

# 1 Endogenous Development: Practices and Perspectives

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Diversity is one of the main features of European agriculture. It is also becoming one of the keywords in the debates on Common Agricultural Policy. Any European perspective on rural development must be grounded on the recognition of such diversity and must necessarily build upon it in order to maintain the agriculture required by Europe's peoples. Diversity (or heterogeneity) might be seen, depending on one's views, as a problem and/or as a remnant of the past, or it may be seen as a major challenge. In this book we will present some strategic elements for this latter point of view.

The diversity of Europe's agriculture is not a chance phenomenon. It is due not only to differences in factors such as climate, soil, physical distance from centres of consumption, historically-created land-use patterns etc., but above all, to the basic fact that agriculture is a social construction, i.e. the way agricultural practice is organized is heavily dependent on the actors involved in it. The strategies used by these actors, the ways in which they link their practices to markets and to technological developments, the specific interaction between farming activities and regional, national and supranational policies and interventions – are all decisive elements in the complex process that makes agricultural practice what it is – a highly diversified whole. In particular, the cultural repertoires of the actors involved, their historical experiences (vis-à-vis policy interventions for instance) and the interrelations as created – in a conscious and/or implicit way – vis-à-vis local ecology, more often than not play a crucial role.

Farming, therefore, is not to be understood as simply a set of variations around one theme. On the contrary, European farming entails a wide and complex array of themes: the highly differentiated social, economic, cultural and historical relations in which it is embedded make it the richly chequered outcome of the goal-oriented and conscious activity of the people involved. It is precisely for this reason that throughout this book we use the concepts of heterogeneity and styles of farming.

Central to the book is the notion of endogenous development. Endogenous development patterns are founded mainly, though not exclusively, on locally available resources, such as the potentialities of the local ecol-

ogy, labour force, knowledge, and local patterns for linking production to consumption, etc. As is argued in several contributions, endogenous development can revitalize and dynamize these local resources, which otherwise might decline or become superfluous. Furthermore, endogenous development practices tend to materialize as self-centred processes of growth: that is, relatively large parts of the total value generated through this type of development are re-allocated in the locality itself.

The renewed interest in endogenous development and the search for an adequate theoretical understanding of it may provoke some surprise. However, for those involved in, or familiar with the so-called 'modernization' of European agriculture over the past three or four decades, this renewed interest will come as no surprise.

Modernization of agriculture has become increasingly seen as originating from and driven by actors and institutions external to the producers in the agricultural sector itself. This specific focus was consolidated by a concept of modernization which stressed an essential rupture with existing practices and types of discourse of the countryside. Implicitly agriculture was considered a stagnant sector. 'Getting agriculture moving' and 'transforming traditional agriculture' were some of the telling slogans of the 1960s that reflected this specific and still persistent view. Correspondingly, those farmers who were more able than others to participate in the modernization projects, were classified as those most open to outside information, messages and innovations, an attitude which, in its turn, was perceived as being identical to an orientation towards urban dynamism.

This dominant (sociological) focus fitted well with mainstream economics, which perceived agricultural development as essentially a (re)adaptation of farming practices to (changes in) global markets and technology. While paying much more attention to regional variation, recent theories such as that elaborated by Hayami and Ruttan (1985), still follow this deterministic model.

Accordingly, the practice of modernization was (and still is) shaped by sets of external interventions, mostly centralized in state-agencies aiming to introduce new organizational models for farming, new interlinkages between farming, markets and market-agencies, new technological innovations meant to replace existing techniques and knowledge, new forms of socialization and techno-economic training, and, last but not least, new models for the definition of roles and identities for farmers and their wives.

Notwithstanding the wide differences between such sets of interventions, the deliberate effort to create an integrated policy (and model) for these interventions, implied, in the first place, that the degree of discontinuity vis-à-vis existing practices, relationships and role definitions increased considerably. Indeed, the 'application' or 'implementation' of such an integrated policy more often than not materialized as a de-facto rupture with existing practices: the reorganization of labour and produc-

tion processes became, together with the introduction of new politico-economic schemes, an empirical, albeit highly differentiated, phenomenon.

In the second place, the distance created between existing discourse and practice and the new models was highly selective: under certain conditions, in particular places and at specific moments it proved to be much easier to 'apply', 'adopt' or 'implement' modernization projects than at other times or places. The same is true for heterogeneity among farmers (taking into account family situation, demographic cycle, gender relations, structure of local labour markets, local power relations, etc.). That is to say, the practice of modernization turned out to be a highly differentiated phenomenon: thus modernization not only reproduced existing differences, but increasingly generated its own differences and inequalities. In this way modernization resulted in growth as well as underdevelopment and marginalization. Consequently, the simple 'repetition' of the growth-model typical for 'growth poles', or so-called 'centre economies', became, within the 'less favoured areas', an ever less convincing policy proposal.

In the third place, it must be stressed that, since the practice of modernization revolved around the introduction of exogenous elements into the farming sector, dependency became internalized into the structure and mechanisms of growth and development – not only on a material level, but also regarding the dynamizing elements themselves.

In the fourth place, the emphasis on exogenous development produced a particular bias in our knowledge of the nature, scope and mechanisms of agricultural development. Social practice is not only shaped, at least partly, by available knowledge and theory that are, or become, part of the practice concerned, practice also shapes the scope, structure, language, legitimacy and idiosyncrasy of the theories themselves. Indeed, on the level of theoretical knowledge on rural development, a remarkable redistribution of knowledge and ignorance has been produced during the epoch of modernization. Considerable knowledge now exists on how to design and implement projects for exogenous development. However, on how to conceptualize and analyze endogenous development patterns, and of their impact and their potential, there is remarkable ignorance, expressing itself, for instance, in the widely shared belief that if such endogenous development patterns are relevant at all, their significance for resolving actual problems is minimal. It is our opinion that this historically-produced ignorance manifests itself today as one of the central features and causes of rural and agrarian questions and problems in Europe.

#### *Heterogeneity Entailing Specific Expressions of Endogenous Growth*

The heterogeneity of European agriculture reflects a wide range of development patterns, some of which are dependent on 'external' forces, while others are mostly grounded in 'local' interests, perspectives, resources and types of discourse. It is impossible to ascribe this wide range

of patterns to one dominant set of 'driving forces' located in markets, agrarian policy and technology development. Agrarian development is never a simple derivative of the latter: understanding the dynamics of agrarian development implies a careful analysis of the social relations of production, as located in town-country relations, in the intersection of agriculture with local, regional, national and international economies (which usually involves specific institutional patterns and linkages), in historically-produced landscapes, in local culture, in reigning family patterns, etc. These social relations of production not only determine and therefore structure the way farming is related to markets, technology and policy, they also imply a frequent negotiation, adaptation and/or transformation of the goals, instruments, tendencies, directives and rationale contained in markets, technology, and policy. That is, the same set of market conditions, technology packages and agrarian policies might well lead to a considerable variety of responses. Consequently, as an expression of differentiated development trends, heterogeneity is reproduced.

Heterogeneity in agriculture is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. One of the criteria we can use to analyze this diversity is the degree of autonomy or dependency vis-à-vis global markets and the supply of technology. We are not, of course, saying that development patterns can be defined in ideal-typical terms as exclusively founded upon local resources, nor as only entailing external elements. What empirical research indicates is that they contain a specific balance of 'internal' and 'external' elements. What turns out decisive, for those who follow the exogenous development pattern, is that it is the outside or external elements that compose the conceptual model from which the eventual utility of local resources is judged. If the latter 'fit' with the former, they are integrated according to the rationale of the established model. If not, they will increasingly be considered as 'outdated', 'worthless', or as a 'hindrance' to change. In endogenous development patterns, on the other hand, a different balance is encountered: It is local resources, as combined and developed in local styles of farming, that figure as the starting point as well as the yardstick for the evaluation of the eventual utility of 'external' elements. If the latter can be used to strengthen both the specificity and the vitality of local farming styles, then they will be internalized (often after a careful 'deconstruction' and 'recomposition' so as to guarantee the maximum fit with local conditions, perspectives and interests). If no 'fit' can be created, then the external elements will remain what they are, that is, 'outside' elements.

Different chapters of this book highlight how rural development patterns indeed reflect a highly different balance of 'internal' and 'external' elements. This becomes not only clear when comparing regions; it is especially the case when detailed analyses are made of heterogeneity within specific regions. This is illustrated in the contribution of Cristóvão, Oostindie and Pereira, who analyze the impressive heterogeneity in the

Barroso area of north Portugal. They show, in the first place, that generic concepts, such as endogenous and exogenous development, can indeed be operationalized so as to capture the specificity as well as the diversity of local development patterns. Second, their research stresses that the essential differences between development patterns are, so to say, hidden in the subtleties of the strategically-managed balances contained in the different patterns. The same goes for the contribution of Ventura and van der Meulen. They discuss heterogeneity in Umbrian farming in Italy, focusing on the production of Chianina meat, a highly appreciated quality product. This heterogeneity is linked, as they show, to specific socio-economic circuits that link the production, transformation and consumption of meat, each circuit being characterized by its own, particular social definitions of meat quality. From this research, as well as from the Portuguese and Spanish examples, insights emerge on the farming styles involved. In this context, the Spanish case described by Remmers is especially interesting since it entails the collective action of producers.

The general argument that emerges is that, in the first place, empirical heterogeneity is neither a random nor an insignificant phenomenon. It reflects frequently a wide array of local farming styles. Second, each empirical enquiry argues that this array of different farming styles contains both those reflecting endogenous development processes, and others expressing a predominantly exogenous development trend. As will become clear, the notions of endogenous and exogenous are handled in these empirical cases as relational concepts that primarily refer to the empirical differences that are encountered in the particular regions or localities. Third, it is in the careful exploration of the more endogenous styles and associated development patterns, that specific clues are encountered that could strengthen endogenous development processes. In other words, perspectives on endogenous development arise through the comparative analysis of heterogeneity and associated styles of farming.

On a more abstract level, the opening Chapters by van der Ploeg and Whatmore in Part I, are dedicated to the methodological and conceptual problems entailed in this approach, while Benvenuti's contribution (Chapter 9) discusses the broader dimensions of the problem, that is, the general interrelations of science and practice in rural development. These are followed in Chapter 10 by Slee's argument that one needs to develop a well-grounded theory of endogenous development. In current, or, as Benvenuti would say, in 'canonical scientific approaches', it is indeed difficult to understand theoretically the empirically-relevant practices of endogenous development.

The perspectives on endogenous development are amply discussed in Part II of the book. Both Huillet and Picchi discuss, from their ample experience in policy-making, the political arenas in which endogenous practices are embedded. While Huillet (who is responsible for rural development within the OECD) argues that endogenous development emerges

as a major challenge requiring new policy arrangements, Picchi (who is responsible for rural development in the Emilia Romagna region in Italy) examines the contradictory relations between central and local powers.

But it is not only policy which is relevant for the strengthening of endogenous development processes. It is also commercialization, as discussed by Ventura and van der Meulen, and the need for more appropriate tools of economic analysis, as suggested by Thomson, as well as attention to the design of adequate technologies as argued by Roep and de Bruin. Their argument is echoed in the contribution of Antonello and de Roest, two researchers linked to the CRPA research institute that operates in the area of Parmesan cheese production. If adequate technologies are not developed, then valuable endogenous practices such as the production of Parmesan cheese can quickly be marginalized. Gibbon, a well-known expert on farming systems research, offers us some methodological clues, stressing the importance of comparative analysis of relevant empirical settings. His general recommendation fits well with the work presented by Portela and Portela and van den Dries, who show, for specific areas of interest (manure and irrigation) how the empirical analysis of heterogeneity, especially as far as 'technical issues' are concerned, offers stimulating, refreshing and innovating insights for promoting more adequate technology development.

Finally, the importance of agency is brought out by Lowe, Murdoch and Ward. They link the discussion of endogenous development to the issue of sustainability, concluding that a reordering of priorities is urgently needed.

Locality is a concept that is deployed in several of the papers, but this must not be misunderstood. Although one can agree fully with Lowe *et al.* when they claim that '*rural localities might be able to play to their strengths*', it must also be recognized that the meaning of 'locality' was largely de-activated and deconstructed during the epoch of modernization and that it has only recently been reconstituted (van der Ploeg, 1992). At the same time, it must be recognized that locality as such contains no guarantee whatsoever. One could even argue that more often than not endogenous development is blocked not by global factors but by locality itself. Again we see that there is no general scheme for endogenous development. It is only the careful and detailed exploration of farming styles and other local elements as embedded in particular frames of interaction with 'outside' factors, that can render insights into the prospects for (or the impossibility of) endogenous development. Yet having said this, one cannot but agree with the statement of Lowe *et al.* that '*rural livelihoods [and hence 'localities'] could be strengthened locally rather than weakened globally*'.