

PART III:



**The Future: Prospects,
Policy Issues and Proposals**

PROSPECTIVE TRENDS AND POLICY DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

1. INTRODUCTION

During the 1970s, rural areas in general in most developed countries experienced an economic revival, reflected in population increase often outpacing metropolitan growth (OECD, 1990:11). During the 1980s, rural population growth slowed down and in many areas the historical trend of decline re-asserted itself. There are, of course, differences between different types of area and the EU has suggested a broad classification, with three types (CEC, 1988):

- those under pressure from modern development, near to or easily accessible from large metropolitan centres;
- those in decline whose survival is threatened;
- areas which are remote and isolated and which have been subject to depopulation (especially mountain regions and small islands).

As this implies, there is a distinction to be made between, on the one hand, prosperous regions where the economy is growing and diversifying and, on the other hand, the economically weaker regions which are home to those dependent on a fragile and vulnerable agricultural base. In this context, peripherality and sparseness of population are over-riding factors determining the development potential of rural areas (CEC, 1991:151).

Ireland has a 'late-developing, peripheral economy', with a comparatively high level of dependence on agriculture, a high proportion of its non-metropolitan population living in sparsely populated rural areas, and a fringe geographical location. This country, therefore, faces particular problems in developing its rural economy.

In the following sections there is a review of the macroeconomic context for the future development of the Irish rural economy, followed by the presentation of the broad framework within which the future for rural areas can be envisaged and an appropriate concept of rural development can be formulated. This concept is based on the relevance of local spatial planning and the adoption of a multi-dimensional but integrated approach to rural problems.

2. MACROECONOMIC CONTEXT

Because Ireland's population outside of the Dublin region is predominantly rural, and because the maintenance of rural population numbers is, either expressly or implied, a national policy goal, it follows that rural development is inextricably linked to the general problem of countering widespread unemployment. As we shall show later, rural development is a more comprehensive concept than economic development in rural areas but one of the major adjustment problems is the provision of economic opportunities for those displaced from commercial agriculture.

In relation to agriculture, the policy in the EU will tend to reflect global trends towards more reliance on markets (NESC, 1992). Various measures in agricultural policy such as compensatory or direct income payments may exert a certain holding influence on agricultural labour but the movement of labour out of full-time farming may be expected to continue. The record of the recent past shows that while some of those exiting from farming have come to depend heavily on State welfare payments, there was a substantial segment of smallholders whose families adapted to change by securing non-farm employment and other sources of income while retaining possession of the holdings (Hannan and Commins, 1992:80). Using the opportunities presented by the availability of free post-primary education and associated transport facilities, this segment of the farm population capitalised on the employment growth of the 1970s to a greater extent than categories of non-farm households.

This adjustment was facilitated by a programme of decentralised industrialisation, though with some concentration within regions. However, with economic restructuring and retrenchment in the industrial sector the availability of off-farm employment has become even more centralised, being concentrated near the larger urban centres or provincial towns. A study of the changing social ecology of Rural Districts between 1960 and 1980 (Hannan and Commins, 1993) showed that the demographic vitality of many rural areas had become closely tied to the development of a diversified rural economy and less connected to the characteristics of the local farm economy. The higher the exclusive dependence of an area on small-scale farming, the study's authors concluded, the lower the capacity of that area to maintain a viable socio-economic and demographic structure. These findings were based on the data available to 1980; similar data are not yet available for 1991 (i.e. demographic and agricultural census data at local level) but it is more than likely that they would confirm the above conclusion, given the widespread rural population decline of the 1980s.

The implication of these points is that with the restrictive policies in agriculture and industrialisation - and in sea-fishing - many of the more isolated (remote from urban centres) areas will continue to lose population over the next decade. This prompts the need to think about strategies through which 'coalitions of areas', perhaps centred around an urban area or provincial town, could form a basis for a more concerted and area-focused approach to rural development.

While the above argument is based on trends in the generality of industrial enterprise, the question could be raised as to the potential growth in small and medium enterprises in rural areas. Nationally, small companies have an excellent employment record but O'Moráin (1991) states that few small industries grow to be medium-sized; only one in every 100 small companies grows to employ more than 50 persons, while a significant number of medium-sized companies fail to achieve further growth.

Apart from the problem of the spatial distribution of employment activities, there is the over-hanging issue of the national incapacity to cope with potential increases in the labour force. The scale of the task of providing adequate levels of non-farm employment has been greater here than in any other western European country. One reason for this is the exceptional demographic structure of the Irish population with unprecedented numbers coming into the school-leaving age cohorts. Another factor is that the proportion of the Irish workforce in the contracting agricultural sector is higher than in other European countries - Portugal and Greece excepted. It is not generally realised that the longer term (1960-1990) growth rate in non-agricultural employment in Ireland has been well above the average rate of non-agricultural job growth in the EU. Here, however, the massive decline in agricultural employment over the past three decades has played a significant role in slowing the rate of growth in total employment (NESC, 1992). As the NESC report notes, while the significance of this 'agricultural' factor has diminished over time it continued to hit Ireland more severely than most other countries during the early 1980s.

But Ireland had another problem in the second half of the 1980s when employment in the non-market services sector fell sharply, by an average of 1.0 per cent per annum. On the other hand, growth in market services employment compared quite favourably to that of other EU countries (NESC, 1992).

In any event, the dominant consideration here is that for the future the prognosis for the Irish labour market is quite stark. The domestic labour force will continue to expand, possibly by 20,000 persons per year up to the

year 2001, even if net emigration reached 10,000 per annum (DKM, 1992). The existing stock of unemployed will be augmented by an inflow of new job-seekers - up to 30,000 annually in the absence of emigration. The conclusion is clear: mass unemployment is here to stay, at least for the remainder of the century, in the absence of sustained success in job creation or a return to high rates of emigration. The scale of unemployment is now so large that it cannot be reduced rapidly. This, of course, still leaves options for generating growth in employment, and rural areas, where there are productive natural resources, are better circumstanced than many urban areas to create jobs.

In the European context, two developments can have a bearing on the future prospects for Irish rural areas. There are uncertainties about the distribution of the benefits that might ensue from the Single European Market policies. It is widely accepted that more intensive competition could adversely affect the economic position of the weaker sections and peripheral regions. However, the increases in the scale of the Structural Funds and the deployment of the special Cohesion Fund are expected to offset the possible detrimental consequences in the peripheral economies. But as Kennedy (1992) cautions, economic and social cohesion is essentially a political concept, to be broadly understood as a degree of economic and social equality needed for the Community to function and develop satisfactorily - as a single entity. "In so far as the Community treats real convergence as a major objective", he adds, "it places the emphasis on 'economic and social cohesion', and the two are not quite the same" (p.39). Kennedy adds that although the articles on cohesion added to the Treaty by the Single European Act 1987 gave special mention to reducing disparities between the various regions and the backwardness of the less favoured regions, the Community is unlikely to set clearly defined quantifiable targets for convergence.

The second European issue concerns the implications of the opening up of the economies of East Europe for the peripheral EU countries. Kennedy (1992:28) considers that it is difficult to say with any assurance what the balance of negative and positive outcomes will be since much depends on whether the reorganisation of the East European economies can proceed without major disruption.

Summarising the major trends in the macroeconomy, Kennedy (1992:53) states:

We are in process of intensifying an unhealthy dualism in our economy and society, in which an increasing minority is left further behind in terms of access to jobs, income and education, with the

attendant risk that multiple deprivation will be transmitted inter-generationally to the children of this marginalised minority.

While economic and social marginalisation is obvious in urban areas of concentrated unemployment, it is also the experience of those living in the remoter rural areas, especially, but not exclusively, in the western peripheral regions and in the North-West.

3. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES - ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING AND SPATIAL CHANGE

Before setting down a broad framework as a basis for a desirable scenario of rural development it will be helpful to draw together here some points of a more conceptual nature that have underpinned the discussion in earlier chapters, especially Chapter 2 and Chapter 5. These concern the relationships between processes of macro-level socio-economic change and change in particular kinds of local spaces, e.g., rural or urban areas.

(i) Territorial Change: Externally Induced Dynamics

The first point is the proposition of Duncan and Goodwin (1988) that particular spatial arrangements (such as 'rural' or 'urban') have no independent causal power; that is to say, to describe 'change', 'development', 'decline', or 'growth' as rural is simply to use a convenient common-sense or shorthand way of signifying what is in fact a contingent manifestation of more general socio-economic processes. Space is not a determinant; spatial configurations are in fact constituted by social processes although space makes a difference as to how these processes work (Duncan and Goodwin, 1988:51).

The second proposition is that the socio-economic (or, more accurately, the technico-economic and social) processes of relevance to contemporary change in rural areas are those associated with 'restructuring'. This model of change has several features, some of which have been already noted (see Chapter 5). These include: restructuring of production in agriculture, reorganisation in agribusiness, and in industrial systems; increased productivity, through technical innovation; internationalisation of the economy, taking advantage of the most favourable locations for production, management and control; growth of service industries, especially in those processing information; advances in telecommunications; shrinkage of the public sector and associated 'privatisation' of State assets (Castells and Henderson, 1987).

According to Castells and Henderson, there are two implications of this restructuring trend at the spatial level. The first is that there is a tendency for a *space of flows* to supersede a *space of places*. By this they mean that the logic and dynamics of local area development depend very much on the connection of the population and activities of local areas to activities and decisions that go far beyond local boundaries.

(ii) Consolidation at Local Level to Cope with Change

At the same time as the externally included dynamics impact on a local area, a second territorial process gets under way. While some dominant economic interests locally may have a sense of *extended space* (e.g. through their links into transnational business) communal social relations for the most part continue to operate according to a *locally* specific, place-oriented logic and often in defence of locally specific interests or local identity. The new territorial dynamics, then, in a market economy tend to be organised around a 'contradiction between placeless power and powerless places' (Castells and Henderson, 1987:7).

A somewhat similar argument is advanced by Stohr (1990:20-54). He notes that while local economic crises are a concern in all parts of Europe (both in major industrial regions and in peripheral regions, East and West) central or 'top down' policies have been unable to generate local innovative capacity and promote flexible responses locally in periods dominated by restructuring needs. Hence, local and regional communities are organising themselves to meet the challenges of a global scale. The initiative of the western Bishops in mobilising a campaign to 'Save the West' is an Irish example at regional level.

One way for people to do this, according to Duncan and Goodwin (1988:65-68), is to find a 'spatial fix'; that is, to find at some geographical area level a measure of strength and stability in the face of change. The need for a 'spatial fix' interacts with, and complements, an in-built tendency towards 'structured coherence', to find stability and gain control even in the shadow of the external forces inducing change.

Forms and technologies of production, inter-industry linkages, patterns of labour supply and demand, physical and social infrastructures, patterns of life and consumption, all these interact to produce this coherence (Duncan and Goodwin, 1988:65).

These 'spatial fixes' may exist at different spatial levels. Also, they are 'porous' and always open to being undermined but a factor contributing to their strength is the development locally of a common sense of purpose, an understanding of the challenges to be faced in maintaining cohesion, and a fostering of local culture and consciousness of identity. Of course, state intervention (through central or local government) can be a major means of establishing 'spatial fix', i.e. in consolidating the capacity of local areas to respond to the global processes of restructuring.

Translating these ideas to the Irish context a spatial fix may be a region, county, or a sub-county unit perhaps based within the sphere of influence of a county town. This issue will become relevant when we take up below the question of spatial reorganisation for Irish rural development.

4. RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND EXCLUSION

Here we introduce an additional concept, that of 'exclusion'. Combating exclusion is now a theme in the EU approach to social policy in the broad sense, and is included as a policy aim in the Maastricht Treaty (Article 1 of the Agreement on Social Policy).

Whereas concepts like 'disadvantaged', 'under-developed' or 'less favoured' have connotations of static conditions, or conditions attributable to the internal characteristics of particular areas, exclusion has connotations of a dynamic process. It puts the focus on societal processes by which disadvantage or under-development is brought about. It calls attention to the mechanisms or forces by which certain categories of areas or persons are closed off from accessing the opportunities, benefits and rights of the contemporary society.

Exclusionary processes manifest themselves in two broad dimensions: spatial and socio-economic. In the light of what has been said, however, about the relationships between the restructuring of economic space and geographical space (see Chapter 2), the distinction between these dimensions is simply one of convenience; spatial exclusion is basically the locational outcome of dominant socio-economic processes and not a feature of space *per se*.

The following sections discuss these two dimensions of exclusion, drawing out the implications for rural development policy and strategy.

(i) Rural Spatial Exclusion/Development

Some Examples

Clearly, rural under-development - or exclusion - is not randomly distributed over space. However, statistical measures of under-development for localised areas, and on an up-to-date basis, are not readily available. But for illustrative purposes, reference is made here to the experiences of District Electoral Divisions (DEDs) in selected areas, in the matter of maintaining or losing their populations during the 1980s. In other words, capacity to maintain population is taken as one indicator of successful rural development, of the capacity to counter exclusionary forces.

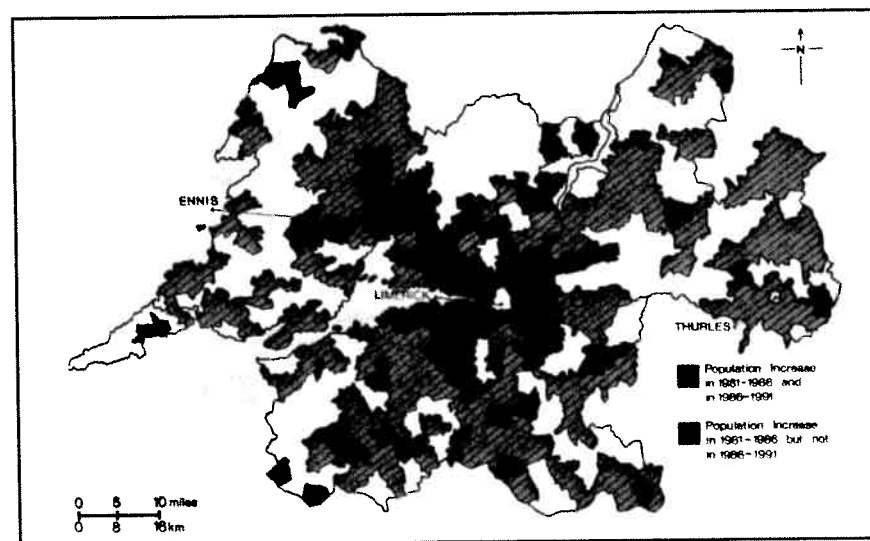
The accompanying maps for the areas selected show three types of spaces: (i) those DEDs which increased population both in 1981-86 and 1986-91; (ii) those that increased population in 1981-86 but not in 1986-91; and (iii) the remainder, most of which failed to record any increase during the 1980s. Relatively few DEDs would have lost population in 1981-86 and gained in 1986-91.

Figure 12.1 shows the position for counties Clare, Limerick and most of North Tipperary. This is of interest because the Mid-West Region has its own development agency - SFADCO. Sustained population growth has obviously centred around the Limerick-Shannon-Ennis triangle with spatial extensions along the main communication routes out of the triangle. The 1981 population density in the growth area was 44 persons per km². By contrast, the areas which did not participate in this growth (i.e. no population increase during the 1980s) had a 1981 population density of 21 persons per km².

By way of further illustration, somewhat similar patterns are shown for Counties Wexford, Westmeath and Mayo (Figures 12.2, 12.3 and 12.4). Generally, population growth - as a measure of development - is concentrated near an urban centre or the larger county towns.

FIGURE 12.1

Population Increase in the Mid-West, 1981-91



This raises the question of whether a new spatial fix or re-organisation of rural territories would ensure a greater degree of population stability or 'structured coherence' to counter decline and spatial exclusion. The question has been put in another way and more starkly by O'Tuathaigh (1992:100):

Is it realistic to expect that every village in the country can or will prosper; that the IDA or SFADCO can ensure a viable factory or cluster of SMEs in every town? Would it not be more honest to admit that there will have to be choices; that, when all factors are weighted, some places will prosper while others won't, that there will be winners as well as losers, determined by the results of competition and the rewards of local leadership and enterprise, as between one town and another? Is not this natural and inevitable, and should we not accept it as such, instead of denouncing it in terms of the cruel Darwinian logic of market forces?

Need for Spatial Reorganisation to Counter Spatial Exclusion

These kind of questions are about spatial organisation and reorganisation, about managing and making choices over what Swyngedouw (1987:77) calls "the organisation of the 'spatiality' of society". Here we need to return to the conceptual level to examine these issues.

FIGURE 12.2

Population Increase in Co. Wexford, 1981-91

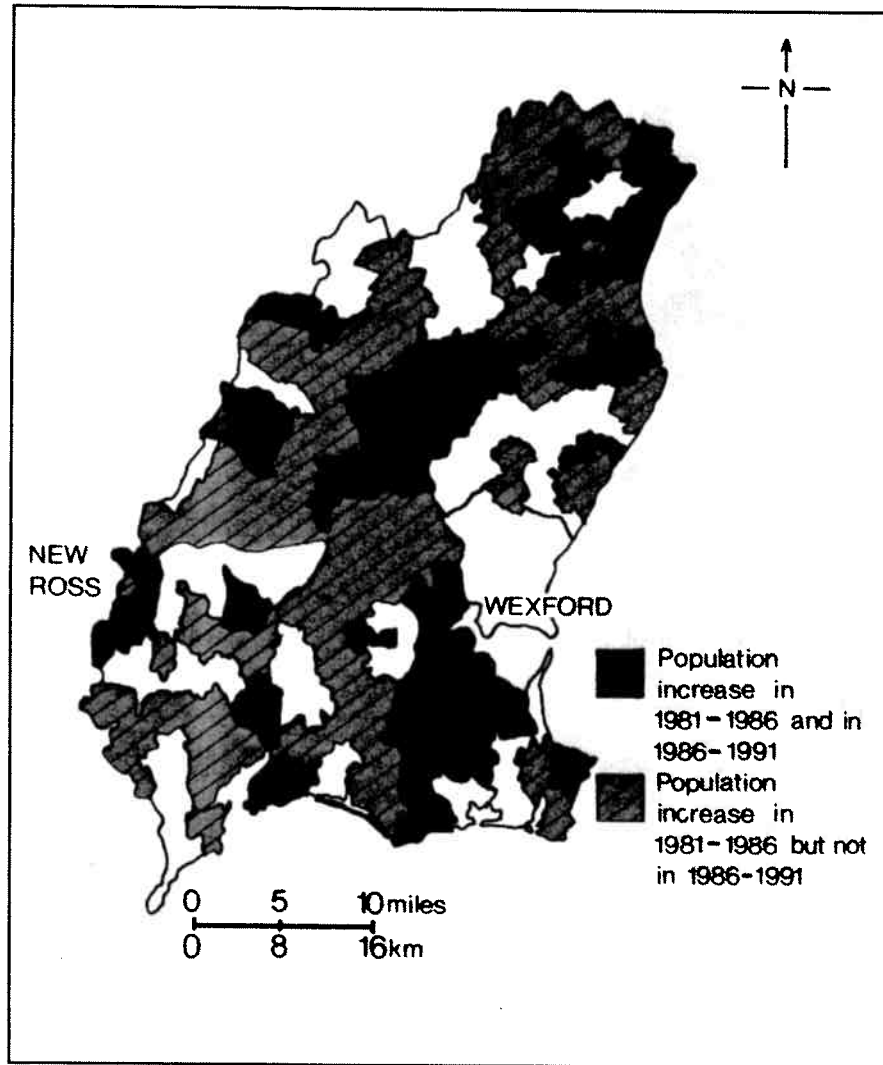
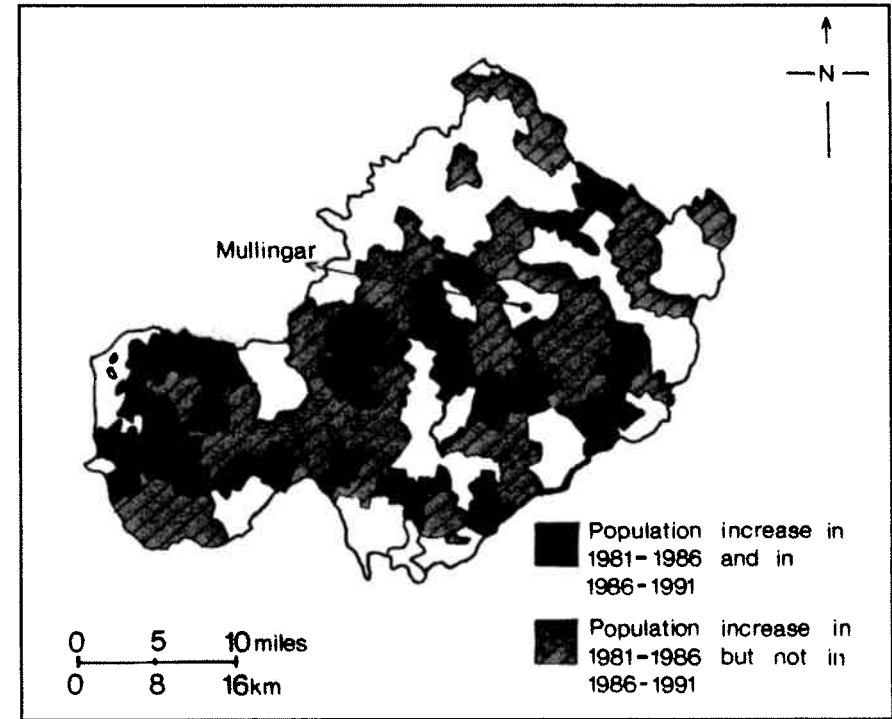


FIGURE 12.3

Population Increase in Co. Westmeath, 1981-91

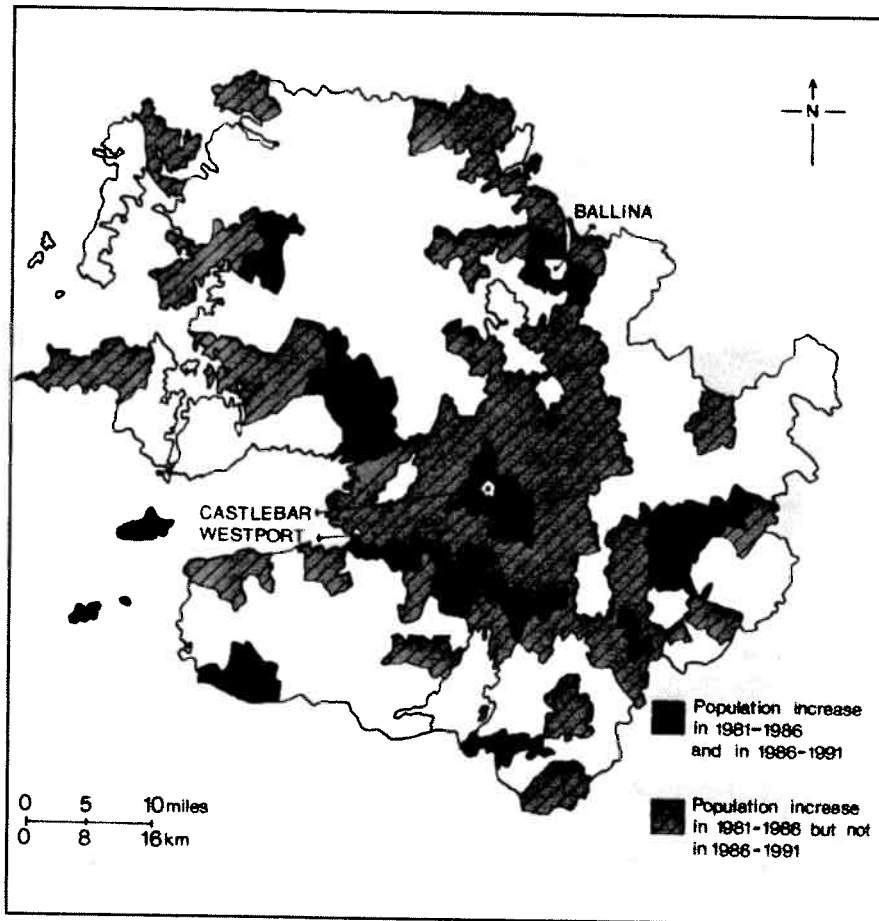


Like all social processes, the notion of spatial reorganisation involves a new system of resource allocation which in turn implies some notion of efficiency. The general hypothesis is that certain types of spatial arrangement can be expected to make a relatively better contribution to the attainment of specific goals than others. Authors like Friedmann and Alonso (1964), Parr (1979), and Mabogunje (1989), writing from a planning perspective, have discussed the working of this relationship between spatial structure and socio-economic change and development. Their argument is that, notwithstanding the dominance of macroeconomic forces in causing change, it is through spatial structure that, in practice, change can be managed.

In studying the spatial structure of change and development, physical elements and activity patterns must be considered, as two aspects of the same reality. The first refers to the arrangement of things like settlements, productive facilities, roads and other transport

FIGURE 12.4

Population Increase in Co. Mayo, 1981-91



spatial consequences and specific spatial arrangements in turn conditioning - and being designed to condition - socio-economic processes (Parr 1979).

This perspective gives an active role to space and to spatial considerations in the context of development issues. It defines the development process as one of spatial reorganisation, because a given set of spatial arrangements can become outmoded and unsuitable due to the kind of socio-economic transformations taking place in the society. Thus, in order to adapt to, or to accommodate a new set of social goals, it becomes necessary to have some kind of spatial adjustment or reorganisation. This reorganisation will seek to make the system better able to respond to the new demands for higher levels of economic efficiency and greater equity.

To return to the practical aspects of this question in Ireland, restructuring has meant changes in the spatial configuration of activities. There is no longer a national strategy of dispersing industrial employment and it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract overseas industry to areas outside the major population centres. The disassociation of many rural communities from their historical agricultural base has not been offset by sufficient growth in new economic activities. On-farm diversification is encouraged even though it is not yet clear whether the different diversification packages will in fact be an adequate response to the rural problem (see Chapter 8). Current systems of grant aid, for the most part, consolidate the position of those who already have a stake in the community - essential though that may be - but generally do not create substantial new stakes (such as extra jobs for school-leavers). There are policies with respect to each of the natural resource based industries but there is little in these policies to reflect the *spatial* economic context within which these activities are conducted. This can be seen, for example, in relation to forestry policies (Hannan and Commins, 1993), the policies for rural tourism, fishing and for service provision. In the case of rural tourism, the lack of support for local co-ordination and local management is an obstacle to local participation. Public policies generally have not adequately responded to the changes that have taken place in the rural economy.

Spatial Reorganisation and Integration Around Urban Centres

The limited employment creation in manufacturing and in services, especially public sector services, during the 1980s slowed down and, in many cases, reversed the population increase experienced on a widespread scale throughout the State during the 1970s. The districts which experienced continued growth testify to the importance of proximity to County Boroughs and the presence of other centres of population in facilitating population retention (Cawley, 1994).

infrastructures and land uses. Activity patterns consist of the flows of capital, labour, commodities and communications which link the physical elements in space. The spatial structure of the economy comes into being from the inter-relatedness between the different physical elements and the different activity patterns which energise, and make dynamic, the development process. This spatial structure can be viewed, on one level, as an arrangement which accommodates, and reflects, an underlying set of social relations and processes. The complete relationship, however, is one that works in a reflexive manner with particular socio-economic processes creating certain

The transformation which had taken place in rural areas during the 1970s in terms of manufacturing and service employment growth and declining agricultural activity triggered a number of spatial processes. One significant process has been the spatial spread of urban-oriented activities. Traditionally, activity patterns in rural areas were dispersed and they supported, and were complemented by, a dispersed spatial arrangement of small settlements. These settlements acted as the social foci for their hinterland in the countryside and helped to maintain linkages and some degree of economic and social self-containment locally (Gillmor, 1988). However, functional shifts in rural space due, for example, to changes in employment and to greater mobility have created a situation where rural areas are now more integrated to the urban economy. This 'urbanisation of rural areas' is used here to describe processes that lead to urban type activities and urban-oriented patterns of behaviour. These urban features are observable in terms of employment in non-agricultural activities and in services, and generally express the degree to which the population of an area is oriented towards traditionally urban-based employment opportunities.

Rural Ireland is a mosaic of manifold areal units with different problems and possibilities. To a greater or lesser degree, all rural areas are being absorbed into the urbanised economy. If the economies of rural areas are to be sustained, then it will be necessary to manage this process of integration so that within the kinds of relationships and systems that are being created around urban centres, it will be possible to articulate different roles, and identify how various economic, social and infrastructural objectives can be achieved. This articulation of roles and objectives is likely to be best attained in the form of a territorial or area-based approach to policy and planning that does not ignore 'the urban connection'.

It was not possible within the scope of this report to undertake detailed studies of spatial patterning but some main issues can be illustrated briefly by reference to two counties: Galway and Mayo.

Changing Spatial Patterns: Illustrations from Galway and Mayo

Within each of these counties there is likely to be a greater dynamic in the urban centres which are strategically located with respect to population, productive activities, and transport networks. A simple methodology is used (see Appendix 1 for details) to classify DEDs in each county around this urban focus. The classification of DEDs falls into the urban, semi-urban and rural areas or 'zones'. The results for the two counties are shown in Figures 12.5 and 12.6.

The systems outlined in these two Figures encompass important spatial features of the two counties, and also point up some contrasts. In the case of Galway, the city creates an extensive urban region and its influence is also reflected in the semi-urban zones that extend outwards along the major access roads. The smaller urban centres maintain a series of more limited semi-urban zones and these are mixed, at least in the eastern part of the county, with rural areas. In the case of Mayo, the semi-urban areas almost form one large contiguous area around a set of dispersed medium-sized urban centres. Extensive areas of West Mayo and West Galway are still very rural in character.

This classification of areas into urbanised, semi-urban and rural can be viewed as one possible spatial filter of reality. Through this filter it is possible to look at changes in the different local areas. The aspects that are examined are those relating to population (Tables 12.1 and 12.2), and to the location of economic activity (Tables 12.3, 12.4 and 12.5). The data in Tables 12.1 and 12.2 show that urban areas in both counties have, on average, increased their share of the total population during the period. This is at the expense of rural areas. Most of the urban growth was achieved in the 1971-81 period. The growth rates in the urban areas of Mayo have been slightly negative since 1981. The growth rates for urban areas of Galway have been negative since 1986, if one excludes Galway city which continues to have high rates of population growth. The semi-urban areas have maintained a more or less constant share of total population. The population of rural areas in Mayo had been in constant decline. In Galway, as happened in the country generally, positive growth took place in rural areas in 1971-81 and in 1981-86 periods. However, the rural areas in County Galway have experienced losses during the latest inter-censal period.

In general, the capacity of the different DEDs to retain population varies significantly with the type of area (Table 12.6). Clearly, both urban and semi-urban DEDs have a greater capacity to retain population than do their rural counterparts.

The data on the location of economic activity indicate a high concentration of both manufacturing and service activities in the urban areas, although the large and medium-sized industrial enterprises have become proportionately less important in the urban areas (moving to the semi-urban areas). On the other hand, the concentration of retail services has become pronounced in the urban centres. Concentration of retail services increased during the period 1979-88. For personal and business services, the 1988 data indicate

a very high degree of locational concentration in the urban centres in both counties (Table 12.5).

Generally speaking, both the urban and semi-urban DEDs display a much greater degree of economic diversity than do the rural DEDs. Table 12.7 shows average indices of economic diversification for each of the three types of area in Galway, derived from the 1986 Census of Population data on the distribution of employment by sector. (The measures are Gini type coefficients; thus the larger the coefficient the smaller the degree of diversification present in the particular area).

This analysis of types of area in Galway and Mayo is only a limited and preliminary attempt to illustrate the usefulness of an 'urban systems' approach to understanding changing spatial configurations in rural regions. Further research, but in greater detail, would be necessary to articulate more fully the structural and behavioural transitions taking place. A task of this research would be to reveal the significant dynamics and strengths in 'the system of places' and to provide guidance on the type of restructuring and reorganisation necessary for the smaller places and more remote areas to be integrated into the mainstream economic and social life of the country.

(ii) *Socio-Economic Dimensions of Rural Exclusion/Development*

The second main aspect of exclusion - besides the spatial - is the socio-economic dimension, which itself has a number of facets. In other words, there are a number of processes which, depending on how they operate, can exclude people from, or integrate them into, mainstream society. Below, seven dimensions of socio-economic development are identified, in terms of broad headings. A fully comprehensive and multi-dimensional concept of rural development would incorporate the core elements of these different dimensions, and relate to all people in a locality.

1. *Economic*

Development of natural resources; provision of satisfying employment, enterprise opportunities and income levels.

2. *Social*

Access to public services such as education, health care, means of communication and transport.

Opportunities to develop personal talents and skills, to develop the capacity to participate in collective action for local development, e.g. through training and human resources programmes.

3. *Infrastructural*

Access to living accommodation; availability of adequate road networks, transport, telecommunications, water supplies and related facilities.

4. *Political/Institutional/Civic*

Provision of opportunities for local people to participate in, or influence, decision-making; availability of structures to implement local development; access to information about entitlements.

5. *Environmental*

Protection and enhancement of the physical environment.

6. *Cultural*

Provision for the invigoration and inter-generational transmission of local culture; opportunities for cultural expression and creation of local identity through, e.g., development of community arts.

7. *Communal/Protective*

Establishment and maintenance of informal social and caring networks to give people a sense of belonging, attachment, protection (e.g., for older people in isolated circumstances); adequate policing for local populations.

It is recognised that in practical operational terms, it would be difficult to implement a rural development programme in which all of these various dimensions would be taken into account in formulating a coherent local plan. What is being suggested here, however, is that there is need for a broad concept of what constitutes rural development - both in the number of dimensions included and in the coverage of different categories of population.

5. MULTI-DIMENSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE INTEGRATED APPROACH

Much is made of the importance of having an integrated approach to policies rather than proceeding in a sectoral and piecemeal fashion. The integrated framework is not an operational notion, as such, but more in the realm of a controlling idea "through which to plan and to evaluate the inter-relatedness and the multiple implications of both market forces and the full range of public policies" (O'Tuathaigh, 1992:104). Thus it is difficult to impose such an idea in a policy milieu where the practice is distinctly and strongly sectoral.

In relation to the integrated approach, Mosher (1972:2) has pointed out how, in considering the idea of integrated planning, it is necessary to make an important distinction between “the need for a certain group of activities to be administratively integrated, and the need for them to be simultaneously available....The major requirement is that...services be simultaneously available, and it is frequently possible for that to be achieved without administrative integration”. In the case of Irish rural development, this basic consistency and collaboration could be sought at some suitably defined territorial level.

(i) The Local Area Unit as a Basis for Action

By using an area basis for policy and planning, involving towns and their surrounding hinterlands, and by focusing on the development of the local functions and linkages, it should be possible to achieve the essential requirements of an area-based integrated approach. Such an approach should, for example, make it possible to devise public support measures in a holistic fashion, and to achieve collaboration between Government agencies and local groups on the basis that there is this common ground or framework of reference. Central to such an approach would be the role of the strategically located urban or town centres. New and replacement infrastructural investment decisions (e.g. in school-building) could be undertaken with reference to such centres. Other types of decisions could also be made in a co-ordinated manner. The operational criterion, as suggested by Stabler and Olfert (1992) in relation to a similar approach to policy in rural Canada, would be recognition of the general economic effect that decision-making within a common set of communities could have, in contrast to an ad hoc approach in which each type of infrastructure is organised or reorganised with reference only to its own requirements. In addition, local communities could themselves plan better if they had such a territorial frame of reference.

The question of how this territorial approach might be designed is addressed in Chapter 13. One overarching issue is whether it is possible to design such an approach when there is an institutional vacuum in the sense that there is no planning framework for resolving the higher level issues relating to spatial management. In the design for rural policy and planning it would be advisable, for example, to follow a comprehensive national approach rather than continue with a series of disparate pilot and geographically scattered programmes or projects which ‘ration out’ resources.

The difficulties of design come back again to the problem of what is meant by integrated development. In the light of what has been said, our preference here is for *area-based* integrated development (AID), which recognises the complementarity of rural and urban functions in a sub-county area. To borrow from O’Tuathaigh’s definition of integrated regional development the idea of being integrated is exactly that, an idea; it is not a set of discreet measures which, if implemented, would automatically guarantee certain results. But it is possible to devise public support measures that can be compatible with one another and to achieve collaboration between agencies and local groups, provided that there is a common goal being shared by all those involved. An area-based focus to decision-making can provide the sense of shared perspective needed for the success of an integrated approach to rural problems. To reiterate Mosher’s point, what is relevant is, not that there should be a high degree of administrative integration, but that there should be integration where it is needed. This is important because there is the danger that a design for AID could result in unwieldy and unworkable bureaucratic structures.

6. CONCLUSION

This chapter ranged over conceptual issues and empirical analyses in an attempt to discern a set of broad guidelines for rural development policy in the future. Macroeconomic and political forces pose serious threats to the economies of rural areas. The traditional boundaries of what were formerly local self-contained areas are being breached and new configurations of spatial patterning are emerging. There is growing inter-dependence between rural areas and urban centres, with the demographic vitality of many rural areas becoming tied to the development of a diversified rural economy rather than to agriculture.

It was argued that rural development needs to be based on two principles. The first is on a concept of a local area in which the actions of smaller localities can be consolidated to cope with the external forces of change. The second is a concept of multi-dimensional actions integrated into a coherent strategy at larger area thresholds than those represented by the smaller communities.

FIGURE 12.5

Urban, Semi-Urban and Rural Areas in Co. Galway

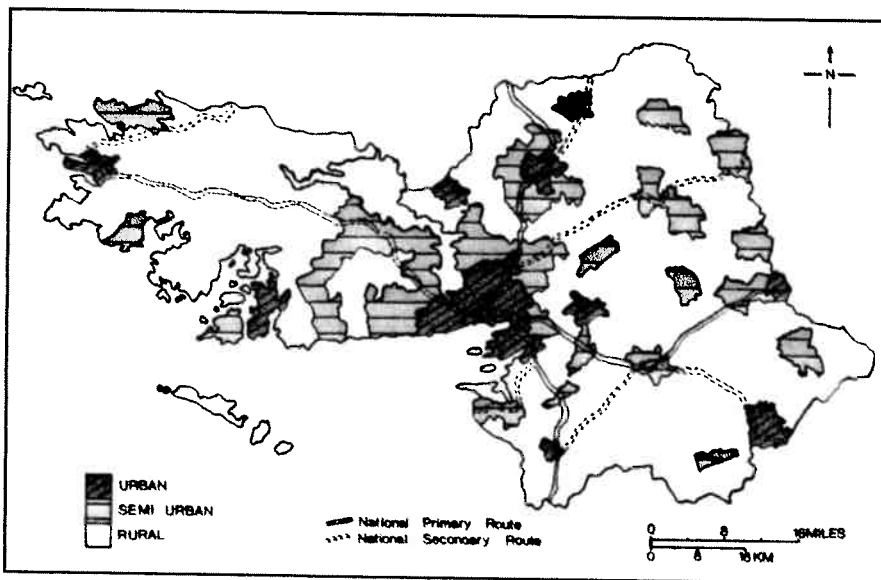


FIGURE 12.6

Urban, Semi-Urban and Rural Areas in Co. Mayo

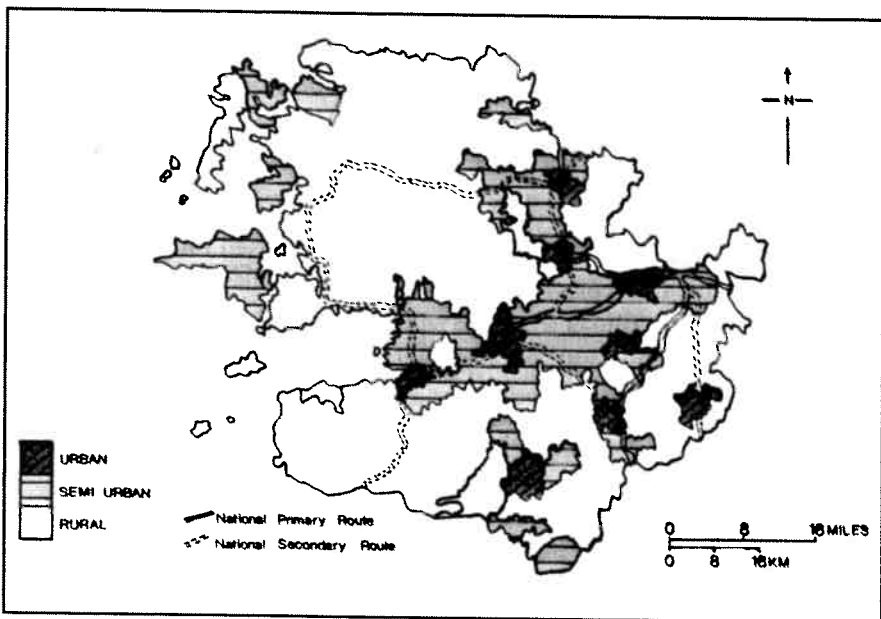


TABLE 12.1

Percentage Population Change by Type of Area, County Galway 1966 to 1991

Area	Percentage Change				% Share	
	1966-71	1971-81	1981-86	1986-91	1966	1991
Urban	+9.6	+33.9	+6.5	+4.5	33	44
City	(+12.9)	(+43.9)	(+9.7)	(+8.1)	(21)	(32)
Semi-Urban	-0.6	+23.4	+6.3	+1.7	12	13
Rural	-4.2	+1.6	+0.9	-2.3	55	43

Source: Derived from Census of Population.

TABLE 12.2

Percentage Population Change by Type of Area, County Mayo 1966 to 1991

Area	Percentage Change				% Share	
	1966-71	1971-81	1981-86	1986-91	1966	1991
Urban	+1.7	+14.1	-0.2	-0.1	24	30
Semi-Urban	-7.1	+7.2	+2.6	-4.1	35	36
Rural	-7.8	-3.5	-1.2	-6.7	41	34

Source: Derived from Census of Population.

TABLE 12.3

Percentage Distribution of Manufacturing Enterprises by Area, County Galway 1978 and 1991

Area	Size of Enterprise ¹					
	Large		Small/Medium		Very Small	
	1978	1991	1978	1991	1978	1991
Urban	90	81	71	72	47	60
Semi-Urban	7	12	21	18	25	27
Rural	3	7	8	10	28	13

¹ Large = >50 employees; Small = between 5-50 employees; Very Small = <5 employees

Source: Survey of Manufacturing Activities, County Development Team, Galway.

TABLE 12.4

Percentage Distribution of Manufacturing Enterprises by Area,
County Mayo 1978 and 1991

Area	Size of Enterprise ¹					
	Large		Small/Medium		Very Small	
	1978	1991	1978	1991	1978	1991
Urban	96	85	74	56	58	50
Semi-Urban	4	15	22	34	31	34
Rural	-	-	4	10	11	16

¹ Large = >50 employees; Small = between 5-50 employees; Very Small = <5 employees.

Source: Survey of Manufacturing Activities, County Development Team, Mayo.

TABLE 12.5

Distribution of Service Employment by Area 1979 and 1988

	%	%
	1979	1988
Urban Share of Retail Employment		
in County Galway	58	68
in County Mayo	55	60
Urban Share of Employment in Services (Personal Services, Business Services, Transport and Communications Services)		
in County Galway	n.a.	79
in County Mayo	n.a.	75

Source: Census of Distribution 1979 and Census of Services 1988.

TABLE 12.6

Per Cent of DEDs in County Galway showing Growth or Decline in
Population 1986-91

	Type of DED		
	Urban	Semi Urban	Rural
Per cent showing population growth	53.8	55.6	30.1
Per cent showing population decline	46.2	44.4	69.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N =	15	45	163

TABLE 12.7

Measures of Economic Diversity of Type of Area

Type of Area	Gini Co-efficient
Urban	.270
Semi-Urban.	.297
Rural.	.448

AREA-BASED INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

The vulnerability of rural communities to economic decline and depopulation is now a major policy concern in most EU countries. Yet it cannot be said that there is a clear-cut set of principles for rural development, nor a well-validated practical approach across the member states. Many of the initiatives being taken are ad hoc, experimental responses often co-existing with the more traditional models and forms of local action - and in all cases conditioned by particular economic, institutional and socio-political contexts (Keane, 1990). Responses also depend on how widely or how narrowly development is perceived (i.e., simply uni-dimensional, or multi-dimensional on the lines suggested in Chapter 12).

Generally, there is agreement that rural development is a collective good involving economic, social, environmental and equity goals. As such rural development cannot be left to market forces. Neither can it be considered as the concern of centralised bureaucracies acting unilaterally from a top-down perspective. Strategies which emphasise indigenous development but linked to regional and national programmes and integrating the resources of different actors on the scene are emerging as the preferred options.

This chapter argues that, notwithstanding the rhetoric in favour of 'bottom-up' development, localised and voluntary efforts are not sufficient, being too fragile in face of the macroeconomic forces impacting on rural areas. Related to this it is contended that the national policy goal of stabilising the rural population cannot be realistically taken to mean that existing population levels in all local areas can be maintained. Population stability and the sustainability of rural systems (services and infrastructures) can be better achieved by focusing development actions around a multi-community, sub-county spatial framework, typically but not always the hinterland of a county town. A development policy aimed at sub-county districts of 15,000 to 25,000 people would: (i) acknowledge the inter-dependencies between rural and urban communities; (ii) allow for the co-ordinated planning and provision of rural services, facilities and infrastructures at suitable geographical scales; (iii) provide a stronger base

and 'critical' mass for local initiatives; and (iv) enhance the possibility of having greater synergy between the various national and EU measures that could be part of a comprehensive development programme.

Moreover, by encouraging the establishment of institutionalised partnerships among development actors at the suggested geographical threshold levels, local and indigenous development could be brought more firmly within the mainstream of national policy and state-sponsored action. A programme of area-based integrated development on these lines would also bring a degree of rationalisation into the various area-based initiatives that have been set up in recent years.

(i) Overview - The Wider Context of Rural Development

The changes occurring in the Irish rural economy are not unique in the context of other modern - or modernising - societies. The EU Commission's report *The Future of Rural Society* (CEC, 1988:5-6) drew attention to a number of international 'heavy trends' which, it may be added, are clearly evident in Ireland. Agricultural development has reached a new threshold with technological advancement and enhanced productive capabilities, but in a situation of over-production for available markets. The outlook for the growth of conventional farming is, therefore, somewhat limited and the land areas needed for the production of the main crop and livestock types are reduced. Whereas industrialisation in the 1960s and 1970s followed a dispersed locational pattern which favoured rural areas, more recent restructuring in agribusiness and in industry generally has had the opposite effect. *The Future of Rural Society* notes that inward investments to rural regions, particularly in the establishment of new production units, will decline in number and will be more selective. While Irish industrial policy has been officially based on a strategy of designating the more rural regions for preferential grants the practical effect of such incentives has now been eroded, more especially with the move to grant aid employment irrespective of where the jobs are located.

The 'population turnaround' of the 1970s, whereby rural areas on a widespread basis experienced repopulation, was not sustained during the 1980s. However, a broad distinction must be made between town or urban hinterlands and the more outlying districts. The capacity of the latter to sustain viable rural systems - in schools, employment, transport, social services, etc. - without being systematically linked to secondary or major urban centres, must now be seriously in question. Reliance to a predominant extent on an agricultural economic base is clearly associated with the higher

levels of depopulation, especially where the agricultural economy is weak. The problems of stabilising population levels have been particularly acute in the North-West where, apart from its poorer agricultural resources, there is a limited urban framework.

Notwithstanding the force of - or perhaps because of - these 'heavy trends', Irish and EU principles for economic and social development, as well as actual policy declarations, support a concept of rural and regional development. The 1991 Programme for Economic and Social Progress stated that the Government was committed to 'stabilise the rural population by appropriate integration of agricultural, industrial and other policies'. The EU Commission in *The Future of Rural Society* has expressed similar aspirations stating that rural populations must be maintained at their existing levels (CEC, 1988:37) although the level of aggregation at which this may be possible is left unclear. The general strategy recommended by the Commission required not only direct and carefully targeted rural development actions but also more general measures and even, to some extent, actual course corrections in all the policies and action programmes which have an impact on the future of the rural society. The Maastricht Treaty (Article 130a on economic and social exclusion) affirmed that in order to promote its overall harmonious development the Community shall develop and pursue its actions leading to the strengthening of its economic and social cohesion. In fact, Article 130a goes on to say that the Community shall have particular regard for the aim of reducing economic disparities among the various regions, as well as addressing the backwardness of the less favoured regions, 'including rural areas'. However, as already noted in Chapter 12, the practical realisation of such aspirations as 'strengthening cohesion' may not be as impressive as the rhetoric.

Concerning the scope of rural development, we have already suggested that this should be a multi-dimensional concept and not confined to a few sectors. It cannot be reduced simply to a question of economic development. Many countries are now moving towards a more comprehensive and integrated approach to rural problems. According to the OECD (1990:23):

A view is emerging that it is constructive to view rural development as a broad notion, encompassing all important issues pertinent to the individual and collective vitality of rural people and places. It encompasses such concerns as education, environment, individual and public health, housing, public services and facilities, capacity for leadership and governance, and cultural heritage as well as sectoral and general economic issues.

The adoption of this perspective on rural development has a number of implications. It suggests a territorial or area-based strategy through which sectoral initiatives can be integrated at the point of implementation. It means that development is not simply a question of undertaking projects, or of achieving objectives specified in narrow economic terms. Much less is it just a matter of responding to the availability of EU funds. Development is also a process, by which is meant the creation of social products such as upgraded local leadership, a culture of enterprise and innovative action, or the enhanced capacity of people to act in concert, purposefully and effectively, so as to cope with the threats and opportunities they face. And as a process that permeates across sectors it may take off from any number of starting points (e.g., successful cultural activities may create a momentum of action that could be instrumental to the initiation of economic ventures). As the notion of development also implies a certain comprehensiveness of scope, it involves many interests with different perspectives, resources and 'stakes' in the outcome of any development initiative. To achieve a sufficient measure of consensus among the various stakeholders for collective and complementary actions is the major institutional challenge.

(ii) Limitations of Conventional Approaches to Development

There is now a realisation that the conventional approaches to area-based development have limitations. Walsh (1993) notes the main features of the different models of local and regional development. In the 1960s and 1970s the emphasis was on the 'top-down' model, encouraging firms to locate in designated regions, based on the reasoning that problems of under-development arose from the weak export potential of the regions. Exports could be increased by attracting growth industries into the regions. In turn, it was expected that growth would intensify backward and forward linkages, promote innovation and create a cycle of self-sustaining economic development regionally. It was also assumed that the benefits of economic growth would spread across geographical space and percolate to disadvantaged categories of the population.

The weakness of this top-down model were its over-dependence on externally controlled investment, the consequent vulnerability to international forces, the limited development of local linkages, the low skill content of much of the employment, limited commitment to research and development and to independent marketing capacity, and weak development of indigenous sectors.

In regard to public administration, top-down approaches tended to follow a central government-initiated development strategy. According to Stohr (1990:20-54), such centralised systems adopt a controlling, regulatory mode of functioning. They may help to redistribute the benefits of growth but they are not the ideal means of generating local innovative capacity in weak regional communities. They allow for limited participation of local interests whereas self-sustained local and regional development requires 'local content' i.e., the predominance of local actors, of local democratic decision-making, and of local control of resources and of benefits (Stohr, 1990:40). Stohr adds that central allocation policies may cushion some of the negative social and spatial side effects of growth (e.g., through income supplements) but this tends to stifle rather than generate individual and community initiatives, entrepreneurship and innovation. Centralised policies for economic generation do not accommodate well to the diversity of local problems and the opportunities for resolving them.

At the other end of the spectrum two kinds of bottom-up models may be identified, viz., 'spontaneous' developments truly initiated 'from below' and initiatives which, although initiated from, and supported from, above are nevertheless driven very much by local non-statutory interests. Irish examples of the former are the local community councils, co-operatives and development associations, while the latter are exemplified by the LEADER groups and the PESP area-based companies.

Notwithstanding the idealisation of the self-help principle and indeed the practical achievements of locally-based groups in such matters as articulating needs or even in improving facilities, infrastructures, or amenities the spontaneous types of developments have been shown to have numerous weaknesses. Varley's (1991:48-76) evaluation of these include the following: their lack of resources, such as capital; limited impact on employment; difficulties of sustaining the voluntary efforts required; competition among them for limited external resources; and the production of marginal products and services. However, Varley attributes the marginalised state of community action not only to internal weaknesses at local level but to the stance of both the State administration and the political system to bottom-up initiatives. These initiatives cannot survive without State subventions but the State has not taken seriously the concept of partnership with local groups, that is, as compared with arrangements to accommodate sectoral interests such as agriculture, employers or trade unions. Furthermore, the problem is compounded by the 'fragmented nature of the State itself - comprising as it does a plethora of departments, agencies and offices often acting at cross purposes' (Varley, 1991:54-55).

(iii) Area-based Partnerships - Linking 'Bottom-up' and 'Top-down'

The newer version of the bottom-up model - as yet only in an emergent phase - is expressed through forms of central support for local development initiatives in order to fill an 'institutional decision-making vacuum in which local communities are trapped between the anonymous and usually inflexible role of the state on the one hand and, on the other, dynamic world-wide economic restructuring' (Stohr, 1990:45). In this setting also, reliance on a private enterprise, market economy is not conducive to achieving a range of local communal objectives.

The features of this newer bottom-up model - or, more precisely, a compromise model - have been identified by Walsh (1993) as follows:

- structures which allow development to be a process articulated by people living in localities (area-based);
- greater participation of local and regional interests;
- an emphasis on human resource development technical skills, knowledge, entrepreneurial attitudes;
- comprehensiveness in scope to include a multi-sectoral approach; a shift from single projects to integrated programmes; flexibility to respond to regional specifics and to spontaneous local mobilisation; and an emphasis on indigenous resources while not ignoring the realities of external forces and trends.

Given these features, and especially the last point, regional and rural development will, of necessity, be a process of balance between top-down structural adjustments and bottom-up local initiatives.

Increasingly, in many countries, this balancing process is negotiated through institutionalised partnerships, which, according to an OECD (1990:7) report, are 'durable forms of co-operation that go beyond mutual consultations in the policy formulation phases, and provide for actual risk-sharing and responsibility-sharing arrangements during the implementation phase'. The OECD report adds that these partnerships may involve different levels of government sectoral ministries, government agencies, private business, professional associations, community voluntary organisations and interests (OECD, 1990:13).

2. A STRATEGY FOR AREA-BASED INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT (AID)

As noted earlier (Chapters 7 and 11) policy orientations and institutional changes since the 1970s have de-emphasised the spatial (regional and sub-regional) aspect of national planning. Sectoral interests have dominated policy consultation mechanisms with little representation on the part of geographically based populations or communities. Not since the early 1970s, for example, has there been any substantial Government statement on regional policy. Efforts to create regional structures were set back when Ireland was treated as a single region for EU Structural Fund allocations, although this arrangement maximised overall receipts from these Funds. As for local government, the system is still essentially that designed in Westminster in the last century. The Regional Development Organisations and County Development Teams had not been instruments of regional or local development policy, certainly not in the sense of integrating the sectoral activities of Government departments or State agencies. The National Development Plan submitted for EU Structural Funds in 1989 contained a chapter on sub-regional plans but this did not set out objectives in relation to the inter-regional distribution of the activities for which assistance was being sought (Walsh, 1993:11).

While this describes the general picture, there has been at the same time a gradual accretion of area-based initiatives, either instigated nationally or by the EU. As shown in Chapter 11 there is an attempt, to various degrees, to link up vertically the different levels of action (local and national) and, additionally, to pursue a horizontal strategy by integrating a number of socio-economic dimensions of development within a geographical context (see Chapter 12).

It would seem appropriate and desirable now to consolidate this emergent policy framework by taking strategic decisions in regard to development organised on a spatial basis. There should be a formal Government statement setting out: (i) the spatial levels at which different area-based development functions can be pursued; and (ii) the institutional arrangements by which development actions can be implemented. This should clarify the position in relation to having standardised regions for public administration and for regional economic and social accounting. The existence of different regional frameworks for different administrative purposes, together with a misnamed set of 'planning' regions, has been further complicated by the designation of another set of regions for the recently established regional authorities. It would seem helpful also to spell out the role of private investment given that some forms of privatised rural development can mean a loss of local control

over local resources and rural investments can become the prerogative of urban-based developers, as exemplified in the construction of touristic and leisure facilities. Specifically, in relation to rural development, the experience of the various local area-based initiatives such as LEADER, the 1988-90 Pilot Programme and Forum (North-West Connemara) should be drawn upon to clarify the future pathway for sub-county development.

It will be readily seen that sub-national development, incorporating functions and agency roles at different hierarchical levels, is inextricably linked to the question of the arrangements for local government. This increases the complexity of the issue of area-based development because local government systems have shown considerable inertia in the face of repeated calls for reform. However, this issue cannot be taken up here except in so far as it bears on the main theme of area-based development.

(i) Principles

Before proceeding further with this theme it has to be said that AID is not so much an operable strategy for rural or local development as a set of principles by which development should be implemented. In setting out these we are supplementing the arguments made earlier (in Chapter 12) to the effect that development, as a comprehensive concept, is a matter of countering spatial and socio-economic exclusion in its several dimensions.

- (i) AID should be planned and implemented on a geographical area basis, and not primarily in terms of sectors. The question of the appropriate geographical scale is discussed below.
- (ii) Development across different area levels (local, county, regional national) should be integrated, i.e., functionally linked. In turn, this means greater synergy among policies, actions, agencies and funds. It does not necessarily mean a withdrawal from departmentalised public administration (which is necessary for the assembly of expertise appropriate to functions) but to integration at the point of implementation (Mosher, 1972:2).
- (iii) While AID should link together development activities across several sectors in a mutually supportive way (e.g., new farm enterprises, tourism, communications, infrastructures, services provision) it is realistic to expect that there are latent conflicts over the different uses of rural space or over different priorities in relation to the socio-economic dimension of development. It is thus necessary to have mechanisms for avoiding these or resolving them when they occur. (For

instance, it is difficult to see how the conflicts surrounding the establishment of the Mullaghmore Interpretative Centre in County Clare would have reached the stage they did if an AID philosophy underpinned the actions of public authorities).

- (iv) AID should link together various 'projects' into an integrated programme.
- (v) AID should link activities across several years (multi-annual planning).
- (vi) AID should allow for partnership arrangements that incorporate both statutory and non-statutory interests.
- (vii) To improve the capacity of non-statutory (especially community) organisations to undertake and collaborate in partnerships, AID should give attention to the promotion, training, and the mobilisation of local leadership and initiative (the proactive approach).
- (viii) To allow for locally instigated development AID pre-supposes a degree of devolution of decision-making from central administrations to local levels. According to the principle of subsidiarity public services should be devolved to the lowest practicable administrative level at which they can be provided effectively and efficiently.
- (ix) AID should include provisions for technical assistance, monitoring, evaluation and research so that the ingredients of success or failure can be quickly discerned and disseminated across AID localities.
- (x) AID should take into account the role of the State in providing various public services, e.g. education, transport and communications, policy and caring services. That is to say, State functions in relation to rural development should not be narrowly confined to economic aspects.

In practice, different actors on the local development scene operate implicitly with various combinations of the above list. However, the wider the interpretation of the AID concept, especially if it extends to substantial devolution of power, the more difficult it will be to have a clear consensus about the practicabilities of implementing AID. Considerable negotiation and compromise are required among the interests concerned.

(ii) Geographical Scale for AID

AID has to be based on some spatial framework. Of central concern to an AID strategy, therefore, are the kinds of development that can be undertaken at different levels of administration and at different spatial scales. Rural tourism is an example where a localised community approach is feasible and effective (Keane, 1990:295). On the other hand, major infrastructural developments have to be planned at a much higher geographical scale. Another main consideration is the nature of the social and economic relationships between the local and the larger economy, and how these relationships are likely to affect the local capacity to undertake certain kinds of development activities.

Compared to many other countries Ireland has a dispersed rural settlement pattern. The function of villages had been to act as rural service centres for their hinterlands in the countryside with the linkages being predominantly local, though local economic or social self-containment had never been complete (Gillmor, 1988:67). Gillmor concludes that greater geographical mobility and changes in the pattern of employment and service provision have changed the position such that villages are becoming more integrated into the national hierarchy of settlements, with increased economic dependence on urban places and greater urban influences on villages. The benefits of economies of scale exert such a strong centralising influence on activities and location tendencies that it is difficult to see how centralising forces can be overcome. This does not mean of course that the local villages or communities are absorbed as undifferentiated wholes into wider systems; there is, for example, a clear difference between the low levels of centralisation observable in the provision of primary education facilities and the high levels necessary for processing facilities in farm commodities such as milk. However, there are clearly limits to the potential of smaller, more dispersed places for maintaining their existing economic base (and population). It is thus difficult to sustain the vision of small centres acting as central and dynamic agents in rural development (Keane, 1990:299).

At the same time, a policy which aims to maintain the rural population cannot acquiesce in accepting centralising trends as wholly deterministic and impervious to challenge from rural planners. The compromise is to plan for a degree of spatial closure and self-containment -the spatial fix and associated structured coherence referred to in Chapter 12 - at some area level. The inter-dependencies between rural and urban areas have to be recognised in this regard.

Ideally, the delineation of AID area boundaries at sub-county level should be determined on the basis of a comprehensive spatial analysis of economic and social conditions, e.g., settlement patterns, population changes, mobility and commuting routes, spatial distributions of employment and services, physical geography, inter-dependencies among towns and villages. In practice, however, sub-county areas can be discerned pragmatically, using county towns as centres. This would take account of existing patterns of centrality (the relationship of different towns to their hinterlands), homogeneity or degree of 'natural' cohesion within an area, size and population numbers. Labour market areas, travel to work areas, and second-level school catchment areas suggest the kinds of scale in mind here. The identification of a county town and its functions would be important in the delineation of area boundaries.

While we are not at this point concerned with the local government implications of a 'town centred', area-based strategy for integrated development, it is worth noting the conclusions of the Advisory Expert Committee on Local Government Reorganisation and Reform (Advisory Expert Committee, 1991). The Committee stated (p.72) that the pattern of a market town hinterland being within a radius of about ten miles still survives, largely unaffected by transport changes and that in Ireland, as elsewhere, these constitute the natural 'cells' of town-countryside living. In proposing a town/hinterland district as a geographical basis for sub-county structures of local government the Committee suggested that districts within the range of 15,000 to 25,000 population would be appropriate, with an average of about 20,000 persons. This allocation would give 111 districts (outside of Dublin county and four County Boroughs).

It is also relevant to note some examples on this point. Denmark's second tier of local government, based on the town/hinterland concept typically has 15,000 to 16,000 inhabitants. In France, a population of 30,000 to 50,000 people is considered necessary for effective territorial development (OECD, 1990:82). In Canada the Community Futures Programme (somewhat similar to the EU's LEADER) is based on a combined number of local administrative units to give an area population of 30,000 to 50,000 people. Examples of multi-community development are to be found in the Mid-West US where voluntary "clustering" of small communities has been promoted as a strategy for rural revitalisation (Wells, 1991:24-27).

It is recognised here that the smaller, more localised communities have non-material assets that might not be so readily available to a larger entity of some 20,000 persons. These intangibles include a strong sense of place identity, and an attachment to the local community (Gillmor, 1988:67), a

willingness to volunteer time and effort, and an affective or altruistic - as distinct from an instrumental - commitment to the local common good. On the other hand, such communities can fall into the 'parochial trap', by having unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved locally, by espousing a bottom-up approach to development for which they do not realistically have the capacity, and by an unwillingness to create new linkages or enter wider networks or alliances, (e.g. through district development associations). On the other hand, allegiance to a wider form of localism or extended community offers the prospect of engaging the statutory authorities in forms of partnership - independently of whether local government will be extended to sub-county districts. What have been marginalised activities can then be more readily brought into the mainstream of development. Services can be delivered and managed in a more co-ordinated manner and decisions about service rationalisation can be made in consideration of the totality of circumstances in a sub-county district. A sub-county district could also be the appropriate level for achieving synergy in implementing various EU and national measures. If institutionalised partnerships between statutory agencies and non-statutory organisations are to become the norm for development structures these simply cannot be established for small localised areas, but the multi-community district offers a compromise between the local community and county scale. It also provides a wider pool from which to draw leadership for the bottom-up end of a partnership for area-based integrated development.

It will be readily apparent that contiguous communities in rural Ireland will not automatically express what Coombes (1991) refers to as 'associative capacity', except in perhaps response to a sense of crisis. This capacity is the ability of organisations and individuals - or communities - to devise and operate arrangements for: (i) identifying mutual interests; (ii) serving common needs or solving common problems; (iii) managing conflicts by mutual agreement; and (iv) sharing and exchanging benefits. A community character cannot automatically be expected to mark a coalition of local communities each with a strong sense of its own separate identity.

This may not be as formidable an obstacle as may seem. LEADER groups to a greater or lesser degree have overcome the more negative aspects of parochialism. Also, sociological reasoning suggests that, conceptually, community is not exclusively a physical place but a social construction. For example, Wilkinson (1991, 1992) proposes an interactional notion of community; community is seen not as a fixed but as an 'emergent field' or developing network of economic and social interactions. Community emerges when dynamic processes of interaction create, alter and re-create

the structure of economic and social relationships within boundaries which are not rigidly fixed in space. Several distinctive but overlapping networks can exist, with some more locality-oriented than others. For instance the different levels of education provision - primary and second level - or the organisation of different health services are based on overlapping spatial scales.

Therefore, the creation of AID districts is a task of consolidating new fields of interaction and new networks, of establishing new associative capacities. In turn, fields of interaction can give rise to revised expressions of collective identity and willingness to act in collaboration, especially on the part of people to commit non-material assets (loyalties, time, expertise, voluntary work, etc.) to development. In this sense, the building of associative capacity is both an object of, and a means to, area-based integrated development.

(iii) County Structures and Sub-Structures for AID

Here we consider a number of possible institutional arrangements for supporting area-based integrated development.

County Enterprise Boards (CEBs)

A statement of the Minister for Enterprise and Employment of 26 May 1993, concerning the CEBs (previously known as the County Enterprise Partnership Boards), indicated that membership would include 'community interests drawn from the voluntary sector' - in addition to members drawn from the social partners. This arrangement gives a greater recognition to the voluntary sector than was intended in the earlier design of the Boards.

The Minister's announcement also conveyed that each CEB would devise 'a strategic plan for local economic development' and establish an evaluation committee for project appraisal purposes. The statement went on to say that this committee would have a critical role to play in making recommendations to the Board on the most appropriate level and form of assistance for projects, and in exploring the prospects for maximising the resources available for particular enterprise projects by attracting other sources of funding such as those pledged by the banks and other financial institutions in supporting the Government's plans for local economic development.

The CEBs represent a considerable advance on the existing structures. They incorporate the concept of partnership and bring the voluntary sector in from the margins. The emphasis on strategic planning is to be welcomed

especially as it is now to be implemented at a sub-national level. And the CEBs are intended to be an important vehicle for funding local development.

On the other hand - and without wishing to pre-judge the future of the CEBs - it would appear that they are set to inherit some of the weaknesses of the County Development Teams. There is no provision for a sub-county spatial framework. The function of the CEBs is seen to be predominantly concerned with administration or regulation, especially with the assessment of the quality of submitted projects, presumably with reference to their contribution to achieving the county strategic plan. In other words, the designers of the strategic plan are not charged with its implementation except in so far as the designers can ensure its execution through making financial aid available to project initiators.

There is an innate inertia in public sector administrative structures when what is required is a disposition to be proactive, developmental and animating. The CEB statements to date reveal an all too common tendency, that of regarding development as a matter of *structures* and projects to the exclusion of the *process* by which projects come to be generated in the first place. In these circumstances, county officials are cast in the role of local bureaucrats relaying downwards what is basically the central State's agenda. It is also obvious that the CEBs, despite their partnership composition, lack an integrated approach simply because of their singular emphasis on economic enterprise.

Some of these deficits could be removed if the CEBs were to appoint appropriate staff including, in particular animators or local development organisers, who would instigate development at sub-county level with local development groups. There is no explicit provision, however, for this arrangement and, arguably, it is not desirable as other options exist which would better allow for 'development from below'.

Area-based Integrated Development Groups

A more effective arrangement could be achieved by having structural mechanisms whereby AID groups could be linked to the CEBs. Such groups could be modelled in large part on a variant of the existing LEADER groups - especially those at sub-county level, the PESP companies or the Forum project in North-West Connemara. In other words, sub-county 'natural' areas of 15,000 to 25,000 people could be invited to form AID groups based on the concept of partnerships among the statutory, voluntary and commercial sectors. To illustrate, although it is not a typical case, County

Mayo has currently three LEADER groups and a rural PESP company. If these were expanded in scope to adopt a more multi-dimensional strategy for area-based development and if two or three additional groups were added to cover the whole county, then a complement of territorially-based development groupings would exist in Mayo. These could be financed to allow for a more comprehensive programme and extended geographical coverage than obtains with existing groups. A parallel is the SIVOM model (Syndicat Intercommunal a Vocations Multiples) in France whereby an intercommunal association makes a contract with the relevant regional authority to carry out locally a defined programme of development.

These groups would participate in the preparation of a CEB strategic plan with a view to being funded through the CEB to implement it locally. This plan would have to be a more multi-dimensional nature than 'enterprise'. Enterprise, as noted earlier, may emanate from starting points other than purely commercial ventures and this may have to be the case in the early stages of development. Furthermore, the county level structure would have to deal with development issues that extend beyond the geographical scope and remit of the AID groups, (e.g., rural transport or major infrastructural investments).

AID through Approved Local Councils

There is already on the statute books ample legislation on local government (Acts of 1941, 1955, 1963 and 1991) to allow for the creation of 'approved local councils'. A local council established to further the general social and economic interests of its inhabitants can be recognised by a county council or county borough council as an approved council. The local authorities concerned can provide a building for the use of an approved council as well as office facilities. The Local Government (Planning and Development) Act of 1963 allows a local authority to assist a local development association in money or in kind by the provision of services and facilities. McNamara (1992-93:310) suggests that the imaginative use of available legislation would enable approved local councils:

- to be delegated powers and duties of county councils
- to have premises provided
- to be supplied with office facilities
- and to be assisted in money or in kind, or by the provision of services (including the service of staff)

While the 'local' in question in the legislation is meant to be at the individual community level, there is no reason why approved local councils could not be taken to represent multi-community districts of 15,000 to 25,000 people. It would, of course, leave the onus on local interests to form a council for approval once the appropriate town/hinterland districts were designated. Such structures could take on various AID activities in addition to local authority type functions. Funding could be channelled through CEBs or other agencies depending on the activities being undertaken.

AID through Sub-County Local Government

The report of the Advisory Expert Committee (1991) on 'Local Government Reorganisation and Reform' (1991) argued that sub-county arrangements for local government were 'in need of a fundamental overhaul'. Some 80 elected town authorities represent only 15 per cent of the population. In response, the report recommended the replacement of these by 111 town/hinterland districts as appropriate sub-county structures. The Committee did not reach agreement on details but put forward two possible models: directly elected district councils and district committees of the county council meeting locally. In both cases, some major infrastructural services would be transferred from existing town authorities to the counties. However, the Committee considered that a programme of devolution could provide a sufficient range of benefits for district councils to have a meaningful role. This would include general community development and 'co-operation with voluntary groups'.

This model thus offers a framework for area-based partnerships for integrated development. However, while consideration was given by the Government to form sub-county units the decision was postponed in March 1992. It has been suggested (McNamara, 1992-93:312) that this postponement was heavily influenced by pressures being brought to bear on the Government by urban councillors who felt threatened by the proposed changes.

It would appear that linking AID strategies to local government structures could offer a means of bringing much of local bottom-up development 'in from the fringes' to be better placed within mainstream programmes. However, given the realities of Irish political culture there is also the risk that AID could become unduly politicised. Party political rivalries - even intra-party contention - added to the inevitable competition among sectional interests could threaten the working consensus needed within area-based partnerships.

In any event, sub-county local government structures do not appear to be on the agenda currently. In that case, the most desirable structure for AID is that suggested in (ii) above: the sub-county area-based partnerships working in conjunction with, and being financially supported by, County Enterprise Boards. Partnerships would be representative of state agencies, local authorities and the co-operative sector as well as of non-government organisations. They would incorporate features of the area-based partnerships and of LEADER groups.

(iv) The AID Process and Institutional Supports

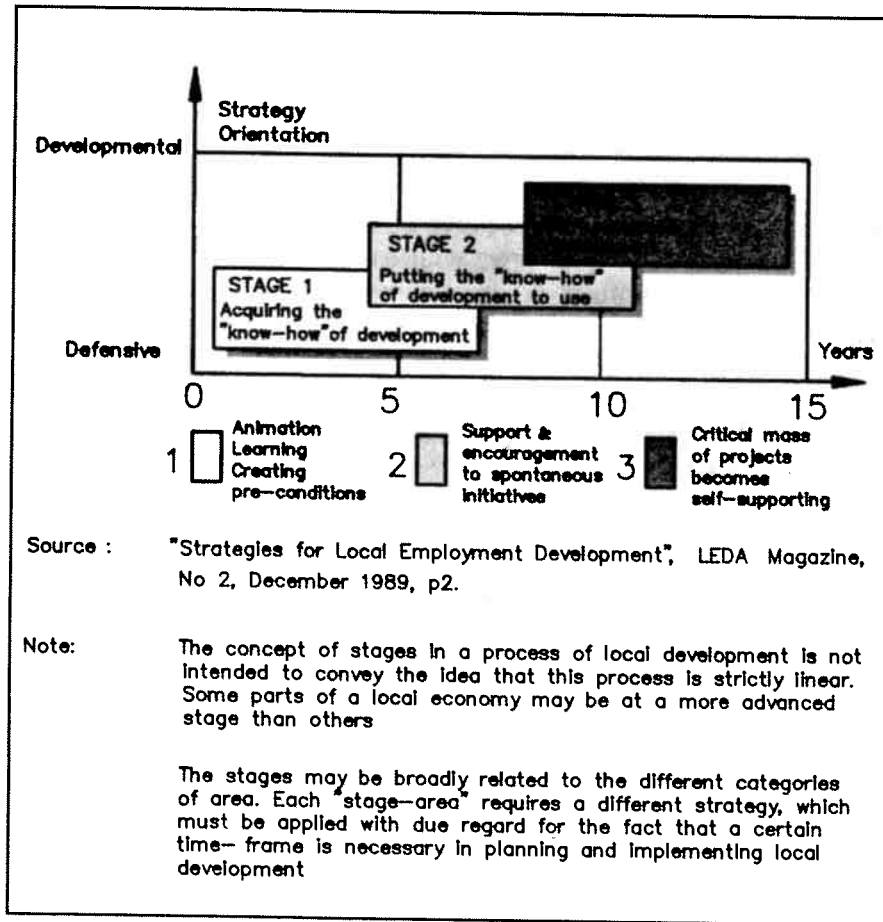
Current programmes and proposals have a tendency to regard development as a matter of having structures, funds and projects which are visible as concrete actions or achievements. As already argued it is not sufficiently realised that development is also a process. This lack of awareness persists despite the evidence from pilot programmes that areas which make the best use of economic incentives or other supports are those with previous experience of local organisation and community development activities. There are three notions inherent in the concept of process. First, development takes time; conceptually, it must be seen as a progression through a series of phases, from a 'pre-developmental' stage to an advanced stage where development tends to be spontaneous, self-sustaining or self-generative. Second, development involves not just 'hardware' such as investment in physical capital but 'software', that is, investments in developing knowledge, disseminating information, organising public discussion, deepening awareness of possibilities, encouraging initiatives, multiplying creative contacts, helping to translate ideas into viable projects and building effective organisations. This means creating a milieu for, and generating a culture of, development. Unfortunately, the importance of this component of development is not always appreciated because of its intangible nature; it does not represent a 'hardware' product. Third, arising from this a development momentum, encompassing increased levels of enterprise and action, will not emerge automatically. It must be stimulated or 'animated', often from outside, especially in areas where the social fabric has been weakened by out-migration, and by a consequent sense of apathy.

With regard to the stages of the development process the EU programme on Local Employment Development Action (LEDA) has suggested a model in which the initial or preparatory stage is concerned with generating the 'know how' of development (Martinis, 1989). This includes the provision of information, consultancy services, demonstration projects and animation. An intermediary stage builds on this foundation through more specific

interventions to upgrade know-how, provide finance for enterprises, and lay the basis for self-sustaining growth. A final stage is reached when there is a sufficiently critical mass of projects and activities and a spontaneous momentum to development (see Figure 13.1).

FIGURE 13.1

Main Stages in Local Development Strategies



Clearly, this is an idealised model as not all components of an area-based development programme are likely to have the same starting point or need for external supports, nor do they proceed at the same pace. The LEDA perspective does, however, reinforce the idea of development as a process

and the need for institutional supports that are appropriate to the development location, and to the stage of the process of development.

What is required, then, for area-based integrated development is a proactive, energising approach which is given effect through a systematically organised national programme. A 'programme' in this sense means much more than offering grants or making available a fund, for which interested groups are invited to apply. A programme would have several related components over and above funding.

One is provision for animation. The Committee on Rural Development Training (CRDT, 1993) suggested that animators be made available to act as catalysts in stimulating development. Such animators, working on a part-time or full-time basis, could be assigned to local areas for a limited period. They might be local activists, or involved in some developmental role, in the public or private sector. To be effective, animators would need training and institutional support (see below). Financial support could be made available from an 'Animation Fund' to local groups to engage the services of an animator (as suggested by the Committee on Rural Development Training), or public sector agencies -such as Teagasc or FÁS - could be funded specially to employ and resource animators. Teagasc, for example, had special budget allocations for the provision of programmes specific to small-scale farmers. A similar arrangement could apply for animating local development. A variation of this arrangement would be the secondment of agency staff to local development projects for an agreed length of time.

Secondly, AID needs to be professionally staffed to maximise the value of monies expended. One of the lessons emerging from existing area-based initiatives (e.g. LEADER, PESP companies, anti-poverty projects) is the need for good quality management and staff. The management of AID is, seemingly, a more complex task than is recognised: it requires competencies in conventional management, as practised both in the private and public sector. But, in addition it calls for a variety of skills in community development.

The model of management appropriate to AID and the repertoire of knowledge, skills and attributes needed has to be clarified further on the basis of emerging experiences. AID groups which have strategic plans for their areas could seek to employ 'local AID programme managers' on a professional basis.

Thirdly, an AID programme must have a special training component - both at the local area level and at regional level. Various training providers, Teagasc, FÁS, VECs and third-level institutions already offer training programmes for a variety of needs in relation to local development. But the Committee on Rural Development Training has recommended (a) new programmes focused explicitly on enterprise and on more general rural and community development, and (b) more formalised co-ordination among different agencies.

Fourthly, AID needs various forms of technical assistance besides training - including feasibility studies, local economic and social analyses, planning, market assessments and project or programme evaluation. Again, third level education institutions and agencies such as Teagasc provide a certain amount of support on a case-by-case basis. However, it would appear that this service role of the third level institutions needs to be more explicitly recognised within their individual administrations and their funding bodies.

Fifthly, each local AID programme should be linked to a specific 'Resource Centre' which would not alone be the administrative base but also function as a centre for the co-ordination of development activities in the statutory community sectors - and perhaps some of those in the private sector. Resource centres would also provide information, advice, training, and support for animators. Several agencies and administrations already have a country-wide infrastructure which could serve as a basis for establishing such centres - Teagasc, FÁS, local authorities, and VECs - as noted above. The powers of local authorities could also be used to provide premises at local level.

(v) National Administration and Co-ordination

A national programme of AID requires two structures at central level. One would be concerned with administrative functions on the lines previously undertaken by the Central Development Committee (for the County Development Teams) or by the Area Development Management company for the EU Global Grant.

In addition, an AID programme needs to have an 'Interdepartmental Forum' or an 'Interministerial Group' at, or close to, the point at which policies are formulated and policy implementation measures are decided. The experience of local development initiatives (e.g. in the Third Poverty Programme) is that issues emerge which cannot be resolved at local level where discretionary powers are limited, and they require high-level decision and agreement across two or more central departments.

(vi) Funding AID

Judged from the experience of LEADER groups and of the Forum project in North-West Connemara a programme of area-based integrated development will require substantial funding. This is especially so if, as proposed here, it were to encompass a range of economic, social (including human resource development), and environmental/cultural measures. One possibility is a special Operational Programme (within the EU Community Support Framework). Some preferential terms might be given to the more disadvantaged areas, e.g. those where the agricultural base is weak and where rural depopulation has been particularly severe. The philosophy of the EU Commission at the Community level on economic and social cohesion should be replicated within the State's own jurisdiction. However, the need for AID structures exists all over the country.

Another option is to seek expansion of the LEADER initiative into other areas but, as noted elsewhere in this report, LEADER resources are thinly dispersed, the predominant focus is on 'business plans' and not on a multi-dimensional approach to development although a wider scope is envisaged in the second phase. Besides, the main orientation is towards funding projects which come forward rather than on animating individual or collective action. Even at a late stage in the LEADER Programme training budgets had not been fully allocated by local groups.

Of course, a multi-dimensional and integrated approach does not preclude the sectoral organisation of interests within a local AID programme. Structures can be established to reflect the particular needs of agriculture, other economic developments, social provision or environment and cultural concerns.

The direct economic beneficiaries of AID should be expected to co-finance development to an agreed extent.

If AID were to be linked to a reform of local government as sub-county level a certain amount of local financing could be raised by local taxation.

3. CONCLUSION

Surveying problems of rural development on both sides of the Atlantic Nothdurft (1991: 69-83) contends that those policy makers who struggle to preserve rural economies are doomed to failure. The task, he adds, is not to 'preserve' them but to help them adapt to accelerating change and even to seize the opportunities such change may bring. Rural communities

dependent on a single sector such as agriculture are in a constant state of economic vulnerability. Reducing this vulnerability is a major challenge for policy.

The analyses in this report show considerable erosion in the economic base and demographic structure of Irish rural areas, especially in extensive tracts of the West and North-West. The historical record testifies to the difficulty of stabilising population levels in the remoter rural areas and the most recent census data, taken in conjunction with economic trends, suggest that rural depopulation will continue in many areas. At the same time opportunities are being provided through EU funding sources to address the problems of area development and peripherality.

Given the restricted opportunities in conventional agriculture, the difficulties of finding alternative employment, and the weak demographic structure of most rural areas, some policies of income supplementation for farm and indeed other rural households will continue to be necessary. The problem is to ensure that these are made available in ways which do not conflict with the need to achieve greater mobility and use of resources, e.g. making land available for afforestation.

The main argument being made here, however, is that the stabilisation of rural populations and the maintenance of various rural services and facilities should be seen as a problem of geographical scale. Local communities, even those that have viewed themselves as autonomous entities and in competition with one another, should face the realities that their survival is better assured through participation in wider area coalitions.

This is not to suggest that more localised self-help efforts or community development should be abandoned. But these will continue to be somewhat marginalised and residual activities unless undertaken within a context where there is a wider area-based development plan, ideally on a geographical scale incorporating the hinterland of a county town. At this district level formally constituted partnerships are necessary for integrating sectoral interests, the actions of public sector agencies, and the efforts of community organisations. The commitment of the local arms of the public service to this approach would have to be mandated from the highest levels of authority. District strategies would be linked systematically to the plans of the County Enterprise Boards. The entire effort could be formulated into a national programme supported by Structural Fund allocations. And integrated development at sub-county level should be complemented by inter-departmental co-ordinating structures at central administration.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY PROPOSALS

This final chapter draws together the main points of the analyses presented in earlier chapters and summarises the principal conclusions. Following a brief review of the contemporary context of rural development the main elements of the Irish 'rural problem' are identified. The later sections focus on the key policy issues and offer a number of proposals for a strengthening or a reorientation of current policies so as to achieve national objectives for rural development.

1. WIDER CONTEXT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

During the 1980s there were a number of circumstances which impelled policy makers in what was then referred to as the European Community to establish new structures and programmes to cope with the problems facing rural areas. Output levels in agriculture were leading to oversupply and the budgetary resources to support farm commodity prices were being strained. The pattern of industrial development and location which had favoured rural areas in the expansionary years of the 1970s could not be replicated in the recession of the 1980s. The prospect of the Single European Act, and the threats which the Single Market posed to balanced development between the central industrial zones and the peripheral rural areas, committed the Community to efforts to achieve greater economic and social cohesion.

Within the last six years or so rural development has been brought firmly onto the policy agenda and Community-wide initiatives, especially the enlargement of the EU's Structural Funds, have instigated a number of rural development actions in Ireland such as the Operational Programme for Rural Development and the LEADER programme. Other measures, of course, under the Structural Funds such as those supporting infrastructural developments or tourism also contribute to the development of rural areas.

However, the early years of the 1990s have revealed trends which will continue to place major adjustment problems on rural areas and rural communities. Some of these adjustments affect the EU as a whole and, consequently, the Community's capacity to respond to the problems in a particular member state, while others are of a specifically national nature.

The contemporary needs for rural development and for Community action in this regard have been recognised in the 'Communication from the Commission' (CEC, 1993). This notes that the implementation of the CAP reforms, agreed in 1992, and the continuing problems of the fragile areas of the Community demand further attention. It adds that there is agreement that rural society is undergoing major changes and that new directions, new forms of rural development, new schemes to bring together the various partners concerned need to be found.

Up to 20 per cent of the Community's population (over 60 million persons) live in rural areas. The quality of life in many of these areas is under threat and trends are at variance with the Community's own aspirations for economic and social cohesion. Out-migration continues and without specific measures to combat exclusion, promote rural development and improve public services there is a risk of 'rural desertification' on an unprecedented scale (Delors, 1993).

In the industrial economy there is considerable reorganisation through the greater mobility and internationalisation of capital. Despite the aspirations for cohesion within the Community the greater advantages of the Single Market are likely to accrue to the most economically advanced regions. In any event, cohesion is not the same as convergence and, as Kennedy (1992:36-37) points out, there is no assurance from Ireland's past performance or from future projections of EU developments that Ireland is on a definite course towards convergence with its richer partners in the Community.

The growth of the service industries (especially in marketed services such as banking and insurance) is not likely to be of immediate benefit to the peripheral rural regions. There are, however, considerable expectations for other developments - such as forms of tourism - that can benefit the economies of these regions. Similarly, the development of modern information technologies and communication systems has the potential to offset some of the disadvantages of peripherality. But the introduction of new economic opportunities and services will be a gradual process requiring substantial investment.

Referring to the change in economic circumstances in the Community in recent years the Commission has noted (CEC, 1993:5) that there is now a serious downturn with 17 million unemployed, and 'a crisis in public finances which restricts public investment'. The Commission adds that it is not only the weaker regions and the traditional sectors that are feeling the pressure of competition and economic and social change but that, increasingly, the

stronger regions and the heartland of the Community's industrial areas are also vulnerable. As we shall note presently this is an observation that could be applied even more validly to the situation in Ireland.

These various trends suggest that however the Community may interpret its commitments to cohesion, convergence and the amelioration of peripherality - in terms of allocations of Structural Funds - it has several preoccupations, even without taking into account the relationship with eastern Europe and the preparation to admit new members to the Community. The corollary of this is that the prime responsibility for addressing Irish rural problems rests at home.

2. THE RURAL PROBLEM IN IRELAND

This report has been based considerably on the premise that the problems of Irish rural areas are not so much singularly rural in character but are synonymous with the general problems of the national economy. Principally, these are problems of unemployment, emigration and population loss. The reason for this is the highly non-metropolitan and rural nature of the Republic's settlement pattern outside of the Dublin area and, concomitantly, the comparatively high reliance on an agricultural economy which is undergoing major structural change in a context where the development of alternative sources of income has been weak.

(i) Demographic Problems

In a sense, demographic problems are but symptoms of a deeper malaise, the nature of which has been outlined in this report. But, given the national policy goal of maintaining the country's rural population demographic data offers the clearest evaluative criteria for assessing the efficacy of rural development measures. On the evidence available, the challenge continues and in fact is of immense proportions. The 'population turnaround' of the 1970s, whereby the rural areas reversed a long established trend of decline, has itself been turned around in the late 1980s. This has signalled the re-appearance of the historically familiar distinction between the expanding 'new pale' (Dublin and the eastern counties) and contraction in large parts of the rest of the country. Within 'the rest of the country' the more problematic regions, expectedly, were the West and North-West, but, ominously, the figures for the latter part of the 1980s show the emergence of the Midlands as an additional problem area. When taken alongside the regional manifestations of debilitation in the agricultural economy the

conclusion is that particular problems of rural development exist in the West, North-West, and Midlands Planning Regions.

Another significant feature of the late 1980s trend (the East excluded) was that depopulation in Rural Districts was not offset by population growth in urban areas. More refined analyses (in Chapter 3 and Chapter 12) indicate that the geographical configuration of Rural Districts and their relatively large size conceal the spatial-ecological nature of population shifts. That is to say, population stability seems, in general, to be a characteristic of bands of territory in the perimeter of urban areas and along inter-urban communication routes - a feature not readily apparent in Urban District/Rural District comparisons.

Nevertheless, the overall population declines in all regions other than the East suggest that the goal of population maintenance through rural development has to be inextricably linked to policies for regional and sub-regional development and not confined to measures applicable only to rural areas as such. And within regions somewhat different strategies may be needed for different categories of rural area - the 'urban-adjacent', the 'urban-remote', and the 'intermediate' areas. For example, in the remoter areas planning for population decline, or the management of decline, however difficult to admit politically, will have to be considered.

(ii) The Farming Economy

Structural adjustments in the farm economy were discussed in Chapter 4, while trends in farm incomes were analysed in Chapter 6. A major driving force in the farming sector is production technology which translates into increases in output and a rise in productivity - the latter manifested in, for example, higher yields. Technology is biased towards saving labour while using machinery and other purchased inputs, but this factor substitution means increased costs such that there is continuous pressure on retained farm earnings. Despite the subsidisation of farm commodity prices - and, in some cases, of farm inputs - there is a longer term tendency towards a cost-price squeeze, arising from a deterioration in the ratio of farmgate prices to input costs. Factor substitution in turn integrates agricultural production more directly into the industrial economy but such integration also occurs through the primary processing stage where producers must meet increasingly demanding specifications as regards quality, delivery and health requirements.

The responses which individual farmers make to these forces vary by their command over resources and their individual or household characteristics. As shown in Chapter 6 some 'professionalise' their farming, by enlarging the scale of the production unit and by becoming more commercialised and specialised. Others remain static, with the current generation of management already settled into a stable pattern of production associated with low material aspirations. An increasing number seek alternative market income either in a home-based business (farm-related or independently of the farm) or through off-farm employment. In many small-farm areas, especially where off-farm employment has not been available, there has been a pronounced disengagement from farming and indeed from any gainful occupational activity, coupled with a retreat to 'retirement' status and heavy reliance on State income maintenance payments.

There is thus a considerable degree of fractioning within the farm sector. A recent analysis (Power and Roche, 1993) indicates that on strict economic viability criteria (capability of remunerating family labour at the agricultural wage rate and of giving a 5 per cent return to non-land assets), about 107,000 of the country's 160,000 farms would not be viable on their 1992 performance. On about 27,000 of these non-viable holdings the householder and/or spouse had another source of income and may be economically secure to the extent that non-farm employment is sustained. Of the remaining 80,000 farms the demographic composition of the household in 30,000 cases was such as to suggest that these would not be reproduced into a further generation. This left 50,000 demographically 'viable' households living on economically non-viable farms but with no earned income from non-farm sources accruing to the landholder or spouse. Of even more significance, these figures do not take into account the 30,000 holdings eliminated from the enumeration at the 1991 Census of Agriculture because of their minimal farming activity.

Of course, the responses and behaviour of farming households are conditioned by other considerations besides an economist's criteria of economic viability, especially in the shorter term. The figures above, however, indicate that over the longer term there are endemic pressures towards further structural change within the farming sector.

Despite the substantial shifts out of full-time farming there has not been a commensurate change in the pattern of land holding or in land mobility. In particular, the sale and amalgamation of holdings has been comparatively limited. It is true, however, that in the remote, mainly inland, small farm areas - where demographic decline has been severe - there has been a greater rate of amalgamation, greater expansion in land letting, as well as the transfer

of holdings - though much of this transfer was to non-locals (Hannan and Commins, 1993:91).

Associated with these structural changes is a considerable degree of regional and sub-regional differentiation, summarised in the statistics given in Table 4.6. In parts of the West and North-West farming in any significant commercial sense has diminished considerably. As noted above, the 1991 Census of Agriculture eliminated some 30,000 holdings from enumeration (compared to 1980). The Census returns also indicate a substantial degree of land under-utilisation in the North-West. Tillage has almost disappeared and although in some counties increases in sheep numbers during the 1980s offset declines in cattle numbers there was little change in the overall land use densities when reckoned on a standard livestock unit basis. Forestry is an obvious option but as noted in Chapter 8 private forestry is not proving attractive in the remote small farm areas.

(iii) The Non-Farm Economy

Perhaps the most critical contextual factor in the development of the rural economy is the national unemployment situation. Since the early 1980s unemployment in absolute numbers has more than trebled. Given the demographic composition of the national population the numbers of young people coming on the domestic labour market will continue to increase for another decade or so. Depending on the assumptions made about emigration - and job opportunities have become restricted in the traditional foreign markets for Irish workers - additions in the domestic labour supply could increase annually by 10,000 to 20,000 until the early years of the next century. Since 1990, the labour force has grown by less than 20,000 annually so even if this comparatively good performance were maintained for a decade there would still be a considerable 'backlog' of unemployed people. This does not take account of the possibility that as employment opportunities increase others not now registered as unemployed, especially married women, might seek work.

The 1980s marked a transition phase for the economic development of the rural economy. The world recession of the early part of the decade intensified a process of attrition in the State's programme of rural industrialisation. For most of the decade in most regions, in IDA supported enterprises, job losses exceeded job gains. Whereas earlier service employment owed much of its growth to the expansion of the public sector, the momentum in this sector was also curtailed. Rural areas do not benefit directly from the expansion in marketed services.

The deleterious impact of the industrial recession cannot be reckoned merely in job losses. Because industrial development maintained the demographic vitality and viability of many farm households, it was also instrumental in maintaining the levels of agricultural production. Paradoxically, the demographic 'health' of farming communities and the economic prosperity of farming had become more closely dependent on the development of a diversified rural economy and less connected to the specific characteristics of the local farming economy itself (Hannan and Commins, 1993:93). Young farmers, even with non-farm jobs, contribute more to productive farming than ageing full-time farmers.

For the current decade the difficulties of industrial development in rural areas have to be seen in the context of the more general macroeconomic changes that are restructuring spatial economies. In Chapter 5 restructuring was characterised as a set of processes incorporating greater mobility of capital, flexible - and therefore - mobile production structures, rationalisation, and labour displacement. Old urban industrial structures are dismantled and this creates new competition for scarce international investment. Even agribusiness, which is often considered as a possible mainstay for rural employment, has exhibited the distinguishing features of the restructuring trend.

(iv) Service Provision

Restructuring also characterises the provision of services in rural areas. A problem in this respect, however, is that there has been little systematic research on rural service provision either in regard to the economics of service delivery or in the coverage, content or impact of the services provided.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that a number of trends pose particular problems in meeting service needs. One is the set of financial constraints and commercial pressures which service providers face in catering to rural areas. This was exemplified in An Post's rationalisation plan for the rural postal service; the plan argued that there were too many sub-post offices for the volume of business available. Second, demographic and social changes such as an increasing proportion of elderly persons and the migration of younger people result not alone in more demand for State services, but for particular kinds of services. Third, people have come to expect - and rightly so - a certain minimum universal standard in the quality and range of services. We may also add here that services often supply functions to local populations over and beyond those intrinsic to the service itself. A local primary school,

for example, apart from providing an education may be a focus of local social interaction (by providing a meeting place), a supplier of local leadership (through the extra-mural role of its teaching staff), or a symbolic representation of local identity and solidarity.

Chapter 10 noted that shifts were occurring in commercial services (mainly shopping) with these functions moving from smaller to larger centres. Proposals have emerged for greater rationalisation of postal services, schools, hospitals, Garda stations and transport services. While it may not be realistic to seek to maintain any service unchanged, a problem is that proposals to change services are usually made at central level, solely within the particular brief of the proposing agency, independently of the totality of services within an area including their possible inter-relationships, and the consequences for rural development objectives, and without regard to the implication for the non-economic functions that may attach to the particular service. This observation leads us to a more general feature of policy making and policy administration in rural areas, viz., the lack of complementarity - indeed the existence of contradictions - among the measures pursued by the several administrations and agencies concerned. The State's role in the deployment of its services cannot be divorced from other policies that seek to generate local development and maintain rural population levels.

(v) Policy Orientations

There has been no systematically formulated and consistent policy for rural development - at least in the comprehensive sense in which rural development is understood in this report (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 12 and also below). This can be associated with the general disengagement from spatial policies in the late 1970s. Regionalism moved out of focus when the Republic became a single region in the EU context; strategies for industrialisation paid less attention to regional and sub-regional targeting of new jobs; and the abolition of local rates, among other factors, reduced the strength of local authorities as structures for development. An amalgam of measures for local area development, of EU and national origin, has emerged in compartmentalised fashion from individual sectoral perspectives, rather than from any understanding of the need for the structured integration of different measures to respond adequately to the multi-dimensional nature of rural underdevelopment. In fact, rural development as a policy theme has emerged mainly from one sector - as a response to the problems facing those making their living from farming. There has been a tendency in official policy statements to conflate rural development objectives with those of sorting out the structural problems in agriculture. Indeed, as farm policy

became less of a food production policy and more of an incomes support policy it also became very much the substitute for a rural 'development' policy. At the operational level, measures like the Operational Programme for Rural Development were weighted strongly towards supporting individuals to diversify from conventional farming, with much less emphasis on the mobilisation of local communities on lines which brought a measure of success in the Pilot Area Programme of 1988-90. Measures based on grant aid and matching resources help those who already have a stake in the community to consolidate their economic position - which is not an unimportant matter - but they do not directly benefit the young unemployed.

This is another way of saying that there has also been a relative neglect of development as a *process* compared to development as a set of tangible *products*. Development as a *process* involves the longer term work of local animation, identifying and nurturing local entrepreneurs, developing the capacity of local action groups to function as initiators or partners in local development, providing training appropriate to the needs of local development, and tailoring forms of technical assistance to local circumstances. It would seem that providing capital grants for specified investments, important that this undoubtedly is, has greater visibility and political appeal than creating human and social capital.

The current National Development Plan is a welcome departure from the compartmentalised sectoral approach in that it expressly recognises the need for area-based local development. However, its focus on disadvantaged areas with an emphasis on the long-term unemployed renders it too narrow in scope to make the necessary contribution to integrated rural development.

(vi) Institutional and Administrative Framework

The way policy measures are conceived is, of course, a reflection of an administrative structure organised on functional (sectoral) lines, even if centralised mainly in one location - Dublin. Admittedly, various attempts are now in motion to correct the lack of co-ordination among the different agencies in this system. These efforts include, in particular, the establishment of new Regional Authorities which will promote co-ordination among local authorities at regional level, the setting up of County Enterprise Boards at local authority level, and structures like the LEADER groups and the area-based partnerships at sub-county level.

The major deficiency is still at county and sub-county level. There has been considerable inertia in regard to the reform of local government despite numerous reports on the issue. We would suggest that what is needed is not

so much another tier of local administration at sub-county level, but a revitalisation of the system which exists. There is need for a culture of development in local authorities in addition to routine regulatory administration in accordance with mandates from the centre - mainly from Dublin. In particular, there is need for a capability to energise and support ground-based development at sub-county level.

Here it is also necessary to raise the question of the capacity of older established agencies and structures to respond to the challenges of rural development. As the tasks of development in rural areas are now extended beyond agriculture towards more diversified but integrated forms of rural development there is a need for personnel to undertake new roles and functions. Agricultural advisory services which were set up and staffed on the basis of assumptions about the necessity to expand farm production should be capable of re-orientation in mission, direction and role in the context of the emphasis on rural development. This will not be easily achieved in the short-term. The farm advisory services have gradually evolved from a proactive advisory developmental role in promoting new practices and innovation in farming and towards an administrative function in implementing regulatory programmes and incentive schemes. Apart from this - and leaving aside the in-built tendency to inertia in any established service - the restrictions in public service recruitment have raised the age profile of existing staff. Pasquarelli's observation (1993:20), though made in the context of the US, is of interest here if not entirely apt in this context: the proper role of public agencies in development is to act as facilitators, catalysers of private and collective initiatives, providers of technical assistance and funding only to the extent that it is necessary to match and enhance the promoters' own efforts; this is their function rather than act as deliverers of prefabricated schemes containing all the 'good' solutions to problems.

One other point to be made here concerns the limited arrangements for research, monitoring and evaluation in connection with rural development programmes, and the dissemination of the lessons derived from implementing various actions. Such assessments that are made tend to be based very much on financial amounts expended and projects initiated rather than on gaining an understanding of the processes of development and measuring their effectiveness and impact in dealing with rural problems. Systematic analyses of the achievements of programmes, especially those operated on considerable amounts of public funding would generate information of relevance to policy makers and policy administrations, as well as to training providers, project managers and the intended beneficiaries of future programmes.

3. POLICY ISSUES AND PROPOSALS

(i) A Framework of Regional and Sub-Regional Planning

Rural development as a policy issue needs to be placed in a broader and more strategically formulated framework than has hitherto been the case. This wider framework, in our view, would take greater cognisance of the spatial aspects of development, especially through planning at regional, county and sub-county levels. Rural development in its implementation has been narrowly conceived and in current plans is closely linked to agriculture and to a limited concept of local development. Agricultural development centres on farm investment and diversification from conventional production with a strong emphasis on income supports (e.g. through compensatory animal headage payments). There is ample evidence in this report to show how important these measures are - and they should be continued - but they represent only a component of a multidimensional approach to rural development.

The proposed Local Development Programme (in the 1994-1999 National Development Plan) is a very constructive step but could be restrictive in practice. This is because in its country-wide application it is intended to have a singular focus on enterprise (again important though this is) and, where it will have more selective geographical focus, it will be concentrated on areas of long-term unemployment and economic marginalisation. Under-employment, out-migration and depopulation, rather than unemployment, are more characteristic of rural areas.

The LEADER Programme and the area-based response to long-term unemployment (ABR) are also steps in the right direction but their geographical scope, too, is limited.

Our proposals for a greater emphasis on spatial planning (or, more accurately, for a return to spatial planning) arise from our understanding of current national planning. It seems that even regional planning and regional statistical accounting (e.g. county income analyses) have become subdued in recent years by the dominant sectoral and national level orientation introduced through the Structural Funds. The need for 'balanced regional development' (though the implication of this is not clarified) is admitted in the National Development Plan, and the Review Committees were consulted on the development strategies to be pursued in each sub-region (as the Planning Regions came to be known). Moreover, the sub-regional aspects of the Plan are concerned with such matters as improving accessibility and minimising peripherality, developing indigenous industries, promoting the development of industry/enterprise in towns across the regions, and

developing clusters of industries/sectors in association with infrastructural planning to maximise regional development opportunities and enhance the competitive advantages of regions.

However, it would appear that the individual sub-regional Review Committees have been primarily concerned with ensuring a proportionate flow of resources to their respective sub-regions. The contention here is that this orientation in planning needs to be supplemented by: (i) a greater emphasis on the balance among the sub-regions, especially *between* the expanding perimeter of Dublin and the West, North-West and midlands; (ii) a renewed concern for the changing economic inter-relationships between the different areas and centres *within* sub-regions; (iii) a greater consideration of the growth centre concept whereby the geographical clustering of economic activities in strategically located hub towns could induce spread effects to their hinterlands; (iv) more informative systems of regional and county economic and social statistics.

In regard to regional development specifically, the case for treating the Republic as a single region for EU Structural Fund purposes may be considerably weakened by the time the next round of the Funds comes to be allocated - in six years' time. If Ireland's GDP per head exceeds 75 per cent of the Community average - as now seems likely - then the argument for Structural Fund allocations to this country will have to be based on the economic circumstances of different sub-regions within the national territory.

In a framework of regional and sub-regional planning (county or sub-county in this instance), the smaller and more vulnerable rural communities could better face the reality that their future does not lie in narrow parochialism but through association within spatially wider economic and social networks. In any event, the traditional boundaries of local communities are being extended and reshaped as they are obliged to adapt to new scale requirements with rationalisation in commerce and in services. The challenge is to canalise these trends with more constructively planned forms of 'localised centralisation'.

This perspective on ways of managing change in rural areas may now be considered alongside current thinking about rural development. As discussed in this report (especially in Chapters 2 and 12) rural development means systematic attempts to combine actions across several sectors or dimensions and integrating these actions in an orchestrated manner at an area level. Examples of this approach - though not conforming to it entirely - are the area-based partnerships (ABRs) and the LEADER programme.

(ii) Area-Based Integrated Development (AID)

Based on these two considerations - the need to intervene in the spontaneous processes of decline in local areas and to implement rural development in a comprehensive multi-sectoral manner - we propose that a concept of Area-based Integrated Development (AID) be adopted. This would mean implementing rural development by:

- basing a multi-dimensional but integrated approach on sub-county districts ('local development districts') of 15,000-25,000 people, ideally incorporating a county town and its hinterland
- allowing for the establishment of partnerships (companies) of statutory and non-statutory interests in these areas, thus giving local people a strong voice in local development
- adopting a proactive and energetic approach to tackling the problems of development within AID areas, in addition to providing a menu of incentives and income supplements
- having a vehicle through which external funding could be channelled to assist 'bottom-up' development
- bringing about greater co-ordination and synergy among the great variety of funds and schemes now available for different developmental purposes
- managing or co-ordinating public services in a manner consistent with local area development

It is not envisaged here that 'local development districts' would be officially designated but that the criteria on which local interests could themselves establish such districts would be specified. Obviously the formation of local districts for AID purposes would depend on an emergent sense of identity and cohesion in the size of area proposed.

New LEADER groups could be formed on this basis but what would be a more ideal approach for multi-dimensional development is a combination of the LEADER and ABR models.

The proposed local AID companies could be funded by block grant from County Enterprise Boards. More localised self help initiatives need not be abandoned for district-scale development; these could still draw on the Global Grant for locally-specific needs.

Experience in LEADER groups, ABR companies and the Forum project in North-West Connemara suggests that local development can be facilitated by 'resource centres' which provide office facilities for development staff, information services, commercial services (e.g. for local small-scale enterprises), facilities for local social or public services (e.g. health clinic), facilities for training courses, and access to telecommunications services. Many communities have buildings that could be easily adapted for use as local development centres. Local authorities have powers to establish local offices to facilitate community organisation.

(iii) Agriculture and Diversification on Farms

Although rural development subsumes a range of activities its core enterprise in many rural areas will continue to be farming, even despite labour outflow. Given the seriousness of unemployment in all parts of the country, it is imperative to maintain the maximum number of people in farming and related land-based activities.

One obvious way of achieving this is to raise the efficiency and competitive capacity of the country's commercial and potentially viable farms, having regard to the need to adapt to the CAP reforms and the changes consequent on the GATT agreement.

The greater degree of differentiation and segmentation now within the farm population (see Chapter 6) calls for support services tailored to the needs of particular categories of producer. There are at least three categories in question.

Commercial farmers need up-to-date advisory and consultancy services relating to the technical and managerial aspects of modern farming. Power and Roche (1993:21) note that Irish farming has still too many high-cost producers and they are to be found in all systems of farming.

Those farmers whose viability is at risk need to have a special farm development service to support their efficient production of mainstream commodities but also to enable them to develop alternative enterprises.

For those who have an insecure future in farming we support the proposal of Mannion *et al* (1993) in recommending that the path to adjustment lies in alternative farm enterprises, off-farm businesses or other employment, or in retirement from farming under the new and, it would appear, attractive Farmer Retirement Scheme.

To enable these various recommendations to be effected Teagasc should expedite the implementation of its proposed tripartite advisory service, corresponding to the three categories of clientele outlined above. The third part is intended to be a 'rural enterprise service' with a complement of about 50 staff. This will have a focus on work with local organisations, identifying possibilities for local action, nurturing local leadership, and enabling individuals and groups acquire training and other supports. A staff of 50 would not seem sufficient to deliver the kind of 'ground-based' and 'pre-development' animation needed in many areas. Teagasc should be resourced to augment its proposed rural enterprise service by a corps of animators on a three-to-five year basis.

Yet many non-viable farmers will not be in a position to diversify into other lines of production, or start-up non-farm business even with an expanded rural development service. The evidence on diversification trends is limited (see Chapter 8) but it indicates that progress will be slow and selective as to the kinds of producers who diversify. Consequently, as long as there are no realistic and clearly available alternatives to the direct subsidies paid to farmers these payments will have to be maintained in some form.

As a general point regarding diversification the emphasis, understandably, in the early stages is on production. However, as volume builds up through initiatives like LEADER or other promotional activities, more attention needs to be given to consolidating networks of producers or 'clusters' at county or regional level. These are necessary to rationalise the delivery of support services and technical assistance but, above all, for a concerted approach to marketing. Increasingly, diversification should be market-led and not production-driven.

Finally, the volume of farm-based or other alternative enterprises coming forward for support is low compared to the interest in tourism projects. This may be due to the relativities in the incentives offered, or to the potential investors' perceptions of the business prospects. Experience in a number of LEADER groups, however, suggests that the problem is more fundamental in that, independently of the incentives available, there simply is not a culture of enterprise in many rural areas waiting to be tapped through financial incentives. Two proposals seem relevant, therefore.

First, there is a need to evaluate the merit of different levels of incentive on offer for promoting enterprises other than those based on tourism. Where a project requires a high level of the promoter's own finance the promotion schemes might be linked to a loan system on preferential terms.

Second, there should be a more concerted approach to training programmes aimed to stimulate enterprise in rural areas. The recommendations of the Committee on Rural Development Training (CRDT, 1993), regarding the provision of a training course leading to the Certificate in Rural Enterprise, should be implemented. These training programmes could be linked with the placement of a corps of local development animators in rural areas (see below under 'Human Resources and Technical Assistance').

(iv) Afforestation and Natural Resource Use

In considering alternatives to conventional farming, afforestation deserves special attention, for four reasons.

First, forestry has been identified by Government as a key sector for development. The proposals are to expand the existing planting programme to 30,000 ha per annum as compared with some 20,000 ha in recent years, bringing the area under forestry from 7 per cent to 10 per cent of the total land area. To help achieve this aim, grants and premium payments were increased substantially in 1993. These incentives give preference to planting by farmers and, of the area being afforested by the private sector, an increasing proportion is being taken up by farmers planting on their own lands.

Second, because of its extensive scale as a crop, its visual occupancy of the landscape, and its irreversibility - at least in the short-term - as a land use, forestry has consequences for natural resource and landscape management which have to be taken into account in resource management.

Third, afforestation has to be considered not just in terms of achieving national targets for timber production but for its implications for other aspects of rural development - population maintenance, farm restructuring and consolidation, maximisation of economic benefits in local areas and use of local physical infrastructures, especially roads. Without careful planning there may not always be a convergence between reaching national targets for afforestation, especially by a robust commercial strategy, and meeting the aims of rural development.

Fourth, judged from an economic development or resource use perspective forestry is the only realistic option in many areas (Leavy, 1994). The current mix of development schemes is likely to be of little relevance in areas where there has been substantial disengagement from full-time farming, major increases in land letting and in 'residual' and low intensity agricultural production, effective abandonment of farming on many small holdings, with

a considerable proportion of land occupiers being old, and many occupiers being non-locals. In those circumstances, the most important income sources are likely to remain headage payments, old age pensions and the 'dole' (Hannan and Commins, 1993:95). We have already noted here (and in Chapter 8) the selective nature of farm diversification. Thus, although there is a pool of land potentially available for afforestation, progress to date suggests that farm forestry has less appeal in the small-scale low income farming areas.

In the absence of detailed local area research into the factors that dictate individual landholder decisions in regard to land use and the disposal of land, and the circumstances which determine the patterns of land use change in different areas, it is difficult to make specific proposals for policy. However, three requirements may be stated.

There is need to examine, from a resource viewpoint, the operation of a variety of measures which currently cover promotion of afforestation, income subsidisation, extensification of farming, farm retirement, and environmental management. At present these measures are designed independently, and singularly focused on objectives defined within separate administrations or schemes. They may, in fact, reward the landholder for the under-use of resources. Holding on to the use of land, while it yields little or no current product though the holder incurs no cost but rather receives significant income from public funds, seems somewhat indulgent on the State's part (Hannan and Commins, 1993:97).

Secondly, afforestation should be undertaken on a more planned basis at county or sub-county level, and in the context of an integrated programme for rural development. The reason for this is to achieve greater collaboration between agencies in the promotion of afforestation, better tailoring of afforestation strategies to the circumstances of different areas (e.g. commercial farming areas, remote areas, or part-time farming areas) and closer consideration of the way afforestation could be linked to rural tourism, wildlife management, or recreational activities.

Thirdly, there is need for a national policy on natural resource management or, more narrowly, land use. There has been a gradual expansion in the uses of rural space, not alone in afforestation but in, e.g., fish farming, recreational use, heritage sites and for industry or public utilities. Without creating layers of bureaucratic control there is need for a system of classification and zoning, as well as procedures to provide greater public transparency in regard to plans to change from one form of use to another. This would allay current concerns

about 'mass' or 'unplanned' afforestation and regulate competing claims on the use of rural space - including the coastal areas.

(v) Opportunities Outside of Farming and Land Use

It goes without saying that the provision of employment opportunities is crucial to the achievement of a central aim of rural development, viz., the maintenance of population in rural areas. Yet as the Culliton Report (Industrial Policy Review Group, 1992) noted, there are no simple policy actions that can ensure a rapid solution to the problems of unemployment, though the problems have been well analysed. Nationally, the total numbers at work increased by about 8,000 persons per annum in 1988-93, but the natural increase in the labour force was about 25,000 persons per annum.

As a result of the analysis of industrial policy carried out by the Culliton Group, and also the report of a Task Force which advised on the implementation of the Culliton recommendations, a revised framework for industrial promotion has been established.

The National Development Plan states (NDP, 1994-1999; 1993:51) that the combined activities of Forfás, Forbairt, SFADCo, An Bord Trachtala, Údarás na Gaeltachta and the County Enterprise Boards will promote the creation of new enterprises and the growth and consolidation of existing firms at local, regional and national level. Forbairt will pursue a regional development role, identifying product and technology opportunities and providing access to business know-how and sources of finance. The County Enterprise Boards will provide a new source of support for local enterprise initiatives, their primary role being that of facilitating local development.

At local level there will now be four modes of intervention supporting enterprise development - that is, apart from the mainstream Operational Programmes in agriculture, tourism or industry. The area-based partnership companies (ABRs), established under the PESP will be applied more widely but targeted to designated disadvantaged areas. These will include marginalised rural areas although, as already noted, the primary focus is on areas of long-term unemployment. The Global Grant provides support for the partnership companies but also for other community groups. The Community Employment Development Programme (CEDP) is also targeted to the long-term unemployed but is designed mainly to provide a training dimension. A proportion of the CEDP will also be focused on the designated areas of disadvantage. Finally, it is expected that the EU LEADER programme will be extended from the current 16 locations to other areas.

What this framework suggests is the emergence of ad hoc - and often short-term - responses to the problem of unemployment, partly conditioned by the availability of EU funds and based on a rationing system in favour of areas having particularly acute problems of unemployment and deprivation. Because the need for jobs is so widespread a more strategic approach is desirable. This might be based on the application of an area-based integrated development (AID) programme to all districts along the lines proposed above (see also Chapter 13). Within this arrangement preferential supports could still be given to areas of disadvantage designated by objective criteria. Forbairt and the County Enterprise Boards could work closely with AID structures with the CEBs as a major co-funder.

There are three other requirements to be met in the promotion of enterprise development at local level: (i) the removal of the disincentives to business start-ups and employment creation that are inherent in the taxation and social welfare systems, e.g. in VAT and PRSI; (ii) the reduction or simplification of administrative procedures connected with processing applications for State support; (iii) the provision of more focused training and technical assistance for those likely to develop a new business or expand an existing enterprise. On this last point the recommendations of the Committee on Rural Training (CRDT, 1993) have already been noted. These call for, inter alia, a greater degree of collaboration among various training providers in order to help those with a practicable idea for business as well as those requiring new competencies (see below).

In regard to inward investments (as distinct from indigenous enterprise) it must be accepted there is a trade-off between 'bringing jobs to the people' and the clustering of enterprises in central locations (or clustering by sectoral types) in order to gain economies from the generation of associated support services. The appropriate compromise would appear to be a strategy for the promotion of growth centres within the regions. Such a strategy would also facilitate the development, of services employment. Despite the growth in services employment there, has not been any systematic framework to attempt to channel this growth in accordance with regional employment needs.

(vi) Tourism

Like forestry, rural tourism offers good prospects in those areas where the promotion of other forms of economic development presents difficult challenges. Rural tourism has been a highly seasonal activity but nevertheless there is now considerable interest in developing further tourism

enterprises in rural areas as is evident, e.g., from the LEADER programme. At the same time, as discussed in Chapter 8, the patterns of vacationing are changing, with increasing emphasis on 'active' holidays, and on acquiring direct experiences of the life, environment and culture of the holiday destination.

Against this background there is still much need for product and market development in rural tourism. Our proposal is that a concept of community-based rural tourism be formally accepted in tourism promotion policy. This would mean that: (i) while individual entrepreneurs would receive financial support for tourism investment, promotion at local level would be undertaken through local collective effort and organisation, e.g., through a co-operative or local development partnership; (ii) each area would have ways of mobilising the local community in support of a tourism development plan; (iii) as many local people as possible would have an opportunity to benefit from tourism development (in this connection there could be a relaxation of some restrictive requirements such as the criterion that a minimum of three rooms be available for accommodation in order for a domestic provider to qualify for grant aid); (iv) each area would develop a complement of activities, facilities and accommodation to represent its own distinctive features as a holiday destination; (v) particular categories of holiday-makers would be targeted as potential visitors to rural Ireland; (vi) community-based tourism in Ireland should be marketed centrally and convey to the market place a clear image of what is distinctive about the product a visitor may expect in choosing this holiday option.

(vii) Fisheries

Chapter 9 noted the substantial economic growth in the fisheries sector over the past 15 years, although the scale of the fishing industry is still comparatively small in relation to agriculture. It is important, however, in many localities where agriculture is not prosperous. The point was made that the fisheries sector is now facing some of the same problems which have overtaken agriculture - overcapacity and the imposition of supply controls in a context where development had not reached its full potential and the production structure had not been modernised.

Yet there are possibilities in taking up opportunities for fishing non-quota species and for the further development of aquaculture. It remains to be seen whether the proposed EU Pesca programme will offer sufficient alternative development opportunities in areas adversely affected by restrictions on conventional fishing.

(viii) Commercial and Public Services

Next to securing adequate employment, the most pressing problem in rural areas is ensuring the availability of adequate commercial services, social services and infrastructures. Population loss and the rationalisation of services - entailing cutbacks and concentration in fewer centres - interact in mutually reinforcing processes of rural decline. Progress on information technology and telecommunications may, in time, help to offset some of the more difficult problems of distance but developments in this field carry threats as well as opportunities. Services provided locally could be withdrawn and replaced by delivery systems based on modern telecommunications (e.g., in banking).

However, our analysis of these issues was handicapped by the limited research information available on the scale and impact of changes in service provision, although some illustrative cases were discussed in Chapter 10. The practical problems of providing commercial, social and infrastructural services to rural areas, especially where population has been declining for some time, are issues requiring special study. Our proposals at this point are stated at the level of general principles.

Public policy has not much leverage in intervening in the private sector as regards service delivery. In the case of public services, however, (health, postal services, education, policing, etc.) considerations of equity and citizen rights dictate that a strict rationalisation logic cannot prevail. Changes in service provision should not be made unilaterally within a single sectoral jurisdiction. The complementarities and independencies should be taken into account (e.g. health and public transport for patients; policing and access to public telephone services). The social subsidy elements in different services should be more transparent so that the cost of providing services as public goods can be identified and a conscious decision made as to whether or not that cost can be justified on various criteria. Decisions in regard to the provision of a particular service should take into account the function which that service fulfils in the context of an overall and broadly-based rural development strategy.

The approach to rural service provision based on the above principles could be more easily implemented if an area-based integrated development policy on the lines suggested in this report were adopted. Issues such as the provision of rural transport, health servicing, policing and education could be addressed in a co-ordinated manner where there is a framework for multi-dimensional development at a sub-county district level.

(ix) Human Resources and Technical Assistance

At several points in earlier chapters the argument was made that rural development is a long-term process requiring 'software' supports in terms of animation, training, capacity- building with local action groups, and technical assistance in, e.g., planning and management. The report on the Committee on Rural Development Training (CRDT, 1993) is relevant here as it identified a number of deficits and in the current provision for training and made proposals to remedy these. The deficits identified by the Committee included:

- the lack of a widely shared perspective of what the central rural development problems are, and of what is needed for the future by way of training inputs
- the lack of systematic research in identifying training needs
- despite a degree of informal liaison among providers there was little institutionalised shared learning across the various providers, and no system for developing, validating and disseminating models of good training practice
- the need for more formalised co-ordination within the total system
- uneven geographic coverage in provision

As regards training needs the Committee specified the following:

- training for multi-skills and new competencies for both new entrants to the workforce and persons at work
- training for professional and voluntary roles in community development, including the animation of development

The Committee recommended the provision of three new training programmes to cater to (i) labour market entrants, (ii) those wishing to develop their own commercial enterprises or become involved in community-based enterprises, and (iii) those promoting rural development in a professional or voluntary capacity - such as project managers or workers, animators or local leaders.

To achieve effective co-ordination of training among provider organisations, the Committee recommended the establishment of an Advisory Committee (to the Minister of State for Rural Development). This Advisory Committee, representative of the various training agencies (Teagasc, FÁS, Universities, VECs, etc.) has been formed and it is expected that it will help to progress

the recommendations made by the Committee on Rural Development Training.

Major changes in the agricultural sector - towards farm diversification - and in other dimensions of rural development have not been accompanied by a corresponding strengthening of the supportive technical, advisory and information systems, at least in the public sector. There is particular need for up-to-date information on the economics of production in alternative enterprises and on marketing prospects, and for studies which would provide a better understanding of the barriers to the adoption of recommended enterprises. This latter point applies particularly to forestry.

We propose that of the funds being made available for various components of rural development a greater proportion than hitherto be made available for the systematic assessment of the technical feasibility of different options, of the economics of production, and of market prospects.

It is also suggested that programme and project evaluations would be helpful to investors, as well as to policy makers and administrators.

In addition to the national agencies (e.g., Teagasc, FÁS), the universities and Regional Technical Colleges have assumed a greater role in servicing rural development. This should be strengthened. The Committee on Rural Development Training noted that the value of this service work needs to be recognised and incorporated seriously into the internal reward and promotion systems of academic institutions (CRDT, 1993:3).

(x) Strategic Information for Rural Development

A difficulty in preparing this report has been the lack of: (i) information on *household* economies to complement Teagasc's National Farm Surveys of *farm* businesses; (ii) a comprehensive set of economic and sociological statistics disaggregated to the sub-county level; (iii) studies of the dynamics of change at regional and district level, especially on the determinants of economic progress or decline, and of shifts in resource use (e.g., land use); (iv) studies of the problems of service provision in rural areas; and (v) evaluative studies on the impacts of policy measures.

Considerable amounts of information are being assembled not only in censuses and surveys but in the ordinary course of public administration (e.g., livestock headage payments, applications for grant aid, etc). It is now

possible with modern systems of data assembly to have better data bases for units of area at sub-county level. Administrative records of applications for policy payments could have an area identification code attached in each case which would allow the compilation of area-based statistics and thus permit the tracking of economic changes in different local areas of country.

We propose that agencies like Teagasc and the CSO should be resourced to maintain an area-development data bank, so that there could be a more systematic approach to the planning, monitoring and assessment of rural development measures.

APPENDIX 1

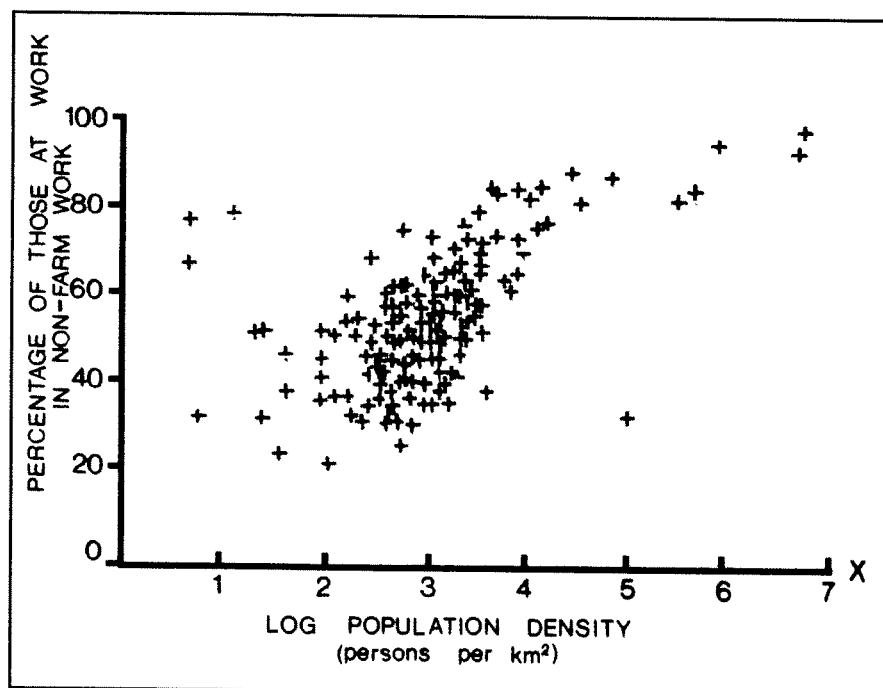
In the analysis of spatial patterns in counties Galway and Mayo (Chapter 12), the emphasis is on urbanisation. Given that the most common characteristic of the urban is high population density, then the first objective of an empirical analysis of urbanisation is to decide the level or levels of population density at which a given area might be classified as 'urban'. The information used to define the appropriate density is then related to data on the composition of the workforce. The urban components are thus represented by: (a) the size of settlement located in each area; and by (b) population density and structure of the workforce (Yeates, 1987). The specifics of this classification method are described for counties Galway and Mayo. The areas used in the analysis are census District Electoral Divisions (DEDs).

The general relationship between the population density of DEDs in County Galway and the proportion of persons "at work" classified as non-farm, is shown in Figure 12.A. (The comparable data for Mayo are similar but not shown). The clustering of points demonstrates that the greater the proportion of those at work classified as non-farm the greater the population density. It is possible to identify three distinct parts to the pattern on the graph. First there is a group of DEDs where the density of population is very high (61 persons per km²) and where the proportion of those at work in non-farm employment is also very high (73 per cent or more). Furthermore, each DED in this group either contains a town of 1,000 persons or more or, in the case of the DEDs around Galway, is contiguous to such an urban centre. These three criteria, i.e., density of population, percentage employed in non-farm jobs and the presence, or proximity, of a sufficiently large settlement, help to define a group of 'urban' DEDs.

A second group of DEDs in Figure 12.A are those where the density of population is greater than 53 persons per km² and where the percentage engaged in non-farm employment is at least 63 per cent of those at work. The second group of DEDs forms a semi-urban set of areas. The remaining DEDs are classified as being rural. The classification of the county into urban, semi-urban and rural is illustrated in Figure 12.5 (Chapter 12). The application of a similar methodology to County Mayo resulted in the classification of areas as shown in Figure 12.6 (Chapter 12).

FIGURE 12.A

Relationship between Population Densities and the Percentage of those at Work in Non-Farm Employment for DEDs in Galway County



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