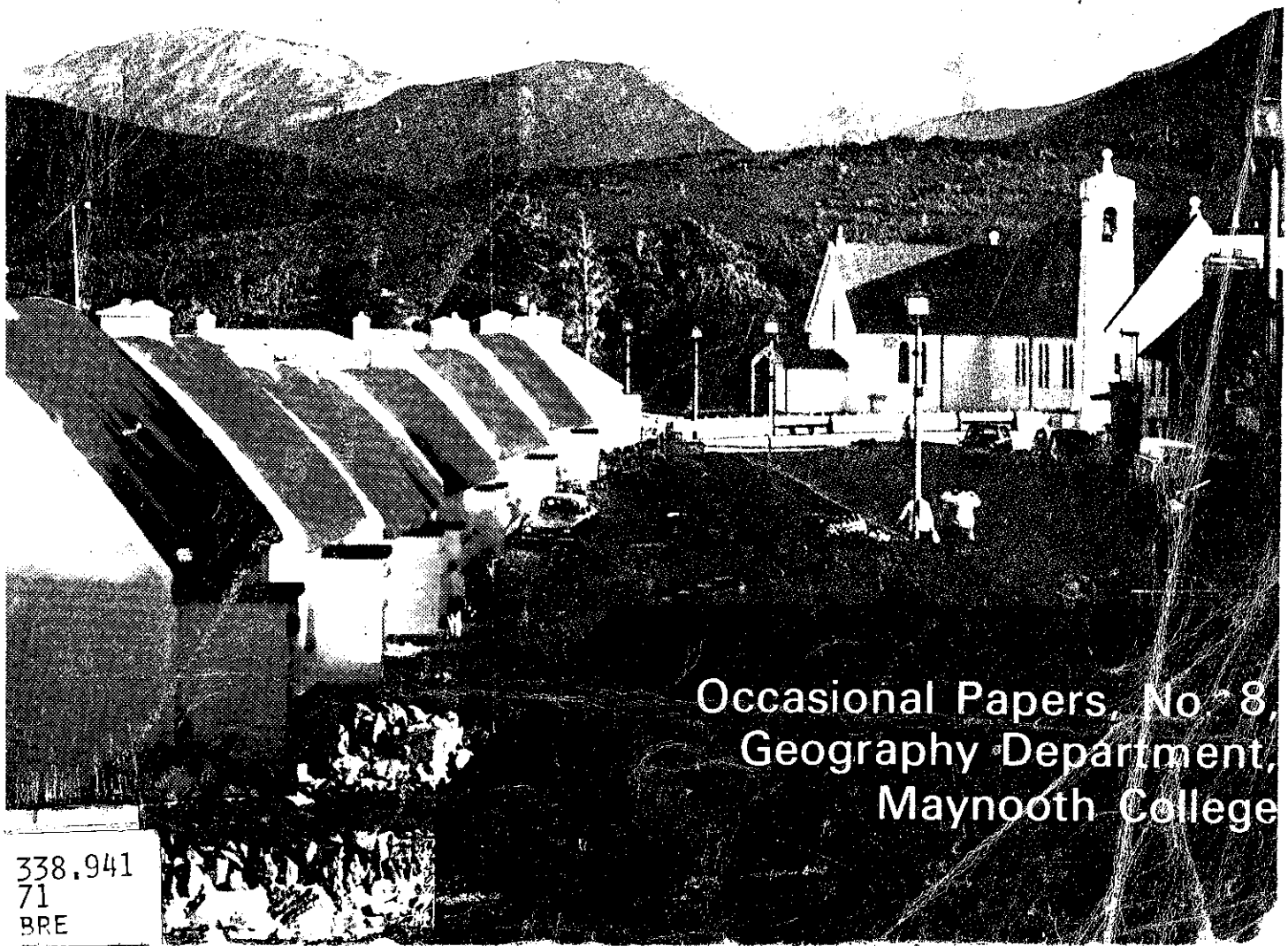


# Community Perceptions of Rural Development in Northwest Connemara

By

Proinnsias Breathnach

Nuala Kelly



Occasional Papers, No. 8,  
Geography Department,  
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IN NORTHWEST CONNEMARA**

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**Proinnsias Breathnach And Nuala Kelly**

**Occasional Paper Series, No. 8,  
Department Of Geography,  
St. Patrick's College,  
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## PREFACE

This report presents the findings of one segment of a larger research project being carried out by members of the Geography Department at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. (This research project, entitled 'Rural development strategies in the West of Ireland', and funded by the National Board for Science and Technology, has as its focus the actual and potential roles of both state agencies and locally-based groups in promoting rural development.) A number of study areas have been selected within which in-depth examinations are being conducted of the contribution to development being made by both types of approach. The study area which is the subject of this report was chosen because of the existence within it of a particularly vigorous framework of locally-based development which could be set against state-sponsored development policies and measures in the same area.

A major component of the overall research project has been an attempt to gauge how the intended beneficiaries of development activities (i.e. the inhabitants of the areas in which these activities, whether carried out by the state or local groups, are taking place) perceive the processes of development and change that are going on about them. In this respect, the research team has been influenced by the sentiment encapsulated in the following passage:

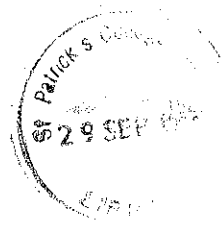
"The values a society holds ... are the ultimate standard by which development or the lack of it will be judged. It is perhaps obvious but worth restating that an outside view of a society's 'development' may be very different from the assessment made by that society itself."

(Stohr, W.B. and Taylor, D.R.F., 1981, p.453)

Accordingly, a questionnaire survey was carried out in the study area, and covered a range of topics concerning the processes of development and change. These included popular perceptions of the effectiveness of development activities being carried out by the state and its agencies and by local, community-based groups; of a set of public services and facilities; of how the survey respondents compared their home area with a number of alternative reference areas; and of how the study area had been seen to change, for better or worse, in recent years.

The report is structured as follows: Chapter 1 introduces the study area and outlines the methodology employed by the questionnaire survey. Chapter 2 presents a socio-demographic profile of the study-area population, as represented by the survey samples. Chapter 3 is concerned with social services/facilities, Chapter 4 with state-sponsored development, and Chapter 5 with community-based development. Chapter 6 is concerned with the perceived quality of life in the study areas, in terms of how the areas are seen as places to live compared with other areas, and how they have been seen to change in recent years. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes with a summary of the report's main findings and a discussion of some of the implications arising from these findings. A copy of the questionnaire used in the survey is included in the Appendix.

The questionnaire survey upon which this report is based was organised by Patrick J. Duffy and the authors, of the Department of Geography at Maynooth College, with the assistance of Kay and Eileen MacKeogh. The survey interviews were carried out by students from the Maynooth College Geography Department whose enthusiastic participation is gratefully acknowledged. Data entry and computer processing were carried out by Sean O Fogartaigh. The maps were drawn by Paul Ferguson and James Keenan. The authors express thanks to all of these, and to the following who provided information, advice and assistance regarding the preparation of the field survey and the



compilation of the subsequent report: Kieran O'Donohue and Michael O'Neill (Connemara West Ltd.), John Coyne (Tullycross Credit Union), Charles Lynch, Frank Dawson and Frank Kelly (Galway County Development Team), C.P. O'Gara (The Land Commission), Eamonn Scannell (ACOT), Joan Aylward and Ray O'Connor (Industrial Development Authority), Noel O'Rourke (Western Region Tourism Organisation), John McKeown (National Manpower Service), the Reverend Joseph McNamara P.P. and the Reverend John Porter C.C. The authors alone are responsible for any errors of omission or interpretation in the report.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY AREA AND SURVEY METHODOLOGY

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY AREA

The parish of Ballinakill is located in the extreme northwest of the Connemara region of County Galway, between Killary Harbour to the northeast and Clifden to the southwest (see Maps 1 and 2). Although there are some small villages in the district, Clifden (1981 population: 796) is the only urban centre in this part of Connemara. Galway City and Westport (Map 1) are some 80 and 50 kilometres distant, respectively. The area is characterised by a wet climate and difficult terrain, with an extensive blanket bog cover. As a result, the resource base for agriculture is limited, although, at the same time, such an environment has considerable tourism potential.

Apart from a couple of townlands, Ballinakill parish coincides with the District Electoral Divisions (DEDs) of Renvyle, Ballinakill, Cleggan and Cushkillary. According to the Population Census of 1981, these four DEDs had a combined population of 1,963, an increase of 167 (9.3%) over the 1971 population of 1,796, thus marking a reversal of the previous pattern of continuous decline. There was a slight female majority in the 1981 population, which is unusual for rural areas in the west of Ireland, but which is at least partially attributable to the presence of a residential girls' secondary school in the parish.

While the demographic structure of rural Ireland improved dramatically in the 1970s, the 1981 census indicated some residual aspects of a weak demographic structure in the study area. Thus, some 30% of males, and 14% of females, aged over 45 were single (excluding widowers/widows). Of the total number of households in the four DEDs (492), one fifth contained only one person, and a further one third contained only two. Of 338 "family units" as defined by the Census of Population (i.e. married couples and/or parents with children), one quarter consisted of childless couples. Overall, there was an average of 3.5 persons per household in the study area.

The improved demographic structure in rural Ireland which emerged in the 1970s reflected a corresponding improvement in the underlying economic base, which was reflected in turn in better housing conditions. Nevertheless, the 1981 census still showed that a substantial portion of the study area's population was living in substandard accommodation, with almost 20% of houses having no piped water supply, either indoor or outdoor, and 15% having no toilet of any kind. It is likely that much of the area's ageing population of single people and childless couples was living in such conditions.

In all, some 30% of the area's houses were built before 1919, with almost the same proportion again having been built between the wars, when there was considerable government assistance for new housing in rural areas. The upswing of the 1970s is indicated by the fact that the proportion of houses built in this decade (21%) was slightly greater than the proportion built in the previous three decades. The 1981 census found that over three quarters of the area's houses were owner-occupied, with no outstanding loans or mortgages.

In terms of economic structure, the 1981 census showed that agriculture was nowhere

near as dominant as it once was. Thus, only 36% of all households were classified as farm households, and allowing for the fact that not all those living in farm households were working on farms, only 28% of those gainfully occupied were found to be working in agriculture. The size structure of farms in the area shows the need for finding employment outside agriculture if one is to remain in the area: over two thirds of the farms were of less than 30 acres, with only 13% in excess of 50 acres. When one considers the generally very poor soils of the area, it is clear that the great majority of the farms are unable to provide an income comparable to what is available from most forms of off-farm employment.

Service employment accounted for 43% of all those at work in the area, while a further 18% were employed in industry (including construction). While the census figures do not allow one to calculate this precisely, the indications are that some 10% of the area's workforce were engaged in fishing, which is a very high proportion by national standards, and which shows the particular significance of this sector in any discussion of the area's future economic development. Finally, it may be noted that, according to the 1981 census, no less than 31% of the area's labour force was recorded as being unemployed or seeking work for the first time. It may be that some of these were small farmers who recorded themselves as being unemployed because they were in receipt of the dole. Nevertheless, this extraordinarily high unemployment rate (for 1981) highlights the urgent necessity for expanding the employment base of the area.

### SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The sample for the survey was drawn from the 1983 register of electors. This excludes people under eighteen years and includes those who have died or moved and not been withdrawn from the register. There was a total of 1,289 registered electors in those townlands comprising Ballinakill parish. A 10% sample of 129 was set on the basis of the personnel, time, and other resources available. In order to maximise the effective use of these resources, a "clustered" sampling approach was used, whereby groups of townlands were selected, based principally on grounds of population concentration and accessibility. A random sampling method was then used to identify the appropriate number and names of target respondents in each townland group.

In case some of these would not be able to participate in the survey for one reason or another (e.g. absent, deceased, refusal), a second group of "fall-back" respondents was also randomly selected. Where the latter were also unavailable, those conducting the interviews were asked to select houses "randomly" (in a subjective sense) in the vicinity and conduct interviews therein, where possible.

As it turned out, the respondents to the questionnaire were overwhelmingly preselected, with only fifteen "randomly" selected during the course of the survey. Apart from some very old target respondents who it was felt would be unable to answer the questionnaire, there were no refusals, which is extremely unusual in a survey of this kind, and for which the project team is extremely grateful. It is thought, therefore, that the sample of preselected respondents obtained should be reasonably representative of the population actually living in the study area at the time of the survey. Given the small number of randomly selected respondents, it was felt that they were unlikely to have a distorting effect on the overall sample and that therefore there was no need to conduct statistical tests for differences between them and the preselected sample. A total of 126 questionnaires were completed - just three short of the established target.

The interviews were conducted in one day (a Saturday, in order to maximise the chances of target respondents being at home) in November 1983 by students from St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, operating in pairs. The project team is most grateful to the students

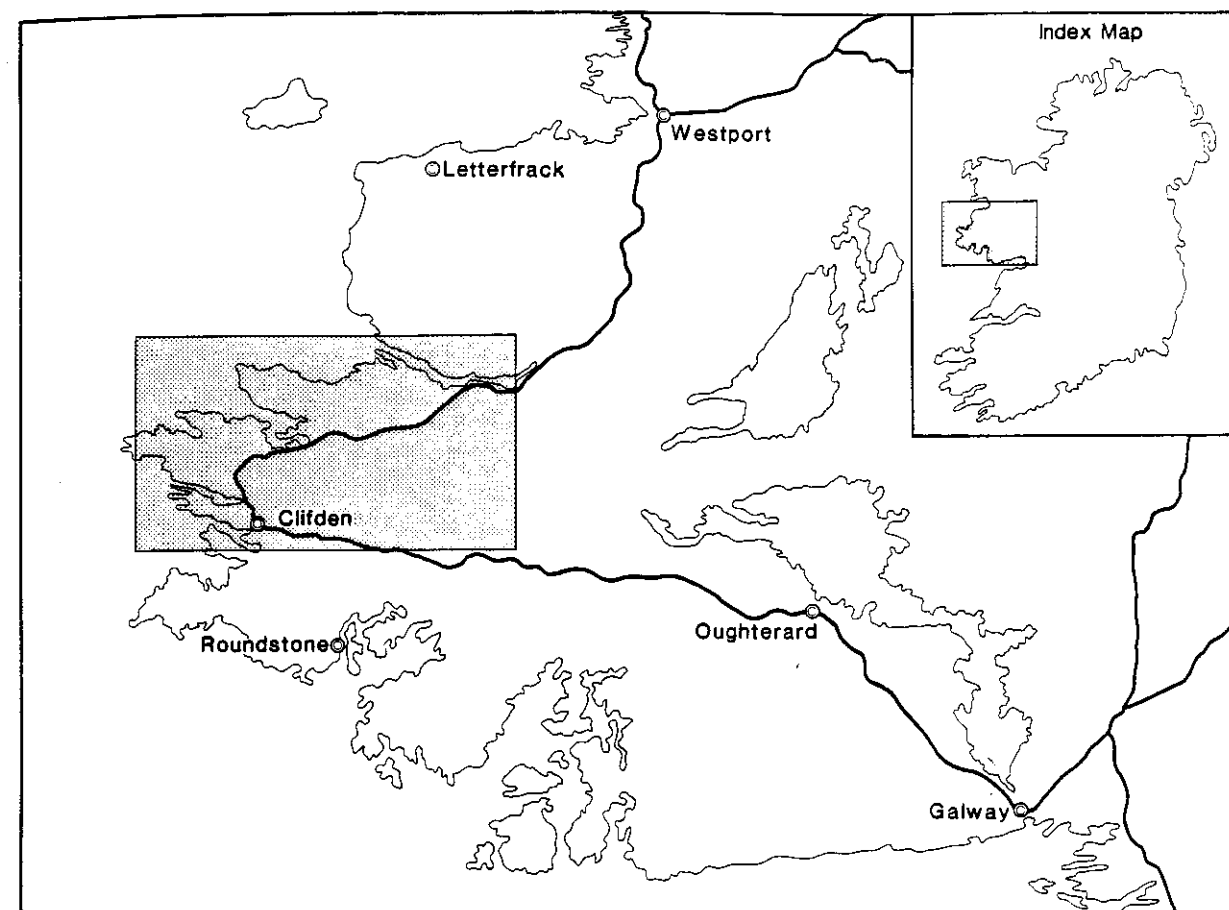


FIGURE 1. THE STUDY AREA IN REGIONAL CONTEXT.

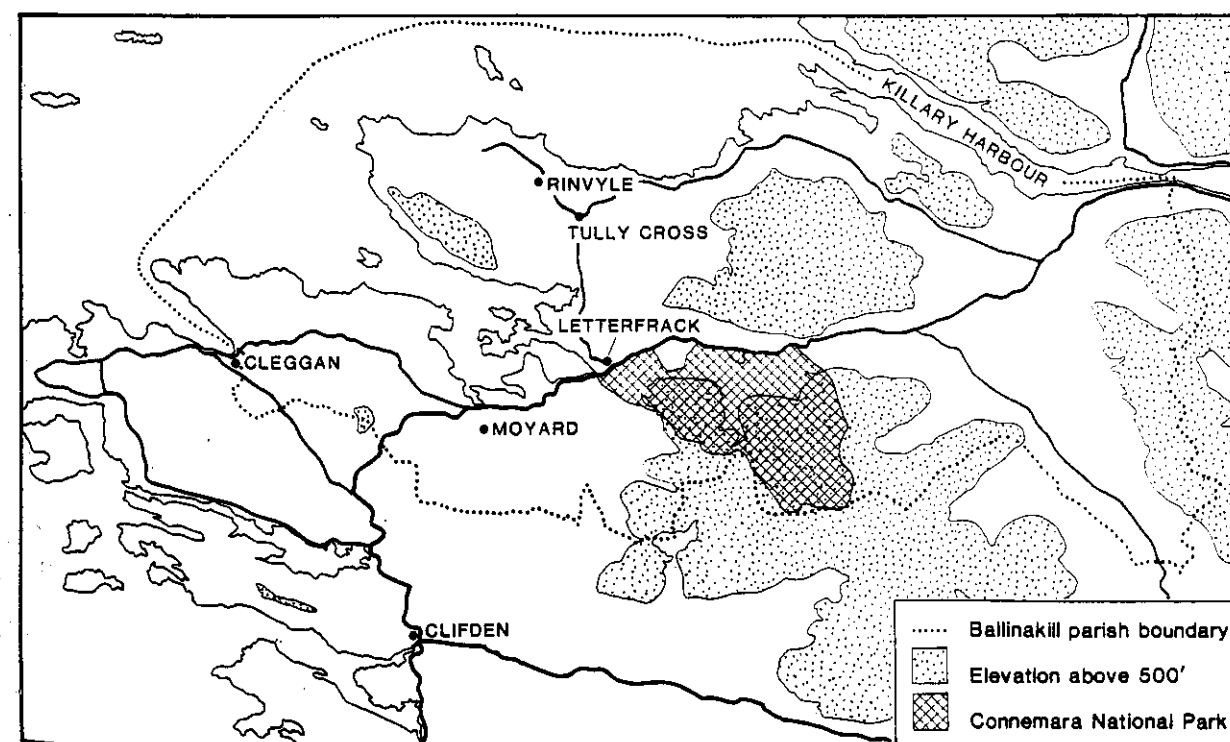


FIGURE 2. THE STUDY AREA.

concerned for their enthusiastic participation in the survey - and to the respondents who co-operated so helpfully. The project team is also grateful to the Rev. Joseph McNamara, Parish Priest of Ballinakill, who allowed advance notice of the survey to be announced in the churches of the parish.

## CHAPTER 2

### SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE

This chapter presents a profile of the demographic and social characteristics of those interviewed in the questionnaire survey. The characteristics chosen for inclusion in the questionnaire were those considered likely to have a bearing on the responses to the remainder of the questionnaire. Where appropriate, comparisons are made with census data for the area in order to assess whether the sample is representative of the total population, as regards the characteristics in question.

|         | Sample (1983) | Census (1981) |
|---------|---------------|---------------|
| Males   | 49.0          | 53.0          |
| Females | 51.0          | 47.0          |
| n =     | 123           | 1208          |

Table 1: Gender structure of the sample (%).

There was a slight female majority in the sample compared with a small male majority in the overall population aged over eighteen as given in the 1981 census figures (Table 1). Such a small difference is unlikely to have a distorting effect on the sample's representativeness.

| Years | Sample | 1981 Census |
|-------|--------|-------------|
| 18-34 | 35.0   | 34.9        |
| 35-49 | 29.0   | 17.8        |
| 50+   | 36.0   | 47.4        |
| n =   | 120    | 1208        |

Table 2: Age structure of the sample (%).

The age groupings used in the survey were based on the supposition that they correspond roughly with three distinct phases in relation to age of entry to the labour force. Thus, those aged 18-34 will mostly have entered the labour force since the late 1960s when rapid economic changes began to effect western areas and therefore expectations began to rise; those aged 35-49 would have mostly entered the labour force in the 1950s and early 1960s when economic stagnation and high emigration would have been largely characteristic of western rural areas; while those aged 50+ would have entered the labour

force before 1950 when the dissolution of the western small farm economy had not yet gotten under way in earnest. Accordingly, it was thought that these age groupings could display significant differences in terms of perceptions of the development process.

In this sample there is a fairly balanced representation of the different age groups (Table 2). Compared to the census figures for 1981 there is an over-representation of the middle age group in the sample, and an under-representation of the oldest age group. This is mainly due to some very old target respondents not being available for interview (see Chapter 1). As older people may have different views on development/environmental issues than younger people, this under-representation may have a distorting effect on the representativeness of the sample.

|                 | Sample | Census |
|-----------------|--------|--------|
| Married/widowed | 76.8   | 63.9   |
| Single          | 23.2   | 36.1   |
| n =             | 125    | 1208   |

**Table 3: Marital status (%).**

As regards marital status, Table 3 shows that the sample differs from the overall population as indicated in the census in that married/widowed people are over-represented whereas single people are under-represented. This reflects the under-representation of the older age group in the sample (Table 2), as a substantial proportion of the older members of the population are single (see Chapter 1).

|              |      |
|--------------|------|
| All          | 51.2 |
| Some         | 14.0 |
| All finished | 34.9 |
| n =          | 86   |

**Table 4: Children at school (%).**

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| All           | 58.4 |
| Some          | 31.2 |
| All left home | 10.4 |
| n =           | 77   |

**Table 5: Children at home (%).**

The stage in the lifecycle of one's family could influence one's view of development e.g.

concern over children's future job prospects or facilities for recreation. Hence, questions were asked concerning whether the children of relevant respondents were still at school or living at home (Tables 4 and 5). Just over 50% of relevant respondents had all their children at school and 58% had all their children at home. Also, although 35% of respondents' children had finished school, only 10% had all left home, which suggests that many youths who have left school are still living at home. The high proportion of respondents with children still at school or at home reflects the under-representation of older people in the sample and the fact that a significant proportion of older people do not have children (Chapter 1).

|                               | Sample | Census |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Farming                       | 22.8   | 11.4   |
| Fishing                       | 2.4    | 4.2    |
| Business/Professional/Manager | 4.9    | 8.0    |
| Other Non-Manual              | 9.8    | 10.3   |
| Manual                        | 12.2   | 15.3   |
| Home Duties                   | 43.1   | 31.6   |
| Retired/Disabled              | 4.9    | 19.2   |
| n =                           | 123    | 1160   |

**Table 6: Occupations (%).**

In order to facilitate a comparison, the occupations of respondents (including the unemployed) were first classified in accordance with the 1981 census (Table 6). This showed an over-representation of farmers and those doing "home duties" (i.e. housewives) - presumably because these were most likely to be at home when the interviewers called - with a marked under-representation of retired/disabled people, (the under-representation of older people has been noted already). For analytical purposes, those who were retired/disabled were eliminated from consideration, and housewives were assigned their husbands' occupations. This produced the revised Table 7, which shows farmers, in particular, and manual workers as dominating the sample. This will have a significant bearing as far as the influence of occupation on responses to other questions is concerned.

|                  |      |
|------------------|------|
| Farming          | 45.3 |
| Fishing          | 5.7  |
| Bus/Prof/Man     | 7.5  |
| Other Non-Manual | 13.2 |
| Manual           | 28.3 |
| n =              | 106  |

**Table 7: Adjusted occupations (%).**

The educational profile of the sample (Table 8) shows a somewhat more advanced level of education than the population as a whole as given in the 1981 census. This again reflects the under-representation of older people (who tend to have lower levels of formal education) in the sample. Nevertheless, a clear majority of the sample has not progressed beyond primary school.



Respondents were asked if they were originally from North West Connemara (as defined by the respondents themselves). It was thought that those who had moved into the area from outside might have different views on the area than the indigenous population. Some 79% of the sample were originally from the area, indicating a high level of homogeneity in the population. However, some 90% of the males, as against only two thirds of the females, in the sample were originally from the area, reflecting principally the in-migration of women to the area on marriage. Irish rural marriage patterns have the effect of widening women's horizons more than men's.

|                               | Sample | Census |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Primary only                  | 57.0   | 68.3   |
| Some secondary/vocational     | 28.9   | 26.3   |
| Complete secondary/vocational | 7.4    |        |
| Third Level                   | 6.6    | 5.4    |
| n =                           | 121    | 1197   |

**Table 8: Education levels (%).**

Not surprisingly, 87% of farmers were originally from the area, as against 64% of manual workers, but perhaps somewhat surprisingly, ten out of eleven persons in the business/professional/managerial group were from the area. Finally, those with primary education only (mostly farmers) were most likely, and those with third level education least likely, to be from the area. Thus, overall, farmers with primary education only dominate the indigenous group, while the "blow-ins" are more likely to be female and with higher levels of formal education.

It was also expected that perceptions of development might be influenced by whether or not respondents (including those indigenous to the area) had spent some time living outside North West Connemara, on the grounds that those who had done so may have been exposed to a broader range of perspectives on life and environment. In the course of the survey, therefore, a considerable amount of information on the migration histories of the respondents was collected.

The majority of respondents (63%) had lived outside the area. Allowing for those who were originally from outside the area, this means that a majority (53%) of those who were from the area had also lived outside the area. Thus there has clearly been a high level of return migration to the area, a common occurrence in the west of Ireland in the 1970s. As might be expected, those who had never lived outside the area were more concentrated in the oldest age group, and had lower levels of formal education, than those who had.

Those respondents who had lived outside the area were then asked why they had returned or moved to live in N.W. Connemara (Table 9). The largest proportion returned/moved to N.W. Connemara because they preferred the quality of life, which mainly meant that it provided a better environment in which to bring up children, or simply that it was home. Also ranking high as reasons for returning were marriage and the need for someone to look after parents, while some women stated that they moved because their husbands wanted to return. Other important reasons were inheritance and employment.

In an area as remote as the study area, possession of a car or a telephone is a very important way of overcoming isolation. Hence, those with a car or telephone might be

expected to have a different perception of their environment than those without. While almost three quarters (73%) of respondents did have a car, almost exactly the same proportion (74%) did not have a telephone.

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Quality of Life | 29.6 |
| Marriage        | 25.9 |
| Family          | 19.8 |
| Inheritance     | 9.9  |
| Employment      | 8.6  |
| Other           | 6.4  |
| n = 81          |      |

**Table 9: Reasons for returning/moving to N.W. Connemara (%).**

Finally, it was thought that whether one worked at home or not, through its effect on daily mobility, could also have a bearing on perceptions of the environment. It was found that 61% of the sample worked at home, with 36% working elsewhere in Northwest Connemara and 2% working outside the area. These figures do not include housewives.

## SUMMARY

The extent to which the sample is representative of the overall population of North West Connemara, as indicated by the 1981 population census, was mainly affected by the under-representation of those aged over fifty, who are more likely to be single and have lower levels of formal education. However, it may be that the views of the younger members of the population, with a greater degree of immediate concern for their own, or their children's, future, are of more importance for this study in any case.

Bearing this caveat in mind, it was found that the sample had an even male/female split and had (as already noted) an under-representation of older and single people. A very high proportion of parents still had at least some children at home and at school. Farmers and manual workers dominated the occupational profile of the sample, the majority of whose members had not gone beyond a primary level of formal education.

Most of the respondents were originally from North West Connemara, with those not from the area being mainly women. However, the majority of the sample (including a majority of those originally from the area) had lived elsewhere at some stage. Those who returned or moved to the area did so mainly for reasons of quality of life, marriage or family. Almost all of those gainfully occupied were working within North West Connemara.

Finally, while the great majority of respondents had a car, only a minority had a telephone.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

In order to gauge how disadvantaged the sample respondents felt themselves to be in relation to the availability and quality of public services and facilities, they were asked to give their subjective rating of a selection of these according to a five-point scale ranging from "Very Good" to "Very Poor".

**SHOPPING FACILITIES**

|           |      |
|-----------|------|
| Very good | 13.5 |
| Good      | 36.5 |
| Fair      | 33.3 |
| Poor      | 13.5 |
| Very Poor | 3.2  |
| n = 126   |      |

**Table 10: Shopping facilities (%).**

Exactly half of the sample thought shopping facilities were good or very good (Table 10), while 16.7% thought they were poor or very poor. One third of the sample thought shopping facilities were only fair. Thus, on balance, there was a positive assessment of these facilities.

Perceptions of shopping facilities were found to be influenced by sex, origin, migration history, age and marital status. Females were much more inclined than males to view them negatively, which may be significant if the general Irish pattern of females being mainly responsible for shopping applies to the study area. Those originally from the area, or who had not lived outside the area, tended to have a more positive view of shopping facilities. Younger people were less inclined than average, and older people more inclined, to take a positive view. A smaller proportion of married respondents than single thought that shopping was good.

Respondents were invited to volunteer additional comments on the services/facilities dealt with in this chapter. Shopping attracted few comments compared to other facilities. Six respondents, however, thought shop prices were high in the study area.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT FACILITIES**

Perceptions of public transport facilities (Table 11) were much more negative than for shopping, with almost one half saying they were bad or very bad, and only one fifth thinking they were good or very good. The principal factors influencing perceptions of public transport were origins, car ownership, sex, and age. Those who were not from the area originally were much more critical than those from the area as, interestingly

enough, were car owners who would have least need to use public transport. On the other hand, it may be that those with cars have most need to get around and may, in at least some cases, have had to obtain cars because of the deficiencies in the public transport service. Females also were more critical of public transport than males, while satisfaction with public transport grew with age.

|           |      |
|-----------|------|
| Very good | 3.2  |
| Good      | 16.8 |
| Fair      | 33.6 |
| Poor      | 22.4 |
| Very Poor | 24.0 |
| n = 125   |      |

**Table 11: Public transport facilities (%).**

It was noticeable from the supplementary comments how variable access to public transport was seen to be, even in a small study area such as this (this applies also to other services reviewed below). Thus, service frequencies ranged from daily to none at all, depending upon where one lived. This suggests a highly localised perception of access to services which would probably seem quite strange to the city dweller.

#### SPORTS FACILITIES

|           |      |
|-----------|------|
| Very good | 2.5  |
| Good      | 28.9 |
| Fair      | 24.8 |
| Poor      | 28.9 |
| Very Poor | 14.9 |
| n = 121   |      |

**Table 12: Sports facilities (%).**

Much the same proportion as for public transport had a negative perception of sports facilities (Table 12) but there was a significantly higher proportion in the positive categories, as against the middle category. Female respondents were more critical than males: in fact, two respondents commented specifically on the lack of facilities for females, while the bulk of the small number of comments on this facility made reference to the football field - presumably a male preserve. Sports facilities were seen as being concentrated mainly at Letterfrack village, with those living in the immediate vicinity being seen as being particularly advantaged in this respect.

#### EDUCATION FACILITIES

Perceptions of education facilities were particularly positive (Table 13), with over three quarters regarding them as either good or very good, and only a small minority thinking they were bad or very bad. Comments on this question were very few, although there were

some complaints about distances from schools.

|           |      |
|-----------|------|
| Very good | 16.1 |
| Good      | 60.5 |
| Fair      | 16.1 |
| Poor      | 6.5  |
| Very Poor | 0.8  |
| n = 124   |      |

**Table 13: Education facilities (%).**

#### HEALTH FACILITIES

|           |      |
|-----------|------|
| Very good | 19.0 |
| Good      | 59.5 |
| Fair      | 16.7 |
| Poor      | 1.6  |
| Very Poor | 3.2  |
| n = 126   |      |

**Table 14: Health facilities (%).**

There was a very positive perception of health facilities among the sample (Table 14), with almost 80% of respondents feeling they were good or very good while only 5% thought they were poor or very poor. However, of all the facilities, most comments were made about deficiencies in the health service - approximately 25% of respondents felt that a particular aspect of health facilities could be improved. Most of these comments (13) focussed on the lack of hospital facilities in the area, particularly as the nearest hospital centre - Galway - is so far away. An additional three respondents referred specifically to the lack of maternity facilities in the locality. It would appear that most of the respondents were referring to the service provided by the local doctor and nurses when replying to this question.

#### TELEPHONE FACILITIES

|           |      |
|-----------|------|
| Very good | 2.4  |
| Good      | 10.4 |
| Fair      | 15.2 |
| Poor      | 28.8 |
| Very Poor | 43.2 |
| n = 125   |      |

**Table 15: Telephone facilities (%).**



By contrast, the perception of telephone facilities was extremely negative (Table 15), with 43% thinking they were very bad and a further 29% regarding them as bad, whereas only 13% had anything good to say about them. Those who had lived outside the area (not surprisingly) were particularly scathing about the service. An analysis of the questionnaire returns shows clearly that this question produced the most outspoken comments, with the telephone service being variously described as "desperate", "diabolical", "ridiculous", "hopeless" and "terrible"! At this stage, the local service was still operating through a manual exchange, and the lack of a night service and long delays in getting a response from the operator were the main specific complaints. Since the survey was carried out, the system has become automatic, so presumably things have improved considerably.

#### WATER SUPPLIES

|           |      |
|-----------|------|
| Very good | 11.2 |
| Good      | 63.2 |
| Fair      | 16.0 |
| Poor      | 5.6  |
| Very Poor | 4.0  |
| n = 125   |      |

Table 16: Water supplies (%).

In spite of the fact that a large number of respondents rely on their own water supply, 74% felt that the supply was good or very good and only 10% were dissatisfied (Table 16). A group water supply was in the process of being installed in some areas, and this was greeted very positively.

#### RUBBISH DISPOSAL

|           |      |
|-----------|------|
| Very good | 0.0  |
| Good      | 20.5 |
| Fair      | 17.1 |
| Poor      | 23.9 |
| Very Poor | 38.5 |
| n = 125   |      |

Table 17: Rubbish disposal (%).

This was the only service which none of the respondents regarded as very good (Table 17). While 20% were happy with it, the majority were not. Again, responses varied very much by locality. Rubbish collection was confined to the villages and connecting roads, with all others having to dispose of their own rubbish. Even then, there was much resentment against, and resistance to, what was thought to be too high a charge for the

collection service that was available. Efforts had been made to extend the service to other areas, but at the time of the survey, this had produced no results.

#### SUMMARY

On balance, the survey sample had a positive assessment of the particular range of services presented to them: for four of the services (shopping, education, health and water supplies), over half of the respondents thought they were good or very good, while for two (telephones and rubbish disposal), a clear majority had an unfavourable impression. The other two (public transport and sports) occupied intermediate positions.

| Service          | Average Score |
|------------------|---------------|
| Health           | 3.89          |
| Education        | 3.86          |
| Water Supply     | 3.74          |
| Shopping         | 3.46          |
| Sports           | 2.71          |
| Public Transport | 2.53          |
| Rubbish Disposal | 2.19          |
| Telephones       | 2.06          |

Table 18: Average ratings of services/facilities.

One way of summarising the perceptions of the services under consideration is to give them a score depending on the ranking ascribed by each respondent, and then calculating the average score for each service. If a score of 1 is given for "Very Bad", 2 for "Bad", 3 for "Fair", 4 for "Good" and 5 for "Very Good", then an average score in excess of 3 means that, on balance, the service in question is regarded positively by the respondents, while a score in excess of 4 could be regarded as very good, on average, and a score of less than 2 is very bad. Table 18 presents the average score for each of the eight services under consideration under this scoring system, listed in rank order.

According to this rating system, half of the services (health, education, water supply and shopping) were given, on balance, a positive vote by the sample, and half (sports, public transport, rubbish disposal and telephones) a negative vote. None were given a "very good" rating, but three (health, education, water) came close. The telephone service came extremely close to being rated "very bad", on average, with rubbish disposal not far behind.

In conclusion, it may be said that, while the study area may be classified as disadvantaged in a general sense, perceptions of disadvantage are not all-embracing within the area, and that its inhabitants appear quite satisfied with many aspects of their everyday lives. However, the range of scores in Table 18 shows that people are quite aware of sharp variations in the quality of public services available to them. For some services, it also became apparent from the analysis of the questionnaires that variations in perceptions can be quite marked at a highly localised level. It is important for planners to be quite sensitive to these variations, both between services and between localities, in drawing up development plans for areas such as this. Surveys such as this can have an important role in highlighting these variations. Of perhaps greater importance, however, is the need for the planning process to have local participation built in, in order to allow for more effective targeting of development measures.

## CHAPTER 4

### STATE-SPONSORED DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The Irish government has, over the years, assumed a considerable role in promoting economic development in the West of Ireland. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how this role is perceived with respect to the study area by the Ballinakill sample. The areas of economic life to be considered are as follows:

- (1) Industry
- (2) Agriculture
- (3) Fishing
- (4) Tourism

In addition, this chapter examines the role of those who mediate between the ordinary citizens and the state at both local and national levels, namely, elected public representatives.

#### INDUSTRY

The respondents were initially asked what problems they thought Northwest Connemara had in getting industry to locate in the area. There were 21 non-responses, while four people thought there were no such problems. The remaining 101 respondents gave 142 responses between them (Table 19).

|   |                                |         |
|---|--------------------------------|---------|
|   | Accessibility                  | 57.0    |
| * | Socio-demographic deficiencies | 12.0    |
|   | Infrastructure                 | 10.6    |
|   | Government neglect             | 6.3     |
|   | Physical environment           | 5.6     |
|   | Other                          | 8.5     |
|   |                                | n = 142 |

Table 19: Industrial development problems of Northwest Connemara (%).

Understandably, the bulk of responses referred to problems of accessibility, including the area's remote/isolated location and difficulties of access due to poor roads. Socio-demographic deficiencies (12% of responses) referred mainly to lack of skills or simply lack of people. Infrastructure problems (in addition to poor roads, covered by accessibility problems) included telephone services and water supplies. Problems of physical environment referred to poor land and lack of raw materials.

#### The Industrial Development Authority

The state attempts to stimulate the development of manufacturing industry through two

main agencies, namely, the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), which is responsible for promoting industry at national and regional levels, and the County Development Team (CDT), responsible mainly for promoting small business at county level. The IDA provides a wide range of incentives to stimulate the establishment of both Irish and overseas manufacturing projects. These include capital and training grants, tax incentives, advance factories and industrial sites, and an intensive advisory service for both intending and existing industrialists. The IDA has been responsible for regional industrial development since 1969, and in this respect it has pursued a "dispersal" policy, involving the maximum geographical spread of new industries. In order to achieve this, neighbouring towns throughout the country have been grouped into clusters, with each cluster being allocated a target number of new industrial jobs which the IDA hopes to set up in that cluster over a certain period. The idea here is that regardless of where a new factory is located within the cluster, it should be within daily commuting distance of all those living in the cluster towns and surrounding areas.

Clifden, the nearest town to Ballinakill, is itself so isolated that there are no other neighbouring towns with which it can be easily clustered. Under the IDA's first five-year regional plan for the period 1973-77, Clifden was grouped with Oughterard (1981 population: 739), which is 55km distant (Map 1), and a job target of 100 was set for the two towns over the period. For the second five-year plan (1978-82), Clifden was paired with Louisburgh (1981 population: 258), some 50km away (Map 1), and this time the job target was set at 200. Towards the achievement of these targets, the IDA bought land in Clifden and built two advance factories, one in 1975 (680 sq. m./7,400 sq. ft.) and one in 1980 (930 sq. m./10,000 sq. ft.). One of these is occupied by an Irish firm making marble panels which employed about 35 workers at the end of 1983, while the other is occupied by a German firm making rubber mountings for shock absorbers, which had a workforce of 17 at the end of 1983. According to information supplied by the IDA Regional Office in Galway, total manufacturing employment in the Clifden area increased from 60 in 1973 to 150 in 1983.

Within Ballinakill itself, the IDA has an unoccupied 1.5 acre site at Tully Cross (Map 2). In addition, the old workshops at the former industrial school at Letterfrack (see Chapter 5) were purchased by the IDA in 1979 for the promotion of small handcraft enterprises. The enterprises which have occupied these workshops, along with a small carpet factory which was set up at Moyard, make up the bulk of the seven small companies which have raised manufacturing employment in Ballinakill from zero in 1973 to 17 in 1983. It can be suggested, therefore, that the IDA has made an amount of progress in expanding industrial job opportunities in the general area from a very low base during the 1970s and early 1980s.

Respondents were asked what they thought the IDA had done to bring industry to the area. Exactly one third gave no reply to this question. Of those who did reply, almost a half (44%) thought the IDA had done little or nothing. Of the remainder, nearly a quarter offered a positive but unspecified assessment of the IDA's efforts, while 30% made some kind of reference to the Connemara West Centre at Letterfrack (See Chapter 5) where the IDA workshops are located. There was a variety of other replies, including reference to IDA grants, the Clifden factories and the picturesque and much publicised small industry centre at Roundstone, located 25 km to the south (Map 1). Some of these replies (such as references to Anco training schemes) were not directly relevant to the IDA. In summary, therefore, some two thirds of the respondents had either negative or inaccurate perceptions, or none at all, of the efforts of the IDA to promote industrial development in the area.

#### The County Development Team

The main function of the Galway County Development Team (CDT) is to provide "priming"

grants for first-time small businesses, although it can also provide, on a discretionary basis, other forms of assistance. It also provides an important, albeit informal, service for small enterprises in acting as an intermediary vis-a-vis the multiplicity of central state agencies with which such firms come in contact. The CDT operates via field officers who hold monthly clinics in local centres. Its services are advertised via posters, church announcements, newspapers and community newsletters, although word of mouth is its most effective way of disseminating information. It has built up contacts with local community groups, and also uses politicians as important contact media.

The CDT has primed a number of projects in Ballinakill, although not all of these have succeeded. It also provided grant assistance towards the refurbishment of the Connemara West Centre and a management grant for the farmers' co-operative set up in 1984 (Chapter 5). According to the CDT, the Letterfrack clinic is always busy, attracting (in 1984) 2 or 3 enquiries per month (compared with only about two per year in Clifden).

The survey respondents were asked if they knew of anything which the CDT had done for the area. Although the CDT's field officer for the area was named on the questionnaire, only 19 respondents (15%) ventured a response to this question, and most of these were off target, associating the CDT with other aspects of county council activities such as housing, water supplies and roads. One would not expect the CDT to have a high profile, as it tends to deal on a one-to-one basis with individuals making proposals for small businesses, while the IDA has a well-publicised national image and is associated with easily observable developments such as factories (prominently displaying the IDA logo) and the Connemara West Centre. At the same time, the almost complete ignorance of the CDT in the study area must raise questions about the effectiveness of its publicity efforts.

## X AGRICULTURE

As noted previously, agriculture in Ballinakill is characterised by a combination of poor land and small farms, giving rise to low per-farm incomes. Despite this, agriculture is still of great importance to the life of the area: almost 70% of respondents said they lived on a farm (not all of whom, of course, derive an income from agriculture). Questions about agricultural development were confined to this group.

Since the foundation of the state, the Irish government has provided a considerable amount of assistance to the agricultural sector. This may be divided into two categories: subsidies to enhance the prices received by farmers for their products or to reduce the cost of inputs, and measures to increase agricultural productivity. These latter include grants for land improvement, buildings, machinery, etc.; structural improvements, including farm enlargement and rearrangement of fragmented holdings; and the assistance of the agricultural advisory service (ACOT). At the time of the survey, agricultural development in Ireland was mainly operated through the Farm Modernisation Scheme (FMS), an EEC-wide scheme introduced in 1974. In addition, a special development scheme specifically for the West of Ireland was introduced in 1979, which provided generous grant aid for a variety of measures, including drainage, fencing, afforestation and marketing.

Prior to asking those respondents who lived on a farm about involvement in agricultural development, it was thought desirable to find out first what they thought about the general prospects for such development in the area. Hence, they were first asked what they thought could be done to improve agriculture in the area. Ten (12%) gave no reply. The remaining 75 gave 116 responses between them. These covered a very wide range of suggestions, the most common of which are identified in Table 20.

One eighth felt little or nothing could be done, mainly because the area's farms are too

small. While the great majority of the remaining respondents mentioned grants in one way or another, most did so with respect to some specific aspect of farming. Nevertheless, suggestions for a general improvement in grants, without further elaboration, made up one sixth of the replies. By far the single most commonly mentioned avenue for agricultural improvement was reclamation and drainage (including clearing of fields). Improvements in farm structure (mainly farm size but also consolidation of fragmented farms and field enlargement) and increased use of fertiliser were also frequently suggested.

|   |                      |         |
|---|----------------------|---------|
|   | Little/nothing       | 12.9    |
|   | Grants (general)     | 16.4    |
| * | Reclamation/Drainage | 20.7    |
|   | Farm structure       | 8.6     |
|   | Fertiliser           | 7.8     |
|   | Other                | 33.6    |
|   |                      | n = 116 |

Table 20: What can be done to improve agriculture in the area? (%).

Very few respondents referred to the abilities of the farmers in the area, although there was a small number of calls for technical training for farmers, more contact with the advisory service, and more initiative and productivity on the part of farmers. Other specific suggestions included more political action on behalf of small farmers, more tillage, grants for machinery, division among local farmers of land owned by outsiders or not being worked, fencing, prevention of erosion, better farm roads, a better advisory service, better marketing of local produce, and increased headage payments. Interestingly, although the question did not preclude it, there was no mention at all of agricultural prices. Clearly, therefore, the great majority felt there was room for increased agricultural output from the area's farms, and most had specific ideas on how this could be achieved, although none of these ideas was widely shared.

Despite the widespread view that improvement was possible, very few of the respondents were, or had been, involved in any government agricultural development schemes. Five referred to drainage (presumably the Western Drainage Scheme), one referred to lime, one had a hayshed built, and one had been involved in the Small Farm Incentive Bonus Scheme, which preceded the introduction of the EEC's Farm Modernisation Scheme in 1974. Those involved in schemes for the most part had higher levels of formal education than the other respondents.

The general non-involvement in development schemes clearly influenced the responses when the respondents were asked for their views on these schemes. There was no response at all from 23 people (27%), while most of the remainder were very general and vague. Fourteen respondents gave a generally positive assessment, while a further five said the schemes were good in certain circumstances. Thirteen respondents mentioned drainage, but apparently this referred mainly to arterial drainage done on a local river rather than field drainage done on individual farms. Twelve respondents gave a generally negative judgement, while seven said the schemes were not doing enough. There were other references to red tape, "talk but no action", the cost of getting involved in the schemes, farm buildings, fertiliser, machine hire, the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and its associated headage payments, and the Farm Modernisation Scheme.

A common thread running through many of the responses was the idea that the existing schemes were either unsuitable or irrelevant to the particular circumstances of the area,

that they were geared to more dynamic areas with larger farms with better land. It has, of course, been frequently asserted that the Farm Modernisation Scheme, with its emphasis on farms capable of reaching commercial status, is largely or totally irrelevant to the situation in the West of Ireland generally, unlike the Small Farm Incentive Bonus Scheme (mentioned above) which was geared specially to the needs of small farmers but which, ironically, was replaced by the Farm Modernisation Scheme. Thus, according to information supplied by the Galway ACOT office, of 1,350 farmers in Connemara who had applied for assistance under the Farm Modernisation Scheme up to 1984, only twelve came under the "Development" category (which receives the highest levels of assistance) and only one was classified as already "Commercial".

The principal point of contact between the farmer and the government's agricultural schemes is the ACOT agricultural adviser. To assess the effectiveness of this point of contact, respondents were asked what they thought of the efforts of the adviser to improve agriculture in the area. Given the lack of involvement of the area's farmers in any development schemes, it is not surprising that the majority of respondents either gave no response at all (34%) or said they had no contact with the adviser (27%), most of the latter saying that they had never heard of him, or that they didn't think there was an adviser for the area. There were fifteen negative responses, most of which said that the adviser was not effective or wasn't doing enough for the area. There were twelve positive assessments, most of these being of a very general nature. Four offered the opinion that there wasn't much the adviser could do in an area such as the study area.

Overall, it would appear that there is little impetus for agricultural development in the study area. This is partly attributable to the area's limited resources, and partly due to ineffective government support systems. It is also, no doubt, due in part to inadequacies among the area's farmers themselves, although one would not expect this to appear in the results of a survey of this kind. In an attempt to get the views of non-farmers on the performance of the area's farmers, all respondents were asked how much of the land in the parish did they think was being worked to its full potential. The overall responses of the 82.5% who replied are presented in Table 21.

|         |      |
|---------|------|
| All     | 8.7  |
| Most    | 24.0 |
| Some    | 62.5 |
| None    | 4.8  |
| n = 104 |      |

Table 21: How much of the land in the parish is being worked to its full potential? (%).

Only one third thought that all or most of the land was being used optimally. This bears out the earlier finding that the belief in the possibility of expanding agricultural output in the area was widespread. Those respondents who were aged over fifty were most inclined to say that all or most of the land was being worked to its full potential. This could be interpreted as a defensive reaction among those who might regard themselves as responsible for the current state of affairs; or it might reflect lower expectations among older people many of whom had struggled throughout their lives with the area's difficult environment. There was a strong correlation between having children at home and appraisal of the optimality of local land use. Those households with all the children at home were most critical, while those where all the children had left home were least critical. There may be evidence of wishful thinking here, with those households most concerned about children's futures perhaps surmising that better use of the area's land

resources could provide more or better career opportunities within the locality.

Respondents were then asked if they thought anything should be done about land not being worked to its full potential. Some 30% gave no response, but of the remainder, the vast majority (94%) were of the opinion that something should be done. When asked what should be done about land not being worked to its potential, 42% offered no response. The remainder came up with 85 responses between them (Table 22).

|                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| Land transfer        | 37.6 |
| Reclamation/drainage | 20.0 |
| Aid for farmers      | 15.3 |
| Fertiliser           | 10.6 |
| Other                | 16.5 |
| n = 85               |      |

Table 22: What should be done about land not being worked to its full potential? (%).

By far the single biggest group (representing one quarter of the entire sample) were in favour of land transfer i.e. giving land not being worked properly to those who would make the best use of it. This is an interesting finding, given the traditional view in rural Ireland that land ownership is sacrosanct, and should not be interfered with - in fact, only one respondent expressly stated this point of view. Those who had lived outside Northwest Connemara were twice as likely to recommend this approach, thus corroborating the idea that travel opens people to new or more radical modes of thinking. Some 30% suggested a technical approach to the problem i.e. more reclamation/drainage and fertiliser, while 15% sought more aid from the state for the area's farmers. Only two respondents recommended more education/training for farmers, and only one suggested a land tax. Other suggestions included reform of the farmer's dole, afforestation, more tillage, better roads and fencing, and turning over the Connemara National Park (below) to agricultural use.

## FISHING

As noted in Chapter 1, the fishing industry is of some significance to the economy of Ballinakill. This was evident from the sample, 23% of whom were either themselves, or had members of their families, involved in fishing. The latter respondents were asked what they thought could be done to improve fishing in the area. Twenty two of the 26 respondents concerned replied, and produced 38 suggestions between them. Nine of these concerned fish stocks, including development of hatcheries, stocking of rivers and lakes, and more effective conservation measures. Associated with this were four calls for the exclusion of bigger/foreign trawlers (reflecting the dependence on small-boat inshore fishing in the study area) and one call for a stamp-down on poaching. Five respondents each said there was a need for a fishing co-operative (See Chapter 5), for better harbour facilities, and for more financial assistance towards the purchase of boats. Three replies were concerned with markets, including the breaking of an alleged buyers' monopoly and cheaper transport to markets. There were also suggestions to clear river banks, to develop fish farming and to provide a better lifeboat service. One respondent thought nothing could be done to improve fishing in the area. Overall, therefore, while there was a wide range of constructive suggestions, none was clearly dominant over the others.

The respondents with fishing connections were then asked what they thought of the government's schemes to improve fishing. In this respect it should be noted that Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) is the state agency with prime responsibility for the development of the fishing industry, which it attempts to do primarily via grants and loans towards the purchase of boats and the development of processing and marketing facilities. The improvement of harbour facilities is primarily the responsibility of the Board of Works within the Department of Finance.

Of the 19 people who responded to this question, most were critical of the government's schemes, although four were positive. Four gave a blanket condemnation, two said the schemes were inadequate, four complained about the inadequacy of grants, while the largest single group - five - felt the government's schemes were not supportive of the type of fishing carried out in the area i.e. inshore fishing out of small boats. The feeling here was that the government was only interested in supporting big boats which in turn threaten the livelihood of the inshore boats, a sentiment expressed in the responses to the previous question. As one respondent put it: "The poor are getting poorer, the rich richer".

## TOURISM

Ballinakill's remoteness and bleak and rugged landscape - qualities which have hindered economic development in other ways - confer on the district considerable potential for tourist development, and, indeed, this industry does provide a substantial annual financial input to the area. There has been quite an amount of investment in developing tourist facilities, including hotels, guesthouses, self-catering accommodation, craft shops, restaurant and recreational facilities, etc. Bord Failte is the state agency for promoting tourist development, and it works at regional level in conjunction with eight regional tourism organisations, of which the Western Regional Tourism Organisation (WRTO) is that which applies to the study area. WRTO is financed jointly by Bord Failte, the local authorities in the region, and private tourist interests. Bord Failte and WRTO provide grants for the development and equipping of tourist accommodation, maintain a register of approved accommodation facilities, and operate a reservation and information system via local tourist offices. They also provide selected assistance towards the establishment of other tourist facilities, and publicise these facilities both within and outside the region.

In Ballinakill, Bord Failte and WRTO have provided assistance for the development of hotel, guesthouse, and self-catering accommodation, including caravan and camping parks. They have also helped with the provision of handcraft outlets. Bord Failte is a significant shareholder in the local community-based development company, Connemara West Ltd. (See Chapter 5). Undoubtedly the most significant single tourist project to be developed in the parish is the Connemara National Park, a six square mile tract of open countryside made up of land acquired from the Kylemore Abbey estate and from the Christian Brothers, who used to run an industrial school at Letterfrack (Map 2). The park is operated by the Board of Works, which has developed nature trails and walkways, displays, and an indoor picnic area with kitchen facilities. Immediately adjacent is the IDA-owned handcraft workshop complex, referred to earlier, and a craft/coffee shop, both located in the Connemara West Centre.

The survey found that 28% of those respondents who replied (all but three) were either themselves involved in tourism, or had a family connection with tourism. This indicates that tourism makes quite a significant contribution to the local economy. Interestingly, Fine Gael supporters (see below) were twice as likely as Fianna Fail supporters to be involved, which perhaps lends support to the traditional view of Fine Gael being a party of shopkeepers!



All but one of the 34 who had a connection with tourism were prepared to say what their connections were, as indicated in Table 23 (some respondents were connected with tourism in more ways than one):

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Accommodation | 43.2 |
| Employment    | 18.9 |
| Services      | 18.9 |
| Letting       | 13.5 |
| Produce       | 5.4  |
| n = 38        |      |

**Table 23: Involvement in tourism (%).**

In over two fifths of the cases, involvement in tourism was in the form of providing accommodation (Guesthouse/B&B). Almost one fifth each were involved via tourism-related employment (e.g. bar and hotel work) and services (shop, garage, bar, restaurant, camping site, baby-sitting, and an unspecified recreation business). The remaining categories were letting of houses and selling of produce (handcrafts, food).

Tourism has been known to evoke mixed feelings among communities affected by it. In order to test if this was the case in Ballinakill, all the respondents were asked if they thought tourism was of benefit to the area. Except for two non-responses and one dissident, all agreed that it was. When asked how they thought tourism benefitted the area, the 94% of respondents who replied gave the answers indicated in Table 24 (Respondents were allowed multiple responses):

|             |      |
|-------------|------|
| Money       | 29.4 |
| Employment  | 19.0 |
| Guesthouses | 15.4 |
| Hotels      | 11.8 |
| Shops       | 10.9 |
| Other       | 13.6 |
| n = 221     |      |

**Table 24: How does tourism help the area? (%).**

Tourism was principally seen as benefitting the area by bringing money into it. The creation of employment was next most important, after which the main beneficiaries were seen, in descending order of importance, as guesthouses, hotels and shops. Included in the remaining responses were better social life, raising of community morale, opportunities to meet new people, improved roads, restaurants and access to beaches, opportunities to let houses and sell local produce. Only a very small number of respondents offered the view that tourism only benefitted a minority in the area: this suggests a strong community feeling, where benefits to individuals are seen as benefits to the community at large.

All respondents were asked what they thought could be done to improve tourism in Ballinakill. Almost 30% gave no reply, while a further 10% either thought that things were okay as they were or that nothing could be done. The remainder gave a wide range of specific suggestions (multiple responses were allowed) as summarised in Table 25.

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Prices          | 30.2 |
| Communications  | 27.8 |
| Facilities      | 15.9 |
| Accommodation   | 10.3 |
| Public services | 8.7  |
| Other           | 7.1  |
| n = 126         |      |

**Table 25: What can be done to improve tourism in the area? (%).**

The single most important area for improvement identified was prices, especially of petrol and accommodation. While this was generally seen as a national problem, deriving from government taxes or the cost of living, there were also many suggestions of overcharging at local level. Not far behind prices as an area for improvement was communications, which in the vast majority of cases referred to the need to improve roads in the area, although there were also references to telephones and public transport services. A wide range of facilities were suggested, including restaurants, fishing, the further development of the National Park, an indoor leisure centre, beach facilities, crafts, and trails and walks. Suggestions for more and better accommodation facilities made up one tenth of the replies, and referred mainly to hotels and self-catering accommodation although there was also a mention of camping sites. Public services needing improvement included signposting, refuse collection, car parking, and tourist information. Other suggestions included better service, better food, and more Irish food. One person suggested that the weather should be improved!

Preliminary research for this study suggested that there was an amount of resentment in Ballinakill against the development of the Connemara National Park, primarily on the grounds that it sterilised a large tract of land which could have been made available to local farmers. In order to test the extent of this resentment, the respondents were asked if they thought the Park was a good idea. Of the 91% who replied, there was a majority of four to one in favour. Those who thought it was a good idea were then asked why they thought so. Almost all responded, with 44% pointing to the employment the Park provided, and 42% to its function as a tourist attraction. The bulk of the remaining replies referred to the amenity value of the Park in its own right. Of those who had a negative view of the Park, over half thought it was a bad investment, and two fifths (9% of the entire sample) thought it was a waste of good agricultural land.

## POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

Democratically-elected public representatives act as the primary intermediaries between the organs and agencies of the state and the ordinary citizens. In the Irish context, the most significant categories of representative in this respect are parliamentary representatives (TDs) and local authority councillors. Individuals and groups seeking the state's assistance for whatever purpose usually use their local representatives as channels of access. These representatives, therefore, act as media for the delivery of state aid to local areas and their inhabitants. In this sense, it was considered appropriate to regard political representatives as part of the state development apparatus, and to explore the survey sample's views of their functions and effectiveness.

## (1) Parliamentary Representatives

Under Ireland's system of multi-seat parliamentary constituencies, Northwest Connemara comprises part of the five-seat Galway West constituency. At the time of the survey, Fianna Fail (FF) held three of these seats, per Robert Molloy, Maire Geoghegan-Quinn and Frank Fahy, while Fine Gael (FG) held the other two, per John Donnellan and Fintan Coogan. Both Molloy and Geoghegan-Quinn are based in Galway City, as is Coogan. However, both Molloy and Geoghegan-Quinn have family roots and strong power bases in Connemara, the western part of the constituency (in which Ballinakill is located), with Geoghegan-Quinn being particularly strong in Irish-speaking southern Connemara. Fahy is based in the area of the constituency to the southeast of Galway City, while Donnellan's power base is in the rural eastern and northern parts of the constituency. In addition to Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, the left-wing Labour and Workers' Parties contested the constituency in the most recent general election, in November 1982.

The survey respondents were asked first of all which party they had voted for in that election. Nine choose not to answer, twelve said they had not voted in the election, and three said they voted for parties or individuals who had not stood in the most recent election in Galway West. Non-voting was highest among the youngest age group and lowest among the highest age group. Of the remaining 81% of the sample, 70% voted for Fianna Fail, 22% for Fine Gael, 7% for Labour, and 1% (one respondent) for the Workers' Party. Support for Fianna Fail was also highest among the older respondents and lowest among the younger respondents. In addition, support for Fianna Fail was significantly higher among those who had never lived outside Northwest Connemara than among those who had. Nevertheless, the overall pattern confirms the image of rural West Galway as being perhaps the strongest bastion of Fianna Fail support in the country. This close identification with Fianna Fail was corroborated when respondents were asked to name three TDs representing the area. All but five gave at least one name, 80% gave at least two names, and 50% gave three names. The aggregate responses are presented in Table 26.

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Molloy          | 37.7 |
| Donnellan       | 23.6 |
| Geoghegan-Quinn | 22.9 |
| Higgins         | 6.0  |
| Fahy            | 4.2  |
| Coogan          | 2.8  |
| Other           | 2.5  |
| n = 284         |      |

Table 26: Who are the TDs for this area? (%).

The overall distribution of responses along party lines is very similar to how respondents voted in the election. However, an examination of those named first by respondents showed that not only did 77% of Fianna Fail voters name Robert Molloy first, but so did 45% of Fine Gael voters! Molloy, therefore, was clearly the most well-known TD - almost 60% of all respondents named him first, compared with 22% for Donnellan and 13% for Geoghegan-Quinn. Fahy and Coogan, while elected in the same constituency, clearly were not seen as representing the study area. The remaining responses referred to people who were not TDs. These included Michael Higgins (Labour), who had been a TD previously, and mainly local councillors.

## (2) County Councillors

Ballinakill is part of the Connemara Electoral Area, which elects four members to Galway County Council. However, as far as the great bulk of the survey respondents were concerned, there were only two councillors representing the area. When asked to name three councillors, Gerald Bartley (FF) accounted for 55% of the responses, and John Mannion (FG) accounted for 25%. This was hardly surprising, as both of these councillors are based in the Clifden area, whereas the other two councillors are based in the Gaeltacht district of South Connemara. The remaining replies were spread across a wide range of names, most of them inaccurate. Only just over half of the respondents (55%) were able to give even one name; 22% gave two names; and only four respondents gave three names. Clearly there is a much lower level of identification with county councillors than with TDs in the area. Of those named first, Bartley represented 65% of the responses and Mannion 20%, again reflecting the division of party support in the sample.

In order to measure the effectiveness of political representatives at local level, the respondents were asked if any politicians (either TDs or councillors) had been of benefit to them or their families. There was a 90% response rate to this question, and two fifths of these replied in the affirmative. This suggests that a very significant proportion of families have been beneficiaries of the services of politicians. Interestingly, 50% of Fianna Fail supporters, as against only 20% of Fine Gael supporters, had been beneficiaries. This may mean that Fine Gael supporters are less inclined to seek politicians' assistance, or else that Fine Gael representatives are less effective in providing benefits (a possibility which is indicated by the much lower level of support for that party in the study area).

Of those who said they had benefitted from politicians, only 54% were prepared to say specifically how they had benefitted. However, even this restricted sample demonstrated the wide variety of ways in which politicians can help their constituents. The most important ways mentioned were getting a council house (7), getting planning permission (6), and road improvements (4). Also mentioned were electricity, harbour rates, flooding, medical card, dole, social welfare entitlements, house improvement grant, school, water, forestry, and employment. Of course, it is not suggested here that anybody obtained anything through their politicians to which they were not entitled, but rather that the politicians expedited matters.

Respondents were much more forthcoming in naming the politicians who had helped them or their families (only six out of fifty desisted). The responses to this question highlighted the extent to which Robert Molloy dominates the local political scene. Eight names in all were given, and between them they were given a total of 49 times: of this total, Molloy accounted for almost two thirds (31). No other politician was mentioned more than five times. Of the 49 mentions, 43 referred to current or former TDs, suggesting that these are seen as being much more effective in getting things done than councillors.

Apart from benefits to themselves or their families, respondents were asked if they thought politicians were of benefit to the parish generally. Of those who replied (86%), two thirds were of the opinion that politicians were of benefit in this respect. Thus there was clearly a widely-held belief in the efficacy of politicians, with Fianna Fail supporters again being firmer in their belief in this context than Fine Gael supporters. Again, when asked how politicians were of benefit to the parish, a large proportion of those respondents in question (37%) were unable to reply, while the biggest proportion of the replies given (35%) were non-specific, referring to general services or assistance provided to the community. The only specific form of assistance mentioned with any frequency was road improvements (26%) - although, going on the basis of the survey findings reported earlier, there is still a long way to go in this respect! Other specific forms of assistance mentioned included housing, the water scheme, a grant for a bridge, electricity supply, house improvements, medical cards, social welfare, and industrial

## CHAPTER 5

### COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT

The principal reason why Ballinakill was chosen for the present study was the existence within the parish of a number of formally distinct, but informally interrelated, community-based development groups whose contribution to the area's development could be compared with that of the state. In this chapter, the background and activities of these groups are first described, prior to presenting the perceptions of the groups among the survey sample.

#### BACKGROUND AND ACTIVITIES

##### Connemara West Ltd.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a widespread diffusion of the self-help philosophy occurred among rural communities in the West of Ireland. This was reflected in Ballinakill in the formation of a Ballinakill Parish Development Committee (BPDC) in 1970, with the immediate aim of raising finance for a projected scheme of self-catering cottages to be built at Tully Cross. The idea for this project had emanated from an informal group of concerned local residents. Originally, the idea was that the scheme would be administered by the Shannon Free Airport Development Company (SFADCo), which had successfully pioneered the concept of clusters of purpose-built "traditional" self-catering cottages in the Midwest region. Eventually, it was decided to form a separate local limited company to run the proposed scheme, and so Connemara West Ltd. (CWL) was born in 1971. This new company, however, was not to be confined simply to running the cottage scheme, as its constitution gave it a remit for the general promotion of social, economic and cultural activities in the parish.

The initial share drive raised a total of £13,500 in share capital from 400 mainly local shareholders. A maximum shareholding of £100 was allowed, in order to ensure that ownership would be dispersed as much as possible among the community. In fact, only 70 people subscribed the maximum amount; about another 60-70 subscribed only between £1 and £5. Most shareholdings fell in the £20-£50 range. The overall average shareholding was about £35. Galway County Council and the Western Regional Tourism Organisation also subscribed £5,500 each to the company, in return for which each has a position on the Board of Directors which otherwise is elected from among the ordinary shareholders.

A total of nine cottages were duly constructed in 1972/3, and the subsequent success of the scheme gave CWL both the financial resources and organisational base upon which further development initiatives could be built. The next such project to come to fruition was An Teach Cheoil ("The House of Music"), built in Tully in 1976/77 as a centre for social and cultural events (including tourist-oriented musical sessions in the summer) and for classes in traditional music, dance and song, with the emphasis on preserving the cultural traditions of the area. In the meantime, the industrial school operated by the Christian Brothers at Letterfrack was closed in 1974 and subsequently put on the market. CWL resolved to purchase this fine complex of buildings, comprising a main building used for classes, dormitories, and refectory, a residential building, a set of nine craft

workshops and a recreation/assembly hall, for use as a community resource. A second share drive was launched to raise further finance for this purpose, which realised £11,000 in share capital, and brought the total number of shareholders up to almost 500, giving an average shareholding of around £50. By now, over 80% of the parish's households held shares, giving the company a true community base.

The industrial school was duly purchased in 1978 for £21,000. No assistance towards the purchase was forthcoming from the state or its agencies, so that borrowings were resorted to in order to make up the difference between the subscribed share capital and the purchase price. What was to become the Connemara West Centre was then renovated at a total cost of £70,000, which was partly funded by a £12,500 grant from Galway County Development Team, three state-funded youth employment schemes, and the sale of five workshops to the IDA to be used for the promotion of small industry. A variety of activities have subsequently been developed at the Centre, as follows:

- CWL's administrative offices
- Resource Centre: The CWL offices also function as a resource for the other activities based in the Centre, and for the community at large, providing services such as book-keeping, typing, photocopying, telephone, telex, and a community information service.
- Letterfrack Co-operative Ltd.: This is a farmers' co-operative formed in 1983 which runs a store at the Centre previously operated by Comharchumann Duiche Sheoigheach, a community development co-operative based in South Mayo. The share drive for this co-operative raised £6,950 from 120 shareholders, or an average of £58 per shareholder. CWL also subscribed £1,000 in shares in the co-operative.
- Tullycross Credit Union (see below)
- Health Centre: Regular clinics held by the local doctor.
- Sports and Social Centre.
- Craft Workshops: Six separate enterprises are now operating from these.
- Community Craftshop and Tearoom: This is run jointly by CWL and a local handcraft co-operative of some 40 members, and acts mainly as an outlet for the products of both the latter co-operative and the Centre's own craft workshops.
- Craft Training Programme: To date, this has concentrated on providing an intensive full-time course in wood crafts for fifteen young local people, with a view to the subsequent establishment of commercial enterprises in the area.

Apart from four people directly employed by CWL in an administrative capacity, 28 jobs have been created in enterprises established with CWL's assistance. The various activities outlined above had a combined turnover of approximately £380,000 in 1984. CWL has been careful of not falling into the trap of over-borrowing which has caused major problems for similar organisations in the West of Ireland. By the end of 1983, all outstanding loans had been repaid in full, by which time CWL was in possession of assets worth in excess of £500,000 and had achieved viability in its main activities.

CWL has a Board of 14 unpaid Directors, twelve elected by the shareholders, and two nominated by Galway County Council and the Western Regional Tourism Organisation. The Board functions mainly via ten separate sub-committees, consisting of Directors (at least one on each sub-committee) and co-opted local people chosen for their interest in the relevant sub-committee's activities or their involvement in relevant voluntary

organisations. This system greatly broadens the degree of community involvement in CWL's ongoing activities and enhances the flow of information, both within the organisation and between it and the community. Each Director gives a report to the Annual General Meeting on his/her sub-committee, thereby further enhancing the flow of information. Articles in the Community Council newsletter also have this effect. Directors are elected for a three-year term, and are encouraged to step down after two terms in order to encourage the circulation of new blood in the organisation. Dividends are not paid to shareholders, in order to facilitate the maximum reinvestment of resources in the development of existing and future activities. So far, CWL has avoided appointing an overall manager, partly for fear of power becoming concentrated in a single individual.

### Ballinakill Community Council

Ballinakill Community Council grew out of the Ballinakill Parish Development Committee (BPDC), set up in 1970 (see above). The 1971 White Paper on Local Government had proposed giving statutory powers to local community councils, and in preparation for this, Muintir na Tire (a national voluntary organisation for the promotion of local, community-based development) began promoting the formation of popularly-elected community councils in place of the vocationally-based guilds which the organisation had previously favoured (there had been one of these guilds in Ballinakill in the 1950s, but it had long since become defunct). As a result, elections were held in 1973 to establish the Ballinakill Community Council (BCC).

BCC has eighteen elected members representing six subdivisions of the parish (the same subdivisions are used for elections to the committee of Connemara West Ltd.). Elections are held every three years: nominations are sought, ballot papers are distributed to each house according to the number of eligible voters in each house and are collected later. The Council also includes representatives of a number of local voluntary organisations (recalling the old Muintir na Tire guild system) and a small number of co-opted members.

BCC initially engaged in making representations on behalf of the local area to government organisations and politicians, particularly with regard to road improvements and refuse collection. It also became involved in bulk purchases of potatoes and fertilisers, repairs to elderly people's houses, organisation of the community games and renovation of the old school at Moyard, began publishing a parish newsletter, and developed a sportsfield at Tully Cross. BCC also played an important role in nurturing popular support for Connemara West's purchase of the industrial school at Letterfrack and for the development of the Connemara National Park, and played a supportive role in expediting these initiatives.

### Tullycross Credit Union

Tullycross Credit Union (TCU) was set up in 1970, and was the first popular parish-wide voluntary organisation in the area, thereby laying the foundations for the subsequent formation of Ballinakill Community Council and Connemara West. It had 275 members with an average contribution of £230 in 1983 (reputedly the highest per capita savings of any credit union in the country), by which time it had invested £133,000 in the area.

An interesting joint venture between TCU and Connemara West (which is a shareholder in TCU) was the establishment in 1983 of a Co-operative Development Fund, whereby a sum of £10,000 (partly invested as shares in the Credit Union by Connemara West) was set aside for promoting the formation of commercial enterprises in the area. The first such enterprise to be so aided was the newly-formed Letterfrack (farmers') Co-operative (above), which was provided with an advance of £9,000 to be repaid over five years at a

fixed interest rate of 5%. Repayments did not begin until after an initial period of six months, in order to give the Co-op a breathing space to develop cash flow. In return for these concessionary terms, the Co-op has agreed to contribute itself to the Development Fund, either in the form of a fixed annual sum or a proportion of annual profits. The Co-op would, of course, be paid interest on these contributions.

This innovation attempts to tackle a basic problem which has beset community-based enterprises throughout the West of Ireland, namely, capital shortage (Breathnach, 1986). Because of their nature, such enterprises have limited supplies of shareholders' funds while, in the absence in Ireland of any co-operative banks, loan capital tends to carry penal rates of interest. The Co-operative Development Fund provides loans at interest rates well below commercial levels, but abreast of inflation, thereby protecting the shareholders' interests. At the same time, the requirement that beneficiaries contribute portion of their surplus to the fund provides a means for continuous expansion, thereby widening the financial base from which future enterprises can be supported. There is clearly a model here with great potential for wide application throughout Ireland.

### Interlinkages

Although Connemara West Ltd. (CWL), Ballinakill Community Council (BCC) and Tullycross Credit Union (TCU) are formally distinct entities, the informal links between them are quite strong. Overlap in the membership of BCC and the committees of CWL and TCU was high in the early years, but has declined as the demands of membership have grown. The CWL committee has two representatives on the BCC and three on the committee of TCU. CWL and BCC have three or four joint meetings per year to discuss matters of mutual interest, while subcommittees of both organisations also have occasional meetings, when the need arises. When CWL has an idea for a new project, it refers it to BCC for discussion. This provides the community in general with a democratic input into CWL's development activities. Essentially, BCC functions, in part, as a clearing house for ideas, whereas CWL, which is a legal corporate entity, implements those ideas which require the backing of such an entity. As already noted, the Co-operative Development Fund represents a co-operative venture between CWL and TCU with considerable potential for contributing to the area's future development, and could see TCU developing an important role in financing commercial projects promoted by CWL.

## SURVEY RESULTS

### Ballinakill Community Council (BCC)

The survey respondents were first asked to identify the kinds of activities they associated with BCC. No less than 44% of the sample were unable to name any activities at all, while a further 3% thought BCC was inactive/ineffective. Table 27 lists those activities which were given by the remainder of the sample.

Because of the intimate degree of co-operation between BCC and Connemara West, and the aforementioned role of BCC in publicising and seeking popular support for Connemara West's initiatives, it would not have been surprising to find many of those activities which come formally under the aegis of the latter also being associated with the former. Also, because of the range of activities accommodated in the Connemara West Centre, classification of some of the responses posed some difficulties. General references to the Centre accounted for 7.4% of the responses, while a further 29% referred to economic development activities (mainly the promotion of co-operatives, particularly the farmers' co-operative, the Anco training schemes based in the Connemara West Centre, and the

Tullycross self-catering cottages) more properly associated directly with Connemara West Ltd. At the same time, the bulk of the responses referred to social development activities, most of which could be ascribed to BCC's own particular sphere of operations. The main activities mentioned in this respect were the group water scheme (not a BCC activity), sports and entertainment facilities, housing (especially for older citizens), and improvements in roads and electricity supplies. "General" responses (11.5% of the total) referred to local development, employment provision, and attention to community needs and problems. Overall, while the high level of non-responses must be a source of concern to BCC, the evidence still is that the Council has created a distinctive identity for itself among a sizeable proportion of the local population.

|                       |      |
|-----------------------|------|
| General               | 11.7 |
| Connemara West Centre | 7.5  |
| Economic development  | 27.5 |
| Of which:             |      |
| Co-ops                | 12.5 |
| Training schemes      | 7.5  |
| Cottages              | 5.8  |
| Social development    | 51.7 |
| Of which:             |      |
| Water supply          | 12.5 |
| Sport/Entertainment   | 9.2  |
| Housing               | 9.2  |
| Roads                 | 5.8  |
| Electricity           | 5.8  |
| Other                 | 1.7  |

n = 120

Table 27: Activities associated with Ballinakill Community Council (%).

It has been argued elsewhere (Breathnach, 1984a, 1984b, 1986) that popular perceptions of the merits of community development organisations are strongly influenced by the extent to which the benefits of their activities are diffused widely throughout the community. In order to test this in relation to BCC, the sample respondents were next asked if they thought BCC had brought benefits to themselves or their families. Since over two fifths of the sample had expressed ignorance of BCC's activities (in response to the previous question), it would not have been surprising to obtain a generally negative response to this question. On this occasion, the non-response rate was 20%, while two thirds of the remaining respondents indicated that there had been no personal or family benefit from BCC's activities. This suggests that about half of those who had been aware of at least some of BCC's activities felt they had not benefitted from them. Overall, 29% of the sample thought they had benefitted from BCC. There were some interesting influences on responses to this question, with members of the oldest age group, females, and those not originally from the area all being particularly inclined to say that they had not been beneficiaries. Those who did benefit did so mainly through provision of social infrastructural facilities (piped water, housing, improved electricity supply) and employment/training through Connemara West projects.

Although Muintir na Tire's model constitution for community councils explicitly excludes elected party politicians from membership, and prohibits candidates for election from standing on behalf of political parties, many community councils in Ireland have had their credibility called into question through becoming identified with particular parties or through becoming fora for the expression of party rivalries. To gauge this in relation to

BCC, respondents were asked if they thought party politics were involved in the Council. 35% gave no reply; of the remainder, three quarters replied in the negative, and one quarter positively. Of the latter, two thirds were unable to specify how party politics were involved in BCC, while the eight remaining responses comprised an incoherent mish-mash. One may conclude from this that BCC is not associated with party politics in the eyes of the great majority of the Ballinakill community.

As noted earlier, the switch from Muintir na Tire guilds to community councils was geared towards creating more directly representative community development organisations based mainly on universally elected members. The sample respondents were asked if they thought BCC was actually representative of the people of the parish. Of the three quarters who responded to this, over 90% said the Council was representative of the community. The respondents were invited to add comments to their reply to this question, but the great majority declined to do so. Those comments which were received emphasised mainly the fact that BCC was directly elected, that it works for the general good of the area, and that there was a broad spectrum of people involved in it. The small number of negative comments focussed on the allegation that the Council was dominated by a small group of people, a topic which will be returned to later. Overall, then, one can conclude that BCC is an organisation with a reasonably well-defined distinctive role in the study area, and enjoys broad credibility and confidence within the community.

#### Connemara West Ltd. (CWL)

As with BCC, respondents were first asked to identify the activities associated with CWL. In this case, only one fifth gave no response, less than half the proportion for BCC, suggesting that CWL has a more powerful and clearly-defined image within the community, which is hardly surprising, given the tangible and high-profile projects for which CWL is directly responsible. Those who did respond named more than two activities on average per person, culminating in a wide range of activities, classified in Table 28.

|                         |      |
|-------------------------|------|
| General development     | 8.3  |
| Co-operatives           | 20.7 |
| Self-catering cottages  | 18.9 |
| ANCO training courses   | 12.0 |
| Craft workshops         | 10.6 |
| Connemara West Centre   | 7.4  |
| Connemara National Park | 6.5  |
| Tourism                 | 5.5  |
| Teach Cheoil            | 2.3  |
| Craft shop              | 1.8  |
| Other                   | 6.0  |
| n = 217                 |      |

Table 28: Activities associated with Connemara West Ltd. (%).

"General development" included industrial development, employment provision and improvement of the area. It is possible that some of those who referred to the development of small industry had the craft workshops at the Connemara West Centre in mind. Half of the references to co-operatives did not specify further, although a number of co-operatives have been associated with CWL. It is probable that in most cases, the new farmers' co-operative was being referred to (this dominated the specific co-operative references). However, there were also several references to the Killary Fish Farming

Co-op, in whose formation (in 1982) CWL was not directly involved, and to the fishing co-op set up under the Combat Poverty Community Action Project (see below) which had ceased to function shortly before the present survey was carried out.

The most widely-identified single project associated with CWL was the self-catering cottages scheme at Tullycross. The other activities mentioned in descending order of importance were the ANCO training schemes, the craft workshops, the Connemara West Centre (this refers to general mention of the Centre without specific accompanying references to any of the activities contained therein), Connemara National Park, tourism (mainly general references to tourist development), the Teach Cheoil and the craft shop at the Connemara West Centre. There were also references to sports facilities, bingo, dancing, the "Barperson of the Year" competition and non-relevant items such as housing, water supplies and vegetable growing. However, it is striking just how few inaccurate responses were received amidst the general profusion of activities given, and in particular how little overlap there was with BCC's exclusive realm of activities. The fact that BCC had been strongly associated with CWL but not the opposite testifies to CWL's dominant position in the area's community development framework, and to its effectiveness in impressing itself on the community consciousness of the area.

Respondents were next asked if they, or members of their families, were shareholders in CWL. One tenth gave no reply. Of those who did, 60% said they were shareholders. This is somewhat less than the 80% of local households which CWL themselves reckon are shareholders (above). The respondents were then asked if they thought CWL had brought benefits to themselves or their families. This time, only 8% gave no reply (compared to 21% who failed to identify any of CWL's activities). Of the others, 43% replied positively, and 57% negatively. Thus, of the total sample, 40% reckoned they had benefitted from CWL, compared with 29% in the case of BCC, suggesting that CWL has been more successful in spreading the benefits of its activities through the community.

Most of those who had benefitted from CWL indicated how they did so. The great majority were economic benefits. Ten replies gave employment (including summer jobs) as the means of benefit, while two hoped their children would get jobs in the area as a result of CWL's development projects. Two others mentioned the ANCO training courses organised by CWL. Nine claimed to have benefitted from the setting up of the farmers' co-op, while five had benefitted from the boost to tourism brought about by CWL. Four thought they had benefitted from the general infusion of money into the area arising from CWL's activities. Two respondents indicated they expected to benefit from their shares in CWL (despite the policy of not paying dividends to shareholders), two mentioned involvement in crafts, and one benefitted from use of CWL's office facilities. Ten respondents had benefitted in non-economic ways, including provision of night classes and sports facilities, the amenity provided by Connemara National Park, the cultural revival in the area, the establishment of Teach Cheoil, and the generation of greater involvement in the community. These responses testify to the wide variety of ways in which CWL has had a beneficial impact within the community and corroborate the evidence of similar surveys elsewhere (Breathnach, 1984a) which show that multifunctional community-based development organisations can produce a range of socio-economic benefits which other approaches to development cannot match.

Apart from personal benefits, the sample respondents were asked if they thought CWL had brought benefits to the parish in general. Leaving aside the 12% who gave no reply, no less than 95% answered in the affirmative, which represents a resounding vote of community confidence in CWL and its efforts. Over 80% of the latter respondents went on to indicate how the parish benefitted, and there replies are classified in Table 29.

Clearly dominant in the responses were the boost to employment and tourism which were thought to have emanated from CWL's activities. The other major specific benefits were the farmers' co-op and the ANCO training courses. More general benefits identified by a

few were the spirit of self-help and community involvement which had been created and the infusion of money into the area. There was a wide range of other responses, including Teach Cheoil and the promotion of traditional culture, the provision of social facilities, benefits to fishing and shopkeepers/traders, the renovation of the Connemara West Centre, the provision of a craft shop and markets for produce, information services, better shopping facilities, water and housing.

|                   |      |
|-------------------|------|
| Employment        | 30.1 |
| Tourism           | 23.0 |
| Farmers' Co-op    | 11.5 |
| ANCO courses      | 9.7  |
| Spirit/self-help  | 5.3  |
| Infusion of money | 3.5  |
| Other             | 17.8 |
| n = 113           |      |

**Table 29: How has the parish benefitted from Connemara West Ltd.? (%)**

As with BCC, respondents were asked if they thought party politics were involved in CWL. As with BCC, the non-response rate was quite high (30%), but of those who expressed an opinion, 83% (compared with 73% for BCC) thought party politics were not involved. Of the small number (15) who said yes, five could not say how, while, as with BCC, the remaining replies were varied and generally imprecise. When asked if they thought CWL was representative of the people of the parish, 83% responded, of whom 91% thought it was - again, this represents a strong community vote of confidence in CWL. The respondents were invited to add comments to their reply to this question, and forty (32%) availed of the opportunity in a meaningful way. Three quarters of these comments were positive about CWL: while many simply reiterated the beneficial impact CWL had on the community, the biggest single group pointed to the democratic nature of the organisation (the board being elected by a general meeting of shareholders who comprise most of the households in the parish). Others said that CWL had the interests of the area at heart, got things done, represented community effort, involved locals only, and had a broad spectrum of people at the top. The negative comments focussed mainly on the view that CWL was effectively controlled by a small group of people.

#### **Tullycross Credit Union (TCU)**

Responses to questions concerning TCU may have been affected by the fact that the organisation was mistakenly referred to as "Ballinakill Credit Union" in the questionnaire. Respondents were first asked if they, or any members of their families, were members of TCU. Only five did not respond, while the remainder were split almost exactly half-in-half. Thus, the proportion of members was not far behind the reported level of membership of CWL. Indeed, shareholders in CWL were more likely than others to be members of TCU. So also were those respondents who had lived outside Northwest Connemara.

The respondents were asked what they thought were the advantages of having a credit union in the parish. Over three quarters replied to this. Most of the replies simply referred to the fact that the credit union made loans available. However, 25 responses referred to ease of access, which included both the fact that the credit union was based in the parish, and that it gave loans where the banks might or would not. A further 22 responses

referred to the favourable interest rates applying to credit union loans. Only eight respondents referred to the advantage of the credit union as a savings medium. Other responses included leniency re repayments (5); helps poor people (4); keeps money in the area (4); helps people better themselves (3); understanding of local people (2); and provides a good service, has sensible people in it, and provides a way of escaping taxation (1) (one each).

#### **Key personnel: a comparative analysis**

It has been commonly observed in many local communities in Ireland that most community organisations are dominated by a small group of people each of whom is found on the committees of a variety of such organisations. In some cases these people are dedicated and effective, and their services are keenly sought after. In other cases, such people are essentially on an ego trip, and exploit the fact that it is easy to get elected onto voluntary committees if one volunteers one's services. Such domination by a restricted clique can inhibit community development in two main ways. Firstly, by spreading their resources thinly across a number of groups, even able people can be of limited effectiveness. Secondly, domination by a few discourages broader involvement by the community, and may threaten the popular credibility of the organisations concerned.

While a small number of references to this phenomenon have already been encountered in the analysis of Ballinakill's leading community groups, it has not appeared as a significant factor in the popular perceptions of them reported so far. Nevertheless, because of the smallness of the parish, and the strong functional links between the groups, the possibility of clique domination seemed strong. Hence, the questionnaire survey attempted to establish, in a direct way, the extent to which "key personnel" were commonly associated in the popular mind with the groups concerned. This was done by asking respondents to name whom they thought were the three main people involved in each of the three organisations, namely, BCC, CWL, and TCU. The results are summarised in Table 30.

Before analysing Table 30, it is worth noting that there are 18 members of BCC, 12 local members of the CWL Board of Directors (plus one nominee each of the Western Region Tourism Organisation and Galway County Council), and 11 Directors of TCU. At the time of the survey, these 41 positions were filled by 35 individuals. One person - Jenny Conboy - had a position on all three; two people - John Fitzpatrick and Patrick Sammon - had positions on both CWL and TCU; one person - Mary Folan - had positions on both BCC and CWL; and one person - Paddy Gannon - had positions on both BCC and TCU. The latter, in fact, was Chairman of BCC and Treasurer of TCU. Only one of the other people with overlapping memberships - John Fitzpatrick - had an officer's position (Chairman of TCU). Hence, 30 of the 35 persons concerned had positions in no more than one organisation.

Table 30 lists all those people who were named at least five times in relation to each of the organisations, and gives the proportion of the total number of mentions each person received. In line with earlier responses, the proportion of the sample who could not give any name was highest for BCC, at 40%, and was lowest for CWL, at 20%. The non-response rate for TCU, at nearly 30%, was almost half-way between the two. For those who did respond, the average number of names given per person was 2.3 for BCC and CWL, and 2.0 for TCU; in other words, the typical respondent was only able to give about two names in response to these questions, despite being invited to give three.

As regards BCC, a total of 37 names in all were given, which suggests that there has been quite an amount of turnover in membership. No individual name dominated in the responses, although two people - Paddy Gannon and Michael O'Neill - were clearly seen as the most prominent. While Paddy Gannon was chairman of BCC at the time of the survey, Michael O'Neill was not even a member, although he had been a leading figure in the

organisation previously and, as can be seen from the listings for the other organisations, he occupies a very prominent position in popular perceptions of the local community development effort. In fact, only nine of the eighteen members of BCC at the time of the survey were named by the respondents, while only four of those listed in Table 30 (and only one of the top five) were members at the time. To a large extent, this reflects the continuing public association of BCC with certain prominent individuals who played a key role in the organisation in the past. At the same time, bearing in mind what was said above about certain people "hogging" community groups, it is no doubt laudable that many of these prominent individuals have been able to withdraw from BCC to focus their energies elsewhere and encourage new blood to come into the organisation. The fact that such a wide range of names is associated with BCC suggests that there has been a healthy turnover in membership; this must be gratifying for an organisation which would be considered the most democratically-constituted and representative of all the community organisations in the parish.

| Ballinakill Community Council | Connemara West Ltd.  | Tullycross Credit Union |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Paddy Gannon 16.7             | Michael O'Neill 29.4 | Paddy Gannon 38.1       |
| Michael O'Neill 14.4          | Paddy Coyne 14.5     | John Coyne 20.4         |
| John Fitzpatrick 8.0          | Joe O'Toole 13.2     | Jenny Conboy 9.9        |
| Joe O'Toole 6.9               | Paddy Gannon 8.8     | J McLoughlin 8.8        |
| Kathleen Mortimer 6.3         | Peter Veldon 7.9     | M O'Neill 8.8           |
| Paddy Coyne 5.2               | Jenny Conboy 4.8     | J Fitzpatrick 3.3       |
| Jenny Conboy 5.2              | Kieran O'Donohue 3.5 | Others 10.5             |
| P.J.Conneely 4.0              | Paul Aspell 2.6      |                         |
| Peter Veldon 3.4              | John Fitzpatrick 2.6 |                         |
| Arthur Walsh 3.4              | John Coyne 2.2       |                         |
| Janet O'Toole 2.9             | Others 10.5          |                         |
| Others 23.6                   |                      |                         |
| n = 174                       | n = 228              | n = 181                 |
| Response rate: 60.3           | 79.4                 | 71.4                    |

Table 30: Key personnel in community organisations (%).

As regards CWL, Michael O'Neill clearly is the dominant figure associated with the organisation, with Paddy Coyne and Joe O'Toole also being quite prominent. Michael O'Neill was secretary, and Joe O'Toole chairman, of the organisation at the time of the survey. In all, 26 names were given by respondents, but, on balance, public knowledge of CWL was sharper than for BCC, which should not be surprising, in view of the responses to previous questions. Thus, all but one of the eleven local directors were named at least once, while eight of the ten names listed in Table 30 were directors at the time of the survey, while the other two had been prominent directors previously.

In the case of TCU, only 17 names were put forward, of which only six were each mentioned at least five times. In this case, two individuals - Paddy Gannon (Treasurer) and John Coyne (Secretary) - dominate public perceptions of the organisation, with Paddy Gannon occupying a particularly prominent position. Of the six people listed in Table 30, all but Michael O'Neill were directors at the time of the survey. Of the eleven directors of TCU, all but three were named at least once.

In sum, therefore, it can be said that respondents were prepared to identify personnel associated with CWL, TCU and BCC in descending order as regards number of names given,

and that the same order was maintained as regards the accuracy of those who did make the attempt. This corroborates the earlier findings concerning the relative prominence and clarity of the profile of the three groups within the Ballinakill community. In all, fifteen people are listed in Table 30, of whom four - Paddy Gannon, Michael O'Neill, John Fitzpatrick and Jenny Conboy - are associated with all three organisations. Paddy Gannon, who tops two of the lists, would appear to be the most prominent figure in the community, followed closely by Michael O'Neill. Four people - Joe O'Toole, Paddy Coyne, Peter Veldon, and John Coyne - are associated with two organisations, and the remaining seven with one each. With only three women among the fifteen people listed in Table 30, there is still obviously a substantial pool of human resources in Ballinakill parish to be drawn upon in furthering the local community development effort.

## OTHER LOCALLY-BASED DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

While the main focus of this part of the survey has been on the three main organisations considered in the previous section, there are, or were, a number of other locally-based development groups in the study area, and some of these are briefly considered in this section.

### Letterfrack Co-operative Ltd.

As indicated previously, Letterfrack Co-operative Ltd. was established at the instigation of Connemara West Ltd. to carry on a business, previously operated by Comharchumann Duiche Sheoigheach of Corr na Mona in South Mayo, of supplying agricultural supplies to local farmers. The co-op was launched in 1983 with an initial complement of 120 shareholders, and is based at the Connemara West Centre.

Those respondents who lived on a farm were asked if they were members of Letterfrack Co-op. Of the 87 eligible respondents, only three gave no response, while of the others, just under half (48%) said they were members. These were then asked why they became members. Almost all (38 out of 40) replied, and over half of these said they joined in order to get cheaper supplies than had previously been available. A further five joined because of easier access to supplies, while six said they joined because they thought it would benefit the area.

Of the 44 respondents who said they had not joined the co-op, one third did not give a reason for this. Of the remaining 30, eleven gave the cost of joining as the reason, six referred to the failure of previous co-operative efforts, one said it was too far away, and twelve said they were not interested or the co-op was not relevant to their circumstances (mainly that they were too old or were only part-time farmers).

### Cleggan and Renvyle Fishermen's Co-operative

This was a project established under the aegis of the Community Action Project which operated in Ballinakill in the late 1970s (see below). It attracted 80 members and began operations in 1978 but ceased to function in 1980. Those respondents who had a family involvement in fishing (26 in all) were asked if they had been members of the co-op and eleven said they had been. All but one of these said they had benefitted from the co-op. The benefits stated were better markets (5), better prices (3), cheaper supplies (2) and provision of a cold-room (1). Asked why they thought the co-op closed down, seven blamed bad management, two blamed financial problems, and one blamed local politics. All eleven said they would like to see the co-op revived.



## Community Action Project

This was one of a number of pilot projects set up around the country in the 1970s by the National Combat Poverty Committee with the aim of stimulating community-based income-generating activities. Two full-time development workers were appointed to work with local community groups towards the realisation of this objective. The project operated between 1976-80, and while not confined to the Ballinakill area only, the project became involved in the following activities of relevance to this area:

- Establishment of fishermen's co-op (above);
- Promotion of group drainage and land reclamation scheme and organisation of night classe for farmers;
- Helped set up Killary Fish Farmers' Co-operative and organised night classes on mussel farming;
- Assisted group water scheme to pressurise county council;
- Provided community information service on housing, planning permission, welfare rights, grant eligibility, etc.;
- Helped pre-school playgroup in Renvyle to get started;
- reactivated community newsletter and set up group to keep it going;
- Helped establish and run a home handcrafts co-operative;
- Consulted with Ballinakill Community Council and Connemara West Ltd. on ways of identifying community needs, methods of working and ways of strengthening local involvement in community development.

The survey respondents were first asked if they could name any of the activities the Community Action Project (CAP) was involved in. Three quarters were unable to respond. This may seem to be very low; however, it should be noted that the CAP mainly operated by targetting specific groups in the area and did not, as such, have a broad or popular base like BCC or CWL. A wide range of activities were stated, many of which were erroneous (industrial development, financial assistance to business, Connemara National Park, repairing elderly people's homes and agricultural supplies). The CAP's involvement with fishing clearly made the biggest impression, and was mentioned 14 times, while the community information service was mentioned seven times. The project's involvement with farmers, the group water scheme, the newsletter, and underprivileged people were all mentioned, but none more than two or three times. There was no mention of the handcrafts co-op or the playschool.

Only six respondents indicated that they had benefitted from the CAP's activities, of whom only two stated how they had benefitted (both via the fishermen's co-op). The 27% of respondents who gave names of people involved in the CAP were quite accurate. Although most gave only one or two names, almost 90% of replies were confined to the four people who were employed during the duration of the project. Kieran O'Donohue was clearly the most prominent of these (38.2% of replies), followed by Margaret Barry (22.1%), John Coyne (19.1%) and Mary Ruddy (8.8%). Two of these - Kieran O'Donohue and John Coyne - are still very prominent in community affairs in the parish (see Table 30).

## OTHER COMMUNITY GROUPS

The respondents were next asked to name any other local groups which were trying to improve the area. 36% responded to this question, of whom six mentioned BCC, CWL or TCU, which had already been covered in the questionnaire. The remaining 48 replies were spread among no less than 15 groups, of which the most prominent was easily the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA), with 14 (29%) mentions. Other groups mentioned were (some of these had already arisen in the questionnaire, but only in relation to selected sub-samples): fish farmers' co-op (six mentions), farmers' co-op (5), Sports and Social Committee and Letterfrack Development Association (4 each), handcrafts co-op (3), youth club, St. Vincent de Paul, fishermen's co-op (despite being defunct) and Gaelic Athletic Association (2 each), and Irish Farmers Association, YMCA, Legion of Mary, group water scheme and "political parties" (1 each). While all of these are undoubtedly doing good work, none (with the possible exception of the ICA) appear to have the broad public profile of the main community organisations considered earlier in this chapter.

### Involvement in clubs/organisations

Finally, the sample respondents were asked if they themselves were involved in any local clubs or organisations. Two gave no reply; of the others, 38% answered in the affirmative. Those who had lived outside the area were much more likely to be involved, as were those with post-primary education (which is hardly surprising, as those with primary education only are concentrated in the older age group). Interestingly, those who were shareholders of CWL were also more likely to be involved in clubs and organisations generally. Almost all named the clubs in which they were involved. Excluding those organisations already covered in the survey, the great majority were involved in sports and recreation clubs, as follows: Gaelic Athletic Association (6), rugby (5), Teach Cheoil (5), soccer (3), gun club (3), badminton (2), sports and social committee (2), youth club (1). The largest single group were members of the Irish Countrywomen's Association (11). Other groups mentioned were the Irish Farmers Association, the group water scheme, school management board and home crafts co-operative.

### \* SUMMARY

(1) Three major community organisations emerged in Ballinakill in the 1970s - Connemara West Ltd. (CWL), a development company in which most local households have shares and which has promoted a range of activities in the parish; Ballinakill Community Council (BCC), a representative organisation which lobbies the state on behalf of the community, acts as a sounding board for new ideas and promotes some of these within the parish, and runs a number of voluntary services of its own; and Tullycross Credit Union (TCU), also with a high level of community membership, which acts as a community bank and has recently moved into partnership with CWL for the financing of development projects. While formally distinct, there is a high level of informal co-operation between these groups.

(2) Accurate knowledge of the activities of BCC was relatively low among the sample, and there was an amount of confusion between it and CWL. However, BCC had managed to carve out a distinctive image for itself among a significant proportion of respondents. Almost 30% of the sample said they had benefitted from BCC's activities. BCC has avoided association with party politics, and is widely regarded as being representative of the community.

(3) Clear and accurate knowledge of CWL's activities was much more widespread among the sample. Over half said they, or members of their family, were shareholders in CWL.

and 40% said they had benefitted from CWL's activities. There was general acceptance that CWL had been of benefit to the parish, mainly through employment generation and expansion of tourism. As with BCC, CWL had avoided being tainted with party politics, and was generally regarded as being representative of the community.

(4) Almost half the sample said they, or members of their family, were members of TCU. While the main advantage of TCU was seen as being the availability of loans at low interest rates, the organisation also came across as being sympathetic and understanding.

(5) Each of the three organisations is particularly associated in the public mind with a couple of key figures. While actual overlap of personnel at the time of the survey was quite limited, four people were popularly associated with all three. These could be regarded as the dominant group involved in community development in the parish.

(6) About half the farm families in the sample were members of Letterfrack Co-op, mainly in order to avail of cheaper supplies. Less than half the fishing families had been members of the now defunct fishermen's co-op, from which almost all had derived benefits, and which all would like to see revived. Public knowledge of the Combat Poverty Community Action Project was limited, although the personnel involved had a strong image among a minority of respondents.

(7) A minority of the sample named a wide range of other groups thought to be trying to improve the area. About one third were themselves involved in clubs and organisations besides those covered in the survey; these included mainly the ICA and social and recreational clubs.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE QUALITY OF LIFE

The focus of this chapter is popular perceptions of the quality of life in Ballinakill. Two aspects of this are considered: how the quality of life in the locality has been perceived to have changed in recent years, and how the residents of the parish perceive their quality of life in comparison to other areas. The aim is not only to obtain impressions of the overall quality of life, but to identify the constituent elements which are perceived to be important in contributing to it. To the extent that development can be defined as measures and processes which enhance the general quality of life in an area, it is important to be aware of how that area's inhabitants measure life quality when it comes to formulating development policies and assessing their effectiveness.

#### RECENT CHANGES IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE

The sample respondents were first asked to identify what they thought had been the main improvements in the area in the previous ten years. One tenth did not respond, while a further 9% said there had been no improvements. The remaining 102 respondents gave a total of 194 responses between them, or an average of just under two per person. The improvements mentioned by these are tabulated in Table 31.

|                       |      |
|-----------------------|------|
| Housing               | 23.7 |
| CWL-related           | 16.0 |
| National Park         | 8.8  |
| Group Water Scheme    | 7.7  |
| Demography            | 5.2  |
| Employment            | 5.2  |
| Living standards      | 4.6  |
| Tourism               | 4.1  |
| Roads                 | 3.6  |
| Telephones            | 3.6  |
| Other public services | 7.7  |
| Other                 | 9.8  |
| n = 194               |      |

Table 31: Main recent improvements (%).

Improvements in housing were seen as being by far the main single area of improvement, and were mentioned by nearly half of the relevant respondents. As a group, CWL-related improvements were next in importance, and included, in descending order of importance, the Connemara West Centre, the farmer's co-op, the Tully Cross cottages, and An Teach Ceoil. The creation of Connemara National Park was the next most important single item, followed closely by the group water scheme, then by improved demography, employment (including four references to the Moyard carpet factory), living standards, tourism, roads, telephones, and other public services (health, electricity, public transport, and sewerage). The remaining responses included recreation/entertainment, the community



council, the credit union, afforestation, cleaning the river, improvements in farming and fishing, health, the dole, shops, pubs, and cars.

The respondents were then asked to name the main disimprovements in the area in the previous decade. This time almost 40% gave no response, while a further 18% stated specifically that there had been no disimprovements, bringing to well over half the proportion of respondents who were unable to identify any recent deterioration in the area. Further, the 59 respondents who replied to the question named only 81 disimprovements between them, or an average of 1.4 each. On balance, therefore, there had been a clear overall improvement in the perceived quality of life in the area. The stated disimprovements are listed in Table 32.

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Public services | 24.7 |
| Roads           | 21.0 |
| Unemployment    | 14.8 |
| Agriculture     | 11.1 |
| Tourism         | 7.4  |
| Fishing         | 6.2  |
| Migration       | 6.2  |
| Other           | 8.6  |
| n = 81          |      |

Table 32: Main recent disimprovements (%).

The single largest category of identified disimprovements referred to public services, but within this category there was a wide spread of complaints, including refuse disposal, housing, public transport generally and transport for the sick and for school children, telephones, water supply, school closure, youth facilities and lack of a public meeting hall. These complaints should be set against the widespread perceptions in improvement in many of the same services reported above. Clearly the major single focus of dissatisfaction was the state of the roads, echoing the findings reported in Chapter 3. Unemployment was the next largest category. Most of the complaints relating to agriculture referred to poor utilisation of land. Complaints with respect to tourism were divided equally between those resenting the influx of tourists and those who perceived a decline in tourist numbers! Disimprovement in fishing (including the closure of the fishermen's co-op) and outmigration from the area were also seen as significant disimprovements. Other disimprovements included environmental deterioration, the cost of living, and resentment against foreigners.

It may be suggested that many of the alleged disimprovements reported here arise more from rising expectations rather than actual disimprovements in the elements mentioned. Thus, rising car ownership will have sharpened perceptions of the quality of roads; there is lower tolerance of the phenomenon of emigration; and acceptance of a manual telephone service will decline as automation increasingly becomes the norm elsewhere. To this extent, perceived disimprovements may be themselves a direct function of improved standards of living and quality of life among the sample respondents.

#### COMPARISONS WITH OTHER AREAS

Three areas were selected as reference points against which the sample respondents were asked to compare their home area as a place to live. All three were expected to be quite

familiar to most respondents. The national capital, Dublin, has the highest average per capita income of any area in the country, and has dominated patterns of internal migration within the country, particularly because of the heavy concentration of government and other service jobs there, and the association of the city with a high level of socio-cultural activity. Galway is the main urban centre of the West region, and one of the fastest-growing urban areas in the country. The Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) area of Carraroe/Spiddal in adjacent South Connemara was selected as a rural reference point. Environmentally, this area is quite similar to Ballinakill, but is in receipt of a range of special forms of state assistance aimed at promoting/preserving the Irish language and associated culture. This latter area has also been subject to a survey (as part of the research project which has given rise to the present survey) in which the present study area was itself used as a reference point (Breathnach, 1984a), so that a reciprocal comparison should throw an interesting light on how the two areas mutually perceive one another.

Respondents were first asked if they thought Ballinakill was better, the same, or worse than Galway City as a place to live. Only 8% gave no reply, and of the others, there was a decisive majority (69%) in favour of Ballinakill, with only a quarter favouring Galway City (Table 33). However, almost two thirds of those who said they preferred Ballinakill were unable to give a reason for this preference. One half of those who did give reasons stated they preferred the rural way of life and one third gave more specific reasons relating to the physical environment (quieter, cleaner, less polluted). The remaining reasons were divided equally between perceptions of urban pathology (crime, drugs) and the view that Ballinakill was a better place to bring up children. Just over half of the 31 who said they preferred Galway justified their choice in terms of better facilities (7), higher standard of living (5), better employment opportunities (4), and better for young people (1).

| Ballinakill is... | Galway City | Dublin  | Carraroe/Spiddal |
|-------------------|-------------|---------|------------------|
| Better            | 69.0        | 78.2    | 42.1             |
| Same              | 4.3         | 0.9     | 13.7             |
| Worse             | 26.7        | 20.9    | 44.2             |
|                   | n = 116     | n = 110 | n = 95           |

Table 33: Comparisons with other areas (%).

A slightly lower proportion of respondents (87%) were prepared to compare Ballinakill to Dublin, but those who did were even more strongly in favour of their home area (78%) than in the case of Galway, with one fifth being in favour of the national capital. However, on this occasion, less than 20% of those who favoured Ballinakill were able to explain their choice. Nearly half of these again expressed a general preference for rural life and a quarter rejected Dublin's perceived social pathology (crime, drugs, vandalism, slums). Other reasons given included lower levels of stress and pollution, better working conditions and that it is easier for the poor to survive in rural areas. Fourteen of the 23 people who opted for Dublin justified their choice along similar lines as were given for Galway (i.e. better facilities, employment opportunities and living standards).

The strong preference for Ballinakill shown in the two previous comparisons could be regarded as 'post hoc' rationalisation by respondents to explain why they are actually currently living where they are, and the low level of explicit explanations for this preference would appear to support this point of view. However, countermanding evidence is provided by the comparison with Carraroe/Spiddal. There was a significantly lower

response to this question (75%). This may in part be due to less familiarity on the part of some respondents with the reference area; however, the alternative explanation that many respondents could not make their mind up is supported by the fact that those who did give a response were almost equally divided between the two areas (with a slight majority in favour of Carraroe/Spiddal). In addition, many more respondents were inclined to equate the two areas than was the case with either Galway or Dublin. As a matter of interest, of those surveyed in Carraroe/Spiddal, only one half preferred the home area (as against Northwest Connemara), 30% rated the two areas equally, and 20% preferred Northwest Connemara.

Respondents were much more inclined to explain their preferences on this occasion: in fact, almost all did so; perhaps the fact that they were dealing with a more familiar rural environment may have been responsible for this. The reasons given for choices, both for and against Ballinakill, were almost entirely different, too. Two thirds of those who favoured Carraroe/Spiddal cited the extra grants available in the Gaeltacht, while most of the remainder referred to the better economic situation and employment opportunities there because of government investment. The main reasons given for favouring Ballinakill were simple familiarity with it and the better land resources of the area. Other reasons given included the view that Ballinakill was more modern, lower population density, physical environment and inability to speak Irish.

It could be argued that, given the tradition of outmigration in the West of Ireland, it requires virtually a deliberate decision to stay on the part of those who do not migrate. In addition, it should be borne in mind that the majority of those interviewed in the survey had experience of living outside Ballinakill, but had decided to either move, or return, to the area. At the same time, it must be conceded that once one becomes used to living in a particular area - particularly the area of birth - there will be an automatic tendency to compare it favourably with other, less familiar areas (despite the conventional wisdom that "faraway hills are always greener", although this undoubtedly applies to some). Nevertheless, the first part of this chapter points strongly to a common perception that the quality of life had improved significantly in Ballinakill in the previous decade, with the result that the majority would appear to be satisfied with their situation. There is little evidence here of the mass demoralisation which characterised many Western communities in the 1950s and 1960s, when people in their masses showed their displeasure with their home situation by "voting with their feet" and getting out. Areas like Ballinakill may portray lower per capita incomes than other parts of the country, but the evidence here suggests that, for many people, there are perceived compensations for these deficiencies.

However, this is by no means a unanimous view. The findings of this chapter indicate that there is a consistent 20% of respondents who are not happy with their situation. This is evident from the proportion who saw no recent improvements in Ballinakill, and who expressed a preference for both Galway and Dublin. There appeared to be no systematic influence (by age, sex, etc.) on the constitution of this disaffected group, except that there were indications that those respondents with all their children living at home were less inclined to look favourably at their home area, and more inclined, accordingly, to look favourably at Galway and Dublin. This would be understandable among parents concerned about the future employment prospects for their children, given that many saw these urban areas as offering better prospects in this respect.

Otherwise, there appeared to be little consistency in terms of those who gave negative assessments of Ballinakill. For example, in relation to the question concerning recent improvements in the area, of those who gave no reply or who said there had been no improvements, 60% still said that Ballinakill was preferable to Galway, and 65% said it was preferable to Dublin (although these proportions were significantly lower than those for the respondents who had seen improvements in Ballinakill, at 74% and 83%, respectively). In addition, of those who said that Ballinakill was worse than Galway City,

only one half also said that it was worse than Dublin. Thus, it appears that disaffection was expressed by different respondents for different questions, and that failure to see improvements at home did not necessarily lead to rejection of the home area in favour of other areas.

## \* SUMMARY

(1) The sample respondents were much more inclined to identify improvements rather than disimprovements as having occurred in Ballinakill over the previous ten years. The main areas in which improvements were seen to have taken place were housing, public services, developments related to Connemara West, and general living standards. Disimprovements were mainly related to roads, public services, and unemployment, but there were indications that many responses here were inspired by rising expectations rather than actual disimprovements in the items mentioned.

(2) Strong majorities favoured Ballinakill as a place to live compared with Galway City and especially Dublin, but most were unable to explain the basis for their expressed preference. Those who did so stressed the rural way of life, the physical environment, and the perceived social pathologies associated with urban areas. Those favouring the latter pointed to better facilities and job opportunities.

(3) A slight majority of those answering compared the South Connemara Gaeltacht area of Carraroe/Spiddal favourably with Ballinakill, mainly on the grounds of availability of grants and a perceived better economic situation. Those who favoured Ballinakill did so mainly on the basis of familiarity and better farmland. Most respondents who expressed a preference in this case were prepared to justify it.

(4) While the great majority of respondents would appear to be at least reasonably pleased with their situation in Ballinakill, there seemed to be a consistent disaffected minority of about 20%.

## CHAPTER 7 <sup>b</sup>

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Before drawing together the findings of the foregoing chapters, it is necessary to draw attention to the possible limitations of questionnaire surveys such as that upon which this report is based. In the first place, it is impossible to be certain that any random sample will be truly representative of the population from which it has been drawn, regardless of how carefully and rigorously the sample has been selected. Secondly, even where the sample is representative, there may be problems of interpretation of the questions asked, and the answers given, particularly where large numbers of interviewers are used (albeit well-briefed beforehand), as is the case here. Thirdly, even if there was uniform interpretation of the meanings of questions, there is no guarantee that all respondents will provide accurate factual or attitudinal information in response to these questions. For example, initial responses to attitudinal questions may often be different from those which would be given after further consideration. Accordingly, one should be wary of placing absolute trust in survey information.

At the same time, one should point to the high degree of consistency found in the responses to many related questions in the survey. One may note also the many occasions where responses were in line with what might have been expected beforehand. There is some basis, therefore, for suggesting that one can place some degree of confidence in the survey findings.

The focus of this report has been the concept of development - its various dimensions, how these impact on a rural community, and how these impacts are perceived and assessed by that community. The rural community in question - the parish of Ballinakill - was introduced in Chapter 1, and was shown to be extremely rural in nature and peripheral in location, although not nearly as dependent on agriculture as one might expect. From a population of about 2,000, a sample of 126 adults were surveyed for the purpose of the report.

Chapter 2 provided a socio-demographic profile of the study area, as represented by the characteristics of the sample. Occupationally, the sample was dominated by farmers and manual workers, almost all of whom were working in the locality (although, according to the 1981 Population Census, almost one third of the area's labour force were reported as being unemployed). The majority of the sample had not gone beyond a primary level of formal education.

Most of the respondents were originally from the locality (those who were not were mainly women), but a majority of these had lived elsewhere at some stage. Those who had returned, or moved, to the area had done so mainly for reasons of quality of life, marriage or family. Older members of the population were under-represented in the sample. The vast majority of parents still had at least some of their children living at home.

Chapter 3 sought the respondents' assessments of a range of services whose availability would commonly be regarded as essential elements of a reasonable level of development. Overall, there was a positive assessment of the range of services presented to the sample, with health, education, water supply and shopping scoring particularly strongly. However, the telephone service and rubbish disposal were rated very poorly by the respondents, with sports facilities and public transport occupying intermediate positions.

The main conclusions to be drawn from these findings are: (1) that there was no general feeling of disadvantage within the study area, at least as far as everyday services are concerned; (2) however, there was a sharp feeling of dissatisfaction with respect to some services; and that (3) this points to the need to avoid all-embracing diagnoses of, and prescriptions for, the problems of so-called "underdeveloped" areas and to involve local people in identifying the particular problems of particular localities.

Chapter 4 had as its focus the development activities of state agencies in the study area. Because of the high level of centralisation of organisational structures in Ireland, it is suggested that quite a degree of alienation exists between bureaucracies and their client populations. This alienation, it is further suggested, arises both from a lack of effective power at local level, and a lack of effective information flow between bureaucrats and the general population.

Such alienation was, indeed, readily apparent in the respondents' assessments of the efforts of the state development agencies. While there was an acceptance of the difficulties of promoting industrial development in the study area, there was a generally negative perception of the Industrial Development Authority's role in this respect, although there was some recognition of the Authority's involvement in the Connemara West Centre. This, despite the apparent fact that the Authority had put quite an amount of resources into the area. The activities of the County Development Team (concerned with the promotion of small business) were virtually unknown among the sample.

Alienation was particularly in evidence with respect to the state's development schemes regarding agriculture, the leading economic activity in the study area. While it was generally considered that there was scope for agricultural development in the area, there was very little involvement in existing development schemes, which were dismissed as being irrelevant to the area's circumstances. While more appropriate forms of state assistance were commonly called for, there was also considerable support for the idea of transferring land from those not using it properly.

The state's schemes for assisting fishing (also an important activity in the study area) were also seen as being inappropriate to the local small-scale inshore fisherpeople, being geared instead to larger operators. Tourism was also found to be of considerable importance to the area, mainly through the income and employment generated in local hotels, guesthouses and shops. Future expansion was seen as being principally dependent on reduced prices and improved accessibility to the area.

Because of the aforementioned centralisation of bureaucratic structures in Ireland, political representatives have assumed a key role in acting as intermediaries between these structures and ordinary people at local level. At the time of the survey, the study area was a bastion of Fianna Fail support, and parliamentary representatives (who have more direct access to nationally centralised organisations) had a much higher profile than county councillors. Some 40% of respondents (mostly Fianna Fail supporters) had experienced benefits through the assistance of politicians, reflecting the high incidence of "clientilism" in rural Ireland. It is hardly surprising that the bulk of respondents viewed politicians as making a positive contribution to the area. While there were some cynical responses, no one articulated the view that it might be in the interests of politicians to maintain a situation of centralised bureaucracy in order to allow them to fulfill their perceived roles as intermediaries.

Overall, then, the view was widespread that there is considerable scope for further exploitation of the study area's natural resources, but that this would require more, and more appropriate, state assistance than is currently on offer. However, the respondents made a clear distinction between the country's bureaucratic and political structures: there was little evidence of alienation from the latter, with high levels of participation in elections and a general belief in the ability of politicians to deliver personalised benefits

to the area's population.

Chapter 5 focussed on the activities of community-based development groups operating in the study area. Such groups, it was expected, would portray characteristics opposite to those associated with state organisations i.e. strong local identification, a high level of information flow to the local population, and a strong orientation towards local needs and resources. To a large extent this was the case, although knowledge and perceptions of the three main groups considered was not uniform among the respondents. Connemara West Limited was clearly the organisation with the strongest image in the community, with high levels of participation as shareholders and perceived benefits being reported by the respondents. There was also a high level of membership in Tullycross Credit Union, which was seen as beneficial, accessible and understanding. Ballinakill Community Council did not have as clear-cut a public profile, with many respondents confusing its activities with the more high-profile activities of Connemara West Limited. All three organisations had a high level of credibility within the community, being seen as representative of that community, and free of party political associations.

Each of the three organisations was associated by respondents with a couple of key individuals, and while at the time of the survey there was very little actual overlap in membership of their committees, four people emerged from the survey as being associated in the public mind with all three. While these people have been careful not to "hog" key positions simultaneously in the groups concerned, they nevertheless would be regarded as the dominant initiators of community development in the parish.

Overall, the depth of knowledge and positive assessment of the community-based development groups in the study area contrasts quite markedly with the sense of alienation and criticism expressed by the sample respondents in relation to the efforts by the state to improve conditions in the area. |||

Chapter 6 concerned itself with how the respondents viewed their home area as a place to live, in terms both of the changes which have occurred there in recent years, and in relation to the perceived quality of life in other areas. In relation to the first of these, there was a clear view that living conditions had, on balance, improved substantially in the study area over the previous decade. In this respect, particular emphasis was placed on housing, public services, developments associated with Connemara West Limited, and general living standards. Some disimprovements were also noted by many, relating mainly to roads, unemployment, and some public services.

There was a strong preference for Ballinakill as a place to live compared to Galway City, and particularly to Dublin, base mainly on familiarity, adherence to the rural environment and way of life, and rejection of the perceived pathologies of urban living. However, a slight majority favoured the South Connemara Gaeltacht as a place to live, mainly on the grounds of availability of grants and perceived superior economic circumstances. Hence, the expressed preference for rural living was not simply a rationalisation of the respondents' current domiciles.

In conclusion, it is clear that popular perceptions of the development process are much more subtle and complex than those normally brought to bear by those government bureaucrats charged with responsibility for bringing "development" about. Thus, according to the dominant criterion applied by such people to define levels of development - namely, per capita cash income - the study area surveyed for the purposes of this report would be regarded as severely disadvantaged. Yet no widespread perception of disadvantage, disaffection or alienation emerged from the survey. With some exceptions, the respondents appeared to be quite satisfied with the services available to them, and happier to remain where they were than move to urban areas where average income levels are higher. This suggests that there are other forms of income, including non-cash material income (such as reciprocal services and perhaps cheaper sources of food and

fuel) and psychic income, which more than counterbalance any deficiencies in cash income.

In addition, while the financial resources available to community-based development groups are generally much more meagre than those available to state agencies, it is clear that the efforts of the former generate a much more appreciative response than those of the latter. This, no doubt, is due to the fact that the activities of community-based groups are more directly addressed to specific local needs and resources, and therefore are perceived as being more effective than the blanket approach of state agencies.

\* This suggests that a radical reappraisal is needed of the way the state goes about formulating and implementing development policies. It is apparent that local needs cannot be broadly defined: they may be highly specific and variable between localities. Similarly, not only do local resources exist (the dominant development policy in the past of bringing outside industry into rural areas seems to have been founded on the belief that this was not the case) but they also vary spatially. There is obviously a need for closer co-operation between the central state and local communities in terms of defining needs and opportunities, devising and implementing methods for tackling these needs and exploiting these opportunities, and monitoring the subsequent effectiveness of the methods decided upon. Such a degree of co-operation would require a major restructuring of the institutions of the state (most of which impact in some way or other on local communities) in order to facilitate greater decentralisation of effective decision-making and greater co-ordination of the development effort at local level. Whether such restructuring would be acceptable to politicians, who clearly derive considerable benefit from the existing structures, wherein they play a key role as intermediaries between local communities and the central state, is another matter.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

We are students from Maynooth College and are doing an opinion survey on development in Ballinakill. We would be grateful if you could answer some questions for us.

PART 1: SERVICES/FACILITIES

First of all, we would like to ask your opinion on services and facilities in North West Connemara.

How well do you feel this area (i.e. North West Connemara) is served for:

|                   | V. Good | Good | Fair | Poor | V. Poor | Comment |
|-------------------|---------|------|------|------|---------|---------|
| Shopping          |         |      |      |      |         |         |
| Public Transport  |         |      |      |      |         |         |
| Sports Facilities |         |      |      |      |         |         |
| Education         |         |      |      |      |         |         |
| Health            |         |      |      |      |         |         |
| Telephones        |         |      |      |      |         |         |
| Water Supply      |         |      |      |      |         |         |
| Rubbish Disposal  |         |      |      |      |         |         |

COMMENTS:

PART 2: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

We would now like to ask you about local groups who have been trying to improve the area.

First of all we would like to ask you about Ballinakill Community Council.

2.1 (a) What kinds of activities is/was it involved in?



2.1 (b) Who would you say are the main people involved in the Council?  
(Name 3)

---

2.1 (c) Do you think the Council has brought any benefits to you  
or your family?

Yes  No  D.K.

If Yes, how?

---

2.1 (d) Would you say party politics are involved in the Council?

Yes  No  D.K.

If Yes, how?

---

2.1 (e) Would you think the Community Council is representative of the  
people of the parish?

Yes  No  D.K.

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

---

2.2 Next, we would like to ask you about Connemara West Limited.

2.2 (a) What activities do you associate with Connemara West?

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2.2 (b) Who would you say are the main people involved in  
Connemara West? (Name 3)

---

2.2 (c) Are you or anyone in your family shareholders in Connemara West?

Yes  No  D.K.

2.2 (d) Do you think Connemara West has brought any benefits to you  
or your family?

Yes  No  D.K.

If Yes, what benefits?

---

2.2 (e) Apart from your own family, would you say Connemara West has  
brought benefits to the parish in general?

Yes  No  D.K.

If Yes, how?

---

2.2 (f) Do you think party politics has played a role in any way  
in Connemara West?

Yes  No  D.K.

If Yes, how?

---

2.2 (g) Finally, do you think Connemara West is representative of  
the people of the parish?

Yes  No  D.K.

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

---

2.3 Concerning Ballinakill Credit Union

2.3 (a) Are you or anyone in your family a member of the Credit Union?

Yes  No  D.K.

2.3 (b) What do you think are the advantages of having a Credit Union  
in this parish?

---

2.3 (c) Who would you say are the main people involved in the Credit  
Union? (Name 3)

---

2.4 A couple of years ago there was a Community Action Project sponsored  
by Combat Poverty operating in this area. We would like to ask you  
about it.

2.4 (a) Do you know what activities the project was involved in?

---

2.4 (b) Did you or any of your family benefit from any of these activities?

Yes  No  D.K.

If Yes, how?

\_\_\_\_\_

2.4 (c) Do you know who was involved in the project?

\_\_\_\_\_

2.5 Do you know of any other local groups which are trying to improve this area?

Name of Groups: \_\_\_\_\_

2.6 As regards your local representatives (TDs, County Councillors)

2.6 (a) Who are the TDs for this area? (Enter first three named)

\_\_\_\_\_

2.6 (b) Who is on the County Council for this area? (Enter first three named)

\_\_\_\_\_

2.6 (c) Have any local politicians been of benefit to you or your family? (This includes TDs and County Councillors)

Yes  No  D.K.

If Yes, who? \_\_\_\_\_

If Yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

2.6 (d) Apart from your own family, would you think politicians have been able to help the parish in general?

Yes  No  D.K.

If Yes, which politicians have been doing most? (Name two)

\_\_\_\_\_

How? \_\_\_\_\_

### PART 3: GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

We would now like to ask about government policies to develop the area.

3.1 First of all, as regards industry

3.1 (a) What problems do you think North West Connemara has in getting industry to locate in the area?

\_\_\_\_\_

3.1 (b) What has the I.D.A. done to bring industry to the Connemara area?

\_\_\_\_\_

3.1 (c) The County Council has its own County Development Team (The officer for the area is Charles Lynch). Do you know of anything it has done for the area?

\_\_\_\_\_

3.2 Turning now to agriculture

3.2 (a) Do you live on a farm?

Yes  No  N.I.

If No, go to 3.3

If Yes

3.2 (b) What do you think could be done to improve agriculture in this area?

\_\_\_\_\_

3.2 (c) What do you think of the government's schemes to improve agriculture (e.g. the Farm Modernisation Scheme, Western Drainage Scheme)?

\_\_\_\_\_

3.2 (d) Are you (or have you been) involved in any farm development scheme yourself?

Yes  No  N.I.

If Yes, which?

\_\_\_\_\_

3.2 (e) What do you think of the efforts of the agricultural advisor to improve agriculture in this area?

\_\_\_\_\_

3.2 (f) Are you a member of the new farmers' co-op (Letterfrack Co-op Ltd.)?

Yes  No  N.I.

If Yes, why? \_\_\_\_\_

If No, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

3.3 (a) How much of the land in the parish do you think is being worked to its full potential?

All  Most  Some  None  D.K.

3.3 (b) Do you think anything should be done about land that isn't being worked to its full potential?

Yes  No  D.K.

If Yes, what? \_\_\_\_\_

3.4 Turning now to fishing

3.4 (a) Are you or any of your family involved in fishing?

Yes  No  N.I.

If No, go to 3.5

If Yes,

3.4 (b) What do you think could be done to improve fishing in this area?

\_\_\_\_\_

3.4 (c) What do you think of the government's schemes to improve fishing (e.g. grants)?

\_\_\_\_\_

3.4 (d) Were you or any of your family a member of the Cleggan and Renvyle Fishermen's Co-op Ltd.?

Yes  No  N.I.

If No, go to 3.5

If Yes,

Do you think it was of benefit to you or your family?

Yes  No  D.K.

If Yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

3.4 (e) Why do you think the co-op closed down?

\_\_\_\_\_

3.4 (f) Would you like to see the co-op revived?

Yes  No  D.K.

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

3.5 Turning next to tourism

3.5 (a) Do you think tourism is of benefit to this area?

Yes  No  D.K.

If Yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

If No, why? \_\_\_\_\_

3.5 (b) What do you think could be done to improve tourism in the area?

\_\_\_\_\_

3.5 (c) Are you or any of your family involved in the tourist industry in any way?

Yes  No  N.I.

If Yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

3.5 (d) Do you think the Connemara National Park was a good idea?

Yes  No  D.K.

If Yes/No, why? \_\_\_\_\_

#### PART 4: RECENT CHANGE

We would like to ask you about how this area has changed in recent years.

4.1 What would you say have been the main improvements in the area in the last 10 years?

\_\_\_\_\_

4.2 What have been the main disimprovements?

\_\_\_\_\_

PART 5: COMPARISONS WITH OTHER AREAS

We would like to ask how you think Ballinakill compares with some other parts of Ireland as a place to live.

(a) Galway City

Ballinakill is:

Better  Same  Worse  D.K.

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Gaeltacht area around Carraroe and Spiddal

Ballinakill is:

Better  Same  Worse  D.K.

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Dublin

Ballinakill is:

Better  Same  Worse  D.K.

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

PART 6: PERSONAL DATA

Finally, we would like to ask some questions about yourself which will be helpful in compiling our survey.

6.1 Age group: 18-34  35-49  50+  N.I.

6.2 Male  Female

6.3 Marital status: Married/Widowed   
Single   
Other/N.I.

6.4 If you have a family, are they

(a)  All at school or younger  
 Some at school, some finished school  
 All finished school  
 N.I.

(b)  All living at home  
 Some at home, some left home  
 All left home  
 N.I.

6.5 Occupation (If unemployed, state last job):  
\_\_\_\_\_

6.6 If full-time housewife:

Occupation before marriage \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation of husband \_\_\_\_\_

6.7 If not full-time housewife:

Location of work \_\_\_\_\_

6.8 At what stage did you finish your education?

Primary  
 Some secondary/vocational  
 Complete secondary/vocational  
 Third level  
 Other/N.I.

6.9 Are you originally from North West Connemara?

Yes  No  N.I.

6.10 Have you lived outside North West Connemara?

Yes  No  N.I.

If Yes, why did you return/move to North West Connemara?  
\_\_\_\_\_

6.11 Do you have:

(a) Telephone: Yes  No  N.I.   
(b) Car: Yes  No  N.I.

6.12 Are you involved in any local clubs/organisations?

Yes  No  N.I.

If Yes, which? \_\_\_\_\_

6.13 If you don't mind my asking, what party did you vote for in the last general election?

Fianna Fail   
Fine Gael   
Labour   
Workers Party   
Didn't vote

