

TABLE 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY FIRMS IN NORTHWEST DONEGAL GAELTACHT

HEAD OFFICE	FIRMS BY MAIN PRODUCT	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	AGE IN YEARS	OWNERSHIP
Local	Fish Processing	30	10	Branch (Irl)
Dublin	Telecommunications	203	14	Branch (USA)
UK	Printed Circuit Boards	29	4	Branch (UK)
Local	Central Heating Radiators	67	11	Autonomous
Kilkenny	Worsted Yarn	121	14	Branch (Canada)
Local	Plastic Bags	78	15	Subsidiary
Local	Potato Crisp/Snacks	90	11	Branch (Belgium)
Belgium	Protective Clothing	60	5	Branch (Denmark)
Denmark	Vacuum Moulded Plastic	6	5	Branch (Denmark)
Local	Chemical Process Equipment/ Fibre Glass Moulds	8	2	Autonomous
Local	Toroidal Transformers	69	7	Autonomous
Local	Fish Processing	14	24	Autonomous
Dublin	Knitwear	30	10	Branch (Irl)
Local	Weaving	14	11	Autonomous
Dublin	Salmon Farming	40	7	Branch (Norway and Irl)
Local	PVC Windows/Door	48	14	Autonomous

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Abstract

Questionnaire surveys are used to elicit the perceptions of rural residents of the West of Ireland of the performance of a number of state agencies involved in rural development. The results reveal widespread disenchantment and alienation, with particular emphasis being placed on the inappropriateness of centralised state schemes to the specific circumstances of local areas.

Introduction

An outstanding feature of Irish political life since the achievement of independence in 1922 has been the growing centralisation of power in the hands of organs of the central government (Lee, 1985: 84-6). Local government has been reduced to the role of being little more than the agent of the central state with respect to certain functions such as roadworks and vocational education. With little independent funding, local authorities face fundamental constraints as regards scope for independent action or initiative. This is in direct contrast to most other West European countries, where regional and local authorities generally possess a much wider range of functions, and a much higher level of independence concerning how these functions are carried out.

In line with general international trends, the Irish government has assumed a growing responsibility for promoting national and regional economic development. Although there have been some token gestures towards regionalisation (e.g. the establishment of the Regional Development Organisations and the appointment of the Shannon Development Company as a development agency for the Midwest Region), both national and regional development policies have been largely formulated and implemented by a plethora of central state agencies. These agencies tend to both formulate and implement policy without reference to one another; their mutual relationships are characterised by either simple indifference or bureaucratic jealousy with a notable absence of coordination and integration at the local level, where the impact of policy implementation is felt (Commins et al., 1978: 145-155).

Due to their centralised nature, these agencies tend to adopt standardised national policies which are applied uniformly throughout the state. There is little or no provision for local input into policy formulation or implementation. The only avenue for local

democratic input into these agencies is via parliamentary representatives. However, it is argued that it is the nature of the Irish political system that these representatives, for the most part, see their role exclusively as lobbying for specific local favours from the agencies, rather than as having any function in shaping the policies of these agencies, or the methods employed in putting these policies into effect. The general upshot of all this is that development policy formulation has taken on a strongly technocratic/bureaucratic character (Commings et al., 1978: 147), with no real public accountability, although the agencies concerned are susceptible to pressure from organised lobby groups, such as farming and business associations and trade unions.

The Field Surveys

This paper presents the findings of surveys of how the inhabitants of a number of study areas in the West of Ireland relate to the attempts to promote development on their behalf being made by a number of state agencies. The West of Ireland is an area comprising about a half of the national territory which is characterised by difficult physical environment, small farms, and heavy outmigration. It has received favoured treatment under a number of official schemes, such as inclusion in the EC's Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, and availability of higher levels of industrial grants than elsewhere in the country.

Random sample questionnaire surveys were carried out in four study areas in all, including the Gaeltacht (Gaelic speaking) areas of South Connemara and West Kerry, and the non-Gaeltacht areas of Northwest Connemara and North Leitrim (See Figure 1). In all, some 855 respondents of voting age were interviewed - 252 in South Connemara, 199 in West Kerry, 126 in Northwest Connemara, and 278 in North Leitrim. The surveys covered a wide range of aspects of development: detailed reports of the findings with respect to the two Gaeltacht areas and North Leitrim have already been published (Breathnach, 1984; Duffy, 1985), while a report on Northwest Connemara is in preparation (Breathnach and Kelly, forthcoming). This paper focuses specifically on official state sponsored development activities. Rather than present the detailed findings (which can be pursued in the above publications), a number of general issues arising from these findings are discussed.

With the exception of West Kerry, where land quality is somewhat better than in the West of Ireland generally, the study areas are characterised by very poor agricultural resources. Despite this, agriculture remains the main form of economic activity although, given the typical combination of poor land and small farms, individual incomes arising in agriculture are quite limited. The study areas are also characterised by remoteness and inaccessibility relative to the main centres of population and high income, both nationally and internationally.

The Gaeltacht Study Areas

In the case of the two Gaeltacht areas, the main focus of attention was Udaras na Gaeltachta (the Gaeltacht Authority - henceforth UnG), a development agency which came into being in 1980. It differs from its predecessor, Gaeltarra Eireann, in that a majority of its board are elected by universal suffrage from within the Gaeltacht. Its original remit enabled it to make suggestions to the Minister for the Gaeltacht as regards what further powers it considered it should have, in addition to the industrial promotion powers inherited from Gaeltarra Eireann. However, to date, no such additional powers have been acquired. Accordingly, UnG has been functioning mainly as a promoter of manufacturing industry, much of it sourced from outside the Gaeltacht (and, indeed, outside Ireland altogether). However, in recent years, UnG has been increasingly emphasising enterprise indigenous to the Gaeltacht, and economic activities outside the manufacturing sector.

UnG regards job creation as its primary objective, and in this respect it would appear to have been quite successful relative to the situation elsewhere in the country, particularly in the context of the current recession. Thus, whereas national manufacturing employment declined by 15.8% (from 248,268 to 208,931) between the beginning of 1980 and the end of 1984, employment in companies assisted by UnG declined by only 1.5% (from 4,472 to 4,405) in the same period (Industrial Development Authority, 1981: 37; 1985: 12; Udaras na Gaeltachta, 1981: 8, 1985: 7). How UnG has performed in terms of its primary task of language maintenance is a different matter; however, it would appear that there is a poor understanding of the relationships between economic development and cultural conservation within the organisation. While a majority of UnG's Board members are popularly elected, this appears to have had little impact on policy formulation within the authority, with the elected representatives - mainly party politicians - adopting a role similar to that of those in the national parliament, namely, lobbying for their own local constituencies.

A fair degree of cynicism concerning the role of the elected representatives was apparent from the surveys. The great majority of the South Connemara sample saw them as having little power (This question was not asked in West Kerry). This is corroborated by the fact that a majority saw no difference between UnG and its predecessor, Gaeltarra Eireann, which had no elected representatives. In both Gaeltacht areas, the great majority saw party politics as playing an important part in the working of UnG, but mainly through promoting divisiveness and providing political patronage.

An important part of the UnG's industrialisation programme has been its spatial selectivity, both between and within Gaeltacht regions, with the Ceathru Rua (in South Connemara) and Gaoth Dobhair (in County Donegal) areas being particular foci of growth via the medium of industrial estates. The surveys indicated a high level of

awareness of this selectivity within the Gaeltacht community. Thus, whereas a strong majority of South Connemara respondents saw employment provision as the main beneficial consequence of UnG's activities, this was much less the case in West Kerry, where grants (to small businesses) were seen as having a much more prominent role. This reflects the relative lack of factory based employment sponsored by UnG in the latter area.

Within South Connemara, extreme local sensitivity to the spatial selectivity of UnG's industrialisation programme was in evidence. Thus, the respondents in localities where UnG sponsored factories have been concentrated were much more positive in their assessment of the performance of UnG than other localities not so favoured. This was corroborated by much higher levels of participation in the UnG elections in the favoured localities, indicating that failure to provide employment opportunities in the immediate locality can generate significant levels of alienation within the community. Overall, less than half the South Connemara respondents could name correctly even one of the two elected UnG representatives from the area. Interestingly, the corresponding proportion for West Kerry was three quarters, perhaps reflecting the more compact and intimate nature of this Gaeltacht area.

Another interesting point is that a majority of South Connemara respondents were unable to distinguish between UnG and Roinn na Gaeltachta (The Department of the Gaeltacht), the Government department to which UnG is answerable, but which also administers grants schemes in its own right - mainly for social, cultural and infrastructural purposes. The fact that both organisations occupy identical and adjoining modern office buildings in a rather incongruous rural setting in South Connemara undoubtedly has a considerable bearing on this. At the same time, it may reflect a degree of popular estrangement and alienation vis-a-vis bureaucratic state agencies. This is corroborated by frequent encounters, during the course of fieldwork, with complaints that UnG's executives had little real identification with the Gaeltacht community, and that they were preoccupied instead with making a good impression on foreign business executives.

This view is reinforced by the fact that, in all Gaeltacht localities, the majority of respondents thought that local community cooperatives were doing more for their area than UnG. This, despite the fact that the level of investment in development activities on the part of UnG is an order of magnitude higher than that of the cooperatives. Predictably, the gap between UnG and the cooperatives was particularly large in those localities not favoured by UnG's industrialisation programme. The very positive relative assessment of the cooperatives is thought to reflect not only their community base, but also the wide range of activities in which they engage, and the fact that many of their development activities (such as piped water supply, land reclamation and Gaelic language colleges) have diffused benefits widely throughout the communities in question, whereas the main benefit deriving from UnG, namely, fulltime employment, has been more specific in its incidence (Breathnach, 1986:86).

The Non-Gaeltacht Study Areas

In the non-Gaeltacht study areas of Northwest Connemara and North Leitrim, a wider range of state sponsored activities was reviewed. In both areas there was a high level of appreciation of the difficulties in promoting industrial development due to the problems of remoteness and poor infrastructure. Nevertheless, there was a strong feeling in both areas that the efforts of the state's industrial promotion agency, namely, the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), in bringing in industry were less than adequate. This finding should be placed in the general context of national industrial policy which, since the early 1960s, has placed heavy emphasis on attracting foreign investment and distributing it widely throughout the country, with particular emphasis on developing the industrial base of the West of Ireland (Breathnach, 1985). The success of this policy has had the effect of creating a mentality of dependence on the IDA to provide factory employment in virtually every local community. The resultant heightened expectations inevitably induce a feeling of critical disappointment in those localities where the IDA has not "delivered".

It is ironic that the existence of the only locally based official mechanism for promoting economic development in Ireland (the County Development Teams operated by the County Councils) is virtually unnoticed in both study areas. This partly reflects the fact that these teams normally function as reactive agencies, responding to initiatives from private individuals, rather than going into local communities to actively promote development at the community level. It may be added that the remit of the County Development Teams is to assist small businesses which do not have the same public profile as the large factory based developments associated with the IDA.

Since a high proportion of respondents in both study areas had a farming background, particular significance may be ascribed to their assessment of state sponsored schemes for the development of agriculture. In both areas, an extremely high level of alienation is reflected in the very limited take-up of these schemes, and the very low level of contact with the agricultural advisory service. Obviously, this lack of involvement could be attributed largely to the deficiencies of the local farming populations themselves, such as low education levels, inappropriate demographic structures, and the prevalence of a "dole" mentality. Nevertheless, while the limitations of the natural resource base for agriculture in the study areas were acknowledged, there was a strong feeling among the respondents that there was considerable scope for improvement, but that the state's development schemes were either inappropriate or downright irrelevant to the study areas.

There has, in fact, been widespread criticism that the highly-centralised agricultural development schemes introduced by the EC have been of little relevance to the special circumstances of the West of Ireland where some 90 per cent of farms are ineligible for the special assistance for development farms under the Farm Modernisation Scheme

(Commins et al., 1978: 48-9). If one accepts that an essential prerequisite for effective agricultural development throughout the West of Ireland is a radical enlargement of production units, then both the state's and the EC's efforts in this regard have failed dismally. Farm enlargement in Ireland has been mainly the responsibility of the Land Commission since the foundation of the state, but the Commission's performance in this respect has been less than adequate (Interdepartmental Committee, 1978: 33-41). The EC also tried to make land available for farm enlargement via the Farm Retirement Scheme, introduced in 1974, but this too was an utter failure (Commins et al., 1978: 69).

Fishing is also of considerable significance to the economy of the Northwest Connemara study area. Again, while the local respondents strongly expressed the belief that there was much scope for development in this sector, the overwhelming sentiment was that the state's schemes for promoting fishing were heavily biased in favour of large operators, and were unsuited to the particular needs of the study area, where small scale inshore fishing was the norm.

As regards forestry, it has been argued (An Foras Taluntais, 1973: Part IV) that, in economic terms, much of the land of North Leitrim would be more remunerative if devoted to tree cultivation rather than existing types of farm enterprise. The survey showed a widespread acceptance of increased afforestation in the area. However, other surveys have shown that existing schemes for promoting private afforestation have generated very limited response from small Western farmers, and that major alterations to these schemes are required if they are to achieve their objectives (Kelleher, 1986; Convery and Dripchak, 1983). The main obstacles to be overcome in this respect are lack of tradition and skills in forest cultivation, and the lengthy period over which payback on initial investment is spread (especially given the ageing demographic profile of most Western farmers).

Finally, as regards tourism, there was a widespread appreciation of the attractiveness of the study areas to tourists, due mainly to the features such as remoteness and bleak landscape which have hindered their development in other respects. Once again, the popular feeling was that there was much potential for improving the areas' attractiveness through the provision of appropriate facilities. However, yet again, it was felt that inadequate assistance was being provided by the state towards bringing these improvements about.

Conclusion

Quite obviously, there is widespread popular disenchantment with, and alienation from, the state's attempts to promote development in

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the West of Ireland. While one can equally obviously retort that it is easy to complain, and that the Irish have a particular propensity in this direction, at the same time, the surveys did adduce an amount of sound argumentation in support of these complaints.

Particular significance may be ascribed to the recurring theme of the inappropriateness of central state schemes to the particular circumstances of local areas. Another particularly significant finding was the high esteem in which locally based community development efforts were held. This esteem was apparent in both the Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht study areas. Both of these findings point to the need for decentralisation to the local level of both the formulation and implementation of development policies. The present author has presented proposals elsewhere (Breathnach, 1983) along these lines.

Democratically based decentralisation, it is argued, would produce greater awareness of both local needs and resources, thereby laying the basis for more effective development policies. In addition, such decentralisation would be conducive to a higher level of efficiency in the development effort by providing a mechanism for coordination and integration at the local level of what are at present the disparate activities of different state agencies. At the same time, a more central role in the development process on the part of community groups may be conducive to a more positive view of this process on the part of those whom it is designed to benefit, namely, the ordinary inhabitants of disadvantaged areas. The overall effect of such measures may be preferable to the existing state of affairs, both economically, in terms of being more efficient in the use of scarce resources, and politically, in terms of being less alienating and therefore more conducive to strengthening the democratic institutions of the state.

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SECTOR VERSUS REGION: THE STALEMATE OF NORWEGIAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN THE 1980S

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Abstract

The issues addressed in this paper are the extent to which regional development policy goals are acted upon and what results are obtained. To what extent do policy measures achieve their goals? To what extent does the central government really try, or should the concept of regional policy be written off as a symbolic gimmick?

1 Introduction

While the 1970s were characterized by a trend towards decentralized regional development, a relative consolidation of peripheral regions and a slower growth of the major urban regions, this trend has been dramatically reversed in the 1980s. Increased out-migration from peripheral regions and especially from Northern Norway, together with reduced in-migration and falling birth rates have led to a population decrease in most communes outside the major urban regions. These regions, and notably the southeastern part of the country, which includes the Oslo region, have attracted most new jobs being generated in still expanding manufacturing industries and in the growing private service sector.

These development trends may be seen as alarming and a challenge to government policies, but they may also be seen as a manifestation of inevitable structural changes which can only be influenced by government policies to a limited extent in a mixed economy like Norway.

Large amounts of money are being spent on government transfers of various kinds. That these transfers in practice influence structural changes in a substantial way, also along the regional dimension, is not unlikely in an economy where half of the GNP is channelled through government budgets, and where a relatively high proportion of this is being spent, not on government services, but on transfers which thus are channelled "back" to the private sector and the household sector.

This raises the question of the actual effects of government policies given the background of problems and challenges raised by the ongoing changes in the location and the settlement structure.

As seen by the author, these questions are, however, not subject to serious consideration for the time being, mainly due to the present party-political - or rather - parliamentary situation. One may suspect