

THEMATIC GUIDE FIFTEEN

Resilient Communities: Pillars of Sustainable Rural Development



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**RESILIENT COMMUNITIES: PILLARS
OF SUSTAINABLE RURAL
DEVELOPMENT**

EURACADEMY THEMATIC GUIDE SERIES

THEMATIC GUIDE FIFTEEN
“Resilient Communities: Pillars of Sustainable Rural Development”

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Edited by: John Kowalchuk and Foul Papageorgiou, with Irén Szörényiné Kukorelli

This Thematic Guide is the outcome of the collective work of a large team of Euracademy Association members and other collaborating experts. The contribution of authors to the various chapters of the Guide has been as follows:

Chapter 1 was written by Professor Sarah Skerratt,

Chapter 2 was written by Dr Brendan O’Keeffe,

Chapter 3 was written by Dr Danielle Kelly and Dr Artur Steiner,

Chapter 4 was written by Irén Szörényiné Kukorelli, professor emerita, Széchenyi István University and ELKH Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungary, and Patrícia Honvári Ph.D., ELKH Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungary

Chapter 5 was written by Dr Oliver Moore.

Case studies were contributed by: Iren Kukorelli, Patricia Honvári, Oliver Moore, Foul Papageorgiou, Demetris Mylonas and the 15th Summer Academy participants

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17 Empedocleous Street, GR11635 Athens, Greece
Tel: +30210 7525080
www.euracademy.org

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Preface

The Euracademy Association is a pan-European, non-profit membership organisation devoted to capacity building of rural communities in Europe. The Euracademy brings together planners, researchers and practitioners of rural development from a host of European countries. The Summer Academy on a theme pertinent to sustainable rural development is organised every year in a different location; furthermore, a Thematic Guide is published every year on the same theme as the Summer Academy. In addition, the Euracademy organises conferences, undertakes research and coordinates EU funded projects with a view of building a body of knowledge on sustainable rural development. These activities aim to prompt lifelong learning opportunities amongst members of rural communities by using a variety of educational means.

This is the fifteenth Thematic Guide in the Euracademy series. It exploits the lectures, case studies and discussions held in the 16th Summer Academy, held in Middleton, Cork, Ireland, from 3rd to 8th September 2017, organised in cooperation with SECAD Partnership.

This Thematic Guide aims to explore, together with the reader, such questions as:

- What are the definitions of resilience and how can they apply to rural Europe?
- What are the converging economic and ecological challenges rural communities in Europe face today?
- What are the links between resilience and sustainable rural development?
- What are the changes in lifestyle rural communities need to bring about in order to become more resilient?
- What can we learn about resilient communities from best practices in Europe and elsewhere in the world?
- How can we identify community resources and needs, and design an environment from which creativity and collective effort can emerge?
- How can we propose strategies and models to shift current policies to support and foster community resilience?
- What are the steps a rural community needs to take in order to establish a resilience-building plan?

For the Euracademy Association, this issue is part of the broader challenge of sustainable rural development. It inevitably cross-relates to, or overlaps with, themes of previous Summer Academies, such as:

- Education and Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Rural Development
- Local Governance and Sustainable Rural Development
- Social Innovation and Sustainable Rural Development
- Volunteering and Sustainable Rural Development
- Social Economy and Sustainable Rural Development

The Euracademy Association

Chapter 1

What is “community resilience” and how should it link to sustainable rural development?

Professor Sarah Skerratt,
Director, Rural Policy Centre, Scotland’s Rural College, Scotland, UK

What is community resilience?

“Community resilience” is a term that has gained popularity in recent years – in research and particularly in national policies – as a key route towards sustainable rural development. Resilience is also seen as a **positive quality** that communities should strive for. It is seen as desirable and increasingly necessary, particularly in times of declining public sector resources and greater national and international uncertainties. Below, I outline the different concepts of resilience, focusing mostly on those relating to rural communities, and give some examples, which illustrate key conceptual points.

The traditional use of resilience is based around the **absorption of**, and **resistance to shocks**, and then the **perseverance** and **recovery** – or “**bounce-back**” – from shocks towards a similar, or adjusted, **equilibrium**. These shocks are typically **external** to the system being studied, and are usually described primarily as environmental, social or economic.

However, the definition of resilience as bounce-back from external shock is **not universally accepted** by academics or development practitioners for three main reasons. Firstly, there is frustration with the dominant view of “bounce-back” of a system that does not take **human creativity and forward-thinking** into account. Secondly, there is frustration with thinking about systems as being only **reactive** to shocks, rather than systems and communities of people actually planning ahead (being **proactive** and **socially resilient**). Thirdly, there is evidence that **change is always happening**, so we should not just think in terms of periodic shocks, but instead, recognise that people and communities exist within a situation of constant flux.

Figure 1 (below) shows the **spectrum** of concepts and thinking around (rural) **community resilience**, which shows the evolution of this important term. As we move from left to right across the diagram, we can see a shift from physical to human agency systems, broadly representing the change in thinking over time, from **reactive to proactive** definitions. There is still no consensus; however, there is a gradual shift towards recognising the importance of people as agents of forward-looking change.

Human agency is a critical part of the evolving definition. If you recognise human agency, you believe that humans act deliberately and consciously, that they network, imagine futures, and make decisions between perceived options. They even dream of possible futures, and work towards preferred futures and away from undesirable options. Humans can anticipate, act collectively, postpone actions, have memories and can learn. Importantly, human agency is **unequally distributed**.

It is important to note that community resilience involves **balancing** the community’s **assets and vulnerabilities**. It is therefore not a description of a static state, but is an **on-going**

process where **pathways** are being identified by individuals and communities so that they remain constantly able to **adapt to change** (“**adaptive capacity**”). Diversity, rather than narrowness, of a resource base is seen as centrally important to this.

It is also important to note that, in this context, we are talking about **communities of place** that have “communities within communities”; are “messy”; have unequal and asymmetrical power structures inside them; are dynamic rather than static; and do not have fixed boundaries.

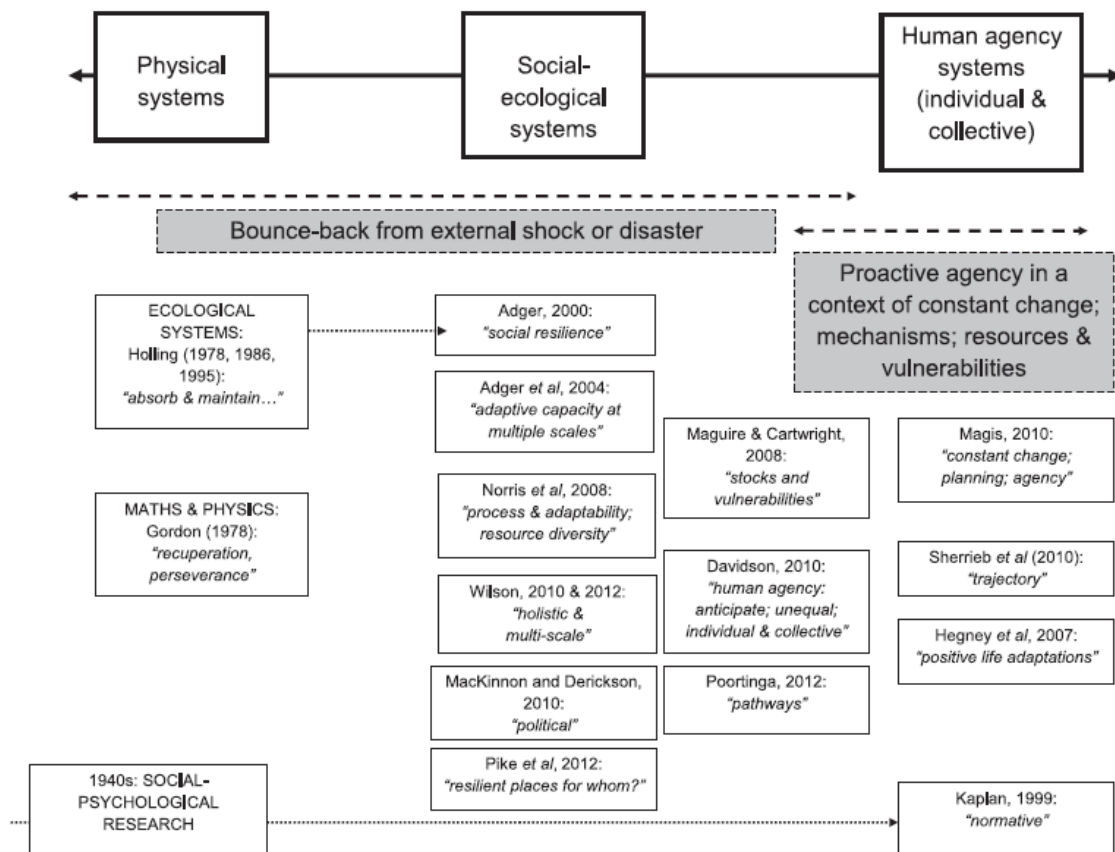


Figure 1. Typology or spectrum of resilience research, showing key authors, concepts and evolution of terminology

Source: Skerratt, 2013, p.39

When you take these elements and complexities into account, the **definition** that satisfies them most closely is from Magis in her work in NW America (2010) in which she developed in the context of forest management:

“Community resilience is the existence, development, and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterised by change, uncertainty, unpredictability and surprise. Members of resilient communities intentionally develop personal and collective capacity that they engage to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community, and to develop new trajectories for the communities’ future” (p.402).

Magis' definition reflects the wider understanding of “**resilience pathways**”, rather than one-off moments of simply assessing community assets or deficits where **always being prepared for change** is all-important.

Before we leave this definitions section, a key point we must note is that “**community resilience**” **has normative associations**. In other words, there are strong (and rapidly growing) political, policy, and societal *expectations* that communities *should* be resilient; they *should* take responsibility for securing their own futures, for being *strong* and *providing solutions* to their own difficulties, e.g., in providing services such as health and broadband. It is important that we make these assumptions and norms really explicit and clear, so that we are open about what is being expected of rural communities. This is discussed this in the next section.

Problems with use of the word “resilience”

As we have just heard, there are normative associations with the term “community resilience”. In addition, the word “resilience” is used very lazily – some people mean passive bounce-back, while others mean proactive human agency. These differences matter because they have an impact when you move into the real world. I discuss these two issues below.

Normative associations:

Rural and community development policy is focusing more and more on pushing for resilient and empowered communities – I will talk about **three examples** from:

- Northern Ireland (“Rural Needs Act”);
- Wales (“Well-being of Future Generations Act”)
- Scotland (“Resilient communities” as part of the National Performance Framework).

This deliberate policy drive has been taking place because of a **strong normative push** where community-led local development is believed to: (1) be desired by many people at community level; (2) increase self-confidence and shift power; (3) improve infrastructure and demographic trends; and (4) create solutions that fit – e.g., the LEADER programme across Europe. Ultimately, it is seen to have led to **increased community resilience**. However, resilience remains vague and undefined.

Community land ownership in Scotland is **another very strong example** of this policy and is political trend, which is directly linked to community resilience.

What this means is that there are **increasing expectations** on communities to be stronger, and to put more and more of their own resources into their development. This works for some, but not all communities, leaving some communities behind.

While this process gathers momentum, it is necessary to have a “reality-check” because:

- no individual or community starts from the same place;
- belief, self-belief and interest differ greatly within and between rural communities.

Two examples of this can be seen with reference to:

- **rural poverty** and
- **mental ill health** in rural areas.

Given that this **diversity** exists *between and within* communities, how can all communities take advantage of “community empowerment frameworks” equally? How can all communities “be resilient” in the way that is increasingly being demanded of them by policy, by funders, and by service providers?

Passive rather than proactive:

The perception *in policy* that community resilience is still mainly about **passive resistance to shocks** can lead to communities being viewed in a limited way and support mechanisms then foster much more limited engagement with rural community development. This has been called “**commissioning empowerment**”. That is, services have been closed down in rural areas; this constitutes the “shock”. Rural communities are advised that the only way services can be re-opened is for them to be delivered by communities. Such communities are then “empowered” by being commissioned to deliver the services. However, some rural community development commentators question whether this is *genuine* empowerment because it is to deliver something that was previously a state responsibility and does not necessarily strengthen the wider, forward-looking resilience of these communities.

In Scotland, the **National Centre for Resilience** (NCR) encourages communities in remote rural areas to be prepared for climate change, especially flooding, and local mobility difficulties that arise from this. For the NCR, resilience is defined very narrowly by the Scottish Government, with communities being encouraged to respond to, and plan for responding to, environmental shocks. This pre-existing, reactive definition limits the scope of community ideas, resilience pathways and developments to what has already been prescribed in policy.

What is the impact?

We are seeing, in policy and practice, imprecise use of language around **resilient and empowered communities** in rural areas, coupled with a *normative increasing reliance on resilient communities*.

However, the mechanisms for supporting growth in rural community resilience are inconsistent.

This means that we are seeing a new landscape emerging, which shows a *new* “resilience distribution failure”, where we have:

- Darwinian development
- Already-empowered becoming more empowered
- Social justice implications

This is because there are “empowerment frameworks” and “Guidance” but no legislation that insists that the same effort is put into making sure resilience and empowerment are spread in a just and equitable way.

New inequalities are emerging:

- This matters for social justice reasons
- It also matters because services in rural areas will increasingly be delivered through rural communities, which means that *service inequalities* (including health and wellbeing) will increase in and for rural communities

Conclusion

It is important to acknowledge that rural community development is complex and is not the same experience for everyone. This has implications for resourcing, for policy and for politics.

I conclude by suggesting that we have a duty to remember those rural communities that do not, or cannot, show resilience. We therefore have to be open-minded and rigorous in our evidence-gathering, and make sure we are inclusive of multiple perspectives and experiences. Only then will we gather a fuller picture that will inform and support sustainable rural development.

Case study 1.1 Carrigtwohill

Dealing with change through socio-economic development planning

The community of Carrigtwohill is located in a small town located in the Cork County, 17 km from Cork city centre, in southern Ireland. Historically it was a rural village with a strong rural hinterland and a farming-based economy. However, due to the strong suburbanization of the Cork region it faced strong demographic growth and economic diversification. In the period 2001-2011 the population in Carrigtwohill increased 323%, bringing it to currently more than 5000 inhabitants. That increase, involved in-migration of around 40 different ethnicities. This has resulted in Carrigtwohill being the second youngest community in Ireland, having four times more preschool children than elderly inhabitants. Although the community was faced with major challenges brought by this unprecedented inflow of newcomers, it has managed to pull through and in fact to go beyond that and be celebrated today as a success story in terms of resilience.

The reasons behind the community's resilience and resulting success in dealing with the major changes, relate to the community's strong identity – the strong nationalist sentiment in the town in the past, together with its rural character, have proved to be strong bonding capital for the community nowadays, resulting in local pride. The community's response to the dramatic inflow of newcomers with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds was not to build fences and alienate them; just the opposite, it saw this change as an opportunity to change itself and grow, welcoming and integrating the newcomers. The community has developed a wide range of thematic associations based on a strong and broad culture of volunteerism (around 50% of the population are involved as volunteers in a wide range of community-led activities) that help newcomers integrate to the community, some of which include: sports clubs, men's sheds, social care, language courses, arts, and mental health support. It is also open to new associations that cater to the interests and needs of newcomers. Through managing the community-owned real estate, the community has provided the necessary space to house the wide range of activities. It has developed a family resource centre and community resource centre where the community can come together. Furthermore, the community has promoted corporate responsibility activities with the multinational companies housed in the business park adjacent to the town; has made efforts to diversify its fund-raising sources (local and national sources, local residents); and has taken action to preserve and promote local historical and natural tourist attractions (castle, island). In addition, the community has drawn up a Masterplan for the future development of the community, while building partnerships and networking. The Carrigtwohill community is also aware of the importance of celebrating and promoting its success: Carrigtwohill took part in the national competition "PRIDE OF PLACE", uniting all community forces under a common goal – it won first place.

While celebrating its success story, the community is at the same time aware of its weaknesses and future threats. If the population increase is sustained in the years to come, the needs for new housing and social services to cater for newcomers will also be increased; this may lead to a gap in the services and infrastructure necessary. Moreover, the integration of new groups or nationalities with no mentality of integration could prove problematic – the community recognises the danger of a divide between newcomers and the current community, with closed communities being developed within the Carrigtwohill community (for example own shops, schools, hobbies, TV, associations – that exist in some other communities in Europe). Also, a massive increase in population may lead to a shift in values and the loss of the rural/agricultural identity of Carrigtwohill, and may also result in a challenge to sustain

high numbers of volunteers or in fact the burn-out of volunteers – especially community leaders who have been working for the community for many years. Another weakness is the local economy’s over-reliance on the pharmaceutical multinationals operating in the Business Park; the economic link “Multinationals - Cork County Council - Carrigtwohill Council” may be affected in the event of a negative development regarding the multinationals’ operations in the area (e.g., decision to relocate, crisis in the pharmaceutical sector, etc.).

There are also concrete external threats for Carrigtwohill. The existing possibility discussed at the county level of setting up new administrative boundaries dividing Carrigtwohill in two would severely undermine the community council’s capacity in working for the community as a whole. Moreover, large-scale investor-led housing developments that are disproportionate to the community size can pose significant challenges to the community in terms of maintaining the community identity and the quality of services offered, as well as in terms of strains in the existing infrastructure.



The Summer Academy participants and members of the community council in front of a gate presenting the different ethnicities of Carrigtwohill.



At the community kindergarten

The fact that the community is aware of the assets in place, the weaknesses and threats in the future, and their will to take action to ensure future resilience is an important first step. The Socio-economic plan to be developed (that could easily be titled “Community resilience plan”) represents a unique opportunity to enhance the resilience of the community by recognising that Carrigtwohill is currently at the threshold of important developments and that the community should make an informed decision about its future. The new Community Resilience Plan should ensure that the commitment of volunteers is maintained by on-going volunteers’ recruitment (active volunteer management); preserve and strengthen the spirit of Carrigtwohill (ethos, values, identity) by promoting and discussing it within the community; ensure the voluntary activity encompasses the needs of newcomers; base the integration strategy of newcomers on volunteerism and social services; manage and promote success through developing and maintaining good cooperation with neighbouring communities; encourage ethnic diversity among community leaders through targeted recruitment; improve business and social relations between the community and the multinationals housed in the area to maximize mutual benefits; enhance existing and develop new partnerships with key

stakeholders nationally and internationally (e.g., SECAD, Interreg partners, other communities, academic institutions, chamber of commerce, tourism associations, other networks at the national and EU level); manage community real estate assets for the benefit of the community; combine the plan with the county development plan to ensure the spatial aspect is not ignored; and maintain the diversity of existing funding streams, e.g., fundraising initiatives (fairs), EU funds (SECAD), sponsorship and donations by enterprises.

(Honvari Patricia, Alistair Adam Hernandez, Aleksandar Lukić, Demetris Mylonas)

Case study 1.2 Carrigaline

A case for close community cooperation and action

One of the main challenges in the Carrigaline community is the lack of evident coordination among the existing voluntary organizations and between these organizations and services provided by the county, such as the Youth Service, Employment Service, schools, family support, etc. This lack of coordination seriously affects local resilience.

Given that over one third of the resident population of Carrigaline are under 18, youth is a significant target group that needs to be cared for. A challenge that the Carrigaline community faces is the high proportion of disaffected youth in which a majority have only completed the compulsory education (up to the age of 16) and show no interest in continuing their education or training or entering the labour market. Depression, anxiety, isolation, and complete inactivity have been observed among a significant part of this group. For many youths, the services set up by the local development agency, inside the youth centre, are not attractive enough to convince them to get out of their houses and out of their inactivity and depression.

With a large proportion of young people in the community, there might be a need for more and more varied services designed to match the needs of new young cohorts. The participants of the 16th Summer Academy proposed a wider cooperation of organisations, joining forces with youth services, to offer a variety of activities, hoping to bring these youths out of isolation by involving them in sport, creative arts, music, and such activities that appeal to them. This can then be combined with new methods of career exploration and orientation, which involve IT. Furthermore, this can also demonstrate the gaps that young people have in their education, so that they themselves can choose to continue their education or enrol in training classes.



Carrigaline Lions Youth centre at work

Another proposal concerns the introduction of Social Impact Bonds. A social impact bond is an agreement between public and private agencies to pay for improvements in social services as demonstrated by metric approaches to service provision among a diversity of local agencies. Included in this diversity are civic and voluntary organizations, private and public service providers and facilities, and any other contextually relevant bodies.

For more info regarding SIBs see the following:

<http://www.socialfinance.org.uk/services/social-impact-bonds/>

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/public-asked-to-support-social-impact-bonds-1.610081>

Chapter 2

Rural Vibrancy and Community Resilience – Perceptions and Roles of Civil Society

Dr Brendan O’Keeffe,
Department of Geography, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick

Introduction

This paper presents data from a comprehensive survey of rural dwellers in South-West Ireland in which they articulate their perceptions of the vibrancy of place based on economic, socio-cultural and environmental indicators. The survey, which paralleled a profiling of civil society organisations and a mapping of public service provision, sought to test indicators for the measurement and analysis of vibrancy levels in micro-geographies in tandem with promoting community development and a reflection on public policy impacts on rural locales.

Literature Review and Context

Over the past four decades, rural communities have experienced considerable upheaval and restructuring (Walsh and Harvey, 2013). While many of the changes affecting rural regions are recorded, documented and enumerated in statistical and official sources and in literature – popular and academic (Clope *et al.*, 2006; Butler Flora *et al.*, 2016), there is a need to ensure a focus on citizens’ perceptions of their own communities (Ledwith, 2005; Pitchford, 2008). A reliable and popular first step in the community and local development trajectory is that of taking stock of local assets. Such a process not only clarifies baselines against which interventions can be assessed, it can also serve as a tool of community empowerment, and be repeated cyclically, so as to animate and sustain the momentum of community development. As Butler Flora *et al.* (2016: 461) observe, “asset-mapping is important because it allows communities to move beyond a victim mentality and recognize that working together locally, changes can be made.” The processes associated with local stocktaking and strategic planning can be expanded beyond the utilisation of secondary data sources and community consultation mechanisms, as citizen perception audits offer a means of reaching out to and engaging those who may be less likely to participate in community structures or attend community meetings.

In local and regional development literature and discourses the terms ‘resilience,’ ‘vitality’ and ‘vibrancy’ are often used interchangeably. While it must be acknowledged that they are not synonyms in the strictest sense, they are inter-related and are all associated with territorial development and communities’ experiences and perceptions. They are integral concepts in the growing body of work that acknowledges and promotes the merits of place-based development and the valorisation of territorial capital (Douglas 2010; Zasada *et al.*, 2015). A stronger focus on regional and territorial assets and development potential, coupled with multi-level governance, is seen as contributing to increased innovation and an enhanced ability on the parts of regions and locales to stimulate development from within and to respond more effectively to the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization. Drawing on extensive reviews of policy and practice, the OECD Secretary General argues that “the success of large numbers of rural regions highlights the potential that can be tapped when rural communities are able to mobilize their place-based assets” (OECD, 2015: 4),

thereby promoting local resilience. Community vibrancy and resilience are also shaped by externalities, including government policy and the approaches of public bodies, and the impacts these have on rural territories. Public sector investments, including infrastructure and service provisions, are significant determinants of vitality (Skerratt, 2010).

While vibrancy and resilience are widely-celebrated and acknowledged, they lack a singular definition or measure, but instead, are multi-dimensional concepts, as well as being objectives and policy goals associated with rural, territorial and community development. Therefore, indicators need to cover development outputs, impacts and processes, and in the context of rural territorial dynamics, they need to examine indigenous, endogenous, external and exogenous factors and interfaces. The use of scales and metrics enables benchmarking, so that communities can monitor change and progress longitudinally. Scales also allow for multivariate analysis, so as to establish any possible associations between variables such as geography and demographics on perceptions of vibrancy. Considering these factors, this research pursued a mixed-methods approach to data collection in a case study in southwest Ireland.

Case Study Location - South Kerry (Ireland)

South Kerry (pop. 55,000) comprises the southern half of County Kerry in the South-West of Ireland. It covers a total geographic extent of 2,529 km² and a land area of 2,462 km². The population density is 21.4 persons per km². The eastern part of the area is more urbanised, with the main population centre being Killarney, one of Ireland's most popular tourist destinations. In contrast, the west, on the Atlantic fringe, is more peripheral.

Methodology

There were three parallel data collection strands to this project:

- i. A questionnaire survey of citizens (aged 15+) in South Kerry, the objective of which was to measure their perceptions of community vibrancy;
- ii. A survey of civil society groups across the territory in the form of a questionnaire (per group) and workshops;
- iii. A mapping of service provision.

The citizens' survey presented participants with a Likert scale on which they could express their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements about community vibrancy under three broad headings – economic, socio-cultural and environmental vibrancy. The statements corresponded to a series of vibrancy indicators, which have been tested in communities in Canada (Stolte and Metcalf, 2009). The greater the respondents' levels of agreement with the statements provided, the greater the perceived level of vibrancy of their community. This approach allowed for a calculation of a vibrancy score for each community as well as scores for their performances in respect to economic, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions. A total of 972 citizens responded to the questionnaire, with the majority completing it face-to-face. The response rate was 76%.

The second strand involved surveying civil society organizations (n=102) across South Kerry to establish their membership profiles, map their activities and understand governance mechanisms and interfaces. Questionnaires were circulated at Community Forum (local

networks) meetings and in each case group officers completed it. The officers then took part in a facilitated discussion about community development issues and experiences. They were subsequently provided with the survey results at which point further facilitated discussion ensued.

The third complementary and parallel strand involved mapping public service provision in each community, thereby generating quantitative spatial data on vibrancy. This element of the investigation allowed for a benchmarking of service provision levels against the targets specified in public policy, specifically Ireland's National Spatial Strategy (2002-2020) (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2002).

South Kerry Development Partnership, which is the LEADER Partnership and Local Development Company for the area, facilitated data collection by enabling the researcher to attend Community Forum meetings and make direct contact with civil society organisations.

Results

The survey findings show that a majority of citizens agree with the affirmative statements about economic vibrancy that relate to, or are governed by local variables – attitudes and behaviour. These include the relationship between local businesses and customers, levels of entrepreneurship locally and supports provided to people with business ideas. However, levels of agreement fall below fifty per cent with respect to the statements that relate to variables that are shaped by more external than indigenous factors, such as public transport provision and the area's ability to attract investment. Moreover, the findings suggest that many communities in South Kerry are struggling to meet the challenges associated with rural economic restructuring, and that public / statutory bodies and policy are unfavourably perceived. There are also distinct spatial patterns in the responses, with higher levels of vibrancy in the more peri-urban areas; furthermore, the findings suggest a relationship between public sector investment and vibrancy. Citizens expressed grave concern in the direction of rural development policy in Ireland, and specifically the attempts by the central government to curtail the activities and scope of LEADER partnerships

The data show that rural dwellers in South Kerry perceive their communities to have high levels of socio-cultural vibrancy, as indicated by the friendliness of the people, the recognition of civil society, and the presence of spaces and places for community interaction and bonding. Levels of vibrancy on these indicators, as well as levels of volunteerism, are higher in the more rural and peripheral parts of South Kerry, relative to those in peri-urban communities and in Killarney Town.

The findings show that citizens have a generally positive perception of their local environment and most agree that recycling facilities, farming practices and the quality of drinking water are satisfactory. However, they have a more jaundiced view of the quality of the built environment and there are concerns locally over the impact on the landscape of holiday homes and buildings that are unsympathetic to the landscape.

The survey of community and voluntary organisations revealed that they have become increasingly active in the provision of local services and the development and management of amenities and facilities. In many respects, civil society in rural Ireland is filling gaps that are occurring due to austerity, retrenching and the neo-liberal state. Indeed, volunteers are carrying out functions that local governments / municipal authorities execute in many other European jurisdictions. While their roles and responsibilities are expanding, and they are

managing considerable amounts of funds, many groups are under pressure to implement rotation and succession strategies and some claim to have difficulties in recruiting officers. Consultations also reveal groups' frustrations with the absence of vertical governance mechanisms, thus delimiting their capacity to input into policy formulation.

Public service provision in South Kerry, as in many rural territories, is very variable. Over the past twenty years the vibrancy and resilience of communities, and their capacity to generate economic development has been hampered by the closure of post offices, garda (police) stations and banks, and by the tardy roll-out of broadband connectivity. On average, the level of public service provision stands at 75% of that specified in Ireland's National Spatial Strategy, well over a decade into the strategy's life. Thus, the South Kerry experience suggests that as the strategy was non-binding on public bodies, and not supported by legislation, service providers regrettably failed to pay it due heed.

In general the three sets of findings record high levels of vibrancy with respect to those dimensions thereof over which local citizens have assumed a degree of responsibility and control. These include community amenities, facilities and social services (e.g., childcare, youth development and conservation projects). However, there are widespread concerns locally over the territory's economic resilience and the more peripheral the community, the greater these concerns are. It is noteworthy that for all of their expansions over recent decades, only a minority of civil society groups in South Kerry are directly involved in income generating projects or derive an income from commercial activities. Thus, they tend to rely on fundraising and government grants to fund the services they provide. LEADER and successive local development programmes emerge as the most significant enablers of civil society organisations. Yet, LEADER itself and endogenous local development are, due to government policy, under very considerable pressure in contemporary Ireland.

Discussion and Conclusion

The research findings and the data collection experience in South Kerry highlight the significance of bottom-up development and they verify the assertions by Markey and Halseth (2015, 100-101) that rural places "are proving themselves to be highly innovative [and] are about adaptability and resilience, with many showing strong leadership in environmental protection, commodity production, new technologies and others." EU policies in the form of LEADER and the resourcing of community-led local development and social enterprises are strengthening socio-cultural vibrancy through making investments in community facilities and infrastructure and enhancing social, cultural and knowledge capital. The abilities of endogenous actors to foster and sustain vibrancy levels are, however, influenced and shaped by the responsiveness, or lack thereof, and the attitudes of exogenous actors and public policy frameworks and orientation. The promotion of neo-liberal and austerity policies over recent decades and the consequent scaling back of the presence of the welfare state and public services in many rural communities while galvanizing the determination of civil society to assume leadership roles, is also depriving communities of vital components of economic vibrancy, which in the medium to long-term, propel a downward demographic spiral and lead to social and environmental fall-out, as already evidenced in other parts of Europe (Silva and Figueiredo 2013). The South Kerry experience resonates with that recorded by Skerratt (2010) in rural Scotland, which highlights the significance of volunteers in maintaining the vibrancy of communities, and who do so in a climate of, and in response to, market failures and declining public sector spending. In this context, Skerratt anticipates further increases in the activities of third sector organisations, as government devolves service delivery functions to them. While devolved responsibilities can carry with them the opportunities for

communities to tailor services to suit local conditions and meet specific needs, the mechanisms through which such services are funded and administered in Ireland are defined and operationalized centrally, with little scope for community input. Thus, communities are increasingly on the receiving end of government policy and there is a need to bring about vertical governance mechanisms whereby rural communities can shape the policies and programmes that clearly affect rural vibrancy. Indeed, there is a compelling case for institutional recognition of the contributions and role of civil society, not just in service provision, but also in deliberative democracy. The Irish case study also points out a need for increased transparency in the monitoring of public expenditure, and while the efforts of the (national) Rural Development Monitoring Committee in this respect are welcome, monitoring and goal setting need to happen at sub-regional level.

Case study 2.1 Canolfan Hermon in Cwm Arian

Cwm Arian ('Silver Valley') consists of four very small villages: Glogue, Hermon, Llanfyrnach and Glandwr (with fewer than 500 households) in rural NE Pembrokeshire. Historically, it was a centre for slate quarrying, and lead and silver mining. There is still a strong local agricultural sector and a large haulage company that employs 200 people.

This is part of the story of a community co-operative run centre, Canolfan Hermon ('Hermon Community Resource Centre'), which serves the four villages and a wider area, providing spaces for meetings, social activities, events and education, with a diverse range of tenants, centre users and beneficiaries. Our story begins in 2000, when a community appraisal was undertaken, highlighting the community's desire for a community hall and upgraded play area. The village shop, post office, garage and pub had closed some years previously.

In 2002, the small village school in Hermon was under threat of closure. A group of parents and supporters tried to save it, raising £79k to go to the UK High Court and then a judicial review. Unfortunately they were not successful. However, some new skills were developed, a social enterprise emerged and new opportunities arose from the eventual school closure in 2006. PLANED, a local non-profit association devoted to sustainable development, began working with the community in 2004, under the LEADER+ programme, using CLLD tools and visioning workshops to create a community action plan. As a result, a community forum, Cymdeithas Cwm Arian ('Silver Valley Association'), was formed to implement proposals from the plan. The forum has reviewed and reported on progress against its original action plan annually and refreshed the plan in 2010 with a full new visioning process in 2016.



Public meeting in Canolfan Hermon



The renovated Canolfan Hermon

The forum took forward the community's desire to develop the old school into a centre (among other projects). From 2004 to the present day they have been highly successful in fundraising activities and completed four phases of renovations, building extensions and refurbishments. This has resulted in the highly acclaimed, award-winning Canolfan Hermon. Funding sources included community shares, grants from the Welsh Government, Big Lottery and UK Government, as well as community fundraising activities, such as a celebrity auction.

Centre activities and tenants include the Young Farmers' Club, a kindergarten, a café, many local clubs and societies, exercise and education classes, social and musical events, cultural evenings, sports activities, craft events and a local produce market. The centre is sustained through tenancy incomes, hall and room hire, and volunteer efforts. A linked renewable energy project raised funds to install solar panels, air-source heating and insulation, so that the centre's energy costs are not expensive. An associated community wind turbine project is another big story, but one with valuable lessons, including the benefits it has provided to residents in terms of professional skills, flexibility, enthusiasm and resilience in the face of major barriers. Animators in the forum include community councillors, local business owners and enthusiastic residents, who have been greatly supported by a resident community activist, Cris Tomos. He has gone on to become a community finance practitioner and was very recently elected to Pembrokeshire County Council.

A critical success factor in the resilience of this community has been the action planning process, funded through LEADER and facilitated by PLANED. This process identified the community's vision and key local resources, as well as providing a strong evidence base for successful funding applications. The long-term nature of this community's development process, with sustainability at its heart, has enabled them to overcome many barriers and build their projects organically, going from strength to strength.

Case study prepared by Karen Scott, PLANED, karens@planed.org.uk, based on an interview with Cris Tomos, Cymdeithas Cwm Arian, cris@cwmarian.org.uk / www.canolfanhermon.org.uk

Chapter 3

Community resilience through self-help: social enterprise activity in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland

Dr Danielle Kelly & Dr Artur Steiner,
Glasgow Caledonian University

Introduction

Community resilience is commonly understood as the capacity of communities to harness *'resources and expertise to help themselves prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies'* (Scottish Government, 2013). However, in a rural community context, its meaning is attached to long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability and development, rather than emergency response (Steiner & Atterton, 2014, 2015). Magis (2010:1) describes this as *'the existence, development, and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterised by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise'*. In order to be resilient, communities must have the ability, capacity and willingness to adapt to such change as well as the existence of social, economic and environmental community 'capital' that is essential for their development (Steiner & Atterton, 2014; McManus et al., 2012; Wilson, 2012). The concept of community resilience is commonly discussed in relation to rural communities as these communities are frequently exposed to severe socio-economic uncertainty and flux.

The Highlands and Islands have some of the most remote and rural areas in the UK and is one of the most sparsely populated areas in Europe. The area accounts for 18% of the entire population of Scotland (approx. 450,000 out of 5.2 million) and consists of a significant number of geographically isolated small communities (Scottish Government, 2015). At a basic logistical level, populations in this region face challenges of communication, transport and retention of populations (Farmer et al., 2008; O'Shaughnessy et al., 2011; Steinerowski et al., 2008). Geographically dispersed communities have limited access to markets and economic activities; access to healthcare and education; and rural residents need to travel large distances (Munoz et al., 2014b; Steinerowski & Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Scottish Government, 2008). The Highlands and Islands also have the highest outmigration levels in Scotland, particularly in regard to the youth, which is leaving a high proportion of residents over 65 years (Jamieson & Groves, 2008; Scottish Government, 2015). This continued loss of economic and human capital increases the fragility of communities, highlighting the need for communities to enhance their sustainability and resilience.

On a policy level, the Scottish Government has introduced the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill to help communities in Scotland to build both capacity and resilience, stating that *'communities are a rich source of talent and creative potential and the process of community empowerment helps to unlock that potential. It stimulates and harnesses the energy of local people to come up with creative and successful solutions to local challenges'* (Scottish Government, 2012: 6). Rural communities in particular can be better suited to this grassroots community-led development based on local narrative, informal networks and existing experience (Farmer et al., 2008; Nimegeer et al., 2011). Rural populations are also more likely to have stronger social networks, denser communities and higher levels of social cohesion than their urban counterparts (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Hofferth & Iceland, 1998;

Shucksmith, 1996). This can often mean that rural entrepreneurship is more likely to be socially orientated and based on collective community development rather than individual economic gain (Kay, 2003; Williams, 2007; Shucksmith, 1996). These cultures of self-help and collective resilience are often the perfect breeding ground for enterprising activity that contributes to the sustainability rural regions (Kay, 2003; Shucksmith et al., 1996).

In Scotland, social enterprises can be defined as *'businesses that trade for the common good rather than the unlimited private gain of a few'* (Social Value Lab, 2015:6). Therefore, the aim of this type of enterprising activity is to focus on social and environmental issues, such as strengthening communities and protecting ecosystems through the reinvestment of profits into communities. In rural Scotland, social enterprise activity commonly comes in the form of community businesses and development trusts. The development of rural social enterprise is high on the agenda for the Scottish Government (Scottish Government, 2008; Vision 2025) and the Community Empowerment Bill in Scotland is expected to contribute to social enterprise development by allowing communities to acquire land to increase their assets (Scottish Government, 2014). Recent Social Enterprise Census figures showed that 22% of social enterprises in Scotland are located in the Highlands and Islands; 16% of which exist in 'fragile' areas characterised by *'weakening of communities through population loss, low incomes, limited employment opportunities, poor infrastructure and remoteness'* (Social Value Lab, 2015). This is an average of one social enterprise per four people, compared to one per 1,000 people in urban areas of Scotland (Social Value Lab, 2015). Nevertheless, there is scarce research on the drivers of this growing social enterprise activity in rural locations (Steiner et al., 2012, Steinerowski & Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Munoz, 2011). Moreover, there is a need to understand if and how social enterprise activity may be contributing to developing resilience of communities in remote and rural areas. This is of particular importance in small communities where the ability to be resilient is crucial for their very survival.

This paper will seek to explore how social enterprise activity may be used as a tool of 'self-help' to contribute to growing community resilience. The paper will outline findings from the 'Growth at the Edge' project, which is part of a five-year collaborative research programme, called 'Commonhealth' that aims to develop methods to evaluate new pathways to health creation and reduction in health inequalities arising from social enterprise. Growth at the Edge aims to investigate the health and wellbeing impacts of social enterprise in rural, remote and fragile communities in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and how such activities may contribute to the sustainability and enhanced resilience of these communities.

Methodology

The Growth at the Edge project focuses on 8 social enterprise case studies from remote, rural and fragile communities across the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. The organisations represent various sectors of rural social enterprise activity, such as housing, transport, leisure and tourism and education. Stakeholders from each social enterprise, including board members, service users and staff were interviewed using in-depth qualitative methods over a one-year period. The research simultaneously used ethnographic methods to understand each individual rural context, and the dynamic economic and social factors affecting their sustainability and resilience. This involved spending time working for organisations, interacting with wider community members, and exploring the rural environment.

For the purpose of this paper, 3 case studies will be presented outlining issues of housing, transport and education in rural settings, and the nature of the social enterprise activity that exists to enhance the sustainability and resilience of rural communities.

Case studies

Helmsdale & District Development Trust (HDDT)

Helmsdale is a coastal village in the north-east region of Sutherland, with a current population of approximately 760 residents. Once prosperous for its fishing and harbour port, the village took an economic downturn over the past century as fishing stocks depleted; it is now categorised as an area of deprivation. Helmsdale has continually suffered from depleting populations of youth and ever-ageing inhabitants. Of particular concern is the lack of suitable housing to attract and retain young people to the area. Current housing in Helmsdale has a high rental cost, lacks modern amenities, and still uses traditional expensive fuel methods.

The Helmsdale & District Development Trust (HDDT) was formed in 2010 by local residents to reverse the trends of depleting populations and resources. Community consultation identified housing as a priority for the area, with HDDT taking on a major housing project, which included:

- Purchasing land to build modern housing
- Offering affordable rental costs
- Installing updated power lines, gas and water to plots of land using renewable resources
- Improving internet connectivity to houses

The results of this project have increased the sustainability of Helmsdale by attracting new young families into the area, which has increased the population size and brought fresh entrepreneurial skills and ideas to the community. The project also promoted the idea of community land ownership and the building of further infrastructure in the village, which has led to a feasibility study for a community owned wind farm. By improving the internet connectivity in the area, new residents are now able to work from home and the population feels less isolated.

Transport for Tongue (T4T)

Tongue is a coastal village on the north coast of Scotland, with a population of approximately 550 residents. The area is sparsely populated with houses spread out across the Kyle of Tongue, with a small central area containing 2 shops, a bank and a petrol station. Public transport infrastructure in the area has drastically decreased; therefore with local authority services having been withdrawn, local residents were left isolated or forced to move out of the area. In particular, access to education and health services were of particular concern for locals hence transport was identified as a priority need.

Transport for Tongue was founded in 2009 by local community members and was registered as a Community Transport Company to tackle the problem of connectedness and isolation. The service started as a one-car operation and within 8 years of operating now offers the following:

- 3 minibuses, one Eurobus and a wheelchair accessible car
- Daily and weekly services connecting locals to other villages and towns in the area
- Daily service for college students to reach educational institutions in the nearest town
- Daily and weekly travel to healthcare services
- Weekly travel to the nearest large city (Inverness)
- Door to door car service for elderly residents and those with limited mobility
- Volunteer driver and car share initiative for general public use

T4T is now a vital service in the area, which has had numerous effects on the population of Tongue. Access to educational institutes has increased the educational level and skills of the general population. Such skills can then be reinvested into this small community and young people are no longer required to leave the area for academic opportunity. Regular transport to healthcare services means that the health of the population is also felt to have increased. Importantly, in tackling a major issue of transportation, young people and families are now being attracted to the area and the population is no longer remotely isolated.

Cothrom

South Uist is an island on the Outer Hebrides of Scotland, with a population of approximately 1,800 residents. The area is very sparsely populated with few settlements, making access to services and facilities difficult with many having to travel to the mainland for higher education and employment, often never returning. The Scottish Government also recognised low levels of literacy in the general population.

Cothrom started as a small group of women living in South Uist who were concerned by the lack of training, employment and education opportunities on the island. The group was later formalised in 1992 and their first project offered childcare to local people in the area to allow them to be able to work and train. They began by offering small sewing classes to young mothers and have grown substantially over the 25 years they have been running. They now offer the following:

- Courses in adult learning and vocational qualifications, including computing, numeracy and literacy, and business studies
- Life skills and personal development training, including household budgeting, washing, cooking, self-esteem and independence
- Modern apprenticeships for school leavers
- A full time nursery and childcare facility
- A furniture upcycling centre where students can learn woodworking and retail skills

South Uist now has its very own central base for training and education, which means that people do not have to leave the island for skills and qualifications. The centre has also increased the numeracy and literacy levels of the general population, with these new skills reinvested into the community. As well as tackling the depleting population, the centre also provides a vital childcare service to parents, who are now able to both work and train on the same premises as the nursery.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this paper suggest that community-led social enterprise activity can be used as a tool for developing community resilience in rural settings. Social enterprise is a tool that is particularly suited to rural community development due to already existing cultures of self-help and collective action. The impact of social enterprise activity that has been presented, both directly and indirectly, has exemplified how community resilience can be built through the acquisition of assets and the use of existing skills and entrepreneurship within communities. Most importantly, communities are recognising their priority needs and taking innovative steps to tackle socio-economic issues on a wider community level using a platform that allows for both economic and social growth concurrently. The adoption and development of relevant skills and knowledge within communities through social enterprise activity will contribute to longer-term economic sustainability and entrepreneurship within small populations.

Case study 3.1 Latgalian traditions and crafts house “Ambeļu skreine”

This case study is about the merger of generations to improve the possibilities of rest, to save cultural heritage and to make the life in the village Ambeli (Daugavpils District) better.

The small village Ambeli is situated approx. 35 km from the nearest city Daugavpils. There are a lot of active people in their silver age (older than 55) and active youth and children. They want to find the way of how to spend their free time wisely instead of watching TV, playing computer games, etc. It all starts with idea that it is necessary to break the stereotype that the youth can't do anything. It was decided to implement the idea of rebuilding an old house that is situated in very beautiful place for the creation a place to do various activities related to Latgalian traditions, popularise cultural heritage, and unite generations (elderly people can teach the younger generation and vice versa). With LEADER and also a large support from the local authority, the project was realized in 2012 and the Latgalian traditions and craft house “Ambeļu skreine” was reconstructed. Youth did all dismantling works and were active in all renovation works. As a result, it was made into a great place to keep traditional objects, sing traditional songs, play games, tell stories, and make home-made bread, other dishes and also drinks. It is a place where the elderly people can feel like they did in their childhood, and the younger ones can get to know their history and cultural heritage. This place has been operating for 5 years and it is here that the community celebrates annual customs, organizing some joint works, workshops (for example on permaculture), tourists come to visit, and also some weddings were organized here. Around this house a family garden has been started – when every spring comes families from the village join in by planting different kinds of fruit-trees, berry-bushes, etc. There is a good cooperation with residents, other NGOs, and collectives of amateur performers. We have to think and we already have some ideas of how to develop our offer in the tourism sphere in order to find opportunities for accommodation for our potential guests, and to improve the tourist activities.



Celebrating local customs at “Ambeļu skreine”

Chapter 4

Depopulated villages in Hungary – does resilience exist?

Irén Szörényiné Kukorelli, professor emerita, Széchenyi István University and ELKH Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungary

&

Patrícia Honvári Ph.D., ELKH Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungary

Community resilience itself is not a popular topic among Hungarian settlements. Neither single settlements, nor settlement associations prepare resilience strategies. However, several communities create local economic development strategies, rural development strategies, and many settlements located in areas threatened by natural disasters also have a disaster management plan against floods. Except for the last one, these existing strategies are not intended to prepare settlements for certain shock in that they are able to answer different social, political or environmental changes. However, several parts of these strategies can be considered as elements of resilience, especially those concerning the use of local resources and the involvement of the local community.

According to Bourbeau resilience is not a state but a process (Bourbeau 2015), which can be described as an attitude, a mentality, and community commitment. It requires expertise in order to build a strong community, which is able to give a proper answer to the challenges and deal with vulnerability. Renewal, preservation and creativity are needed all at once, which can be achieved through a place-based approach, by the mobilization of own resources and by the increase of community capacities. For example, when a community is able to preserve and transmit its cultural identity, it takes a step towards resilience. If it builds on identity, then not only the resistance against change prevails, but the self-organisation as well, and through continuous renewal, it can lead the community to resilience (Faragó, L. 2017).

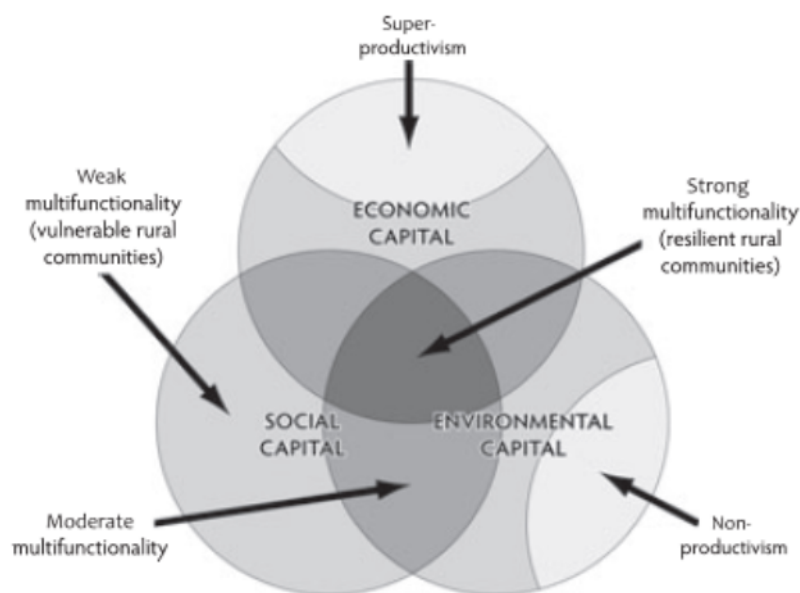


Figure 1. Interrelations of economic, social and environmental capital

Source: Wilson, 2010, p.367; from Van Huylenbroek et al. (2007)

According to Huylenbroeck et al. (2007) through multi-functionality a community can overcome its vulnerability. In order to reach multi-functionality, it is essential that the economic, social and environmental capitals are interlinked and have a mutually reinforcing effect (Figure 1). In those communities, where these capitals are in balance, multi-functionality is powerful, serving as a basis of strong community resilience (Wilson, G. 2010). Numerous researches have proven that social resilience can be described using several indicators, like the changes of an institutional system, the economic structure and also demographic changes. Depopulation, therefore, can draw attention to or directly warn of the importance of resilience. On one hand host societies can lose their identity, which weakens their resistance, on the other hand the depopulating communities can lose their social capital, their economy declines, and their inner resources stay untapped, which results in vulnerable resilience (Adger, N W. 2000).

In our study, we are looking for the answer to the following: are Hungarian rural tiny villages able to fight external impacts? What kind of resilience strategy do they have? Which form of community resilience are they choosing in order to stop or even reverse the depopulation process? In which areas can they strengthen their “immune system” against depopulation? How dependent is it on the size of the settlement, on the community, or on the chosen intervention?

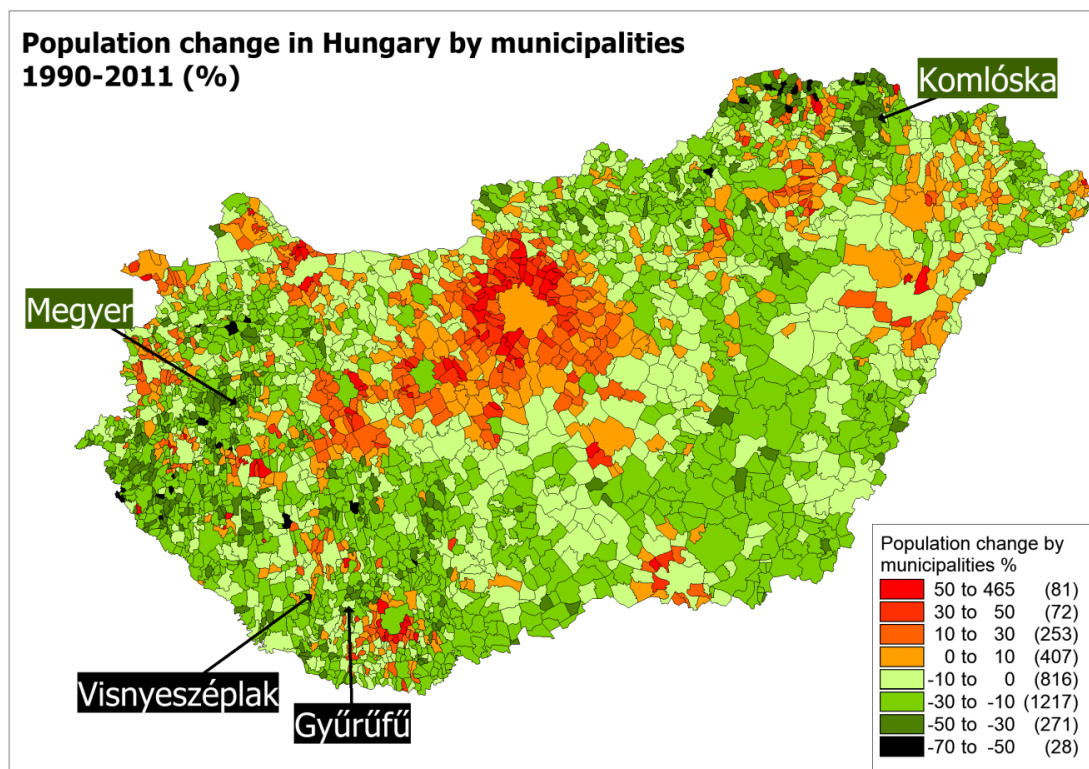


Figure 2. Population change in Hungary by municipalities 1990-2011 (%)
 Source: own (Hardi T.)

The demographic trends of Hungary are very unfavourable. Since 1981 natural reproduction has been negative (with a value of -4,08/1000 inhabitants), which means that the population increase of certain settlements is only derived from internal migration. Only Budapest and some settlements of suburban districts around bigger cities could produce an increase in the population between 1990 and 2011 (Figure 2). Depopulation is especially remarkable among

villages with 500-1500 inhabitants. Due to their population loss, these settlements can easily fall into the category of tiny villages, i.e., settlements with less than 500 inhabitants.

The number of tiny villages increased from 941 to 1082 between 1990 and 2011, and altogether 280 thousand people live in them across the country (Table 1). Depopulation is also strong among the settlements with a population between 500 - 3000, and as a consequence 150 of these settlements slipped down into the category of tiny villages since 1990. The questions that arise are whether the communities living in the growing number of tiny villages are able to resist different social, ecological challenges, whether they are able to treat their vulnerability, and how can they realize multi-functionality, as a tool for resilience.

Table 1. Settlement structure in Hungary

Category of population size	of number of settlements (1990)	of number of inhabitants (1990)	of number of settlements (2011)	of number of inhabitants (2011)
≥ 300000	1	1 934 831	1	1 589 231
300000 - 100000	8	1 177 218	7	1 002 789
100000 - 50000	12	777 201	11	720 903
50000 - 10000	116	2 245 593	122	2 334 865
10000 - 5000	135	934 950	136	947 402
5000 - 3000	204	765 873	206	780 124
3000 - 1500	577	1 223 761	550	1 158 751
1500 - 500	1141	1 035 098	1020	934 369
≤ 500	941	268 982	1082	283 649

Source: own, based on the data of the Central Statistical Office

As previously presented in Figure 1, the three dimensions are physical/environmental, economic and socio-cultural. According to Adger, migration can endanger resilience, both in

the sending as well as the receiving settlements, since they can lose their stability (Adger, N.W 200). In this case, we are looking at the sending tiny villages where ensuring resource exploitation and the sustainability of development are especially difficult. By examining Hungarian depopulated settlements, we can state that these communities considered all the above dimensions; however, they developed their strategies by relying on only one factor as a driver.

The examined settlements were classified into four groups according to the dominant driver they have been using in order to face their vulnerability and to reverse the negative process of depopulation. One of the groups sees the way out through the development of tourism, i.e., in the creation of a new economic function (Case Study 1). Another group has relied on strengthening the economic and institutional system (Case Study 2), while some others have enhanced the ecological/environmental dimension through the utilization of renewable energy sources or the creation of eco-villages (Case Study 3). The Hungarian case studies present a concrete example of each of these groups.

As an impact of the chosen driver, new functions started to emerge in the given settlement, which led to social-economic diversity and to the strengthening of community capital. In one of the Hungarian case studies, by strengthening the economic-institutional dimension, the local municipality was able to generate financial stability, followed by the development of social capital and community-based natural resource management. The transition in 1990 intensified the depopulation process of villages. Simultaneously with land privatisation, state farms and cooperatives were abolished, resulting in employment problems that led to a rise in unemployment in rural areas, which could not be solved by the slowly developing private farms. Furthermore, it also needs to be emphasized that the average education level of the village population was lower, with a higher rate of physical workers. Almost half of the unemployed only finished primary education or less – this rate affected village populations in a greater proportion (Szörényiné Kukorelli 2006).

At the same time, despite these problems, the bottom-up policy gained strength, since the municipality-system that came into existence after 1990 supported empowerment. Municipalities created their own local development strategies, and implemented these by using both external sources and the available local endogenous resources. However, human capital of rural areas was depleted, and besides mayors and a few local actors there was no one who could take over the handling of rapidly changing political, economic and social factors. Entrepreneurs, if they were present in the settlement, did not take actions beyond their own interest, which is understandable since they were occupied with setting up and developing their own businesses.

Apart from the activity of the rural population, the urban intellectual elite, who chose a rural settlement as a second home, also had a strong effect on the local community. It is remarkable that civil society became vibrant in those villages and rural areas where the intellectual elite reappeared. These individuals urged the formation of different advocacy organisations. In these settlements, more local civil organisations came into existence, which played an important role in shaping the community life and in implementing local developments. New functions (like rural tourism) and new services (like environment and landscape protection) emerged, and associations linked to the local culture and nature, were created. Settlement-associations (including several municipalities) were developed with local capacity building as one of their main tasks. These settlement-associations created their own development strategies where future developments were also listed at a municipal level. After the EU accession, LEADER groups came into existence based on the experiences of these settlement-

associations. LEADER groups were also able to strengthen the place-based development and the bottom-up approach.

Accordingly, we can state that there were such processes that supported autonomy, resistance and innovation-capacity in rural areas and villages. However, their success is predominantly isolated; their results mostly relied on the activities and creativity of the local mayor and a few local stakeholders.

The question is: how can tiny villages faced with depopulation recover? According to the literature, settlements have to develop their resistance in many directions, while the community capital, the multi-functionality and the natural resource management together can support the process (Robinson, M. G – Carson, A. D. 2016). This basically means that the joint application of three dimensions also reinforces self-organisation, thus increasing community resilience.

Based on the experience of the case studies, the following and final table summarises the most important elements of innovative strategies that are necessary for the development of a community resilience strategy (Table 2). Among the Hungarian tiny villages, we can find communities, faced with depopulation, answering with different innovative survival strategies, thereby establishing resilience against negative processes. To conclude, we can answer the question in the title: resilience exists. However, it will be a task in the future to make municipalities realise their importance and start building resilience consciously.

Table 2. Elements of resilience dimensions

<i>Physical/Ecological dimension</i>	<i>Economic dimension</i>	<i>Social-culture dimension</i>
good infrastructure or develop it	adaptive ability in the economy	ability to manage the social conflicts
rich biodiversity	adaptability to new technologies	open community
ecological system	willingness to learn (employees)	willingness to learn and possibilities for local people
preserved countryside	high quality educated management for innovative solutions	local community which knows its own past well, preserves and promotes cultural heritage
ability to build local sources in the local development	management keeps sustainability in view	innovator, local or external “hero” who is an open-minded, has a high quality education, committed to change
preservation of natural resources	strong and wide network	strong civil organisations
	self-preservation	good connection among the civil organisation, local government and (personally) the mayor (personally)
		broad network at national and international levels

Source: authors

Case study 4.1 Megyer, the village to rent

Tourism as a resilience strategy

The little settlement of Megyer in Hungary was officially declared as the country's smallest remaining village. The population was very low; there were 21 houses, but only 5 of them were occupied by residents. Clearly, the village was under the threat of disappearing. However, in 2006, the life of the village changed, when a new (external) actor appeared. He chose to leave urban life and decided to settle in Megyer. Soon after he was elected to mayor, he wanted to make sure that they would not end up extinct. He started to think of ways of how to save the village and make it resilient. The path to development and the strategy was based on tourism, since the small village is surrounded by undisturbed nature. The first idea was to renovate the abandoned traditional guest-houses within the village and rent it to overnight guests. Therefore the mayor started to apply for grants and subsidies and soon after the renovation was completed with the help of EU grants. The guesthouses opened; however, it produced very slow results.



Traditional guesthouses in Megyer after the renovation (source: https://nepszava.hu/1085915_nagy-az-erdeklodes-a-berelheto-falu-megyer-irant)

Afterwards, the small village had an innovative idea: instead of renting the guesthouses one by one, they will provide a complete tourist package and rent out the “whole” village. This means that the renters can get control over all seven traditional guest-houses, and moreover, the mayor's office, the local stables and animals, the classroom, the canteen and the farmlands as well. Furthermore, renters can also become deputy mayors and rename the streets as they wish. The idea was published on several travel-booking websites and it soon became very popular. Renting the whole village was a major success; it received wide media attention (both nationally and internationally) and many inquiries came in.

Today, the operation is managed by the local cooperative, which provides employment to 8 people (care-taker, office-manager, cleaners, etc.). Currently, they have around 4,200 guest nights in a year, which is considered to be a high number. The village has new ideas as well, like holding weddings, birthday celebrations, corporate training events, costume parties, etc.

However, what makes the village resilient is not only the revenue and guest nights, but rather that the initiative has had a strong effect on local community involvement, and on the reinforcement of the social capital. It is important to emphasize, that the renters only receive the infrastructure while other services are offered by the locals (breakfast, dinner, homemade products, etc.). As a result, the few local residents increasingly got involved with the initiative of the mayor; they become open-minded and more inclusive. Furthermore, since the guest-houses preserve their traditional architectural character, they also pay attention to the conservation of local cultural heritage.



The village has several future plans, naturally all based on the guest-houses and tourism. They are planning to establish another guest-house, and provide more beds and capacity (for 60 guests). According to the mayor, the main aim is to give a stable livelihood to the locals, thus saving the village from extinction. Megyer is a perfect example of showing how a single idea (tourism) is able to generate other developments and innovations (both economic and social-cultural). The village did not consciously focus on resilience building; however, their strategy and future development path clearly contains resilience elements.

Resources and further info:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/12/world/for-rent-a-hungarian-village-and-a-mayoral-title.html>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-31669630/hungarian-village-up-for-rent>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/hungary/11435045/Entire-Hungarian-village-put-up-for-rent-includes-bus-stop-cows-and-deputy-mayor-title.html>

<https://www.megyer-falu.hu/megjelenesek/> (in Hungarian)

Case study 4.2 Komlóska

Resilience strategy built on income tax

Komlóska is a small settlement in Hungary, with a population of less than 300. It is located in an undeveloped region with depopulation trends, high unemployment and ageing problems. Since 1994 there was no business income tax for the settlement because there was not a single enterprise or business premises located within the village. The role of the local mayor, who became the leader 24 years ago (the youngest mayor in the country at the time), had had a significant role in the development progress.

In the framework of resilience building, the mayor wanted to achieve self-preservation and he also wanted to keep the primary care institutions in order to prevent intensifying depopulation. However, for this, the village needed income. The mayor had the idea, which was to invite enterprises to the village and to offer them partial tax exemption. This means that the enterprises do not have to pay a local business tax (in Hungary settlements are entitled to make a decision regarding this); however, they do have to pay all other types of taxes. As a result, 200 enterprises chose to come to the village (at least with the seat of the company), and more than 100 of them still operate here. Komlóska officially has freshwater and marine fleets as well as a diamond-business. Naturally, most of the newly settled enterprises are mainly from the transport sector, i.e., those businesses that are not tied to a specific place. This resulted in almost 1000 reported trucks in the village and, as previously mentioned, the business only exempted the local business tax – not the other types of taxes. Therefore, the newly arrived business (although paid less in general) contributed significant income to the village, for example through the weight tax of company cars.

The settlement uses the income for further developments – the mayor did not forget about self-preservation. The local government is buying the nearby lands (so far it possesses 150 hectares of farm land) where more than 30 persons are employed in agriculture. Several local products are manufactured, like jam, goat's milk and cheese, syrup, and fruit juices.

The main result of the development process is that the outward migration has partially stopped, and a slow inward migration has started. Through manufacturing local products, the local community is also involved in the renewal, and the local social capital is further enhanced by the strong cultural Rusyn traditions. The success of the village was also acknowledged by different national and international prizes (like the European Village Renewal Award). As for the future, it is important to provide space for those businesses that want to settle in the village. Therefore, infrastructure development is needed; furthermore, an eco-industrial park is also among the future plans of the village.



Resources and further info:

<https://mno.hu/hetvegimagazin/komloska-adoparadicsom-hajoflottaval-1335614>

<http://www.komloska.hu/utolsobol-elso/>

<http://www.komloska.hu/filmek-rolunk/>

Case Study 4.3 From exodus to resilient eco-villages

Gyűrűfű and Visnyeszéplak

Gyűrűfű and Visnyeszéplak are two small villages in Hungary with exceptional natural environments. However, due to infrastructural deficiencies, the settlements were not easily accessible. As a result, the population started to leave slowly and the villages were practically faced with extinction. Gyűrűfű was only populated until the end of 1970s while the population of Visnyeszéplak has declined from 600 to 30 by the beginning of 1990s.



Landscape around Visnyeszéplak (source: www.elofalu.blog.hu)

The new turn in life in the villages came when young families discovered the outstanding natural environment and the potential of undisturbed nature. People with “eco-vision” started to move in the villages and rebuild them. They needed to develop an existing village (and community) from a non-existent settlement; however it was a long and bureaucratic process (building permissions and developing land). As for the governance, the villages do not have their own municipalities instead they are formally attached to other settlements. Although they do not have administrative independence, they do have a good connection with the nearby municipalities.

Today, 8-10 families live in each of the villages. The aim of the newcomers was to create a decentralized, autonomous, self-sufficient and resilient community. Not everyone is accepted within the community; in Gyűrűfű there is an “informal” selection procedure, while in Visnyeszéplak strong religious and Christian traditions are followed. Therefore by selecting who they want to live together with, the community is able to shape strong bonds.



The locals are following an old/new mentality. On one hand they are revitalizing the folk traditions by, as much as they can, producing what they need with their own hands. On the other hand, they are very consciously living a sustainable life, creating a symbiosis with nature – living an “eco” lifestyle. Families living here are striving for self-preservation (in food and in energy as well), and the ecological savings are very characteristic of this, for example they minimize their waste.

As for the results of the community building, it can be established that families moving here have created a sample society of those who are learning to live a new/old lifestyle. The critique of the village development is that the self-preservation is practically based on external workplaces and eco-tourists. However, what make these communities resilient are the people, the ones that are living there and the strong community that they are building.

Resources and further info:

<http://www.visnyeszeplak.hu/>

<http://www.elofaluhalozat.hu/visnyeszeplak.php>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_t5k-ZA80Y

<http://www.origo.hu/utazas/magyarorszag/20140930-ilyen-az-elet-egy-okofaluban.html>

Chapter 5

A resilient community? The work in progress that is Cloughjordan: an emphasis on its agri-food mosaic in general and community supported agriculture in particular

Dr Oliver Moore,
University of Cork

This short exploratory paper is about the issues facing an intentional community in Ireland, which is expressly trying to be resilient. First we will introduce some basic facts about the community then we briefly explore resilience as the community defines it. We then focus in on the agri-food mosaic in and around the intentional community with particular emphasis on the community owned and operated farm. We will explore this in more detail, using previous work by Moore (et al. 2014) and the notion of reflexive resilience. Finally, key questions for future growth and development are outlined.

Background

The Cloughjordan Ecovillage is an intentional community in the Irish midlands. The idea for this ecovillage formed out of a food co-op in the 1990s.

Ecovillage resident and politics professor Peadar Kirby [outlines](#) the development process: “By 2002, the village of Cloughjordan was selected as the site and a year-long community consultation began with residents. An Ecological Charter of basic principles for development of the ecovillage was drawn up and agreed by members and a master plan developed and submitted for planning permission. By 2005, a 67-acre site had been bought and, following the granting of outline planning permission, infrastructural work began in 2007. With its completion in 2008, the first houses were constructed in 2009 and the first residents moved in in December 2009.” It is also worth noting that there were no planning objections to the development.

Prior to the ecovillage, the town of Cloughjordan was a small Irish rural town in relative decline. The ecovillage has added population, profile and activity to the town, as it lies on the edge of the town. This is however in the context of what has been, until recently, an economic recession impacted both the town and ecovillage.

The establishment and maintenance of a collectively owned 67 acre site and infrastructure includes 55 housing units, heating systems, enterprise centre, allotments, non-residential areas including woodlands and a farm. Each of these elements both flourishes and has challenges. The site is 1/3 occupied; infrastructure is more costly and technically difficult to run in this context, though the community manages to do so with internal skills. Solar panels are only now, in 2017, finally starting to work after instalment issues while heating with chopped wood has been in use since the project’s inception. The enterprise centre functions with leading edge technology but not to capacity; some but not all allotment sites are being utilized, which includes research gardens that are the subject of a busy Youtube channel; woodlands have been planted but suffered partial ash dieback while thousands of fruiting trees are growing all over the site; the community owned farm has about 70 family memberships, and has supplied local seasonal food regularly since 2009, it pays two farmers a living but not

an average industrial wage, and is viable, albeit with challenges including low population base in the immediate region.

For this initiative to start building at the beginning of a global recession, one that impacted Ireland especially hard, means that on one level its establishment and survival is impressive. Construction companies and banks were going bust, while this was in fact a thriving building site by national standards. Tenacity, sacrifice and commitment have been required to get to the current level of socio-economic and cultural activities – dozens of events are held and a few thousand people visit yearly. The community farm – the subject of the longer paper – is one of the few CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) initiatives in Ireland and has shown exceptional “reflexive resilience” in its restructuring, fundraising and activities.

Nevertheless it is still to an extent underdeveloped and underpopulated – weak broadband in particular inhibits the kind of work that could thrive in this location. There are few opportunities for people aged 25 to 40 to work or buy into the project, due to a lack of co- or social housing, though there are plans for both. That said, local schools have more pupils, local activities are more plentiful and popular while local food production and events thrive, as seen in the recent construction and opening of an amphitheatre by the Irish president Michael D Higgins. Various new approaches to ownership around food production, heating and decision-making are being trialled, developed and showcased. Neighbourly relations are deeper and more engaged - with all that entails - than other living arrangements allow for, by virtue of proximity, kindredness and the consequences of shared ownership of a range of resources not typically owned collectively – a farm, heating system, general infrastructure, and the entire 67 acre site. Growth in numbers involved is slow but nonetheless continues while importantly interested parties also relocate to the region because of it. Regional and national level prioritisation of sustainable development would see high-speed broadband fast tracked for strategic regional reasons along with various other investments and supports, including assurance of the rail line; whether this happens or not remains to be seen.

Resilience

Resilience from a community point of view refers to the capacity of a community to overcome adversity and adapt positively to change. There are both internal and external shocks that can have an impact on a community, and the Cloughjordan Covillage is no different. As outlined above, the global and national economic recession with banks and property strongly implicated, has had an impact on the ecovillage – but not so much as to cause its collapse. During the peak recession years, it was one of Ireland’s busiest building sites.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation manifest on the site with aspects such as flood prevention, local food initiatives (to reduce food miles), energy efficient buildings, a self-managed renewable heating system; the [ecological footprint](#) (Anon 2014) of the ecovillage has been measured as 1.1 planets. Though above the ideal number of one planet, this was considerably lower than the rest of Ireland, according to research presented by the Tipperary Energy Agency: “This compares to the 2.3 planets that would be required for the 79 Irish settlements surveyed or the 3.4 planets that would be required on the basis of the Living Planet Report’s measure of the Irish footprint.”

The topsoil taken off individual sites was not removed from the 67-acre site; instead this was repurposed into a mound, which was landscaped with an amphitheatre now built into its side. This repurposing, turning a problem into a solution, is a good example of resilience.

The above is not in any way comprehensive but merely introduced the idea of a resilient community; Kirby (2017) has focused on the ecovillage's role in transitioning to a low carbon society and also on the ecological footprint of the location.

Below, we focus primarily on the resilience or rather the agri-food dimension.

Agri-food mosaic in Cloughjordan

As an alternative to either high or low input agriculture, [Huxham et al \(2014\)](#) recommend a focus on “multifunctional mosaics”:

“a focus on maintaining ecosystem health through the management of terrestrial and aquatic environments as multifunctional mosaics. This approach envisages ecosystems managed to provide a range of services, with sites of intensive production supported by contiguous areas providing different services. This is compatible with modest average increases in productivity and with greatly enhanced resilience in the face of natural and economic shocks. It recognises that ecosystems managed well can be both productive and resilient.”

By way of contextualising the community farm, it's worth considering the following, as some of the more significant and relevant to resilience agri-food dimensions in the ecovillage's agri-food mosaic. It is worth remembering that there is much interconnectivity and synergy between many of these initiatives. Importantly, from the perspective of creating and sustaining resilience, there is enough within this mosaic for some residents to, for example, avoid leaving the ecovillage or Cloughjordan town to do a supermarket shop in a bigger town.

On site in the ecovillage

A Community Supported Agriculture initiative

Food related community gatherings

Allotments

An OOOOBY style grower who runs demonstration gardens and pay-what-you-want meals, with ingredients sourced primarily from his own growing spaces

Edible landscaping including native/adapted Irish apple tree walks

Bakery with bread delivery club and teaching initiatives

CSA-affiliated egg club

A wholesale wholefood buyers club with monthly deliveries

Back garden growing

Community polytunnel

Community apiary (beehives)

Emerging from the ecovillage and part of the broader agri-food mosaic

A windfall apple juicing initiative and now an own business (Midnight orchard)

Local organic raw milk, butter and cream deliveries (formerly part of the CSA)

A co-op café (in Cloughjordan town, using ecovillage sourced and other ingredients)

Other relevancies

High tech fab lab, 3D printing, C&C machine, co-working space including an NGO running permaculture trainings and EU-level environmental monitoring and permaculture initiatives

A local craft butcher (with his own cattle) and abattoir

Cloughjordan House cookery school

Shops carrying some local produce

Questions/conundrums

What's missing from the ecology/mosaic?

How necessary would/could/should more meat production and consumption be?

Does everything perform to its optimum, in an integrated fashion, and if not, why not?

Does the Cloughjordan agri-food mosaic represent competition or internal displacement?

How do low earnings (for producers) and high costs (for consumers) work together?

What level of extra investment and infrastructural support would help make this mosaic more viable – and how likely are they to materialise?

A case within a case: Cloughjordan Community Farm

Cloughjordan Community farm (CCF) is a CSA that has been in operation since 2008/9. CSA – Community Supported Agriculture - is a specific type of producer-consumer distribution arrangement, where the consumer takes on both the risks and rewards of production while the producer adjusts to the preference of the consumer on various agronomic practices, from crop choice to use of agri-industrial inputs and processes. (Saltmarsh, Meldrum, & Longhurst, 2011; Soil Association, 2010).

Ireland experienced an economic crash in 2008. Youth unemployment and emigration re-emerged from this point on and are still issues despite a (unequal) recovery that has been in motion since 2013. Since 2008, some people have had to a greater extent more time to give but little money to invest. This may in part explain why allotments, GIY and community gardens are so popular, whereas CSA – which requires cash investment up front and on an ongoing fashion – has not grown at anything like the same pace. There are, fewer than 10 CSAs in operation in Ireland.

These initiatives show that in recent decades some small, scattered aspects of how consumers related to agriculture and food have changed in Ireland, as elsewhere.

Though both the CSA and the ecovillage have separate legal identities, they are seen in the locality and indeed more widely as primarily being part of the same overall tendency. (Ecovillage residents who are not farm members do know the difference, but in general there is much overlap between the two in people's thinking.) About 3/4 of CCF's memberships are from intentional community residents; the rest live in the town. Since 2009, part, and later all, of the CSA has been situated on the intentional communities' 67 acres.

The biodynamic farming movement has been central to the establishment of CSAs in Europe and the US (Saltmarsh et al. 2011). As some members and those affiliated with the intentional community had an interest in biodynamic farming, they were thus familiar with the concept of CSA. It is also the case that the intentional community has an interest in self-sufficiency – its motto is “building sustainable community” – so owning the means of production of food would be typical of its approach.

To establish the CSA, loan stock was generated from about 40 people in, affiliated to, or living in the small town because of the intentional community. From this loan stock, an 80,000 Euro loan from a German ethical bank was generated and people were repaid, though they remain as guarantors of the loan. CSA membership is open to all in the locale, whereas membership of the intentional community involves living on the ecovillage site or having some intention of living on the site. The latter is usually defined by some sort of monetary commitment, either a deposit or ownership of a housing unit.

Initially the farm was situated a short distance outside of Cloughjordan on a 26 acre existing but underused farm. After five years the landowners of this farm took advantage of an opportunity to review the terms of a 10 year lease. A family member, who had been supplying the overall CSA, established a stand-alone business supplying milk and other dairy produce to people in the region. This split was quite acrimonious at times and long drawn out, as the CSA had invested much in this holding. Nevertheless, a significant number of farm members continued to get produce from both the CSA and this ‘breakaway’ business.

Costs have varied over the years, as have some of the terms. Membership has cost between 10 and 16 euros per adult per week. This entitled members to 3 or more visits to the distribution point per week. This CSA has always been year round, not seasonal, and did not operate a box scheme system whereby members receive a set amount of food. Instead, produce is delivered to a distribution point, from which members took what they themselves felt was a fair share, based on their own needs – and the needs of others. There is no official limit on the amount people can take, though there is guidance.

There was a low-income rate at one stage, which was initially 50% lower; this was tightened and eventually dropped altogether. Living wages are paid to two producers. There was also no lock on the door for some years – this too has been changed, in part because of other users of the building.

CCF and reflexive resilience

Moore et al. (2014), describes what is termed reflexive resilience - an institutional reflexivity by the CSA. 'Reflexive' refers here to being critically self-aware, trying to understand your own limitations and adapt; being ready willing and able to change, and then changing. 'Resilience' refers to being prepared for shocks and responding accordingly to said shocks if and when they occur. Taken together, the term 'reflexive resilience' describes the CSA's adaptive awareness.

The process through which this member owned and operated CSA is critically self-assessed and restructured in the face of challenges, is a core part of this reflexive resilience. While CSAs specifically involve sharing risks and rewards and while this is described as an acceptable uncertainty (Dubuisson-Quellier & Lamine 2008), when pushed to its limits, the actualised risk of not enough produce became in fact unacceptable for this CSA initiative in 2011.

The ability of the CSA to restructure following an EGM (extraordinary general meeting) is what gave rise to the term reflexive resilience. Then, a new structure for organising the whole operation of the farm was introduced.

The CSA's structure in the first half of the research period involved one full time farm manager doing most of the work in the areas of livestock, dairy, grains, vegetables, poultry, education and distribution. This farm manager interacted with the Board of Directors, while an advisory panel interacted with both. Members interacted with the farm manager and the board sporadically. This structure placed a lot of emphasis on the farm manager. Though they understood that there were mitigating factors, members were not happy with the level of productivity of the farm. This was especially expressed via a members' survey and also at an EGM, which allowed for members to express their concerns with the farm in a world café type format.

Following this, the contract of the previous farmer was not renewed. Due to the tight-knit nature of the community, this was nonetheless an awkward development for internal community relations. A new structure, instead of a farm manager, that consisted of employing three part time co-ordinators (i.e., farming and growing member-producers, or simply – the farmers) each with an area of specialisation. A coordination team and advisory group were established and reinvigorated respectively, to aid the co-ordinators. The co-ordination team met weekly or fortnightly, and included board members and the core co-ordinators. This team worked in the areas of membership/distribution/internal communication; fundraising/education/research/events/external communication; and volunteer support. This allowed the board of directors to focus on legal and financial issues, as is more typical of a board. More recently, a producer support team has been established. It reports to the board on the day-to-day functioning of the farm and matters arising.

This above, in brief, was a reflexive resilience – an ability to self-assess, criticise and adapt to circumstance. It was an especially participatory way to do so, drawing on a wider range of skills and membership interests.

Since then, more shocks have occurred, including large scale thievery and very recently a barn fire, which destroyed a large two story hay loft and barn. Each of these has been an opportunity to come together but also a drain on the time, energy enthusiasm and resources of members.

So, what is the future of resilience on and in this farm?

- How does the farm prioritise following these shocks? What should be kept and what dropped?
- Is the farm in fact viable, following loans, splits, and shocks? Is it too risky to keep investing in it?
- Are the other elements of the agri-food mosaic displacing or complementing the farm? Two of these involve former farm producers, who may want to increase their own operations, and who may be disgruntled by how the farm operates?
- More broadly, does the wider ecovillage and its unique set of demands on residents drain available resources from the farm - and visa versa?
- What is the balance (of power) between strong willed very idiosyncratic farmers and a community owned entity?

The five bigger broader questions:

- How engaged with locale should these sorts of settlements be? Where does the responsibility for engagement rest?
- Is it best to model individual resilient communities in a deep way, or to make rural areas more resilient in a shallow way?
- In a context of the real costs of agri-food production not being paid for in the agri-food sector, how do communities concerned with these issues (pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, rural depopulation and under-investment, etc.) operate? Is self-taxing the only option?
- How do rural areas without major population bases generate traction for their sustainability activities?
- What level of extra investment and infrastructural support would help make this mosaic more viable – and how likely are they to materialise?

Case Study 5.1 Cloughjordan ecovillage

a. Outline

Cloughjordan ecovillage is an intentional community in the Irish midlands. This community expressly tries to be resilient – this case study tentatively explores how resilient or otherwise the community may be, with a particular focus on food.

b. Introduction

The idea for this ecovillage formed out of a food co-op in the 1990s. The site was purchased in 2005, and construction of the first houses began in 2007. Currently the ecovillage is home to about 130 people in about 55 housing units. The focus of this case study is the period from 2010 to the present. Prior to the ecovillage, the town of Cloughjordan was a small Irish rural town in relative decline. The ecovillage has added population, profile and activity to the town, being as it is on the edge of the town. This is however in the context of what has been, until recently, an economic recession has impacted both the town and ecovillage. The community's farm is the main stakeholder considered in this case study.

c. Activities

The establishment and maintenance of a collectively owned 67 acre site and infrastructure includes 55 housing units, heating systems, enterprise centre, allotments, non-residential areas including woodlands and a farm. Each of these elements both flourishes and has challenges. The site is 1/3 occupied; infrastructure is more costly and technically difficult to run in this context, though the community manages to do so with internal skills. Solar panels are only now, in 2017, finally starting to work after instalment issues while heating using chopped wood has been in use since the project's inception. The enterprise centre functions with leading edge technology but not to capacity; some but not all allotment sites are being utilized, which includes research gardens that are the subject of a busy Youtube channel; woodlands have been planted but suffered partial ash dieback while thousands of fruiting trees are growing all over the site; the community owned farm has about 70 family memberships, has supplied local seasonal food regularly since 2009, it pays two farmers a living but not an average industrial wage, and is viable, albeit with challenges including low population base in the immediate region.



Weekend tour visitors

d. Lessons learned

For this initiative to start building at the beginning of a global recession, one that impacted Ireland especially hard, means that on one level its establishment and survival is impressive. Construction companies and banks were going bust, while this was in fact a thriving building site by national standards. Tenacity, sacrifice and commitment have been required to get to the level of socio-economic and cultural activities – dozens of events are held and a few thousand people visit yearly. The community farm – the subject of the longer paper – is one of the few CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) initiatives in Ireland and has shown exceptional “reflexive resilience” in its restructuring, fundraising and activities.

Nevertheless it is still to an extent underdeveloped and underpopulated – weak broadband in particular inhibits the kind of work that could thrive in this location. There are few opportunities for people aged 25 to 40 to work or buy into the project, due to a lack of co- or social housing, though there are plans for both. That said, local schools have more pupils, local activities are more plentiful and popular while local food production and events thrive, as seen in the recent construction and opening of an amphitheatre by the Irish president Michael D Higgins. Various new approaches to ownership around food production, heating and decision-making are being trialled, developed and showcased. Neighbourly relations are deeper and more engaged - with all that entails - than other living arrangements allow for, by virtue of proximity, kindredness and the consequences of shared ownership of a range of resources not typically owned collectively – a farm, heating system, general infrastructure, and the entire 67-acre site. Growth in numbers involved is slow but nonetheless continues while importantly interested parties also relocate to the region because of it. Regional and national level prioritisation of sustainable development would see high-speed broadband fast tracked for strategic regional reasons along with various other investments and supports, including assurance of the rail line; whether this happens or not remains to be seen.

Case Study 5.2 Civic Innovation - Birr 20:20

Open Public Fora and Civic/Community Trust: An Irish example emerging in the context of town council closure in 2014.

In 2014 town councils all over Ireland closed, devolving power to the county authorities. This cost saving action has left a vacuum in municipalities, which in many cases is being filled by a bottom-up approach to local governance in the form of civic and community trusts. Birr 20:20 is one such example and this is a brief account of its structure formation capacity and vision.

A Trust is a legal facility that confers two particularly useful capacities, those of: a) Holding land and assets and redistributing these by lease to partners. b) Receiving and redistributing cash grants. This form of legal structure is relatively insulated from risk of acquisition and as such has been used by estates in their protection of land assets in Ireland to date.

A Community or Civic trust is a means of providing access to land and resources such that said access is performed in accordance with the principles and values of the trust. Given the title of Community Trust, the scope for principled resilient development is to some extent embedded and this can be further reiterated in the governing document of the trust itself.



Birr theatre and Arts Centre.



Birr Castle Gardens and Science Centre

In 2014, with the help of Cloughjordan resident and Cultivate facilitator, Davie Phillip, Birr 20:20 called a public meeting to gather locals to discuss areas for improvement, and a strategy for long-term development in the town. The principles of “Collaboration, Cooperation, and Partnership” were a guiding focus of the meeting whereby members were invited to gather, converse, and agree, in groups of four, as to what areas of development required attention in the locale. The ‘world café’ style served the function of surfacing common concerns such that participants could appreciate the commonality of their concerns

This meeting culminated in a proposition that a local Trust be established with capacity to contract, hold assets, and redistribute funding to local agencies who perhaps lacked this capacity. A pillar structure was adapted with that consisted of 7 sectoral areas: food, tourism, environment, youth, culture and the arts, health, and wellbeing. The board of directors

consists of seven members. Monthly public meetings are held and a partnership with local papers and a social media strategy ensured public dissemination of meeting results.

Since establishment in 2014, the Trust has undertaken a number of projects but its main function is its role in providing a forum for public discussion and facilitating bottom-up approaches to activities and projects dealing with elements of public concern in the immediate locality.

Key achievements have been:

- the establishment of a directory of local organizations with contacts for responsible persons.
- the acquisition of a discount structure for community benefit organizations among local benefits.
- the establishment of a local market supporting small scale local food producers
- the acquisition of the local courthouse for development of a ‘Creative Hub’

Resilient local development can be well served by the establishment of such a structure.

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