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**INTEGRATION AND PARTICIPATION IN RURAL
DEVELOPMENT:
THE CASE OF IRELAND**

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Abstract

Rural development initiatives in recent years, in Ireland and elsewhere in western Europe, have placed great emphasis on ideas of integration, participation and empowerment. As a consequence, at both national and European Union levels, there have been a range of territorially-based programmes which, to a greater or lesser extent, espouse the idea of a more locally attuned 'bottom-up' approach to rural development. This approach is seen as a more appropriate mechanism than traditional 'top-down' strategies. While current strategies might be seen as offering new possibilities for those living in rural areas, this paper presents some evidence from on-going research in Ireland suggesting that there are a number of issues which need to be teased out. Two key themes are highlighted. Firstly, there are a number of what can be seen as 'technical' considerations centring on the mechanics of co-ordination and integration. Secondly, there are issues pertaining to power relationships at both national and local levels which need to be explored.

Introduction

In recent decades, rapid changes have occurred in many rural areas in western Europe resulting in significant social, economic, demographic and cultural transformations. Farming has ceased to be a major employer as agricultural rationalisation has occurred, while counter-urbanisation has altered the social composition of many localities. Whereas previously the rural has been equated with agriculture, there is now a recognition of the diverse nature of rural areas. With these changes, linked to a variety of socio-economic processes, there has been a need to view rural development as something more than an adjunct to agricultural development.

In the light of this, the European Commission issued a document, *The Future of Rural Society*, in 1988 marking the first concrete stage in the espousal of a rural policy (as distinct from an agricultural policy) within the then EC. While the document lacked specific proposals, the Commission asserted that "rural development must be both multi-disciplinary in conception and multi-sectoral in application" (Commission of the European Communities, 1988, p31). This was an articulation of the apparent wish to promote an integrated,

participative approach to rural development. Within the European Union from the late 1980s onwards, a rural development framework has evolved which emphasises ideas of integration, participation and partnership. This mirrors moves within the broader realm of economic development where the principles of subsidiarity and cohesion have been accorded considerable prominence (Walsh, 1995). A variety of rural measures, most notably LEADER, has arisen in response to the perceived problems of many rural areas. Central to the initiatives undertaken has been an espoused shift away from traditional 'top-down' approaches to more inclusive and integrated 'bottom-up' strategies. Inherent within the approach currently being advocated is the involvement of local residents in this development process. This has meant an increasing emphasis on the importance of 'community groups' and local actors, and the encouragement of partnership arrangements where such groups have a say in what happens in their own area.

In this paper some of the implications of this supposedly 'bottom-up' strategy are explored in the context of the Republic of Ireland, where the increasing pre-eminence of EU measures has meant

there is a growing emphasis on the ideas of partnership and participation. While such a move may well have positive implications for some rural dwellers, it is suggested that there are a number of problems associated with these measures. In this instance, two key types of problem are identified. The first type may be seen as technical and the second as political. The first category refers to problems pertaining to the operation and the co-ordination of activities. The second category relates to problems pertaining to power. There are issues of vertical power relationships between local groups and statutory organisations as well as issues of horizontal power relationships within localities, lying beneath the rhetoric of community. The paper presents preliminary reflections on on-going work, utilising, where appropriate, examples from the EU LEADER programme in Ireland.

What precisely constitutes development is a subject of much debate. Buller and Wright (1990) define development as an ongoing interventionist process of qualitative, quantitative and/or distributional change which leads to improvements for groups of people. This implies that development must be seen as a process, not simply as a

series of concrete changes. As Buller and Wright make clear "development cannot be equated simply with an open-armed welcoming of change in any form: it must include goals for the betterment of some people" (1990, p4). This emphasis on development as a process implies some notion of sustainability. Thus, Hoggart and Buller (1987) distinguish between development on the one hand and mere short term improvements in living conditions on the other. Notions of integrated development involving local people were popular in the so-called 'Third World' in the 1950s and 1960s. The general aims were the improvement of living conditions, using initiatives emerging from the locality and having wide local participation (Shortall, 1994). However, as Wright (1990) argues, such 'community development' initiatives often reflected a somewhat paternalistic colonialist mindset on the part of the external 'experts'. The result was a situation in which 'natives' were encouraged to engage in the process of converting their societies from a backward 'traditional' form to a 'modern' one. From these dubious origins, a version of this 'colonial export' is now being applied to rural Europe. The current rhetoric of rural development plays heavily on the role of the local

'community'. Communities are envisaged as playing an integral part in the process of initiating and managing projects in their own areas. The argument here is that

"policies that are sensitive to local circumstances will not only be more effective in taking the uniqueness of local social structure, economy, environment and culture into account, but also, through the involvement of the local community, will be more likely to be successful in their implementation. Communities that have a say in the development of policies for their locality are much more likely to be enthusiastic about their implementation"
(Curry, 1993, p33).

It might be argued that this shift reflects wider notions of moving away from a modernist vision of planning to a more post-modernist approach emphasising rural diversity and local differences. Thus, locally-sensitive initiatives are espoused rather than developing cross-spatial blueprints. Such strategies also tend to utilise ideas of the 'tradition' of co-operation and 'self-help' reputed to be deeply embedded within rural life (Rogers. 1987). Viewed from a wider

political economy perspective, these moves might also be seen as an attempt to off-load responsibility for rural development and a tacit admission that previous endeavours have failed. In an era where there is an increasing emphasis on fiscal considerations and on 'value for money', it has also been argued that they represent a cheap method of delivering some form of rural development (McLaughlin, 1987). In a 'Third World' context, White (1996) argues that strategies emphasising participation reflect a wish by governments or agencies to control developments. This, she argues, is best achieved through a process of incorporation rather than one of exclusion. Thus, local people are 'involved' but are not necessarily in control. She suggests that participation has become a " 'hurrah' word bringing a warm glow to its users and hearers" (White, 1996, p7). Whatever the reasoning, the question of whether the current European version will actually induce a dramatic change in the nature of rural development remains to be answered. From a political economy perspective, such initiatives need to be viewed in terms broader than a simple evaluation of their espoused aims. This paper represents a tentative attempt to move towards such an evaluation.

Socio-economic change in rural Ireland

Ireland is one of the most rural societies in Western Europe, with a low population density and a relatively high dependency on agriculture (Hoggart, Buller and Black, 1995). The transition from more traditional farming methods to a more modernised system has meant a centralising of production into larger units, increased mechanisation and decreased employment (Commins, 1980; Walsh, 1986; Varley, Boylan and Cuddy, 1991). While accession to the then EEC in 1973 brought about an overall rise in farm prosperity, the benefits have been uneven. The result is the creation of a duality with a modernised sector on the one hand and a numerically much larger marginalised sector containing economically unviable farms on the other (Commins, 1996). There is also a spatial dimension to this duality with the west characterised by smaller farms on relatively unproductive land with older farm operators, less specialisation and lower levels of mechanisation, all of which contribute to lower mean farm incomes relative to the south and east (Gillmor, 1977,1987; Walsh, 1992; Commins and Keane, 1994; Commins, 1996).

In addition, there have been changes in the social and occupational composition of the rural population. Rural Ireland's long-established demographic trend of population loss as a result of net out-migration is indicative of poor employment opportunities and the low possibility of obtaining a satisfactory standard of living in many parts of the country (NESC, 1991). The west of Ireland has been quite severely affected by this process with its attendant demographic, social and economic consequences (MacLaughlin, 1994). Associated with this is the existence of considerable levels of deprivation as evidenced, for example, in Connemara (Byrne, 1991) and in Cork and Kerry (Storey, 1993) and problems of access to services (Cawley, 1999). Even those services designed to provide assistance, whether by statutory or voluntary agencies, appear to be located in such a way as to severely disadvantage many rural residents, many of whom may be those most in need of support (O'Mahony, 1985; Storey, 1994). As a consequence of these phenomena, significant parts of rural Ireland might be seen as a 'periphery' displaying the characteristics of marginal rural regions. At the same time some rural areas are experiencing in-movement of people, whether as commuters, people

working from home or retirement migrants. This has served to alter the social and demographic composition of particular localities (O'Flanagan and Storey, 1989). The expressed intent of rural development initiatives is to endeavour to redress some of the imbalances identified above. As suggested earlier, two types of problem with current development strategies are identified here - technical problems and political problems. While these are treated separately in the sections which follow, it should be emphasised that the two are highly inter-connected. Technical considerations cannot stand entirely apart from the underlying political structures from which they have arisen and in which they are firmly embedded. Indeed, as White (1996) has suggested, there is a severe risk that what are essentially political problems become 'translated' into technical problems thus depoliticising the issues.

Rural development in Ireland - 'technical' problems

In part as a response to on-going out-migration and the poor living standards of many rural dwellers, outlined above, recent years have seen the introduction of a plethora of rural development

initiatives in Ireland. The following are amongst those which are, or have, operated since the late 1980s.

- Pilot Programme for Integrated Rural Development;
- Operational Programme for Rural Development;
- Area-Based Partnerships;
- Community Development Programmes;
- LEADER;
- County Enterprise Boards;
- Global Grant for Local Development.

In addition there have been projects such as FORUM in Connemara, operated under the third EC Poverty Programme, and non-governmental initiatives such as Developing the West Together (which had a strong church involvement). The proliferation of these reflects

what might be seen as the uncoordinated nature of public policy in Ireland. Certainly, the number of schemes in operation suggests some need for rationalisation (NESC, 1994). In accordance with the emphasis on partnership referred to earlier, these initiatives require some form of institutional relationship between various agencies and groupings, both statutory and non-statutory. Issues of co-ordination and co-operation arise in three different contexts:

1. between government departments and statutory bodies;
2. between the various agents in each locality;
3. between government agencies/statutory bodies on the one hand and local individuals/groups on the other.

The first two of these refer to horizontal integration, the third refers to vertical integration. Given a requirement to work with various interested bodies, both statutory and non-statutory, technical issues arise concerning how co-ordination of activities can take place. Attention needs to be paid to methods of co-ordination between groups at a local level and between government departments. Partnerships

such as those operated by the various local LEADER groups demonstrate, to some extent at least, how this can be achieved. LEADER is an EU initiative focused primarily on economic development and centred on local area-based rural development groups. The project is now in its second phase. The first operated from 1991 to 1994, while LEADER II commenced in 1995 and runs through to the end of 1999. The local groups are composed of representatives of farming organisations, co-operatives, local authorities, state bodies, community groups and other interests. The South Kerry Development Partnership (the operators of LEADER II in the area) functions as the local agent for a number of schemes. As such it could be said to play a co-ordinating role. However, it must deal with five separate government departments as well as the EU and a range of other national and regional bodies such as trade unions, state agencies and farm organisations. This is in addition to its obvious need to liaise with a variety of local interests, including community groups and local businesses. All of this potentially means that local operators and local groups are faced with something of a maze through which they must make their way. The role of local co-ordination may well be made

more difficult by virtue of the necessity to deal with a wide range of government departments and statutory organisations. It also follows that there is a severe risk of duplication and lack of co-ordination at the level of government departments.

What LEADER does in South Kerry is endeavour to ensure that a level of co-operation and co-ordination can occur at the local level. Thus, the South Kerry Development Partnership board consists of representatives of community groups, the so-called social partners (trade unions, employers, farming organisations and the unemployed) and state agencies (organisations involved with agriculture, industry, tourism, education, training and the local authority). Close liaison appears to take place between the relevant groupings within each area. While some suggestions of lack of co-ordination arose in relation to LEADER I (Kearney, Boyle and Walsh, 1995), a specific objective of LEADER II is the avoidance of duplication of activities and hence an inefficient use of resources. While co-ordination of activities within partnership arrangements may present problems centring on the mechanics of co-operation and co-ordination, there may well be political reasons as to why some of the partners may be seen as less

than equal. These are returned to in the next section where consideration is given to the issue of power.

A second technical issue relates to the actual involvement of local people. How can this be achieved? Leaving aside issues of representation and power (which will be returned to later) problems would still arise with regard to the involvement of local people in developmental activities. In Ireland there is evidence to suggest that those most in need in rural areas are unlikely to involve themselves in community activities. For example, a survey of 408 farming couples in County Roscommon in the 1970s revealed that 57 percent of men and 85 percent of women were not members of voluntary organisations. In addition, many of those who were members of an organisation were 'inactive' (Hannan, 1979). Smaller farmers are also more likely to lack effective political influence. They are significantly under-represented in the Irish Farmers Association (IFA). Only 12.9 percent of the country's 'marginal' farmers (a category containing the majority of Irish farmers) are members (Healy and Reynolds, 1988). In a survey in counties Cork and Kerry it was discovered that those who lack household facilities are also more likely to lack formal social

connections with other people. Informal links with others in the locality may be extremely important. However, the same study suggests that many 'non-participant' households, particularly those in more physically remote and isolated areas, do not appear to have regular social contact with their neighbours or others in the locality (Storey, 1993). Members of such households are unlikely to become actively involved in devising strategies to resolve their problems. The corollary of this is the over-representation of particular groups within local organisations. Kearns's (1995), in a discussion of active citizenship, points to the over-representation of professionals and managers in voluntary organisations. Evidence from west Cork indicates the overwhelming dominance of business interests within voluntary organisations and the marginalisation of other sections of rural society (Eipper, 1986). Thus, the membership of community groups may be heavily skewed away from the more vulnerable and marginalised within rural areas. Another tendency is the involvement of a small number of residents in a variety of organisations (Storey, 1993). This multi-involvement on the part of particular people, while it may be well-meaning, narrows the extent of representation. These two

phenomena lead to the danger of inferring community involvement on the basis of the participation of a small number of people not necessarily representative of wider local views (Shortall, 1994).

One consequence of this may be that groups more 'in need' may not be the chief beneficiaries of projects. Even if 'community groups' could be assumed to be reasonably representative, evidence from an evaluation of LEADER I indicates that aid to private sector projects was more common than support for community group projects, both in terms of numbers and financial support (Table 1). This suggests that those who are better-off are in a better position (in terms of time and financial ability) to be more actively involved in project formulation. This further increases the risk that the vision which becomes articulated may be that of those who are least disadvantaged. If this is the case, then nothing is done to alter existing power imbalances. Both people and places "in need" may become further marginalised. Kearney, Boyle and Walsh (1995) also argue that groups such as the unemployed and trade unions were under-represented within the 17 LEADER groups. Thus, even if there is a genuine will to encourage widespread participation, problems of involving people will

still need to be addressed. In response to this, one of the objectives of LEADER II is an enhanced emphasis on ‘capacity-building’ via a process of ‘animation’. In this way it is hoped that individuals within localities will acquire the confidence and skills necessary to engage in meaningful developmental work within their own areas. The designation of two ‘pre-development’ groups under LEADER II reflects this added dimension, which might be seen as a mechanism encouraging a greater level of empowerment for local people.

This section has pointed to some technical concerns in the implementation of a local level ‘bottom-up’ rural development strategy. It should be apparent, however, that there are political dimensions attaching to such initiatives. While technical considerations clearly need to be addressed, it is important that these are not allowed to obscure political issues which arise surrounding power relationships between the various agencies and groupings involved. It is to this important dimension that attention is now turned.

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECT EXPENDITURE UNDER LEADER I

Status of activity	Percentage of projects *	Percentage of pr expenditure
Community groups	23	17
New Private activity	27	28
Expansion of existing private activity	31	32
Farm diversification	9	9
Other	15	16

* Figures are the mean percentage within each category for the 17 LEADER I partnerships

Source: Kearney, Boyle and Walsh (1995)

Rural development and the issue of power

The question of unequal power relationships is crucial when considering partnership and participation in rural development. As Cloke (1987) has argued, any consideration of policy cannot be divorced from the issue of power relationships. One element within this is the relative powers wielded by statutory organisations on the one hand and community groups on the other. The state may not be overly willing to relinquish control. Ireland is a highly centralised state with weakly developed regional or local structures (NESC, 1994; Coyle, 1996) and it has been argued that "there is a history of ambivalence in the relationships between statutory and non-statutory organisations" (Commins, 1985, p177). One possible reason for the lack of consistent external support for community-based initiatives is the politicians desire to see instant results (Varley, 1991), something which may not be forthcoming from such initiatives or, where it does occur, may be difficult to quantify. Another possible explanation for the state's ambivalence is the fear of not being able to control developments. While many politicians espouse the importance of local control, this may be as much to do with attractive rhetoric as with any real wish to see such developments. In 1990, the then Junior Minister

for Agriculture and Food spoke of the governments 'launching' of a 'bottom-up' approach (Kirk, 1990). The fact that it was initiated by government seems to refute the idea of local organic development. Commins (1986) view that too little attention is paid to community development, despite the rhetoric, in a situation where centralised public planning has remained dominant may still have considerable validity. Wilkinson (1992) has suggested that states may well oppose any real democratisation of the development process. As he argues:

“it is one thing for government administrators and social scientists to declare that the locals are in charge and quite another to provide the kinds of interventions and assistance that would increase the possibility of success in local actions” (Wilkinson, 1992, p33).

Certainly there is evidence of opposition to earlier attempts at locally-initiated development in rural Ireland (Tucker, 1989)

Even within the LEADER I partnerships there was evidence to suggest the existence of a 'top-down' mindset on the part of some of the statutory organisations involved (Kearney, Boyle and Walsh, 1995).

This suggests that such partnerships may be prone to the disabling impediment of an oppositional engagement where the 'professional' view is accorded primacy above that of the local 'amateurs'. In this scenario, the unequal power relationship results in what has been termed "partnership from above" (Varley, 1991, p95) rather than proper vertical integration. As Commins has argued this could render it problematic for "communities to be innovative by experimenting with their own solutions to local problems" (1985, p177). What passes for 'bottom-up' development could simply become a local-level expression of wider national or European concerns. As Varley (1991) has suggested, the state or EU agenda may retain primacy over local agendas. The risk here is that rather than empowering local people, the end result may well be the maintaining of a dependency relationship, as has been argued by Murray and Greer (1993) in relation to two schemes in Northern Ireland. It should not be assumed that a territorially-based approach is automatically going to be more attuned to the needs of local people. Instead it may merely serve as a mechanism for the pursuance of a 'top-down' agenda.

Even if statutory bodies were willing to act less in terms of institutional self-preservation and more in a manner conducive to local autonomy, the problem of power relations *at a local level* would still need to be addressed. Little attention has been given to this. Instead there appears to be a risk of assuming that local interests are in general agreement regarding developmental imperatives. In large part this is due to the assumptions underlying the notion of 'community'. It might be argued that the word community is one of the most abused words in the English language. With regard to change and development in rural areas, constant reference is made to 'rural communities' and 'local communities'. In Ireland Varley (1991) has pointed out that "communities have been invoked as holding part of the solution to many of Ireland's social problems" (p83). The rhetoric of community tends to be quite widely used by LEADER groups amongst others. For example, documentation produced by the South Kerry Partnership refers to the fact that "the community clearly saw the need for an integrated approach to the problems of the area". While conceding that shorthand terminology is often necessary and is difficult to avoid, this still begs questions as to who the community is and how they (whoever

they are) came to arrive at the conclusion referred to. The operating rules of LEADER II stress that the aim of the initiative is to “ensure maximum benefit and contribution to the local community through co-ordination of local development efforts” (Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, 1995). Again, this removes from the picture political considerations of who constitutes the community. NESC (1994), in their overview of rural development in Ireland, tend to emphasise issues of co-ordination and co-operation rather more than issues of power. It is the often uncritical assumptions surrounding the meaning of community which give rise to one of the key difficulties with a 'bottom-up' approach.

Far from being straightforward, community is a highly ambiguous idea fraught with conceptual difficulty (Cohen, 1985). Many different forms of community have been identified: "the concept of community has been the concern of sociologists for more than 200 years, yet a satisfactory definition of it in sociological terms appears as remote as ever" (Bell and Newby, 1971, p21). Buller and Wright (1990) argue that it has three components. Firstly, there is a locational element in so far as community is often treated as synonymous with

the people resident in a particular place. Secondly, there is a cultural component based on the idea of a sense of community or belonging shared by a group of people. Thirdly, there is a functional component whereby the community is seen as a unit through which certain policies can be implemented. The problem is that there is a tendency to assume that the territorial component and the cultural component are virtually synonymous and that occupying the same locality (however that is defined) implies a degree of mutual interest and socio-cultural homogeneity. However, as O'Carroll has pointed out, "belonging to a place does not automatically imply belonging to each other" (1985, p144). This is not just a semantic point. Invoking the term community can serve to gloss over important divisions within localities and can effectively lead to the ignoring of differences in attitudes, outlooks, living conditions, etc. within particular areas. The word tends to conjure up 'soft' images and carries harmonious connotations (Crow and Allan, 1994). There is a very grave danger that "in many circumstances when it [community] is mentioned, we are expected to abase ourselves before it rather than attempt to define it" (Bell and Newby, 1971, p15).

This 'class-less' analysis of rural life may lead to the assumption that rural areas consist of a homogenous group of people with shared interests and broadly similar outlooks, or at least may result in the convenient down-playing of a more complex reality. This highly romanticised notion tends to suggest the idea of a 'natural' community. Thus, there is the risk of assuming that rural development objectives can be achieved by obtaining the 'community view'. That such a view does not exist, let alone is obtainable, presents huge problems for policies which appear to utilise this simplistic notion. Members of a spatially defined community may not have common goals. There will be a variety of conflicting interests. The wealthy and powerful may have a very different agenda to that of the poor and weak. Development means different things to different people. Romanticised notions of rural communities elides differences centred on various fault lines such as class, status or gender (Murdoch and Marsden, 1994). This renders the establishment of development goals a very problematic issue. The ultimate danger here is that the issue of power is ignored. This is not to imply naiveté on the part of those involved in project or strategy formulation, whether in Brussels,

Dublin or Cahirciveen. Rather, it reflects the promotion of a consensual model of development whereby there is an attempt to bridge the divides which exist between the members of spatially defined 'communities'. It could be argued that this does at least allow 'something to get done', but it equally runs the risk of de-politicising the issues (see Kearns, 1995) and, as a consequence, leaving existing power structures (both national and local) intact. It has been argued that a reliance on voluntary activity results in a tacit acceptance of existing power structures (Rogers, 1987). Thus, there is a risk that, in order to avoid conflict, consensus will prevail (Curtin, 1996). Under such circumstances views which challenge an established consensus are unlikely to be accommodated. The views and the needs of some members of rural society are likely to carry considerably more weight than those of others.

Conclusions

Poor living conditions in rural Ireland suggest a need for developmental initiatives to stimulate social and economic change beneficial to those experiencing poor conditions. Currently there is a focus on community-based approaches, largely as a consequence of wider EU measures. These initiatives tend to emphasise principles of integration, participation and empowerment. While this may be a welcome move in some respects, it has been argued in this paper that some caution is necessary. There are technical difficulties surrounding the proliferation of initiatives and the number of government departments and statutory agencies involved in their implementation. Equally, participation by local people, particularly those at the fringes of rural society, may be more problematic than might be assumed. This raises questions of representation. However, even when participation occurs, it is not synonymous with empowerment. The views and perspectives of some people, particularly those deemed to be 'professionals' may be accorded priority over those of resident 'amateurs'. The conflation of locality and community in the discourses surrounding 'bottom-up' development runs the risk of eliding fundamental differences in circumstances, outlook and (most

importantly) need in rural localities. It would seem wise to agree with Shortall (1994) that issues of community involvement need to be teased out in more detail rather than simply "pushing blindly ahead and trading on the positive connotations of the idea of participation" (p253). In the words of Bowler and Lewis (1991), referring to the situation in Britain, there is always the very real risk that "rather than emerging as an alternative model for development, the 'bottom-up' approach seems most likely to be absorbed by the established institutional structures" (p174). Edwards (1997) has recently argued that this process of incorporation into a wider agenda has occurred in relation to similar developments in Wales. Through such a process there is, as White (1996) has suggested, the danger of reducing the political to the merely technical.

In addition to the issues raised above, one of the risks attaching to the current emphasis on area-based approaches to rural development is that they may encourage a degree of competition between localities. This is hardly a desirable outcome on the basis of efficiency. It would seem more appropriate to encourage co-operation and understanding between localities experiencing similar problems, rather than

competition for scarce resources. This is not to suggest jettisoning the idea of area-based responses, but it is to recognise the negative consequences of parochialism. Moves towards more outward looking "new territorial coalitions" (Commins and Keane, 1994, p179) would appear desirable. It may be the case, as Commins and Keane (1994) argue, that 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches should be viewed in less dichotomous terms. Certainly, some set of institutional frameworks of co-ordination, funding and review are necessary in order to facilitate more organic processes. Nevertheless, there is a need to further democratise development to ensure that its benefits accrue to those in most need of them. If development is to be seen as more than just a series of short-term projects (LEADER II has a five year life-span), then there is a need to address deep seated problems, not merely engage in grant giving. The incorporation of a number of recommendations made by an evaluating team (Kearney, Boyle and Walsh, 1995) into the operational framework of LEADER II might be seen as a positive move and a step towards viewing development as a longer term sustainable process in which issues of participation, empowerment and co-ordination are more fully explored. However, it

should be borne in mind that "community development on its own cannot bring about structural change" (Tucker, 1989).

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