geographical theory of core and periphery were generated by changes observed in the functional and spatial structure of states and regions in the era of industrialisation, largely pertaining to the economic characterisation of the variability and

changeability of territorial arrangements (Rykiel, 1991). In formulating the theses that would go on to form the crux of the core-and-periphery concept, Friedmann (1969) pointed out factors connected to early industrialisation which, in his opinion, triggered the rise and competitiveness of innovative cores, in turn opening the way to economic dominance over the rest of the territory, i.e. the periphery (Grzeszczak, 1999; Grosse, 2002). The concept of core and periphery is one of the most commonly employed models of socio-economic development used to describe and illustrate spatial heterogeneity (mapping of development). The assumptions of this theory are also used to describe differences across spatial scales, from local and regional scales (e.g. the nodal region, polarised development) to the national (e.g. urbanisation and metropolisation, diffusion of innovation) and global scales (e.g. world-systems theory). The concept of core and periphery largely accounts for the position of rural areas in the process of socio-economic development that took place in the industrial era. This notion, which takes note of the geographical location and distribution of development processes (primarily in large cities) and bases off dominant (leading) industries at any one stage of economic transformation, places the countryside and agriculture in a peripheral position, eclipsed and dominated by urban centres. The latter are invariably theorised as centres of diffusion of innovation and emanating stimuli that engender development. In this context, geographical research has begun to describe the different levels of economic development of rural areas as corollaries of the process of urbanisation, employing the controversial term 'rural urbanization' encompassing diverse processes of transformation connected to modernisation, demographic and social changes, and institutional development (Rajman, 1994). Past research in Poland has tended to analyse rural urbanisation through the prism of the industrialisation of cities (Rakowski, 1975). Researchers paid special attention to areas that were developing under the influence (and in the shadow) of big cities, and rural urbanisation itself was often conflated with the formation of suburban areas around said big cities (suburbanisation). In contrast to traditional urbanisation as the process that channels the formation and development of a city, rural urbanisation was often described as 'semi-urbanization', or such 'socio-economic and morphological transformations of the rural environment that don't necessarily lead to complete urbanization, either in the sense of villages being enveloped by an existing city, or the metamorphosis of a village into a fully developed city' (Golachowski, 1966, p. 45).

In Polish research of urbanisation, the countryside has most frequently been portrayed as an area undergoing certain structural changes

inspired by urban development (demographically, spatially, and in terms of employment). Rural urbanisation, as the expression of a specific idea of socio-economic progress, placed emphasis on the value of transformations typical for both urban and rural spaces. Interpretations of urbanisation involved the portrayal of the countryside as a backward environment that lags behind the social and economic changes affecting society as a whole. In this view, the city was to be a blueprint of development for the countryside, which in the long run was to 'bring the city into the country' and blur the distinctions between the two by urbanising rural environments. Rural urbanisation is, in this sense, a realisation of modernisation theory, which assumes the transfer and diffusion of certain patterns of socio-economic development that, for one reason or another, are considered desirable in the social and economic structure of rural areas. In the contemporary world, this pattern of thinking repeats itself in studies on the metropolisation of space, which distinguish between metropolitan areas with a high degree of connectivity with global processes and non-metropolitan areas, which are tantamount to the grand majority of rural areas (marginalised regional peripheries).

The concept of the 'multifunctional development of rural areas', derived from planning, is closely related to rural urbanisation (Kostrowicki, 1976). The evolution of the concept of the rural area as a multifunctional space was a by-product of the more general evolution of viewpoints and positions in agricultural geography with respect to the modern nature of socio-economic transformation in the countryside (starting from the 1970s), whose main feature was – and remains – the gradual reduction of the role of agriculture in the overall economic structure of rural areas. The concept of multifunctional rural development was born from the apparent need for new planning methods for the countryside – methods that would keep up with the structural changes that were rapidly taking place in the rural economy, including the modernisation of agriculture. Stola (1987) carried out the most extensive study identifying rural functions through the use of indicators for a given area (reference unit). This model of the functional structure of rural areas reappears in most modern-day geographical studies that tackle this topic (e.g. Bański and Stola, 2002; Bański, 2006).

The concept of multifunctional development once again largely replicates a way of looking at the spatial structure of rural areas in terms of core and periphery, although the identification of core and periphery takes place within the confines of rural areas. In this way, a typology of multifunctional development of rural areas is established, where a

functional structure and predominance of exogenous functions is held as a model for future transformation, although the types of development are identified not only on the basis of non-agricultural functions, but also agricultural ones (e.g. efficient, effective, product-based agriculture). This concept, which took shape in Poland within agricultural geography and was later picked up by the new area of research that is rural geography, takes a much more levelled and reflective approach to the spatial heterogeneity of rural areas than similar concepts developed by geographers in its sister areas (urban geography, economic geography). The popularity of the concept in different subareas of research, such as rural problem areas (Bański, 2006) and rural success areas (Czapiewski, 2010), is today an important component that helps us identify areas of economic growth and backwardness in the countryside.

A completely different approach to rural periphery is taken by geographers who study cultural processes. The universalism of the cultural approach stems from considering the human being as the point of departure for reflections on his biological, social and cultural nature (Jędrzejczyk, 2007). The humanist perspective emphasises the cultural aspects of the human *id*, and its primary objective is to understand the human being and the conditions in which he lives (e.g. Rembowska, 2003a; Jędrzejczyk, 2007; Bednarek-Szczepańska, 2013). The human being and his life, perceptions, assessments and the value he assigns to his surroundings provide a completely different perspective and new quality to geographical research. The quest for meanings buried deep in the human subconscious or externalised in our actions and intentions is necessary in order to understand the act of experiencing, individually or collectively, our living environment. As special kinds of territorial and social entities, villages in Poland – regionally diverse and usually formed over long periods of time – still possess a certain cultural distinctiveness, and are an interesting and inspiring topic for studies of cultural geography. Cultural geography, with its emphasis on the axiological and the aesthetic, interprets the countryside as an expression of a specific way of life. The rural environment, often associated with the process of ‘timeless permanence’, is currently undergoing rapid socio-cultural changes, one of whose key components is the change in the individual’s relation to earth and nature’s other elements. As a cultural construct, the countryside can therefore be viewed through the lens of the local population’s ideas about the meaning and place of life, and the values ascribed to individual elements of their surroundings (the symbolic space). Cultural approaches interpret the countryside as a specific way of life and a kind of social identity built on the basis of values connected

with rural settlement and work patterns. The peripheral countryside is not perceived unilaterally in terms of economic backwardness, problem areas or cultural degradation. Rural 'peripherality' harbours, above all, cultural potential, social and territorial rootedness, and an array of traditional values deriving from the distinctively rural sense of community, family and religion (Wójcik, 2009; Zarycki, 2009). This periphery is a part of national and regional identities, a kind of 'frontier' which, though remaining on the sidelines of the main currents of economic change that affect mass culture, still carries a powerful message through an alternative (conservative) vision of social development, increasingly expressing the longing on the part of society for an idyllic 'rurality' as a way of life (Phillips, 2005; Grzeszczak, 2010). Geographical studies of the peripheral countryside from a cultural perspective increasingly reveal the problems of different sectors of society, often questioning the purpose of a generalised core-periphery dichotomy. Such approaches are not yet commonplace in Polish geography, and it was only recently that some researchers began promoting them in rural studies (Wójcik, 2009, 2012; Bednarek-Szczepańska, 2013).

### **10.3.2 Rural space and economic capital**

Polish geographical thought has more recently produced a number of works in the area of comparative levels of rural development, including areas of socio-economic success (Komorowski, 1998; Gorzelak et al., 1998, 1999; Swianiewicz, 2002, 2006; Bański, 2005; Sobala-Gwosdz, 2005, 2008; Czapiewski, 2006, 2010; Kalinowski, 2006) and problem areas (Ciok, 1996; Bański, 1999; Rosner, 1999, 2002; Churski, 2004).

The underlying causes of such an increase in interest in the mechanisms responsible for the creation of areas of economic growth (success) and areas of increased incidence of negative processes (problem) should be sought in the intensification of processes of concentration at the regional level (formation of agglomerations and regional peripheries) and the simultaneous deconcentration of certain resources in the vicinity of urban areas (suburbanisation). The 1960 and 1970s in particular were the heyday of research on the growth of urban agglomerations (Grzeszczak, 1999). In terms of studies of the rural environment, of greatest research interest were the multiple processes associated with rural modernisation, typically interpreted as constituent parts of urbanisation processes (Golachowski, 1966; Rakowski, 1975). Today, we observe a rebirth of polarisation theories in geographical studies (Gawlikowska-Hueckel, 2002; Sobala-Gwosdz, 2005; Tarkowski, 2008), associated primarily with the expansion of metropolitan functions and

the increased importance of their area of concentration – metropolitan areas (Gorzelać and Smećkowski, 2005; Markowski and Marszał, 2006; Jałowicki, 2007). One effect of metropolisation both at national and regional levels is the multiplication of intraregional contrasts (Bański, 2005; Rosner, 2007). Poland witnessed a considerable intensification of such processes in the 1990s with the introduction of the free-market economy, the creation of local self-governments, and the increased spatial mobility of capital, goods, and people. These rapid-fire processes led to deepening socio-economic rifts, compelling many authors to attempt to ‘identify areas that take the lead in transformation as well as the main problem areas’ (Stryjakiewicz, 1998, p. 299). Traditional perceptions of urban-rural dichotomies were also thrown off their tracks due to the significant disparity between the two categories. Scholars began to speak of a rural-urban continuum (Sokołowski, 1999). This was also the cornerstone of the search for new concepts that would explain the internal heterogeneity of regional spaces, including rural areas. These approaches usually constituted attempts to conceptualise the spatial heterogeneity within the country (or selected regions) in a complex manner, most often through the use of synthesised indicators incorporating a dozen or so variables. Studies belonging to this research stream were cumulatively responsible for a nuanced view of the country’s spatial structure, especially at the macro level (administrative regions) and that of mesostructures (counties and communes). Most of these studies had the common goal of describing the general level of economic development in a given area, usually accounted for by historical factors and the effects of cities, especially large cities, on their economic hinterland.

With respect to economic potential, the division of Poland into core and periphery – success and problem areas – is the scheme that can be represented most clearly. Without a doubt, the highest development potential characterises the biggest cities and their suburban areas (Węclawowicz et al., 2006). This is understandable, and typical of a spatial scheme that resurfaces in regional development analysis more generally and not only in Poland. At present, the greatest development potential is concentrated in cities which have – or rather should have – exogenous functions for the surrounding areas. However, this is not always the case. In the case of big agglomerations, one may point to suburban areas that are characterised by high economic potential. However, smaller urban centres, largely towns located in the eastern part of the country, are not so strong as to stimulate the development of neighbouring areas. Indeed, it is the counties of eastern Poland that possess the weakest development potential of any in Poland. This is a result

of many factors, including history (differences in the relative development levels of areas formerly located within parts of Poland controlled by Russia, Prussia, and Austro-Hungary during the period of partitions), a mono-functional structure of the economy based on agriculture, and the aforementioned lack of strong urban centres (Czapiewski and Janc, 2009). Warsaw's urban agglomeration, with its very high development potential, plays an exceptional role in central and eastern Poland. Areas with a well-developed tourist function also have high potential – the seaside belt, the lake regions, and some mountainous areas to the south of the country (Figure 10.1).

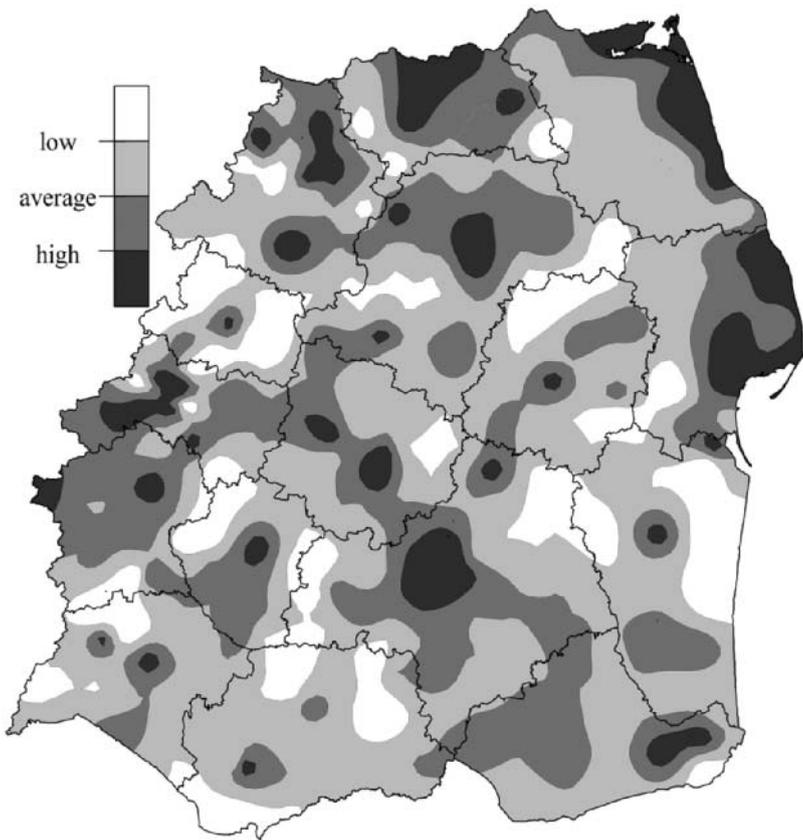


Figure 10.1 Counties by synthetic index of socio-economic development potential

Source: Czapiewski and Janc (2009).

The pronounced split between big cities characterised by considerable developmental potential, on the one hand, and the remaining areas, on the other hand, is undoubtedly a confirmation of the existence, all over the world, of processes of polarisation of economic space. Obviously, the core-periphery thesis implied here carries serious implications. On the one hand, the evolution of metropolises that draw well-educated and venturesome people who are well-equipped and well-adapted to the infrastructural conditions should enable Polish regions to compete at an international level. Great urban centres may be a driving force for the growth of the whole region. On the other hand, increasing intraregional diversity is evident. As such, the establishment of strong centres at the cost of the peripheries is a serious challenge for regional development policy. It is essential for the region to be one functionally coherent area, suggesting that the development of cities should be accompanied by the development of their surroundings as well.

Studies of this kind must research and identify spatial variations and may identify areas that are peripheral from both economic and infrastructural perspectives. Flows, ties and local collaborative undertakings are not currently given much attention. Existing examples of such research depicting a certain level of cooperation encompass studies of formal ties only, such as the functional bonds among local self-governments (e.g. Furmankiewicz, 2002), partnerships between communes (e.g. Doźbłasz and Raczyk, 2010), administrative forms of dependence in the country's political system (e.g. Miszczuk et al., 2007), the clash between different functions in spatial planning (e.g. Śleszyński and Solon, 2010), or the collaboration among different local subjects resulting from the collective utilisation of external funding including European Union funding (e.g. Furmankiewicz and Janc, 2011). The scarcity of these studies is attributable to two interrelated factors. Above all, with such a broad, generalised scope, processes that take place at national and regional levels receive priority. Due to the specific nature of rural collaboration or contestation, the processes attached to either are spread uniformly across the whole country (e.g. formal administrative ties or the LEADER programme) or are incidental and form part of a mosaic that is difficult to interpret at a more general, national level (e.g. the clash of different functions). Second, there is a dearth of statistical data in Poland (even in the form of inferential indicators) that would enable researchers to analyse the forms of local collaboration on a national scale. Given that many analyses which are currently in publication are in the vein of empirical scientism, the two above mentioned factors combine to produce a lack of broader discourse and discussion on collaboration and ties among local actors in the country.

### 10.3.3 Rural space and social capital

In traditional approaches to rural geography, the functioning and socio-economic development of rural areas was largely explained by their location relative to other strategic objects (cities, infrastructure, borders etc.). As demonstrated by numerous studies and analyses, the number of factors that influence – whether positively or negatively – the processes associated with development is large and varied (Gorzelał et al., 1998, 1999; Swianiewicz, 2002; Rosner, 2007; Bański, 2008), and spatial determinants usually account for processes of economic growth on a macro scale. Presently, aside from the group of essential location-derived factors, other factors that are not as readily measurable are gaining sway, such as the internal resources of self-government, human and social capital (a set of norms, attitudes and values), as well as institutions and organisations that build a climate favourable for the market economy (Rosner, 2007).

The level of activity of local populations is considered one of the prime factors supporting economic development (Kołodziejczyk, 2003; Janc, 2009), underlying the creation of bonds of trust among the members of these groups (Halamska, 2008). In areas of heightened local activity, citizens hold a relatively strong belief that they have a real impact on the course of development processes, and accordingly, they engage in actions spearheaded by different social groups while taking active steps to have local authorities remain active and competent (Heffner and Rosner, 2002). The positive influence of local social engagement on local economic activity has been illustrated convincingly by Kołodziejczyk (2003, p. 27), who believes that ‘the map of developing rural areas in Poland will be in a constant state of flux determined by civic engagement, which will allow for a more effective and dynamic development of this space’.

Many studies indicate that Polish rural space, in comparison with the urban cityscape, is an area with much lower levels of civic engagement (Kamiński, 2008). This is partly due to the fact that rural areas in Poland are characterised by extensive self-organisation, which does not always go hand in hand with full institutionalisation. Groups in rural locations often operate very successfully without the need for a formal institutional framework in order to function. Rural organisations rely on volunteer social work, do not generally have paid workers, have less funds available, and focus on local issues. Modern organisations (such as NGOs, non-governmental organisations) are not a natural or traditional element of the living space of rural areas, but rather constitute an urban model transposed onto the rural context (Bednarek-Szczepeńska, 2013).

Due to similar problems with interpretation as those mentioned previously, determining the exact level of civic engagement of local populations in quantitative (statistical) terms is often hindered by problems of objectively estimating the magnitude of this phenomenon. For this reason, researchers often use indirect, inferential indicators. The most popular ones include, first, degree of engagement of citizens in different kinds of initiatives, or second, organised forms of spending one's free time (e.g. membership in sports clubs, artistic groups, clubs, or participation in elections).

The spatial heterogeneity of the civic engagement of local populations – understood as participation in local cultural and social life – indicates that there are several distinct areas where this trait is particularly prevalent (Figure 10.2). South-eastern Poland clearly stands above the rest of the country. These are regions that possess an interesting rural culture and wealth of culture folklore (crafts, music). Most cases with a significant discrepancy between two adjacent areas in terms of social capital can be explained by referring to cultural conditions, while elsewhere explanations incorporate discrepancies between the financial capabilities of different units. Consequently, it may not be surprising that many parts of Poland suffer from an atrophy of social bonds, weak engagement in sustaining traditions, and insignificant levels of social and civic activity, exacerbated by the lack of cultural centres (Janc, 2009).

It should be noted that such broad studies, encompassing many territorial units and heavily reliant on mass, large-*N* statistical data, mainly serve an illustrative purpose, and do not explain adequately and qualitatively complex and diverse processes of civic engagement, in their entirety. Due to a lack of appropriate and accurate measures, these studies generally ignore or overlook the wide range of communal activity in local populations, or undervalue the role of traditional rural cooperatives and related institutions (Bednarek-Szczepeńska, 2013).

From a geographical standpoint, studies that assess cooperation based on social capital deal mostly with identifying and interpreting different institutions (both formal and informal) whose goal is to establish ties between people and their territory. Geographical studies should therefore focus on tracing out those mechanisms of common action that inform territorial identity (and distinctness). Territory possesses a number of social functions: it forms the basis for identification, constitutes a source of stimuli, guarantees security, and creates behaviours (Rembowska, 2003b).

In geographical studies in post-socialist states which have undergone rapid and major structural changes, and which constantly construct or

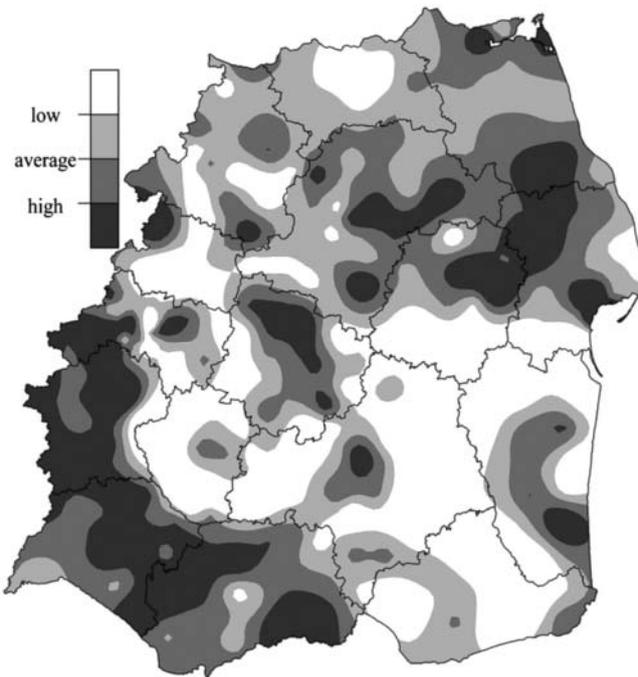


Figure 10.2 Synthetic index of level of social capital in Poland  
Source: Janc (2009).

reconstruct their regional and local identities (both heavily damaged by nearly 50 years of communist rule), territorial identification and forms of cooperation that contribute to it are typically the first to be tackled. This is, in part, the result of the traditional interest that the science of geography has taken, first, in the factors that underlie on-going processes, and second, in presenting a clearer form of these identities than can be afforded through elusive social identities in an age of material polarisation, divergence of political views and worldviews alike (Wójcik, 2009; Fedyszak-Radziejowska, 2013).

Since the early 1990s, when Polish geography witnessed a surge in interest in social and cultural processes, the typology of regional flows in Poland, their backdrop in history and identity and especially their spatial distribution and reach have been persistently popular topics (e.g. Rykiel, 1993; Matykowski, 1996). Cultural regionalisation and the impact of institutions related to cooperation have, in some cases, been

supportive of the administrative reforms that culminated in the division of the country into 16 large regions (Suliborski, 1999).

For rural geography, a much more important issue is studying cooperative institutions and local identity. This line of research is strongly connected to the examination of integration and disintegration processes in local communities, as well as the work of local self-governments. From a cultural standpoint, these studies exemplify the ambition of programmes aimed at humanising space by emphasising terms such as place, vicinity, proximity, and the little homeland. Scholarly approaches to rural cooperation, which relies largely on associations and informal groups, are rooted in the concepts surrounding cultural space. Because the examination of local processes requires a readjustment of theoretical and methodological approaches, it is difficult to describe work in this area as leading research developments. Notable though is the fact that studies evaluating the structural foundations and operation of rural self-governments (e.g. Suliborski et al., 2000; Kotus, 2001) have received greater attention than analyses of the formation of action groups in rural environments (e.g. Wójcik, 2010; Bednarek-Szczepańska, 2013).

#### **10.3.4 Rural space – human action and identity**

Since the accession of Poland to the European Union, there has been a large increase in the number of projects co-financed by external sources – these actions pertain to a number of areas of social, civic and economic activity (Rudnicki, 2010). One of these endeavours is the Rural Development Programme ‘Village Renewal and Development’. Its stated goal is to stimulate social development in rural regions through financial backing for projects involving the utilisation of public space. This initiative seeks to improve living conditions in rural areas by addressing the social and cultural needs of the inhabitants of villages, promoting rural areas, and strengthening local identities (*Rural Development Programme*, 2007).

In the overall assessment of the effectiveness of this programme, it has been stated that the projects under ‘Village Renewal and Development’ primarily impact the social sphere – they activate the population, improve living conditions, and facilitate access to different services that provide for local cultural and sporting needs (*RDP Midterm Report*, 2010). The increased appeal of the area for its inhabitants is tied to the construction or modernisation of infrastructure of all kinds that addresses the multifarious cultural and sporting needs of the population, improves security, and builds up village centres, providing locals with an attractive spot to relax and meet (Wilczyński, 2007). Conversely, the actions

undertaken under this programme have had a minuscule effect on processes of economic modernisation of rural areas and trends in migration. This may result from the fact that the actions that are currently being carried out in rural areas in Poland are typical of the incipient stages of rural renewal, whose defining characteristic is the realisation of individual endeavours that do not have wider resonance in the community. The few examples we do have suggest that only a long-term, complex process of renewal, executed by both town and commune, can bring wider economically and socially noticeable benefits. Projects under 'Village Renewal and Development' should not constitute loose, isolated initiatives that remain unincorporated into the totality of the rural space. This is especially important considering that the impact of these projects may never be particularly significant at the level of the commune since factors influencing economic or demographic circumstances of communes extend far beyond small or medium-sized projects. As such, we recommend that initiatives that inscribe themselves into a town's wider concept of development be given priority. Otherwise, entities controlling these projects may need to refrain from disseminating the effects and results of small projects whose goals are clearly focused on the amelioration of social conditions in small communities; these effects are only possible to capture and assess in projects that have specific goals related to economic development (*RDP Midterm Report*, 2010).

With the activation of substantial exogenous resources entering rural areas through the coffers of local self-governments, small businesses and farmers, there has been a surge in studies assessing the influence and effectiveness of these initiatives on local and regional development, level of entrepreneurship, level of development of agriculture and rural areas etc. (Biczkowski, 2008; Rudnicki, 2010). However, much like such actions are clearly tailored to a project that aims to realise a specific goal, the studies that examine them also do not go beyond simple, unidirectional cause-and-effect connections. They lack a more in-depth look at the wider social, cultural, historical and economic context as well as a strong grounding in broader explanatory concepts and theories. Furthermore, the research methodology employed is often limited to statistical inferences.

In recent years, the role of social and anthropological methods in studies of rural areas and landscapes has risen. One of these methods is the examination of the social perceptions of the process of rural renewal in Poland based on interviews and participant observation. An example of this kind of research is provided from a study of the village of 'Moskwa', carried out as part of a research project on rural development

in areas that were rapidly transformed by an influx of incomers (Wójcik, 2010). The village of Moskwa is one of a dozen or so villages in the suburban commune of Nowosolna, about 5 km from the administrative city limits of the third most populous Polish city – Łódź. The commune of Nowosolna is one of several dynamically developing communes in the Łódź Region, largely owing to the growing importance of the countryside as a place of residence for people who until recently had been living in the big city (suburbanisation). Until the mid-1990s, the dominant economic function of the area was agriculture. The socio-economic transformation of the last 15 years has, among others, manifested itself in the transition from predominantly agricultural to predominantly non-agricultural activity in the functional structure of the area, as well as in the rapidly expanding role of the commune as a zone of concentrated residential housing (Wójcik, 2008). The studies conducted in Nowosolna clearly suggest that the distinguishing factor influencing the current demographic and economic changes is steady migration, with the inflow of residents altering the demographic structure of the population (e.g. the rejuvenation of the overall demographic structure).

In the years 2004–2006, a village square was set up at an intersection, on grounds belonging to the commune, under the ‘Village Renewal and Development’ programme. The action encompassed the tasks of building the infrastructure, clearing and tidying up the square, and furnishing it with signs. The total value of the project was estimated to be 4,000 euros. The decision to set up this project in Moskwa as opposed to elsewhere was mainly justified by the fact that the village already had a square that was open for development, as well as a population that exhibited a significant degree of civic engagement.

The goal of the social study in question was, among others, to provide an answer to the question, ‘To what extent do European grants and resources (supported by the activity of local self-government) strengthen interactions in local communities?’ 12 full-length interviews were conducted with people who, for various reasons, had been at the village square in Moskwa.

The interviews were freely divided up into three groups, arranged according to similarities between the responses given. The first batch of six interviews comprises conversations with ‘established’ citizens whose memory went back to early local experiences and experiences of their ancestors. The second group was made up of four interviews with new arrivals – residents who had not yet spent much time in the village, and were therefore still in the process of negotiating their bond with the

place. The final group was made up of two interviews with individuals whose presence was accidental (tourists, passers-by).

As a locally-organised community, the village possesses a number of distinct traits. One of the most important of these is the mutual interest citizens take in one another, as well as the much greater degree of openness to the problems of other residents than in cities. The public space in which most of the village's social activity takes place is the local road – a kind of keystone artery that forms a microcosm of the spatial behaviour of individuals facing the outside of their homes. A common theme in all of the interviews conducted with 'experienced' residents was the emphasis on a certain continuity in human behaviour around the village, which in recent years had been aided by the now-functional village square.

Those most closely involved with the re-organisation of the space in the square underlined that its opening was only the start of extensive maintenance work, adding that it also marked the beginning of social activity in the square. The members of the village council, which bears the greatest amount of responsibility for spurring local initiatives and putting the effort to good use, argued that that work performed under the 'Village Renewal and Development' project was only the first of a long list of measures seeking to further social integration through activities concentrated around the village square. This small part of the village's total area has transformed, in the social sense, into its centre, and has acquired considerable importance for the local population. The organisation of a common ground for everybody has strengthened communal attitudes and has generated a sense of community and responsibility.

Overall, the interviews show that any local initiative must be matched by 'fertile ground' on which to flourish. Essential conditions include the ability of the local population to work together and engage, the existence of mutual trust, and beliefs that engagement does bring positive change to community. Residents' knowledge and awareness of the origin of the funds for the project and the mechanism by which they are adjudicated are unclear. However, of much greater importance is the creation of certain values without which the development of a civic community and local endeavours cannot take place. Strengthening local identities and appreciation for a place as an area set up through common effort should be considered socially priceless.

Discovering and fomenting the positive values of the rural environment and breaking down negative stereotypes regarding countryside life is one aspect of shaping modern village identity, especially

in communities that lie within the suburban areas of large cities. Evaluating the degree of integration of new residents proves to be a significant problem here, as residents whose time in the village does not go far back view the work on the village square from a greater distance, and tend to be less emotionally engaged. Information gathered from the group of interviews with relatively 'inexperienced' residents (all of them had lived in village for five years or less) generally conveyed a more critical outlook on the local population, and respondents were less engaged in work related to the square. The reasons for their coming to the square usually had to do with needing to read a piece of information posted on the notice board, or walking their children. Unlike 'established' residents, going out to the square was a less regular activity for this group.

The responses gathered from new residents were characterised by a more positive assessment of their own residential living space than that of rural public space. It is worth noting that in most cases, newly-purchased residential houses come with specially designated areas for the residents to do with them as they please. Individuals living on large plots of land (with an area of 2,000–2,500 m<sup>2</sup>) often have gardens with summer houses or gazebos, ponds, mowed grass lawns. More often than not, the entire area is gated, with fences and hedges blocking the view of the inquisitive. This privatisation of their own space also proves useful in organising larger meetings and get-togethers in the company of selected guests. The village square, on the other hand, is a public space, open for all, but for some residents, this is not perceived as a unilaterally positive thing.

The village square and its function has a much broader effect on public space than it might seem. There is a kind of symbolic meaning in the sign, created by local residents, pointing the way to the nearest village. To some extent, it can be considered an axis indicating the centre of the local population's known world, while for most of the members of the local community, this centre is the 'square in my village'.

#### **10.4 Discussion**

The formation of new models and paradigms that help elucidate topics in human geography takes place in Poland mainly through superimposing new theoretical and methodological solutions onto traditional ways of interpreting the structures and processes that shape spatial heterogeneity. The modern-day transformation of rural geography is a process of gradual transition in the methodology of the field, and is closely connected to the arrival of the new generation of researchers.

Reflecting on different traditions in researching the rural environment and new currents (social and cultural) in human geography leads us to the conclusion that the different geographical studies of the countryside, hitherto dispersed, should be integrated now and in the future, while at the same time, researchers should conduct a constant search for ways to peel back the layers of modern-day countryside life in an age of rapid disengagement with the agrarian face of the country.

The most important fact to consider is that rural geography in Poland stemmed primarily from agricultural geography as a result of the constantly widening scope of interest of researchers. This does, however, have some important implications resulting from its theoretical and methodological underpinnings.

Agricultural geography was and continues to be interested, first and foremost, in the aspect of production, while the activity of the individual (farmer), the social and cultural spheres of agriculture remained peripheral to the research interests of geographers. Quantitative methods and the presentation of results through maps, tables, and statistics dominated studies. This approach to research was often transferred to the analysis of processes that took place in rural areas – both to the physical, material products of human activity (business ventures, companies, or infrastructure) and the socio-cultural sphere (social capital, quality of life, cultural landscape). This in turn led to a shallow, skeletal interpretation of the processes under analysis, further exacerbated by the lack of sufficient grounding in theoretical concepts. It can also be pointed out that it was rarely established whether these processes are indeed of a rural nature, and whether they bring us closer in any way to understanding rurality. What *was* important was that they appeared in rural areas, at least in the administrative sense. In Polish rural geography, therefore, there is a genuine scarcity of individualised studies, that is, in-depth case studies of communes, villages, agricultural holdings, families. From this perspective, it is critical to develop and expand social and cultural approaches that can bring in a new quality and viewpoint in studies of the modern-day changeability of the countryside, and in particular, describe the particularity of today's rural living environment.

Second, the increase in interest in, popularity, and demand for rural studies conducted from a spatial perspective converged, in Poland, with the inauguration of the process of regime transition. Polish researchers had once to again discover the models that could explain the transformations that were taking place. This accounts for the multiplicity of potential explanations for the processes in question – democratisation, free-market economy, capitalism, globalisation, Europeanisation,

metropolisation – in combination with changes in social behaviour and attitudes (e.g. the fetishisation of education, free time etc.), created the havoc that defined earlier scholarly publications. The sheer speed and dynamics of the social and economic transformations that took place meant that empirical aspects of the studies were a rich object of study on their own. On the other hand, there were major difficulties in the unilateral interpretation of the results obtained, and there was a generalised lack of deeper reflection on the meaning of the facts that were being produced.

Third, in the last two decades, Poland went through significant systemic and economic changes, hence the considerably larger number of studies that dealt with issues pertaining to the material aspects of human activity – infrastructure, entrepreneurship, agricultural production, European funding. These topics were important not only from a cognitive point of view, to keep up with a countryside in the throes of accelerated change, but also for future practical application. It was for this reason that the immaterial sphere, the perception of the inhabitants of rural spaces, and the socio-cultural foundations of rurality in Poland were not often picked up as research topics in the area of rural geography.

Finally, Polish geographers very rarely participated in international research projects addressing issues in rural environments. Local, regional, and national perspectives abounded, but even in these cases, the interpretation of the results of these studies very rarely went past the borders of Poland. It is therefore of great importance to undertake comparative studies, with in-depth interpretation that will reveal the full scale of the cultural context of change.

## **10.5 Conclusion**

In today's world, achieving success in any line of work or field of social activity is practically impossible without some form of cooperation. Due to the level of socio-economic complexity in the world, the multitude of global processes and the myriad professions that witness progress on a daily basis, holistic studies find fertile ground in researching collective action. A broad social interpretation may offer a view of such processes as an expression of networking (see Castells, 1996) whose effect is synergy – a surplus of benefits deriving from cooperation based on mutual trust.

Scholarly and scientific collaboration allows us to explain the problems that we tackle from an interdisciplinary, multicontextual standpoint, as

well as through different individual research perspectives, frameworks and models. The cultural shift and the progressive humanisation of research problems in geography have been compared to propping open the second wing of the 'ontological door' to the universe (Jędrzejczyk, 2011). This way of looking at it is the starting point for cooperation and mutual understanding while recognising the value of differentiated but equally valid approaches forming the core of a broad interpretation of processes. It is our hope that geographical studies of the rural space in Poland will increasingly be able to take advantage of the benefits from such new, innovative perspectives.

The post-structural methodological shift is not indifferent to studies of cooperation. Qualitative approaches – especially those assuming a broad perspective on discourse analysis – allow us to tease out the drivers behind the triumphs and failures of cooperation initiatives whose goal is to bring development to specific areas, including rural settings. These drivers differ in each case; identifying them is possible only through carrying out regional and local case studies. The capacity for collaborative action is a result of the cultural conditions created by human beings themselves, and the institutions that they create. Studies of the conditions underlying social and cultural change in the world are a key component of development discourse – economic and otherwise (Harrison and Huntington, 2000). This is one of the reasons why social scientists exhibit such interest in social and cultural capital. This is especially visible in rural Poland – a space that is highly diversified in cultural terms – with social science studies capable of providing satisfactory answers to questions about connections among people and impediments to their continued efforts to benefit communities and the territory inhabited by them.

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# 11

## Re-thinking Rural Conflict, Cooperation Difficulties, and Failure: The Case of Rural Cooperatives

*Alex Warlow and Edward Kasabov*

### 11.1 Introduction

Cooperatives offer many advantages as a model for development of specialist agri-food businesses in rural areas. They allow groups of people to work together and build expertise, and are large enough to compete with private and multinational businesses. Here we report research that was carried out in Wales, UK, and which sought to identify the characteristics of rural, agri-food cooperatives. The empirical research highlighted significant rural conflicts, cooperation difficulties and failure which we document and theorise next. The research isolated select few issues that impede rural cooperation and highlighted factors that need to be in place for a rural, agri-food cooperative to be sustainable and successful and for cooperation to flourish. Rural cooperation problems and difficulties that were identified included weak loyalty, distrust, opportunistic and 'devious' behaviours on the part of members and other stakeholders. Lack of professional management, inadequate marketing and branding expertise were also distinguished as key determinants of the high failure rate of start-up cooperatives in Wales. Cooperatives which did not involve trading operations, such as knowledge transfer organisations, business clubs and show societies, appeared more sustainable and resilient.

In academic research, it is large scale, established cooperatives that are usually the focus of investigation. Furthermore, positive aspects of cooperation tend to be prioritised in studies and reports, with many large and successful agri-food cooperatives benefiting from professional management and considerable marketing, supply chain, and management expertise. Such organisations have their own subsidiaries which

are run as private businesses; they operate like investor-owned businesses which are long established and have been formed through the amalgamation or takeover of a large number of small agri-food cooperatives. We suggest that such studies do not necessarily document and theorise sufficiently the problems faced by small and early-stage rural cooperatives operating in the agri-food sector, nor do they necessarily provide the opportunities to conceptualise rural conflict, cooperation difficulties and failure.

Our account of rural conflict, cooperation difficulties and failure, as well as of the factors inhibiting early-stage cooperative growth and long-term sustainability is relevant not only to rural studies researchers but also to practitioners and public-sector policy makers. By looking at differences across diverse types of early-stage cooperatives and by combining conceptual and practical approaches, this research seeks to provide distinct conclusions which extend rural studies literature and extant research on cooperatives and cooperation.

The authors attempt to identify:

1. examples of cooperation difficulties, conflict, and failure experienced by early-stage agri-food cooperatives;
2. causes of cooperation difficulties, conflict, poor performance, and failure;
3. different aspects and rates of cooperation difficulties, conflict, and failure amongst different categories of start-up cooperatives;
4. theoretical and practical solutions to cooperation difficulties, conflict, and failure, in order to increase cooperation success rates and sustainability.

## **11.2 Function and structure of cooperatives, and their place in the rural economy**

Agri-food cooperatives generate considerable value (Jepson, 2006) and, just like cooperatives more generally (Thomas, 2004), have been empirically shown to satisfy complex social, economic and other needs of local residents. The benefits of rural agri-food cooperation encompass production cost reductions (Jepson, 2006) and the provision of technical and other assistance to members. Past research has documented the symbiotic relationships that such cooperatives develop and nurture with other types of businesses in rural areas (Uzun, 2005). Furthermore, agri-food cooperatives assist policy-makers in addressing limitations of alternative modes of rural organisation by maximising the transaction-cost

economising properties of family farms (Valentinov, 2007). Not only do they allow external economies of scale to be captured by local producers, but they also combine the advantages of large-scale production with those of family farm organisation (Valentinov, 2007). At times and under certain circumstances, it may be only through agri-food cooperatives that farmers can capture more of the value of the final product while also reducing marketing costs (Di Falco et al., 2008). In select few rural and national environments, cooperatives may also successfully assume the role of intermediaries between newly arrived multinationals and predominantly small local agricultural producers (Grancelli, 2011). Agri-food cooperatives are frequently described as resilient, and are favourably assessed in terms of their social capital properties and consequences. Dependence on external agents may decrease following the founding of an agri-food cooperative, and direct contacts with end markets may be created, favouring local innovation in agriculture and related sectors of rural economies (Aznar-Sanchez et al., 2011).

Wider benefits of cooperatives and cooperation have also been reported as far as rural locations and communities are concerned. Among the more prominent positive effects of agri-food and other rural cooperatives are strengthening local infrastructure, boosting local employment, and encouraging regional, geographical patterns of buying (Lorendahl, 1996). Lorendahl's study is one of many that empirically and persuasively demonstrate the multiple favourable effects of cooperatives in small villages and in peripheral, isolated locations as those studied throughout this edited volume. Their positive impact on small rural communities and attendant economies can hardly be overstated.

As should be clear from the brief introduction to agri-food cooperatives in this section, they offer opportunities and create challenges different from those associated with the setting up of private businesses. Cooperatives assist primary food producers, mainly farmers, in stabilising and increasing their income and making their businesses financially viable in peripheral rural areas. Some cooperatives remain relatively small with a few members who know one another personally, engendering trust amongst these members. Another group, usually cooperatives controlled by farmer-members, get transformed into major private organisations and eventually become highly successful multinational businesses. Such developments are rare and the really large multinational cooperatives few, even if they remain the focus of many academic studies.

Some commentators suggest that the inability of cooperatives to issue share capital (due to legal statutes), is a constraint, preventing them

from borrowing additional finance in the way that a private, investor-owned business could. To others (including a manager of a large requisite cooperative interviewed in 2009 and 2010), cooperatives have benefit from the fact that they can approach members with requests for additional funding in situations where shareholder businesses may find it difficult to raise capital. One way in which the large multinational cooperatives overcome such problems is to turn all or part of their business into a shareholder business, providing professional managers and a Board of Directors with full control over their business. When undertaking the above noted transformation, such cooperatives exchange members' share capital with tradable shares – a common development in the 1990s whereby mutual societies were bought out by banks.

Academics suggest two possible scenarios for setting up agri-food cooperatives. To some, the main aim of cooperatives is to form groups of farmers who are removed from the vagaries of the marketplace and conditions where they have no control over prices. Through the amalgamation of farmers' operations, they become large enough to exercise a certain level of control over both the supply and price of end products. Such an arrangement allows primary producers to retain higher prices. Furthermore, cooperatives usually incorporate processing, logistics and marketing functions, something which individual businesses and individual agricultural producers would find difficult to achieve on their own. Cooperatives become particularly useful in situations where primary producer products require consolidation, quality control and packing for export (according to a public-sector manager interviewed in 2009). Typical examples include the large dairy cooperatives, such as Fonterra in New Zealand, which was formed through the amalgamation of over 500 small cooperatives, and the New Zealand Dairy Board (see <http://www.fonterra.com/Our+History>) and the Irish dairy multinational, Glanbia plc, of which approximately 48.3% is owned by Glanbia Cooperative Society Ltd., historically formed through the amalgamation of various dairy cooperatives (see <http://www.glanbia.com/about-us>). The remaining shares are held by institutional and retail investors, exemplifying a typical mixed ownership development path which some larger agri-food cooperatives pursue.

A second scenario for setting up agri-food cooperatives focuses on the capacity of cooperatives to provide competition to private businesses and thus coerce private businesses to increase the prices that they pay to farmers. There is some evidence of this happening in Wales for instance (farmers and managers interviewed in 2010). Cooperatives frequently find themselves in the role of establishing 'bottom' prices in

the market which private companies are then required to match. Such arrangements facilitate farmers who tend to change their suppliers and buyers frequently by buying from the cheapest sources and selling to the highest bidders. Farmers do so in order to increase their income in the short run, though sacrificing their loyalty to the cooperatives and consequently endangering the long-term survival of such cooperatives.

### **11.3 Presenting the research programme on early-stage rural cooperatives**

The research focused not on the established large multinational cooperatives discussed above, but on small and early-stage cooperatives operating in rural areas of South Wales. During six years of research, problems in setting up and growing, rural, agri-food cooperatives in peripheral areas of Europe were observed and analysed by looking at the situation in Wales. It was anticipated that such a piece of research would provide guidance and advice for the public sector and other bodies supporting and financing bottom-up and top-down cooperative formation. The research confirmed some conclusions drawn in extant academic literature on cooperatives, for instance concerning loyalty and trust of members and the role that they play in cooperative difficulties and failure, but also highlighted issues that are specific to the different types of cooperatives. This suggests that conflict, cooperative difficulties and failure differ across types of cooperatives, as will be demonstrated in subsequent sections of this discussion.

The empirical research was organised in four stages in 2006, 2009, 2010 and 2011. Some of the research sites and interviews with key informants were more recently revisited and re-assessed in 2012 and early 2013. As is the case with any longitudinal research, the research objectives, scope and findings had to be progressively clarified and focused, not least in view of the fact that the initial research on rural cooperatives had been commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and had objectives and aims very different from those informing this discussion, as a final output from this research. During four stages of data collection and analysis, the research was progressively clarified, the research scope became more delimited, and a greater emphasis was placed on matters of conflict, cooperation difficulties and cooperation failure as areas which gradually emerged as the most significant across interviews, also confirmed through observation on the part of one of the authors of this analysis. Throughout the research, we sought an understanding of the nature and issues facing early-stage agri-food cooperatives as part

of socially constructed conceptualisations that were derived through interviewing and observation.

#### **11.4 Findings for conflict, cooperation difficulties, and failure across different types of early-stage rural agri-food cooperatives**

A number of key inhibitors of rural cooperation and sources of cooperative conflict, difficulties and failure were identified. Addressing such factors, it will be suggested in subsequent sections that advisors and public-sector managers will be required in order to assist the formation, growth and sustainability of cooperatives. Encouraging members and other stakeholders to work together and cooperate will be shown to improve not only the members' financial position but also the long-term prospects of cooperatives and the rural economy as a whole. Through cooperation, greater returns for members are sought, mainly by wresting control over pricing, marketing of primary agricultural products, and other decisions from multinationals and middlemen.

Findings demonstrate that cooperatives need to balance objectives of, first, retaining sufficient margin to cover their operating costs and to accrue surpluses in order to invest in added value productive capacity in the future, and second, offering their members stable and sufficient price levels, such that they can retain their members. Informants repeatedly note that cooperatives can successfully compete with private businesses because they do not have to pay interest on borrowings or pay dividends. If they do report surpluses, these can be returned to members in the form of dividends. However, because the cooperative business model rests on principles of organising groups of people to work together, with many of them often involved in complex social, political, and economic dynamics, processes of coordination, decision-making, and cooperation can be problematic. As will be shown next, it is not unusual for the objectives of cooperatives to be different from the business and social aims of the businesses run by their farmer-members. Such opposing objectives and aims can cause problems for cooperatives if farmer-members are the majority on the Board and back only those proposals that serve their personal and narrow interests rather than the long-term sustainability of the cooperatives and the local communities and rural economies dependent on them.

As will be revealed, when cooperatives have heterogeneous membership, it becomes difficult for them to balance costs and benefits among various members and their other stakeholders, to preserve the

membership base, and grow and sustain their market positions. In some instances analysed by us, differential pricing of goods and services to members has been shown to be necessary to prevent those farmer-members who are less loyal to the cooperative from benefiting from more favourable market opportunities and thus abandoning the cooperative. The failure of some Boards to manage problems of low trust, high opportunism, and a lack of loyalty to the cooperative and its other members has led to the demise of the cooperatives managed by them. Our discussion suggests that there may not be a single model of cooperative management, and a number of different scenarios may describe the sources, nature, and consequences of cooperation conflict, difficulties, and failure, as will be shown below, with six types of cooperatives discussed separately with respect to matters of problematic cooperation.

As regards the *national scale, top-down cooperatives*, we noted developments following the demise of the statutory marketing boards in the early 1990s, when the UK market was liberalised. The statutory marketing boards had been set up to provide a more stable market for producers and, after WWII when food was in short supply, to increase output, and to improve quality, breeding, and hygiene of food. Following the privatisation of the boards during the Reaganite-Thatcherite period, rapid rationalisation occurred. Farmers who had had seats on the statutory boards lost their influence in the process of adding value to the raw produce, while processors and supermarkets benefited from the opportunity to increase their margins.

It has taken considerable time for primary producers to realise the benefits of cooperation, under the transformed conditions of the 1990s and early 2000s. Reminiscent of literature conceptualisations of mistrust, opportunistic behaviour, and fear of such behaviour, a vicious cycle impeding successful cooperation was noted by us across many such rural cooperatives. Informants suggested that this had been fuelled by the poor reputation of many cooperatives that were set up at the time. The eventual realisation of the advantages of pooling resources and controlling a vertically integrated structure generated a number of methods, noted by interviewees, whereby farmer-members cooperated in order to improve the returns to them and other primary producers. However, many farmer-members appeared to fail to fully consider the implications of setting up cooperatives to sell and market their products, and did not appear to have learnt from past mistakes.

The second type of cooperatives studied here, the 'farmer requisite cooperatives', first appeared in Wales in the early 1900s. Their main aim was to assist marketing of primary agricultural products such as

eggs, butter, and cheese. With this role initially undertaken by the statutory marketing boards which were privatised in the 1980s and 1990s, today their primary role is bulk buying and the supply of goods to farmers, including feedstuff and fertilisers. Some of these cooperatives have remained financially viable, though this requires diversifying into higher-margin goods sold through Country Stores, targeting the growing leisure equine market, and offering finance to cover farm purchases. In spite of such measures, only around twelve of the original cooperatives remain, with those that implemented sound management structures gradually absorbing the large number of less successful, smaller and failing cooperatives. Consequently, a handful of such organisations currently dominate the Welsh rural cooperative scene. The professional management of the biggest and most successful requisite cooperatives has allowed them to monitor, punish, and thus restrain and minimise opportunistic behaviour on the part of members. Decision-making rests with professional managers who organise the cooperatives much more like private businesses. Importantly, though we found that some farmer-members sat on the Boards of some of these cooperatives, most members let the professional managers run the organisations. During our observations, only a handful of farmer-members attended the annual general meetings, with much of the operational and strategic decision-making left to professional managers, often attracted from outside the rural location.

A number of farmers noted during interviews opportunities to add value to primary produce by processing food and selling products directly at wholesale or retail. Interviewees listed a number of such *bottom-up farmer formed cooperatives* across the dairy, livestock, and vegetable-growing sectors in Wales. Matters of collaboration and inhibitors to such collaboration appeared to be paramount to the effective operation of such structures. Interviewees indicated that, in their experience, trust among members was particularly crucial to the long-term viability of such cooperatives especially in sectors where the processed produce was difficult to trace back to individual producers. Even if the cooperative managed to secure higher prices for the products of primary producers through quality or brand marketing, some unscrupulous farmer-members could substitute non-compliant products. Such significant trust- and loyalty-related problems were identified across a number of such cooperatives; they appeared to have hastened the demise of a number of such cooperatives over the years. Specific hurdles to the longevity of these cooperatives identified during conversations also included common accusations of insufficient returns, which fuelled

distrust amongst cooperative members. Some producers were reported as having used their membership of such cooperatives to set bottom prices in the market and sell their better product on the open market, particularly when it was buoyant, thus ultimately undermining the objectives of the cooperative.

Interviewees also mentioned Welsh *producer groups* supplying agricultural produce to other companies in charge of packing, processing and marketing agri-food products. Such cooperative ventures enjoy guaranteed markets for their produce at stable, pre-agreed prices. A loose network structure operates well within this business model. The in-built flexibility facilitates, in principle, unproblematic entry and exit. Flexibility, though, seemed to assume additional dimensions, further assisting the success of such cooperative structures. One producer group spoken to, for instance, did not run a bank account or handle any money, but charged a small commission of 1.5% to operate the association. Another successful association interviewed, first, focused on flexibly taking advantage of any opportunity to organise events and technical days for the benefits of its 15 members, and second, attended events on behalf of these members in order to transfer knowledge and best practice, especially when tacit knowledge proved of consequence to the businesses of the members. Such producer groups therefore provide good examples of successful, early-stage, loosely formed networks, whose main aim is the transfer of information and knowledge, and which flourish due to symbiotic and mutually advantageous relationships between the group of purchasers and the producer group, with fewer problems in terms of conflict and cooperation failure witnessed by us. Such producer groups, though, are generally paid market prices for the products that they offer. Therefore, the buyer typically dictates the price through adjudication of the quality of produce. Thus, in times of plentiful supply, the buyer can downgrade the quality in order to pay a lower price. There is little that the cooperative producers can do to offset such practices, widely adopted by supermarkets. With unclear and diminishing benefits to some producers, such producer groups are rarely sustainable in the long run, at least in the Welsh and UK contexts.

*Informal networking* has a long history amongst farmers. Collaborative work and mutual assistance have traditionally been a hallmark of rural relationships and neighbourly arrangements. Whilst post-WWII collaboration typified by the voluntary pooling of labour such as that during the threshing parties has ceased, farmers still share machinery and equipment. Machinery rings were described by informants as a relatively new rural collaborative innovation. They were commonly

perceived as facilitating the collaboration among farmers and suppliers within the agricultural sector by pooling machinery and labour resources. However, interviews revealed that specialisation of agricultural contractor services was one of many drivers which forced contractors to share machinery. Informal networking and cooperation based on common usage of machines were described as imperative in business settings where capital investment was particularly high and profitability was low. Such sharing was often done locally and was typically practiced by individuals who knew one another well. Breakdown of such relationships, though, was described as common, with distrust and weak loyalty finding vent in such closer relations. Prominent and consistent examples were also uncovered of conflicts and collaborative failures due to disagreements among farmer-members, or between farmers and other stakeholders, which were often not related to the sharing of the machinery but were of a personal nature.

Additional cooperative structures identified included, first, *knowledge transfer organisations* such as agricultural shows, breed societies, and grassland societies constituting social enterprises and cooperatives as 'excellent exemplars of cooperation' in the words of one interviewee, and second, *social societies, clubs, and organisations* which covered a wide range of social enterprises, and rural cooperatives operating in the agricultural sector, a prominent example being the Young Farmers Club, with its enviable reputation for providing social interaction opportunities, training, and sporting activities for the rural youth. Another example discussed extensively during interviews was the Farmers Union of Wales, which was formed because it was felt that the National Farmers Union did not represent the interest of farmers in Wales but promoted the agenda of the 'Barley Barons' of England. The Union has survived partly because it is financed not only by members' fees but also by the commissions from the sale of insurances. Finally, there were the cooperative arrangements of the Women's Institute, with its added value food products including retailing of baked products at cake stalls, and the *farmers' markets*, which were managed with the support of local government and which offered important services to small food producers, including product trials and cash income generation. The last example discussed here, and one which appeared to suffer less from conflict and failure problems, were the farmer *buying groups*, formed and operated by small groups of larger farmers in order to facilitate the purchase of feed and fertilisers. They were seen as interviewees to be somewhat similar to the aforementioned informal, loose networks with their lesser trust and loyalty problems.

### **11.5 Understanding conflict, cooperation difficulties and failure in early-stage rural, agri-food cooperatives**

Although assuming somewhat different forms across various types of cooperatives, conflict, cooperation impediments and difficulties, and cooperative failure have been shown to possess some common qualities; they also share certain sources, and present rural locations and their communities with some common challenges. First and foremost among the sources of conflict and cooperation failure was the absence of experienced management and the governance weaknesses described across interviews. Such issues appeared to plague most of the failed cooperatives and those facing cooperation difficulties or internal conflicts. Professional management was often either absent and not welcomed by farmer-members or did not possess the necessary knowledge, skills, experience, and exposure to wider networks and institutional structures to provide cooperatives and their members with a strategic, long-term perspective of rural, agri-food cooperation. To this, one should add the absence or weaknesses of professional, knowledgeable Boards of Directors populated by individuals with links to, and a history of involvement with, local and national industry. Directors and managers of many cooperatives studied here which faced conflicts, cooperation difficulties or failure did not appear to possess formal business relations either locally or beyond the rural area where the cooperatives operated. Management was also often accused of not being focused enough on the needs of the local community and its farmers, or communicating clearly its intentions and rationale to interested rural stakeholders, both within and outside cooperatives. The need for further professionalisation of rural agri-food cooperatives and the associated adoption of robust business models, in order to deliver economic value and maximise benefits of cooperation to rural communities, was a key conclusion from our research.

Second, structural factors were found to be missing or weak in the context of failed cooperatives and those that were assessed to be suffering from cooperation difficulties, or failed following internal conflicts. Structural factors included matters of, first, control, such as voting principles and voting rights, and second, ownership, including equity types and entry fees (see also Kyriakopoulos et al., 2004). Clarity regarding the above matters was often missing or was inadequate within failed cooperatives or those experiencing cooperation difficulties. In these businesses, organisational structures appeared unclear, and the responsibilities of various stakeholders including farmer-members tended to be inadequately defined or enforced. The involvement of stakeholders

other than management and the Boards of Directors in matters of control and ownership was either not clearly specified or was bitterly contested by farmers, who often distrusted outsiders such as the managers. Incentive structures, especially those concerning stakeholder groups such as farmer-members, were also often unclear or were inconsistent, thus not assisting management in addressing problems with farmers' lack of trust and loyalty to the cooperative, its other members, and its managers. Such findings were the obverse of the clear structures and optimal organisation uncovered by Franks and McGloin (2007) among successful rural cooperatives in a Dutch context, thus confirming the criticality of such factors to rural cooperation.

Third, considerable difficulties were identified in balancing the needs of various stakeholder groups – a finding which is not unexpected as such, in view of past reports of friction among stakeholder groups in various rural cooperatives and consequent conflict or even exclusion of some such groups (e.g. Franks and McGloin, 2007). Nor was it surprising to find out that a lack of a cooperative spirit among certain stakeholders such as farmer-members inhibited cooperation (see Lamprinopoulou et al., 2006). However, the magnitude of such problems was less anticipated, for a number of examples were narrated during interviews of a lack of a clear sense of purpose and direction which should ideally be shared not only among managers and board members but also by all relevant stakeholders, including farmer-members. Stakeholders, and especially farmers, appeared to disagree on the distribution of the costs, rewards, and benefits from their involvement with rural cooperatives. Stakeholder groups such as management, on the one hand, and farmer-members, on the other hand, appeared at odds with respect to the governing rights and decision-making processes across all cooperatives that we identified and labelled as either already failed or facing cooperation difficulties at the time of the research. Influential stakeholder groups such as farmers and other rural residents, including farmers' spouses and other family members directly or indirectly involved with rural, agri-food cooperatives communicated their dissatisfaction with their inadequate influence on and involvement with cooperative decision-making, with an alleged imbalance of the interests of local versus non-local stakeholders, such as managers. Though increasingly found across rural areas (Boonstra and Frouws, 2005), multi-stakeholdership proved to constitute a major source of cooperation weaknesses in the studied organisations, with widely held perceptions of imbalances of net costs and net benefits to individuals and entire stakeholder groups perceived to be unacceptable and described as prime sources of conflict and failure.

Power struggles, conflicts, contestation, and the attempted exclusion of whole stakeholder groups were repeatedly observed across failed or failing cooperatives. Such agri-food cooperatives could therefore be described as ‘arenas of power’ not dissimilar from those described by Derksen et al. (2008) in the context of rural partnership dynamics. Far from uncovering evidence of cooperative spirit and humans’ ‘natural propensity ... to cooperate’ (Bianchi, 2001), consistent evidence was collected of inadequate internal cohesiveness within cooperatives, of negative attitudes among farmers and other constituencies toward cooperation and compliance which appeared to undermine collective action, of opposing and contested frames of reference (both among farmers and between farmers and other constituencies), and of an almost natural farmers’ propensity to mistrust others, especially managers and non-local actors, resulting in wide-ranging interests and coalitions within failed, failing, and weaker cooperatives. Opposition mainly between farmers and other stakeholders, including management or in-comers with an interest in such cooperatives, observed by the authors during meetings, thwarted coordinated planning and widened internal divisions.

Fourth, agri-food cooperatives aim to be socially responsible and sustainable, with definitions of sustainability extending beyond the narrow, economic understanding of the term; yet, such cooperatives competed with traditional businesses which did not necessarily face the same, frequently more stringent expectations of sustainability and local or regional accountability, nor did they share the multiple, at times incompatible economic and social-cultural-environmental-political aims of studied cooperatives. Wherever private-sector competitors were found to operate in the same market and therefore compete directly with the studied rural, agri-food cooperatives, the performance of the latter was found to suffer, with cooperation among members weakened and failure rates rising. While we were unable to establish unambiguous cause-and-effect relationships among such variables, competition from the private sector appeared to negatively affect rural cooperation while being somewhat positively correlated with cooperative strife, conflict, and consequently cooperative failure.

### **11.6 Instead of a conclusion: solutions for conflict, difficulties and failure in early-stage rural, agri-food cooperatives**

This discussion closes with some suggestions for resolving conflict, cooperation difficulties, and failure which may apply not only to

early-stage agri-food cooperatives but may also provide lessons for public-sector bodies, consultants, analysts, and facilitators working with or assisting various rural cooperative initiatives and ventures, as illustrated in Figure 11.1.

The research carried out in Wales identified key factors which need to be in place if an agri-food cooperative is to be sustainable and successful. The first two questions in the checklist are crucial to setting-up cooperative rural initiatives and ventures, suggesting the need to set time aside for discussions and negotiations before formulating the type and structure of a new cooperative. Such discussions are often missing during a period of enthusiasm when a new group is being established. It is essential at this stage to ensure that all potential members agree on some common goals and objectives. These need to be written and included in a business plan which has to be backed by all members.

Most cooperatives are initially set up with the aim of improving income for farmer-members; however, it is important to communicate clearly at the outset that the objectives of the cooperative may differ from those of its members. Members need to understand how a cooperative functions, with farmer-dominated management boards not making decisions seeking short-term benefits for members, to the detriment of the cooperative's longer-term survival.

Another issue worth considering concerns the skills available amongst members and how (or whether) such skills are needed for the cooperative to function successfully. It is important to assess the presence, absence, and depth of marketing, supply-chain management, and financial skills and knowledge, for example. An important consideration may be the employment of professional managers – to be considered alongside matters of management's remuneration in relation to farmer-members' earnings.

Within a group that wishes to set up a cooperative, there is usually a 'mover and shaker', a natural leader. That leader, though, should have the support of all members. He or she may have a personality that may alienate some members while favouring others.

The group will need to consider various scenarios, and should hold frank discussions about what could possibly go wrong and how loyalty to the group, which is often high at the outset, may quickly decline once problems appear. At this formation stage, potential problems which may occur should be identified and contingency plans should be put in place in order to avoid problems destroying the cooperative venture. For instance, management systems which control and mediate

- Is there a clear empathy within the groups, are members like-minded?
- Do all the members have common aims and goals, and have the objectives been clearly identified at the outset?
- Has a skills audit been completed amongst members?
- Will the members be loyal to the group? How can this be ensured?
- Does the group have a clear brand and what are the brand values?
- Is there one person with a clear vision and a sense of mission; do all members of the group agree with the mission statement?
- Has the form of organisation been identified? Which of the following is proposed?
- An informal network of members which handles no finances.
  - An informal network of members which has a bank account and makes payments and purchases.
  - Formally constituted as a Community Interest Company (important for organisations holding property on behalf of the community).
  - Formally constituted as a cooperative which can either be a partnership, a limited company, a company limited by guarantee, a private limited company or a public limited company.
- Is the organisation properly financed?
- Does the organisation have skilled managers? Is there a formal management structure?
- Have possible barriers to entering the market been identified; are there spoilers and gatekeepers operating in the sector?
- Has the group used the (sometimes free) professional help available to write business, financial and marketing plans? Have members used governmental or regional governmental support initiatives – if any?
- Has the membership talked to other groups already successful in the product sector being considered? (Talking also to those that have failed as well as those that have succeeded).
- Have the location for the plant, the storage and distribution depot, as well as logistics, including access to markets, been considered? Is an IT infrastructure available?
- Can any likely difference in culture, attitudes, opinions and objectives among members be identified at the formation of the cooperative, which may lead to conflicts later, and can these differences be reconciled from the outset?

*Figure 11.1* A checklist of cooperation

disputes need to be designed. Taking advice and learning from the experience of other cooperatives, particularly those that have failed, should be sought.

The above checklist, as already noted, is informed by our findings. The empirical research demonstrated that encouraging people to work together has long been identified as a way to improve not only individuals' financial positions but also the rural economy as a whole. Cooperation often generates greater returns for its members, mainly by wresting control over pricing and marketing of primary products from multinationals and middlemen. However, because cooperation involves organising groups of people who often have differing social, political, educational and other backgrounds, processes and structures of cooperation and collaboration may be problematic. Ensuring that the key factors identified in Figure 11.1 are in place may ameliorate problems that are likely to arise, therefore improving the chances of long-term success of cooperative and other rural initiatives.

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# Conclusion

*Edward Kasabov*

Discussions in this edited volume revolve around four issues pertaining to relational rurals which contributors sought to explore. Accordingly, in this closing commentary to the volume, tentative conclusions regarding the four issues and ways of taking rural scholarship further are noted.

The first matter concerns ways of looking into, perceiving and theorising rural spaces in relational terms and with respect to the multiple expressions of cooperation and collaboration, be they seemingly 'positive' (or 'affirmative') or deemed 'negative' (and 'deleterious'). The relational turn in rural studies has been recognised and commented on by a minority of scholars, but the relational rurals remain elusive and inadequately understood. Theorising relational rurals further will parallel contemporaneous developments in other disciplines, including regional science and regional studies. Such a renewed interest in the relational, in embeddedness in all its forms awaiting rediscovery, is much needed, for economic activity is embedded in social, cultural and other relational structures and dynamics. From a relational perspective focused on cooperation and its obverse, rural spaces and their inhabitants, the structures and institutions that they erect and the processes through which they realise such achievements are products of a complex and vast amalgam of relational phenomena which are impossible to understand in isolation and some of which await deeper conceptualisations benefiting from 'relational' and 'associational' paradigms in other disciplines.

On a practical level, the preceding discussions demonstrate the significance of relations, cooperation and collaboration founded on strong and positive social capital to the economic, socio-political and cultural advancement of rural spaces. From a rural development perspective,

cooperation and collaboration have intrinsic benefits for the functioning of rural and peripheral territories across Europe. Be it in terms of stakeholder engagement in rural governance (Go et al.), 'sustainable growth' rural cooperation (Pollerman), partnership-based cross-community cooperation (Fekete), or cooperative structures in service provision in low density rural areas (O'Shaughnessy and Enright), strong and systematic linkages between rural resilience and development, on the one hand, and cooperation and collaboration, on the other, have been identified and theorised. Cooperation and collaboration have been shown to combat marginality, underdevelopment, inequity and socio-economic disadvantage; the studies in question also demonstrate the effect of relations on managing shared rural assets, not least by increasing the effectiveness of all forms of rural capitals. Although far from representing sufficient and exhaustive preconditions for rural sustainability, resilience and improvement, high levels of cooperation and collaboration, one may conclude, are consistently enough correlated with rural, regional, and local advancement to warrant the 'relational turn' advocated here not only in academic but also in practice and policy circles. Conversely, relational challenges, limits to cooperation and collaboration, and the manner in which rural actors do not seek to or avoid cooperating present rural and peripheral locations with dilemmas spanning the rural-urban binary and attendant conflicts (Bestwick), social distinctions and class differentiation (Mordue), clashes of differing identities (Heley), and cooperation failure (Kasabov and Warlow). Such accounts of disassociation, disengagement, difference, antagonism, and opposition demonstrate the constitutive power of relational rural forces, offering a fertile ground for future rural analysis and practice cognisant of the impact that such dynamics may have on the European rural and peripheral spaces of the future.

Drawing on the preceding point, cooperative structures and processes, collaborative norms, and collective action underpin community cohesiveness and shape positively rural fortunes, by helping promote shared rural place identity. New approaches to the management and governance of rural space will therefore require an understanding of the sources, nature and consequences of the processes, dynamics, and outcomes studied by all contributors to this edited volume – including cooperation, negotiation, difference, and class conflict – in order to harness the productive potential of the rural relational with the aim of assisting rural and peripheral spaces in the globalised world of the twenty-first century. Novel governance mechanisms predicated on principles of participative rural management, inclusive structures and

consultative decision-making through the formation of partnerships, though inherently complex and 'messy' and at times failing to challenge dominant elites and attendant political, class and other interests (thus open to scepticism and allegations of 'facadism'), are also amenable to affirmative and progressive competition among groups. Within such structures, both consensual discourses and opposing visions may empower local rural residents, may nurture mutual understanding among disparate rural stakeholder groups, and may at least in part facilitate the pursuit of more variable objectives benefiting a greater number of rural inhabitants. Based on the – mistaken at times – assumed superiority and neutrality of such rural management mechanisms, it may be expected that, through such mechanisms, the multifarious and fluid plurality of visions, agendas, and interests presented in this book can be aligned and responsibly channelled into fruitful solutions to rural challenges. Irrespective of one's intellectual and political position regarding governance and similar currently-trialled models of social and economic management, the preceding discussions appear to suggest that competing rationales and plurality of views surface readily within such governance arenas, and have a constructive role to play there. Erasing, ignoring, or condemning difference and conflicts in such governance arenas through policy-makers seeking more simple solutions to frequently intractable rural issues may have deleterious effects.

As far as our collective understanding of how theories of relational rurals may develop, the contributors to this edited volume sought to introduce readers to extant relational, cooperation- and collaboration-focused thinking about rural, peripheral areas and the challenges faced by organisations, institutions, and individuals working in these spaces. While drawing on current concepts and imagery in rural studies, contributors questioned some long-established views and challenged assumptions around political, economic, cultural, and social aspects of organisation in problematic and failing rural and peripheral spaces. Separate chapters provided novel perspectives on rural dynamics, development, cooperation, and policy interventions. Some of these issues have remained somewhat overlooked in academic literatures, especially outside of the immediate area of rural studies, and have consequently appeared mostly in dedicated journals in this area such as *Journal of Rural Studies* and *Sociologia Ruralis*. However, these issues are significant enough to deserve to be available to wider audiences. Our aim was therefore to bring together, in one place and outside of the confines of specialist rural publications, knowledge of a relational rurality which is not only of academic importance, by advancing further intellectual

debates on rurality through a relational perspective, but – we trust – also of practical significance. By searching for theorising solutions of a post-structuralist nature while also proposing a re-think of rural conflict and cooperation difficulties within material rural accounts, and by re-imagining rurality as a site of both cooperation success and failure, the book seeks to address significant conceptual puzzles which double as policy challenges and dilemmas that are currently topical, including finding solutions to European and nationally funded interventions aimed at assisting rural peripheral areas at a time when most EU members are re-negotiating their budgets, agendas, and visions for rural development and when new initiatives would be starting to develop in order to deliver support to rural and peripheral spaces across the continent.

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