The Changing Function and Position of Rural Areas in Europe

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Utrecht 1992

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2 THE CHANGING FUNCTION AND POSITION OF RURAL AREAS IN EUROPE

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2.1 Introduction

We live in an age when things around us seem to be accelerating and dispersing. The internationalisation of capital is progressing apace, especially in financial sectors. The goods we buy have been made in a range of far-flung places and the food we eat can be produced from almost anywhere in the world. People travel further and more often, while telecommunications have been developed to such an extent that almost anyone, anywhere is 'reachable' by anyone else from anywhere else. The global village has arrived ... or has it?

As we become more used to the idea of time-space compression - the geographical stretching out of social relations - it will become increasingly important to understand what exactly causes the differing degrees of mobility which in turn are influential of our changing views of places and spaces. In addition, and in view of the nature of this particular workshop, it will be important to understand what place rurality has within these changes, and what internal variations occur within what we all too readily call 'rural areas'.

These two questions cannot be answered glibly. To say that time-space compression is the result of the activities of different fractions of capital is to assume that our understanding and experience of different places and spaces is determined by capitalism. This ignores other crucial factors - gender, age, religion, nationalism etcetera - which are equally important in understanding our experience of the changing geography of our world.

Similarly, to say that time-space compression brings rural areas within the realm of urban centred labour markets and capital activities is to ignore the variegation of change currently occurring in rural areas. Doreen Massey (1991) who has written powerfully on these matters, stresses that time-space compression has not been happening for all people in all spheres of activity. She quotes from Diane Birkett's work on the Pacific Ocean to illustrate this:

"Jumbo's have enabled Korean computer consultants to fly to Silicon Valley as if popping next door, and Singaporean entrepreneurs to reach Seattle in a day. The borders of the world's greatest ocean have been joined as never before. And Boeing has brought these people together. But what about those they fly over, on their islands five miles below? How has the mighty 747 brought them greater communion with those whose shores are washed by the same water? It has not of course. Air travel might enable business men to buzz across the ocean, but the concurrent decline in shipping has only increased the isolation of many island communities . . . ."

We would suggest that this picture of islands untouched by modern trends of time-space compression may well be analogous to parts of rural Europe. Some parts certainly have become fully 'plugged in' to national and international restructuring. Other parts may still represent islands, somehow passed by or deemed unnecessary in the contemporary stages of international restructuring, as they fall outside of the
sphere of action of new fractions of capital and society. Again, other areas are becoming more attractive specifically because of their 'island' status. Here, characteristics remoteness, marginality, sparse population, morphology and landscape, which have contributed to particular areas being considered unsuitable for modern industrial and commercial processes, now render these areas entirely suitable for uses as 'natural' land parks or dumping grounds of one form or another. Talk of specific and homogenous post-Fordist or post-industrial roles for rural areas seems therefore extremely premature, and we need to identify some rather more thought-provoking conceptual apparatus if we are to understand why some rural areas are being treated differently from others.

In this chapter we seek to outline one potential route to the conceptualisation of rural change, using parts of regulation theory. Our particular focus is to identify a series of 'middle ground' concepts through which the abstract notions of regulation can be linked to the specific characteristics of different areas and regions. Accordingly we suggest that the notions of 'mode of regulation', 'societalisation' and 'structured coherence' can be used as starting points in the discussion of the hanging function and position of 'rural areas in Europe. After sounding a warning note over the scale at which new 'cohencies' can be recognised, we attempt to illustrate the changing meanings in contemporary rural areas, first in Britain and then more widely in Europe. We argue that these middle ground concepts from regulation theory can enhance our existing understandings of economic restructuring, social reorganisation and state activity in planning and policy-making, and we conclude by stressing the cultural coherence of local places.

2.2 Structured coherences in rural areas

In a forthcoming paper (Cloke & Goodwin 1992) there is the beginnings of a discussion about introducing some different concepts of change into the debate about rural areas. In the paper we discuss some of the problems which have arisen in the use of wider social science concepts while maintaining 'rural' as a meaningful category. Much of the political economy literature, for example, tends to undermine the importance of deterministic spatial categories such as rural (see Cloke 1989).

Three main approaches may be detected in the work of rural research in response to these problems:

i to approach research in an empirical and self-confessedly 'theory-free' manner and thereby simply assume that rurality has some functional meaning and that rural areas have evidently functional characteristics

ii to confine 'rural' with 'agricultural' and to use concepts which are applicable to a particular industrial sector to explain farming change. The problem here is that areas which may visibly be dominated by agriculture are now being affected by economic and social changes from far beyond the agricultural sector.

iii to accept that rural space is neither homogeneous nor governed by 'rurality', but equally to suggest that entrepreneurs, residents, leisure-seekers etcetera continue to behave as though 'rural' were real to them, thereby attributing validity to a concept of rural which relies on the social production of meanings (see Mormont 1990).

It is this latter strategy that seems most useful for rural researchers seeking to engage in wider theoretical discourses. One particularly relevant area of theorization which we think is important here is the regulationist literature which has been used to chart an apparent 'post-Fordist' (Harvey 1985) of urban industrial restructuring from Fordism to Post-Fordism. Here there has been a wide body of work which has analysed not only the changes from mass production to flexible accumulation, but the associated changes in the social and political relations of production which have accompanied these transformations. This body of theory has been used, for example, in analyses of the changing nature of agricultural production (see Kenney et al. 1985, 1991; Sanee 1990) which have sought to trace the change from a Fordist social relation to the current crisis of the 1980s and 1990s characterised by a mismatch of the particular concerns of farm families with the wider social and economic necessities of the new times.

We suggest, however, that this analysis needs to be broadened by taking proper note of those aspects of regulation theory which suggest that the so-called new epoch of Post-Fordism may well be just the latest in a series of 'constab revolution' with more links to the previous era that is currently acknowledged. In particular there are three 'middle-ground' concepts from regulation theory which appear useful in the context of understanding rural change, and which in particular allow us to conceptualise the links which exist between economic, social, political and cultural change.

i Mode of regulation - what Lipietz has called the 'ensemble of institutional forms networks and norms which ensure the compatibility of behaviour' within any period of stability between production and consumption (i.e. within a regime of accumulation). Here the broad concern is to understand how the crises and contractions of capitalist economic development are mediated by political and social action. It seems very important that we begin to analyse the changes in the mode of regulation which are occurring in rural areas. The overcoming of contradictions and tensions within capitalism can occur by establishing social norms which are reflected in individual behaviour, often with the aid of state activity (for example, in the area of the welfare state). Changing regulation whether by state intervention or by means of struggle and manipulation, will lead to changes in the experience of rural places and lifestyles of rural people.

ii Societalisation - this refers to the process of regulation at a societal level via a complex ensemble of social practices which are usually mediated by the institutions of the time. A focus on societalisation will shift the emphasis from economic regulation to social regulation wherein social practices operate to integrate diverse social structures and to secure some form of cohesiveness amongst competing forces. As such the interest in societalisation can be linked with existing analyses of class relations and the intra-class conflicts which often accompany the rise of new and influential class fractions. Stable social relations permit the patterning of social relations and social practices which complement a particular mode of regulation. When societalisation achieves a temporary form of stability, it is theorized that two social blocs are created: a historic bloc which Gramsci (1971) describes as a historically constituted and socially reproduced structural correspondence between the economic base and the political and ideological superstructures of a social formation (an example might be the
landed gentry of 19th century Britain); and a hegemonic bloc which refers to a durable alliance of class forces "... able to exercise political, intellectual and moral leadership" (Jessop 1990, p. 179). An example here might be the mix of upper and middle class power in post-war rural Britain. The emergence of new historic and hegemonic blocs in rural society and politics helps us to interpret rural change, although cultural leadership (that is the ability to represent a dominant ideology of the rural) is also important here, since much current rural change has involved the appropriation of cultural values and images from a previous historic and hegemonic bloc in order to promote the very commodification of rural areas which underpins the emergence of new blocs. Clearly, the regulatory practices affecting rural areas will operate at local, national and international scales, and each may not be compatible with the other.

iii Structured coherence - Harvey (1985) attempts to present a grounding of these ideas about the varying practices of regulation through his notion of structured coherence. He presents the configuration of mode of regulation and societalization as an ensemble of multifacted relations and institutions which are application at particular places and at particular times. Sometimes this will take on the form of a coherence, structured not only by the prevailing form of production, but also by "standard of living, the qualities and style of life, work satisfaction (or lack thereof), social hierarchies, and a whole set of sociological and psychological attitudes towards working, living, enjoying, entertaining and the like" (p. 140).

The construction of a temporary and often partial coherence will be linked with particular modes of regulation and strategies of societalization being pursued by recognisable historic and hegemonic blocs which dominate specific areas.

These three middle-ground concepts suggest new ways of theorising rural change:

"rather than searching for one movement from Fordism to post-Fordism, we should look to understand rural change as a whole series of movements between the differing practices and procedures of various strategies of regulation operating at overlapping scales. When successful, in achieving partial and contested stability, these help to form a particular structured coherence. This allows us to see rural regions undergoing a series of diverse and contested changes and developments, all socially constructed, rather than leap from one ideal-typical stage to another" (Cloke & Goodwin forthcoming).

It is perhaps in the light of these concepts that we should attempt to understand the changing functions and circumstances of different rural areas in Europe.

2.3 The scale of coherence in rural Europe

Before going on to discuss some of the major changes which have occurred in the mode of regulation, societalization, and therefore structured coherence of parts of rural Europe, it is important to insert a brief but important reminder about the scale at which analysis of change often takes place. It will be obvious to most rural researchers that the tendency to overgeneralise about rural areas, their changing nature and their problems has been rife in the recent history of rural studies. To some extent the need for generalisation is both understandable and excusable given the search for "similarity" of problems in different geographic and cultural locations. However, if we are to pursue the identification of structured coherences in rural areas, we will be required to deconstruct some of the more flambant generalisations in order to understand the regulatory practices occurring at different scales.

An interesting example of this is presented in the European Commission's (1988) communication on The Future Of Rural Society, which identifies three 'standard problem areas':

i areas suffering from the pressures of modern life. Here the conflicts between modern intensive agriculture and high density residential areas have been seen as leading to pollution and environmental damage. Examples of such areas include peri-urban areas such as South-East England, the Paris-Brussels-Bonn triangle, the Po Valley, the Netherlands, Flanders and Northern Germany.

ii areas suffering from rural decline, where farming is marginal yet there is a lack of alternative employment, so that out-migration (especially of the young) occurs and community facilities deteriorate. Examples of such areas are seen to include parts of Northern Ireland, West of Scotland, parts of Greece, the Mezzogiorno, inland Spain and Portugal, and parts of Italy.

iii very remote areas, where geographical marginality and sparse population exacerbate problems of out-migration and community decline. Here the diversification of the primary-sector economic base is more difficult and expensive to bring about. Areas such as the Scottish Highlands, many different island communities, parts of the Alps and the Pyrenees, the Massif Central and the southern mountains of Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal are seen as fitting into this category.

There would seem to be a number of problems with this as a statement of different rural areas in Europe and their 'problems'. Although the Rural Commission has acknowledged that pockets of decline can exist in pressured areas, this classification appears to treat rural areas as homogeneous and therefore diverts attention from the complex variations within any one area. It especially appears to ignore the common incidence of 'islands' of underdevelopment or need within seemingly prosperous rural areas, and 'islands' of development (perhaps hooked into the processes of time-space compression) within seemingly depressed areas. It focuses on space, not people, and thereby overlooks the obvious truism that it is people not places who have problems and that different people in the same place can have different problems. It concentrates disproportionately on the agricultural economy even though only a small minority of people living in rural Europe are now directly engaged in agriculture.

In order to monitor and understand the changing structural coherences that are occurring in Europe, it seems important that we move away from these broad generalisations. Certainly, coherence will be made up of relations at the international and national as well as local levels, but the coherence itself - the very expression of new social, economic and cultural functions - will be most
recognisable at a more localised scale than broad categorization such as that above will allow.

2.4 An illustration of changing structured coherence in parts of rural Britain

Most rural areas have exhibited localised structured coherences in recent history, based on the central position of agriculture in local society, economy and politics. Coherence was achieved by the ability of the 'property, paternalism and power' of landed agrarian interests to act as localised (as well as often centralised) elites which dominated the rural society of the 'deferential worker'. These powerful elites represented historic blocs which exerted hegemonic influence over the social structures and competing social forces in rural society.

In many cases, rural areas had come under the influence of national-scale modes of regulation involving the imposition of aspects of the welfare state, mass consumption and institutionalized wage bargaining. Some of these were conceded by local elites - the need for council housing is a good example of this - and others were contested. Structured coherences were therefore formed locally by the interconnectivity of mode of regulation and societalization.

From the 1960s onwards these localised coherences began to be broken down by wider processes of economic restructuring and social recomposition. These in turn reflect changing mode of production and societalization as mentioned above. It is important to stress, however, that this breakdown and rebuilding of coherence has taken different forms and proceeded at different scales at different times in different rural areas. A series of economic changes may be identified:

- In-migration of communities in urban fringe areas initially overlay an unchanged local economy in these areas. These migrants stretched the localised coherence through expanded consumption and community ranges, but they did not undermine existing coherences.
- The decentralization of industrial branch plants into some rural areas introduced some of the economic relations of a Fordist mode of regulation into limited rural locations. These changes were by no means ubiquitous.
- During the 1980s the previously localised coherence of many rural areas was shattered as they became linked with wider patterns of production and consumption.
- Industrial production has increased, and the service economy has become the dominant labour sector.
- Some rural areas are becoming increasingly attractive to end-of-line parts of larger service-sector enterprises (a kind of branch line syndrome rather like previous branch plants), thus introducing what some people regard as post-Fordist work practices being introduced into these areas.

It is crucial to note that for these changes to occur, social and cultural conditions have also had to be changed, and that such changes have necessarily involved struggle and conflict. Some changes have been forced by use of state power, for example, the introduction of new modes of regulation which have restructured both central-local government relations (with power accruing to the centre) and public-private sector relations via programmes of privatization and deregulation. One interesting pointer to the future is the potential conflict between these national-scale modes of regulation and the as yet relatively ineffective attempts to introduce different regulatory apparatus within the European state.

Other changes have been the result of persuasion. This has been evident in the commodification of rural idylls and rural lifestyles and in the use of the countryside as a new theatre of consumption. Rural places are protected, and whenever possible privatized. An example here is the dramatic rise in organised leisure facilities (from theme parks to specialist 'rural' activity centres) in the countryside. Rural culture has been iconised and marketed and rural 'values' are being marketed as a specific and generally problem-free commodity. There is a clear result:

"Thus the rural idyll is reproduced but in sanitized form. Much persuasion geared to suggest that rural areas are unchanging, yet the reproduction of the idyll relies on new structures and coherences" (Cloke & Goodwin, forthcoming).

These changes provide an interesting background to the changing function and position of rural areas in Britain, but again it should be stressed that new structure coherences tend to be localised. To give one illustration of a particular set of changes in a particular area we can turn to the impact of new middle classes (of 'service classes') in parts of south-east England (see Cloke 1990; Cloke & Thirlwall 1987; 1990). These class fractions have appropriated the means of consumption by capturing key skills in the new divisions of labour in the service dominated labour markets of London. They have sought to colonise particular rural places which conform to the view of a rural idyll and they have taken over or developed particular styles of rural housing in places within reach of other theatres of consumption. Having colonised these places they have dominated local politics, and used their power to pursue the own sectional interests and claims. These new rural communities clearly represent very different ideologies of what constitutes community and development should be like. Such ideologies include sentiments of patriotism, traditional familialism, anti-development, pro-self-help and pro individual liberty. The influence of these service class fractions is now such that they can be regarded as emergent historic blocs in some rural areas. Interestingly, they are serving to reproduce certain traditional social and cultural attributes of rural life, albeit in a sanitized form, and so it can seem that very little change is occurring in the nature of rural life. However, these reproductions are occurring as part of the commodification of rural living under more recent structures of coherence and changed modes of regulation.

The service class offers only one of the very many potential illustrations of the localised effects of changing structured coherence in rural Britain and it is important to stress the localised nature of their dominance. This, however, serves to emphasize the importance of acknowledging wider-scale changes in society, and culture, and in the modes of regulation which tie them together in the more localised context of societalization and structured coherence. This is paramount when we shift in scale to study change in rural Europe.

2.5 Components for new structured coherences in rural Europe

In order to assess the changing functions and positions of different rural areas in Europe in their full complexity and localised diversity, it is therefore necessary...
review some of the more important contemporary components of structured coherence and then apply these to particular places. Of necessity such a checklist may only briefly be reviewed here, and although components are itemised for easier discussion it should be remembered that one of the chief benefits of the middle-ground concepts from regulation theory discussed above is the appreciation of the interconnectivities between different components and different scales. Nevertheless, three main groups of components may be discerned:

1 Elements Of Economic Restructuring: or How Attractive Is The Area To Capital Accumulation Under Contemporary Modes of Regulation?

The priorities for rural economies are changing fast. As a recent House of Lords (1990) report suggests:

"Technological improvements, rising economic prosperity, and the internationalisation of markets have increased productivity, diversified demand and sources of supply, and undermined the political and strategic imperative of maximising traditional productive capacity" (p. 7).

The structure of rural employment, enterprise and entrepreneurial development, then, begs an understanding of what relations exist between active fractions of capital and the rural areas concerned, and of what positive or negative roles are played by the state in regulating or deregulating these relations. At the risk of over-emphasising the capacity for economic change in some areas of rural Europe, we suggest that current economic restructuring can include:

- the commodification of rural areas. This amounts to an exploitation of rural environments to match contemporary demands of consumption. Commodification includes profits from new forms of organisational recreation, leisure and tourism which can be sold in a more privatised 'pay-as-you-enter' type of rural environment. It includes the development of particular styles of living through special niches in the rural housing market (such as service class or retirement development). It even includes a reorganisation of labour requirements, both to service these other commodities, and indeed to maintain the backdrop of a manured rural landscape which is the necessary context for these commodities. More widely, commodification also involves the use of idyllic rural imagery to promote products which have no specific link with rural areas, as seen in advertisements for a range of goods from cars to clothes.

- technology-led exploitation of rural labour and rural place. The idea of 'branch-line' enterprises has already been mentioned above. Here the ability to use technology to compress time and space opens up the possibility that untapped labour forces in rural areas can be brought into service sector processes such as the computerised processing of air tickets, credit card transactions, wages etcetera. What has characterised such functions in other rural areas of the world, however, is that the capital fractions concerned have been motivated by the exploitation of potentially cheap labour. Smaller forms of technology-led development, such as homeworking and telecottages also have this potentially exploitative character, although in the case of certain individuals it allows them the choice to be a self-employed participant in the new service sectors whilst enjoying the lifestyle of what they regard as a desirable rural place beyond effective commuting ranges.

- rural industrialisation. Some limited rural areas have proved attractive to hi-tech or other industrial plants. These tend to be at motorway corridors and where land for development is readily available. Here again there is a balancing of the wish to live and work in a cherished rural environment and to achieve savings in land and rent costs in comparison with urban locations. Without subsidy, such deconcentration of industry has tended to be in specific rural locations which are accessible to major market centres. However, state agencies have been active in providing subsidy of various forms to attract investment further afield into rural zones which are outside these favoured rural habitats. These subsidies have in some areas had the same effect as time-space compression, in making more peripheral areas attractive to some elements of capital. Here, however, time considerations are traded against the profitability of a subsidised location.

- exploitation of rural marginality. An increasingly important aspect of the ways in which capital is attracted to rural locations concerns the siting of dangerous polluting or otherwise politically sensitive operations. Rural areas cannot be treated as a whole here, as the location of such operations very much depends on the degree to which proposals are contested by local elites. However, the siting of nuclear installations, the dumping of waste materials (especially high level waste), the treatment of industrial residues, the location of military training facilities (including aircraft training routes) and prisons, and so on have all been the subject of increasing attention in some peripheral areas. Often with the aid of the state, the capital interests concerned can logically point to the benefits of 'remote' rural location, both in terms of providing local jobs and in terms of 'safety' considerations which may require a non-urban site. It is possible to foresee, however, that particular places could become 'dumping grounds' for unwanted processes, and that this could be the major future function for capital investment in these areas - their major attraction to capital. This has already been seen in the siting of hazardous waste dumps on Indian reservations in the USA, thus reinforcing the 'outsider' or 'end-of-the-line' status of the communities concerned.

- exploiting and maintaining rural resources. Capital involvement in rural areas will continue to be attracted to particular resources (witness the 'boom-bust' syndrome of oil and coal-related developments, for example). Exploitation of the previously dominant agricultural resource base is already changing rapidly. State action to restrain farm output has led to restrictive price policies and encouraged structural adjustment in agriculture, notably the polarisation of holdings into large viable units and very small domestic units. As a result there are potentially vast surpluses of agricultural land (the EC estimates a surplus of between 6 and 16 million hectares in the Community by the end of the century), and the current rates of productivity, which are already significant, seem bound to increase. These stockpiles of surplus land and surplus labour are open to exploitation as described above and it seems certain that the following functions will grow more important:

  a. the take of rural fringe land by urban-based land users;
  b. the use of certain tracts of rural land in the newly commodifying leisure and tourism industries;

26
c. the increasing role of farmers as landscape 'minders' focusing on conservation as well as production;
d. the proliferation of relatively low pay standards, particularly for part-time work in rural service sectors.

The relations between the state and different fractions of capital in the outsourcing of rural resource exploitation will obviously be crucial.

_the geography of rural restructuring? This could be far more complex and localised than we have so far realised. Matters of geographical marginality and proximity have to be set alongside economic margins and state classifications of which rural areas require subsidised development. Prestige locations will be exploited differently from others nearby, and the social production of the meaning of rurality will differ by region and certainly by nation. Major changes in the mode of regulation - for example, more widespread programmes of privatisation and deregulation, perhaps eroding the established features of welfare states, or the introduction of minimum wage regulations through the suspicious of European scale government - could well disturb the emerging structured coherences in specific rural areas as could variations in the contesting of change by elite blocs both in and beyond the areas concerned.

ii Elements of Socio-Cultural Recomposition: or How Attractive Is The Area To Those Seeking A 'Rural Experience'?

Again it should be acknowledged that social recomposition in many areas of rural Europe is happening only slowly if at all. Elsewhere, however, the nature and experience of rural living is also changing fast. Again, to quote the 1990 House of Lords Report:

"All but the most remote of rural areas are witnessing increases in their populations.... Urban dwellers have moved to the country bringing many of the preoccupations and aspirations with them.... they are less reliant on the local community for goods and services and less likely to integrate with it socially. Similarly, new immigrants are often more ready and better able to articulate their demands and organise for their achievement.... By contrast, some sections of the indigenous rural population have become increasingly disadvantaged, unable to compete with the new entrants for scarce resources such as housing and less able to fall back on the traditional close-knit fabric of the rural community" (p. 8).

Clearly, in-migration to rural areas can be job-led or people-led. The connections between job-led migration and economic restructuring are obvious, but people-led migration includes a range of different age-groups and aspirations including retirement, the wish to be self-employed in a 'nice area', long-distance commuting, the search for alternative lifestyle (from 'hippies' to 'small holders') the attraction of living near kith and kin or in an especially valued place, or even just the availability of seemingly less expensive property or land.

Underlying most of this reshuffling of rural society lies the cultural notion of some form of 'rural idyll'. The wish for a rural lifestyle suggests some predisposition about the object of desire which 'rural' represents. This idea of idyll seems very ethno-centric. It may be particular housing, in a particular type of landscape, being part of specific community, with a lifestyle which offers strong ties with the land and nature. Some rural places seem to represent a particular idyll without modification. Others require commodification in an attempt to develop that sense of idyll, while others again may represent a very negative anti-idyll which repels in-migration rather than attracts it.

All of these component prescriptions will differ from region to region and nation to nation. Just to take the example of landscape, the components of attraction vary enormously. In Britain, some sense of manured agricultural landscape is often crucial. In Holland a flat, remote landscape would not necessarily represent the ideal type. In nations with well defined mountainous regions it is often the rolling hills rather than the stark mountainous terrain which appeal. Equally in socio-cultural terms, the idea of participating in a 'peasant' community can be a negative one in some regions, whereas the idea of joining in a centuries old tradition of rural 'youmancy' or even 'squirearchy' may be more attractive.

Where rural expressions of idyll occur within reach of major labour marke centres then the numbers of potential adventurous in-migrants will be greater and the likelihood of succeeding rounds of colonisation by particular class fractions is therefore higher. These in-migrants will, in effect, be stretching the structure coherences of the places concerned because of their detachment from traditions local rural economies. With the incidence of longer-distance commuting, however, alongside the people-led migrations into rural places, social recomposition in rural areas is not just as simple matter of proximity to thriving urban labour markets.

Whenever these various social changes occur, a series of contests and conflicts can take place:

- a socially dislocating conflict between new class fractions, and existing ones (often labelled 'indigenous' groups but actually more complex than this suggests being multi-layered and experiencing different degrees of attachment to the rural place concerned). This can lead to the occurrence of 'two nations' in the same rural place and intra-class conflict therein with existing residents often feeling marginalised and being least well able to cope with reductions in local services and facilities.

- a contesting of local political power, with the historic and hegemonic blocs of the previous structured coherence first attempting to hold onto their local elite status then maybe attempting to forge alliances with in-coming class fractions and finally in some cases re-establishing their hegemonic position. Such contests are vital to an understanding of the changing societalisation affecting rural areas.

- a contesting of local cultural images, with new residents often experiencing a socially-produced meaning of rural idyll which is a rather sanitised and commodified version of rural history which can be starkly different from the more realistic and pragmatic meanings which longer-term residence in rural areas can instill and provide. In particular, rural cultural attributes are being reproduced in only slightly different form by these representatives of very different modes of regulation. It may be that new rural residents have hijacked existing cultures and replaced them with something very different, as for instance where minority language areas become overrun with in-migrants speaking only the majority
language.

Such changes may not necessarily lead to dramatic changes in how rural areas look, but they certainly cause changes in how it feels to live in the rural area concerned, and thereby any notion of structured coherence involving both the prevailing form of production and quality and style of life, work, enjoyment, entertainment and the like will suggest changing coherence due to these factors.

Again, the geography of socio-cultural recomposition in rural areas will not be a straightforward matter of pressure or peripherality. For a rural place to be within reach of those who might be attracted to a rural lifestyle certain issues of social and cultural as well as physical accessibility have to prevail. Moreover, the social and cultural attractiveness of particular places is also related to what alternative places have to offer. Just as 'counterurbanization' followed rural depopulation in many areas, so the attractions of some new kind of urbanism may at some stage in the future reverse the current urban-to-rural demographic trends, with an urban ideal outweighing a rural idyll in the socially constructed meaning of a desirable place for a desirable lifestyle. In some senses this would be a return to a situation currently characteristic of many of the more underdeveloped areas in rural Europe.

iii. The Role Of The State: How And Why Should The State Intervene To Make Rural Places More 'Attractive'?

It is not possible here to mention all forms of state intervention in rural areas, but it is important to reiterate that a changing mode of production does affect shifting relations between state and capital and the desire to see new social contracts introduced to suit changing economic circumstances. State activity occurs through different institutions in different programmes at different scales, but the very least we should differentiate between the levels of governmental action which are currently significant in different parts of rural Europe:

- the local state

Local governments and regional development agencies have been extremely active in different parts of rural Europe (see Cloke 1988; 1989). Part of their function has been to control or zone the development of housing and industry in particular areas, and there is an important link to be made here with the shifting nature of local political control and the resultant sectional interests that have been pursued in different rural areas. The societalization which is expressed through local development planning can be a crucial factor in whether certain areas are preserved as affluent museum pieces (for the purposes of certain class factions who wish to live in them and others who wish to 'share this part of their national heritage' maintained) or whether some flexibility is available for capital investment in housing, industry or servicing facilities. Changing local social relations will alter, sometimes albeit in a subtle way, the nature of local political objectives and action in rural development planning. Perhaps more often, however, changing social relations at a national scale will cause a shift in central-local relations resulting in conflict between central and local states, for example, in the clash between central support of capital fractions connected with housebuilding in the form of flexibility.

over the location of new development, and local political action to prevent new housing growth in their back yard. The deregulatory programmes introduced by several European states have diluted the strength of development control planning in some rural areas, and localised contesting of development has therefore become even more important.

State action for 'positive' development in rural areas is often channelled through regional agencies. Here again a changing mode of regulation has signalled different approaches by regional agencies than those employed, say 15 years ago. At that time, these agencies tended towards a top-down approach which consisted of designating boundaries of areas to be developed, implementing subsidies for incoming enterprises including making land and factory buildings available in key central locations, and striving to attract new economic enterprises into these new subsidised areas. More recently, the deregulatory ideologies of central governments have forced a switch in these tactics. The emphasis now is on subsidising and more on developing an 'entrepreneurial culture' which involves a seemingly bottom-up (but actually market-led) strategy of fostering local development based on localised resources and enterprise. The major role of such agencies is therefore one of marketing, training and advice rather than producing subsidised means of production.

State activity at these local levels is highly variegated. The artificially drawn boundaries of development areas increasingly serve to delineate the depositories of rural action. Outside these areas much depends on the resources of local authorities (which have largely suffered in the shifting central-local relations of the 1980's) or on the degree to which community self-help can be activated towards rural development objectives. When added to the rather complex circumstances which dictate whether a rural place is attractive to capital or to adventitious people, these structures of state intervention serve to stress the localisation of particular structured coherences in rural areas.

- the nation state

Central governments are obviously an essential function in establishing, maintaining and if necessary changing modes of regulation. Again, it would be facile in this limited space to attempt to describe the multi-faceted nature of radical periods of government such as that of the Thatcher administration in the 1980's (but see Cloke 1991 for such an attempt). It is, however, important to stress the ways in which shifting modes of regulation have been closely linked with creation of new 'cultures' which have impacted on previous structured coherences in the countryside. Two examples illustrate this point. First, programmes of privatisation and deregulation are linked with the culture of 'anti-planning'; allowing much more leeway to capital fractions interested in exploiting certain rural areas:

"The changes in governmental relations have led to significant limitations on the ability of planning authorities and other state agencies to intervene in the development of infrastructure and facilities in rural localities. The deregulation of planning has..."
The reform of EC structural funds reflects the growing importance of rural areas in economic development and structural adjustment. The European Council agreed in 1988 to make rural development objectives a priority, impacting rural areas which are likely to have important bearing on regional development, employment, and rural areas where the rural population is less than 75% of the average for the Economic Community.
Europe are by no means uniform or easily predictable. By viewing change in terms of the impacts of modes of regulation and societalization on localised structured coherences, we avoid reductionist and overgeneralised claims for the impact of government policy, and we begin to explore both the contradictions and strategies of capital and state in altering the institutional forms, networks and norms which seek to secure both societal compliance and stability between production and consumption. We can also assess the importance of the contesting of change and the conflicts arising from it in the socio-political spheres. Finally, we can emphasise the role of cultural factors which act as a glue in the establishment of local coherence. Using these conceptual tools we can recognise significant and widespread variation in the nature of coherence in different places within rural Europe. Some are very much 'hooked into' the new hi-tech service sector economy. Others have proved unattractive to these and other space-compressing trends. Although recent policy initiatives at the European scale suggest large blocks of rural areas with similar development needs, the concepts of regulation theory suggest that it will be most fruitful to understand change at a smaller scale where national and international trends of investment, regulation and social hegemony meet with localization and cultural coherence in localised places.

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