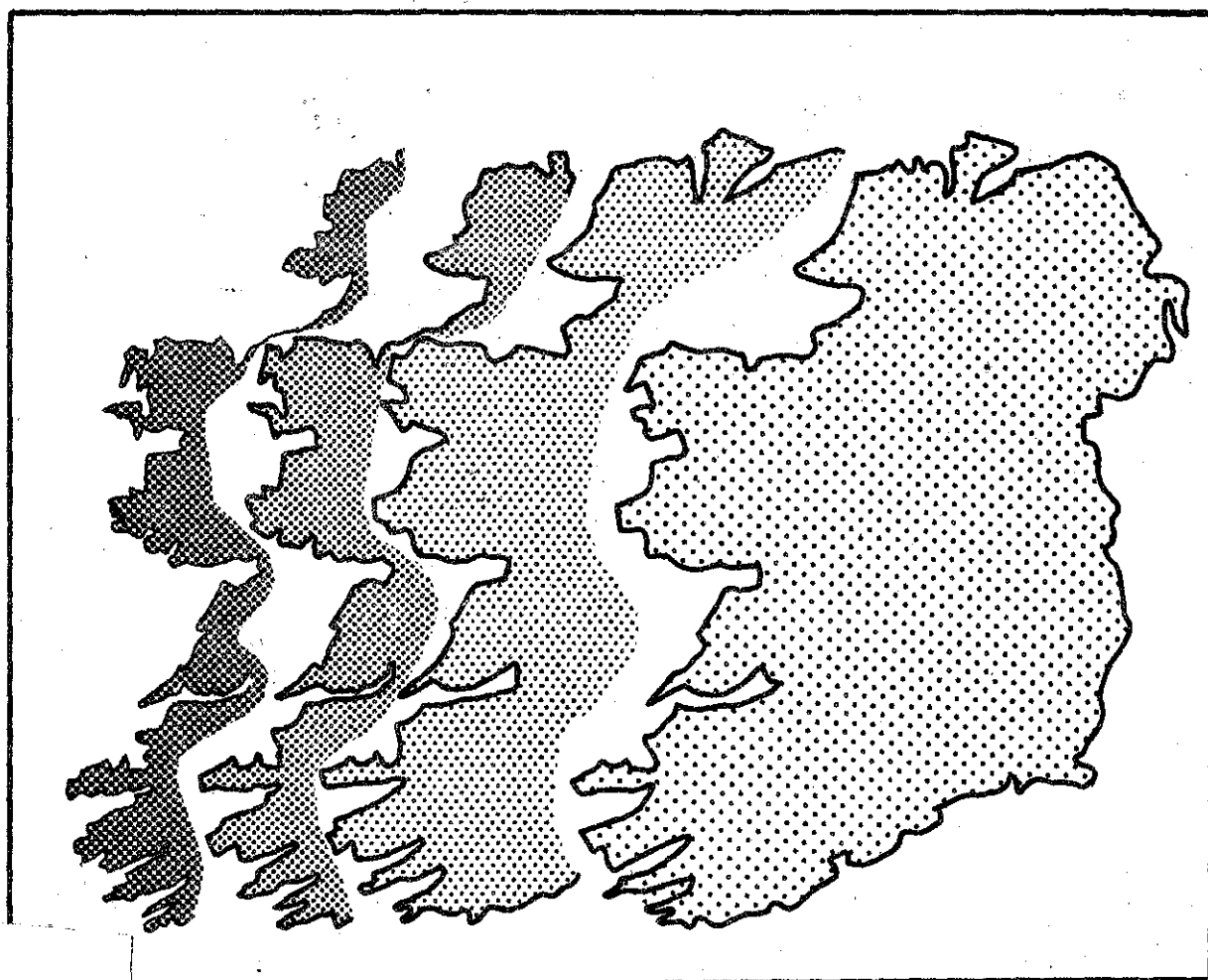


Rural Development in the West of Ireland

Observations from the Gaeltacht experience

Proceedings of a seminar
Edited by

Proinnsias Breathnach



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RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE WEST OF IRELAND :
OBSERVATIONS FROM THE GAELTACHT EXPERIENCE

*Proceedings of a Seminar held in the Department of
Geography, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth :
May 7, 1983.*

Editor : *Proinnsias Breathnach*

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(C) *Pádraig Ó hAoláin, Frank Flynn, P.J. Duffy,
Proinnsias Breathnach, Kay MacKeogh, Jim Walsh,
1983.*



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INTRODUCTION

The present volume has arisen from a research project entitled : "Rural Development Strategies in the West of Ireland", which is being carried out by members of the Department of Geography at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. This research project, which began in 1981 and is scheduled for completion in September 1984, is being funded by the National Board for Science and Technology, whose support is gratefully acknowledged.

The nature of the research being carried out has been strongly influenced by the "top-down" and "bottom-up" dichotomy as regards approaches to development which has become increasingly popular in regional/rural development circles in recent years. At its simplest, this dichotomy distinguishes between, on the one hand, centralised, state-sponsored development programmes which tend to utilise standard techniques based on generalised models of how development occurs, or should occur ; and, on the other hand, local, and frequently community-based, development initiatives which seek to relate the development effort to local needs and resources.

The objectives of the research, then, are (to quote from the research project prospectus) to:

"assess the actual and potential contribution of state-sponsored and local community-sponsored approaches to rural development in the West of Ireland; identify areas of complementarity and conflict between these two approaches ; propose ways of maximising complementarity and minimising conflict ; and suggest

organisational structures to facilitate a comprehensive and integrated strategy for overall rural development".

The first half of the research project has focussed specifically on the Gaeltacht, where, firstly, a specific state development agency - Údarás na Gaeltachta - operates and where, secondly, a particular form of locally-based development activity-community development co-operatives - is especially well established. The operations of both development approaches have been the subject of considerable examination by the research project team.

As an aid to crystallising the project team's findings from this examination of development activities in the Gaeltacht, a seminar was convened with the aim of generating a discussion on the question of Gaeltacht and general rural development among a group of invited participants with expertise in this area. This seminar, with the title, "Rural Development in the West of Ireland", was convened in Maynooth on May 7, 1983.

Four discussion papers were presented to the seminar. Firstly, representatives of the two development approaches identified above presented their particular views of the development process in the Gaeltacht. These were Pádraig Ó hAoláin, Manager of Comharchumann Chois Fharráige and Secretary of Comhlachas na Gaeltachta, the Association of Gaeltacht community development co-operatives, and Frank Flynn, Chief Executive of Údarás na Gaeltachta.

There then followed two papers by members of the research team. P.J. Duffy and Proinnsias Breathnach presented some results from a questionnaire survey conducted

in selected Gaeltacht areas which sought, inter alia, to elicit popular opinion on the development effort being made on behalf of the Gaeltacht community, and on the organisations involved in making this effort. Proinnsias Breathnach then presented a paper which sought to identify some general principles around which rural development should be based, and proposed an institutional framework for promoting development based on these principles. A general discussion concluded the seminar proceedings.

The four seminar papers and an account of the ensuing discussion comprise the present volume. The decision to publish the seminar proceedings was based on the expectation that they can make a contribution to thinking in the realm of rural development, and may contain something of value to those involved in both the theory and practice of development. The research project team would like to take this opportunity to thank Pádraig Ó hAoláin and Frank Flynn for presenting papers to the seminar and making them available for publication ; those who attended the seminar and participated in the discussions for so doing ; Rosaleen O'Riordan for typing the papers for publication ; Údarás na Gaeltachta for its financial contribution to the cost of organising the seminar and publishing the proceedings ; also Paul Ferguson for his cover design and cartographic assistance, and John Saults for reproduction and binding.

PROINNSIAS BREATHNACH
EDITOR

* * * * *

GAELTACHT DEVELOPMENT : A VIEW (1)

Pádraig Ó hAoláin,
Manager,
Comharchumann Chois Fharráige
and
Secretary,
Comhlachas na Gaeltachta

INTRODUCTION:

Mine is a view that has been forged by the fluctuating fortunes of the Gaeltacht community co-operative societies during the past seven years. I address you not only in my capacity as General Manager of Comharchumann Chois Fharráige, the largest community-based co-operative society in the Gaeltacht, but also as a spokesman for Comhlachas na Gaeltachta, a confederation of those development co-operative societies which have social, cultural, linguistic and economic objectives in common. There are, indeed, other factors which these co-operatives have in common, the most noteworthy being an Oliver Twist-like propensity to ask for more, a proclivity to continuously incur trading deficits, a perceived kamikaze-like inclination to launch headlong into developmental projects which are socially and linguistically defensible but commercially suicidal, and last but not least, they invariably attract managers who are so far removed from reality as to equate community and social enrichment with profit. Since the Gaeltacht areas can boast of the worst infrastructural base in the State and since the attractive subventions to industrialists and entrepreneurs have failed to entice the Tony O'Reillys and the Michael Smurfits to seek to add to their millions among the granite outcrops and windswept

peatlands, surely a valuable asset like idealism can find a place in the balance sheet of the eighties? If the gnomes of the Department of Finance have decided that culture is a luxury we can no longer afford and that commercial viability is the order of the day, then the days of the community co-operative societies are well and truly numbered. We may, however, yet manage to convince them of the error of their ways!

DEFINING THE PROBLEM:

Though Maynooth has in the past hundred odd years exerted no small influence on every parish in Ireland, it is with no disrespect to the organisers of this seminar that I find myself forcibly reminded of the witches in Shakespeare's Macbeth mooching round the boiling cauldron in the dark cave muttering.

"Round about the cauldron go;
In the poisoned entrails throw.
Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire, burn and cauldron, bubble."

Umpteen seminars such as this have attempted to chart the course of survival for the Gaeltacht. Umpteen groups such as this have gathered round the boiling cauldron each adding its own ingredients in the hope of producing the concoction which could be dubbed "the all-curing elixir". I am still optimistic enough to hope that we can at least reach agreement on a definition of the ailment at this seminar. One of the main obstacles in the way of accepting the urgent need for fire-brigade action to buttress the Irish-speaking communities in the Gaeltacht is the inability or unwillingness of the "powers that be" (Údarás na Gaeltachta, Roinn na Gaeltachta, Department of Education etc.) to recognise the continuous and continuing erosion of the language base. Job-creation

targets and net job-losses or gains are the magic words that preface and conclude all public pronouncements on the state of health of the Gaeltacht. Though important in themselves these are about as beneficial to the conservation of the Gaeltacht as bandaging to a cancer patient.

The Irish language is the *raison d'être* of Údarás na Gaeltachta. Were Irish to discontinue being the medium of communication of the scattered communities within its jurisdiction, Údarás na Gaeltachta would be an unnecessary and obtrusive state structure dealing with the industrial development of these communities.

Some of these communities have long ceased to be Irish-speaking; some are communities in which Irish speakers are an ever-diminishing minority; and even the linguistically healthy among them could not be said to display militant enthusiasm or even a collective will to survive. It follows, therefore, that in any appraisal of Údarás na Gaeltachta's policies, plans or performance, or in any proposals for the strengthening of that agency's powers and functions, the linguistic and cultural aspects of its statutory remit must be closely and coldly examined and its success or failure adjudged accordingly. It is apposite to ask, therefore, how clearly have the Board and management of Údarás na Gaeltachta defined the cultural, linguistic and community development role of the Authority and what policies and programmes have been formulated in order to give practical effect to the defined objectives?

POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES:

When Dr. Eileen Kane was conducting her research into "The Development of the Industrial Process in the

Gaeltacht" in 1970/71 on behalf of Gaeltarra Éireann, she stated that the factor which most hindered her research, and which undoubtedly would have similar effects on future research, was the lack of stated, concrete aims as correlates of organisations and national policy. She cites the Third Programme for Economic and Social Development (1969-1972), the social objectives of which included fostering cultural and artistic values, the preservation and development of our national heritage and promoting community development. Lofty and laudable objectives, but what did they mean? "Cultural Values", "Natural Heritage" and "Community Development" were not clearly defined in the programme itself and small wonder it was that the representatives of the various government departments whose function it was to implement the aims of the programme could not agree on the definitions of the terms. Twelve years later we are unclear as to the specific objectives of Údarás na Gaeltachta excepting job-creation targets, although Bord na Gaeilge's recently-published Action Plan 1983/86 has, within its own necessarily narrow parameters, set a headline for its sister-agency in the Gaeltacht. Ill-defined objectives are not peculiar to Irish development agencies, of course. B.S. Bariskar of the University of Delhi states, in a paper published in 1982 on "Rural Development in Wales and Scotland - A Third World View":

"I discovered", he says "an unbelievable lack of clarity about the policy-makers and the practitioners on the ground and consequently a lack of appreciation of the necessity for integrated rural development".

Since Údarás na Gaeltachta, and its predecessor Gaeltarra Éireann, whose powers and functions it subsumed in

1980, were given statutory responsibility not only for the economic development of the Gaeltacht but also for the conservation and strengthening of the shrinking language minority in those areas, an integrated community development blueprint would have been expected to form the basis of any serious effort to achieve the stated objectives of the organisation. That such a blueprint has not been formulated has long been a source of serious anxiety to those of us in the co-operative movement who have been struggling at community level to influence the collective will of the community towards a conscious decision to challenge and overcome the forces that threaten their cultural distinctiveness.

COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT:

There is general consensus on the fact that the scattered Gaeltacht areas are most unattractive from the viewpoint of conventional industrial development. They make no sense economically in that they are far removed from markets and sources of raw materials, are poor in terms of natural resources and are severely handicapped by the underdevelopment of essential infrastructure. It is in this sort of context that the gurus of state and semi-state bodies perceive solutions in simply creating more jobs when what is needed is the creation of self-sustaining and living rural (Gaeltacht) communities.

By their very nature most of the present development programmes are oriented towards the individual - indeed are primarily oriented towards capital formation - and are based on the provision of funds in terms of grants and subsidies with the proviso of matching capital. By their very nature they create selective benefits; their standardised application gives no adequate recognition of local variations from the

norm and they do not meet community needs. Father Harry Bohan of the Rural Housing Organisation and, indeed, other commentators strongly contend that the conventional development programmes in Ireland are directly detrimental to rural needs since they compel urban forms of concentration and lack the integrated development approach which is a sine qua non for their longterm success.

What is required is the identification of existing and potential living communities and planning in consultation with them for their survival and development. This will involve not alone the linking of different aspects of Gaeltacht life such as agriculture, fisheries, industry, tourism, education, physical planning, language, culture and communications in an integrated programme but also the recognition of the fact that the semi-state body's administrative and developmental apparatus is not sufficient in itself to save the Gaeltacht. Direct community consultation and participation must be a quintessential part of the approach in order to ensure that the community is not treated as a passive guinea-pig in the process.

Industrial development agencies are by their nature prone to viewing communities in terms of their suitability or unsuitability as catchment areas for factories. It is difficult if not impossible to achieve community-oriented objectives within the constraints of such a narrow perspective. Once the creation and maintenance of living, vibrant Gaeltacht communities is accepted as a goal then all programmes and all facets of all programmes must be geared towards the achievement of that goal irrespective of cost.

Government Ministers or civil servants who may feel that the Gaeltacht is a luxury the taxpayer can no longer afford will no doubt throw up their hands in horror at this

suggestion. However, the choice is the stark one between creating and developing self-sustained and self-confident communities or having Gaelic-signposted Gaeltacht zones with neither focus nor orientation which exist merely as scenic reservations which titillate the fancies of cultural thrill-seekers in transit.

THE ROLE OF ÚDARÁS NA GAELTACHTA:

Údarás na Gaeltachta has been placed in a catch-22 situation by those who determined the parameters of its powers and functions. The promotion of a vigorous industrial development programme and the concomitant responsibility for the conservation and strengthening of the Irish-speaking community in the Gaeltacht can only be achieved by an agency or institution which is as financially and organisationally equipped for the latter task as it is for the former. That it is not is only too painfully obvious to those who would be the beneficiaries of such a multifunctional agency - the people of the Gaeltacht themselves. Though staffed with a highly qualified team who have tackled the industrial development programme with dedication and enthusiasm, Údarás is completely unequipped to tackle the very problem which accounts for its own existence - the decline of the language, or, as Desmond Fennell has described it "the shrinking language minority".

Though bereft of a controlling influence over those areas of activity which impinge on the lives of the scattered Gaeltacht communities - agriculture, tourism, education, physical planning, communications - I have no doubt but that a useful place could be found in the organisation for at least some token language planning strategists and community

development personnel. A semi-state body with a statutory obligation to conserve the language in the Gaeltacht does not enhance its corporate image by being perceived to be over-dependent in this regard on the amateur efforts of well-wishers and well-intentioned do-gooders.

Professionalism in handling the language question is equally as important as professionalism in the industrial development area.

What is needed from Údarás na Gaeltachta is innovative action and an imaginative veering away from the failed methods of the past. The Gaeltacht co-operative movement has repeatedly called for the old moulds to be broken. As most of Údarás na Gaeltachta's schemes are based on the old principle of matching contribution by the beneficiary, it can in the main only be of help to those with resources of their own. Consequently the vast majority of Gaeltacht people become mere spectators in the process and are deprived of direct involvement in the State's grand plan for their conservation.

The most visually evident, though not in many cases the most aesthetically inspiring, aspect of Gaeltacht development since 1970 has been the advance-factory programme. Though arguably necessary in order to lay the foundations for the great advance towards a Gaeltacht industrial utopia (defined as "full employment in the Seventies" by George Colley, T.D. (F.F.); as "full employment in the Eighties", by Tom O'Donnell, T.D. (F.G.); and as "significant progress towards full employment in the not too distant future" (presumably in the Nineties) by Denis Gallagher, T.D. (F.F.)). that programme could only lead inevitably and inexorably towards a high level of eventual community disillusionment and disappointment as it created unfounded and exaggerated

expectations. If it had been given - if it had insistently demanded - a major role in the development of those areas which immediately impinge on the everyday life of the community - agriculture, tourism, education, planning, transport, and infrastructural facilities - then Údarás na Gaeltachta would not only have had no option but to produce an integrated community development plan but would also have had thrust upon it the responsibility of playing a central and influential role in the everyday life of the scattered Gaeltacht communities.

It would have been in a powerful position to give moral and morale-boosting leadership to the Gaeltacht communities in welding together those twin facets of Gaeltacht life which for far too long have uneasily and uncomfortably co-existed: the past and the present, the traditional and the modern. Full community participation in the process is the key to the salvation of the community's cultural distinctiveness. The mere carpenter from Carna (or Gaoth Dobhair) must be given an important role in the Gaeltacht's passion-play.

THE NEED FOR COMPREHENSIVENESS IN GAELTACHT PLANNING

Does Údarás na Gaeltachta wish to proceed along this path? If so it must not only demand of the Government the extra powers, functions and finance it needs in order to fulfill its statutory mandate, but it must also state clearly and unequivocally to what exact lengths in any sphere it needs, and is willing, to go in order to see its linguistic and cultural objectives established in practice. After fourteen years of Gaeltarra Éireann and almost four years of Údarás na Gaeltachta, no clear picture has yet emerged of the desired future position of the various

Gaeltacht communities, and while ideal and idealistic long-term objectives and scenarios are presented by various commissions and Government statements of policy, there is an extraordinary dearth of short-term objectives and specific enumerated community needs whose realisation would achieve these objectives. Would not the re-Gaeltachtisation of one factory or one breac-Ghaeltacht area be a small start towards demonstrating to all and sundry that the linguistic objectives are achievable and are not simply pious platitudes to be trotted out like the prayers of the faithful at factory-opening ceremonies? Comhlachas na Gaeltachta, representing the community co-operative societies and community development councils, has recently submitted such a statement of short-term priorities to the Board of Údarás na Gaeltachta, but the onus is primarily on Údarás itself to produce such a blueprint. While doctors dither, patients die!

Comhlachas na Gaeltachta has for long been urging Údarás na Gaeltachta to take the community co-operatives and local community voluntary groups into their confidence in formulating their development plans and strategies for each area. This is not simply being recommended as a useful adjunct to future local planning or as a sop to the local community, but as a serious effort to achieve a congruence of the various social, linguistic, economic and cultural aims which Údarás na Gaeltachta and representative local groups profess to have in common. This would result not alone in a unified approach to the development of each area according to its particular needs and circumstances, but would also assist Údarás in assuring local communities that they are not willing, as is so commonly thought, to sacrifice their linguistic and cultural aims on the altar of job-creation. The almost inevitable result of fully involving the community in the planning and implementation process would be the community imposing its will on its own development agency

and the community itself espousing the aims of the agency. This, in my view, would be a most healthy development since it is the will of the community which determines the success or failure of all community-oriented programmes.

Gníomh don Ghaeltacht, that exciting action-programme for the Gaeltacht published in 1971, strongly recommended such a role for its proposed Údarás na Gaeltachta. The Gaeltarra/SFADCO working group were requested to prepare recommendations for a comprehensive programme of development for the Gaeltacht. Having considered submissions from 13 Departments of State, 18 Semi-State Bodies, 20 Gaeltacht Parish Development Councils, 9 Gaeltacht Co-operative Societies, 5 Irish-Language Organisations, 4 County Development Teams, 4 Universities, 12 Interested Individuals, 1 National Sporting Organisation and 1 Teachers' Union, the Working Group produced the masterplan.

They prefaced it with the following statement which I think should be engraved in granite at the entrance to Údarás na Gaeltachta's Head-Office (in Irish, of course!):

"After widespread consultation we became ever more firmly convinced that success in the linked economic, linguistic, and social objectives could only be attained through a single comprehensive programme of action. Such a programme can only be carried out with success if it is, in its entirety, the responsibility of a single agency which can be held accountable for its success or failure. The overriding consideration should be that of urgency in determining the action to be taken in the Gaeltacht areas by methods which will promote, not hinder, the linguistic objectives".

That note of urgency and that strong recommendation for a single multifunctional agency unfortunately fell on deaf ears. Almost a full decade elapsed before the establishment of Údarás na Gaeltachta in 1980, a decade during which the politicians effectively emasculated the main recommendations of the Action Programme and during which the Gaeltacht base on which the new semi-democratic structure was to be superimposed was further seriously eroded. That decade saw another generation of Gaeltacht children reared on a T.V. diet of "Sesame Street" and "Little House on the Prairie" and deliberately denied even the minimum level of cultural and linguistic famine-relief to which they are entitled. The four years since the establishment of Údarás na Gaeltachta have witnessed, not, unfortunately for the Gaeltacht, the further concentration of wide-ranging powers and functions in Údarás as recommended in the Action Plan, but further and further efforts by successive Ministers for the Gaeltacht to erode the already limited powers of that agency. Practically every major Board decision is now dependent on Ministerial approval.

GAELTACHT DEVELOPMENT : THE LINGUISTIC DIMENSION

However, despite its present limited powers, it is essential that Údarás na Gaeltachta state clearly and unequivocally, for purposes of policy formulation and public understanding and trust, its actual practical aims and the proposed method of achieving them. To attain a realistic programme, to attain a rational policy of programme planning, it must be recognised that Údarás's linguistic aim, as it is presently perceived, is an ideal rather than a reflection of actual conditions in large areas of its jurisdiction. The function of the factory as an economic means of promoting

and achieving linguistic objectives and of enabling Irish speakers to obtain employment locally can hardly be said to be valid in the case of areas such as the following - where Irish is not the spoken language of the community nor consequently of the local factory/factories - Cill Charrthaigh, Tuar Mhic Éadaigh, Béal an Mhuirthid, Baile Mhic Íre, Acaill, Baile Ghib. For these, and perhaps others, the linguistic aim may be as irrelevant as the methods of achieving it are undefined, and continued adherence to it without objective recognition of the actual situation is not only inefficient in terms of policy planning and expenditure but also damaging to the public image associated with the promotion of the language.

If the linguistic aim is to be adhered to in the aforementioned and other areas, clear and unambiguous short-term objectives for the revival and re-establishment of Irish are required. It is inevitable that the disparity between stated ideal linguistic aims and actual practice gives rise to suspicion, lack of trust and cynicism among the public at large; it fosters the belief that the language policy is incoherent and that no serious thought has been given to creating the kind of conditions that would make an "All-Irish Life" option possible. Small wonder indeed that there is concern throughout the community that lack of foresight, seriousness, coherence of policy and clarity of goals and objectives on the part of successive governments and their agencies has made them and their children guinea-pigs in a massive confidence trick whose perpetrators, while exhorting the people of the Gaeltacht to herculean heights of fidelity to the language merely pay lip-service to it themselves.

IRISH LANGUAGE PROMOTION : THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT

A passing reference to the management of Údarás and its industries is, in my view, very relevant in this context. It is irrelevant as far as the local communities are concerned whether or not Údarás na Gaeltachta has a shareholding in the local industry. All grant-assisted major industries are looked on by the local community as "Údarás Industries" and the success or failure of any or all aspects of their operations redound to the credit or discredit of Údarás.

(The highly successful Small Industries Scheme which has been promoted vigorously by an enthusiastic team of field-officers and the Community Development Awards Scheme which, despite criticism of the seemingly arbitrary manner by which results are determined, has had a beneficial impact on many of the participating communities, are the closest that Údarás has come to involving "the man in the breen" in local development - and neither fall within the ambit of the following remarks).

While the majority of Údarás na Gaeltachta's Head-Office, Associated and Subsidiary Industry managers and executives espouse in principle the organisation's linguistic ideal, many of them do not see it as feasible in actual practice and acting on this belief are in practice ignoring this facet of policy. Many of them have not managed (or bothered?) to achieve anything remotely resembling a comfortable fluency of Irish as it is spoken in the Gaeltacht and very few, if any, have translated the fluency of necessity from their job environment to their own homes. This may seem a harsh criticism of well-intentioned people who are otherwise academically and technically qualified for the positions they occupy, but I hold that since fostering the community's will to maintain their native language is an important part of the brief of these executives, a credibility

gap is created by their less than wholehearted commitment to the language in their own professional and private lives. Many of the managers do not realise that while it is not a particularly popular idea, Gaeltacht people recognise the right, and presume the obligation, of Údarás na Gaeltachta to insist upon the use of Irish. Presumably since many of the managers feel they do not have sufficient competency in Irish to conduct all of their own business in understandable Irish they are uncomfortable about insisting that others do.

In this context a factor that must be recognised is that the non-Irish-speaking manager, linguistically unable to assess cultural values, has far less potential or opportunity for introducing change which could be sympathetically integrated into the local culture: his ability to judge the potential success of a newly introduced element is hindered by lack of intimate familiarity with the culture which is dependent, to a large extent, upon linguistic familiarity. Since the employees in any factory or industry carry their social and cultural environment into their work situation, it is imperative that the cultural concomitants of rapid economic change be adequately catered for when choosing management and supervisory personnel. Admittedly this is no easy task, and though commendable efforts have been made in this regard, it seems to me that a professionally staffed language planning unit is required within the organisation in order to ensure that the proper strategy is adopted in each particular location, to provide a backup service to management in the various industries and to monitor progress.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATIVES

I fully concur with the view that pressing, continuous social, economic and cultural needs can best be addressed by community self-help groups, but strong and continuing state

support for their efforts is vitally necessary if they are to be enabled to reach their full potential. Many of the Gaeltacht communities have shown over the past twelve years that, given the opportunity to participate in the development of their own areas and given a vehicle by which they could assert their collective will to survive, they are capable of undertaking the task of harnessing their own resources and adopt an important economic, social and cultural development role. The United Nations define community development as "the utilisation, under one single programme, of approaches and techniques which rely on local communities as units of action and which attempt to combine outside assistance with organised local self-determination and leadership as the primary instrument of change". Throughout the seventies there was a growing awareness in practically all of the Gaeltacht communities that community co-operative societies could provide them with a means of servicing their own needs on their own terms. At present there are about a dozen multipurpose community co-operatives functioning in the Gaeltacht. Ten of these are active members of the loose confederation called Comhlachas na Gaeltachta which has developed into a unified "common front" in order to strengthen the co-operative base, to search for a resolution of their serious and continuing financial problems and to agitate for a greater diffusion of resources and power from regional and national sources.

These co-operative societies presently employ approximately 200 full-time staff, have a combined turnover in excess of £5 million, paid out a combined wagebill in excess of £1 million in 1982 and have a combined membership of 6,000 plus. They are, or have been, involved in such diverse activities as Irish Summer Colleges, Group Water Schemes, Printing, Publishing, Weekly Newspaper, Office Supplies and Stationery, Retailing Supermarkets, Adult

Education, Fish Farming, Land Reclamation, Sawmill and Timber Tanalising, Knitwear, Pottery, Machine Turf, Farming, Ferry Services, Weaving, and many other trading activities. The majority of them run their multidimensional activities completely through Irish.

In recent years there has been a simmering discontent among community co-operatives arising mainly from:

- (a) Lack of recognition of their community development role and their pioneering work in the provision of basic services which drained their meagre resources;
 - (b) The failure of Údarás na Gaeltachta to formulate a comprehensive supportive policy vis-a-vis the co-operative movement;
- and
- (c) Lack of definition of the present role and functions of the multipurpose community development co-operatives as perceived by the Department of the Gaeltacht and Údarás na Gaeltachta. On the one hand they are advised to avoid direct competition with private enterprise operators, which in effect means to avoid tendering for profitable contracts, while on the other hand they are continuously hectorred for incurring losses in their trading operations.

The philosophy of the co-operative societies has been succinctly enunciated and summarised as follows by P. Commins of An Foras Talúntais who has written extensively and expertly on the problems and potential of the co-operative movement:

"While a co-operative which is not economically viable is a failure, a co-operative which achieves economic success by shedding its social, humanistic and cultural goals can hardly be called a successful co-operative. Co-operation is at least a dual-purpose activity: it has both a commercial and a social function".

The idealism which set the multi-purpose community co-operative movement in motion throughout the Gaeltacht in the late sixties and early seventies still holds firm at the core but is becoming increasingly frayed at the edges because of the frustrations engendered by the vicissitudes of servicing economic and cultural needs from slender resources and by the failure of the State to finance their activities in a way that would enable them to escape from the cul-de-sac into which they were forced by absence of a proper financing structure. The co-operatives themselves are willing and ready to change their structures to accommodate the exigencies of any new integrated Gaeltacht development plan which gives adequate recognition to the important role they play in ensuring the continued survival of the Gaeltacht communities in which they operate. Given proper recognition as an extension of the State agency's community development brief, they are ideally placed to operate in, with, and for the community in a way that it is not presently possible for the State to operate.

The co-operative structure is the ideal means by which the local community can establish and control self-managed enterprises; can mobilise local resources of land, sea and human skills which heretofore have been underutilised and underrespected; and can provide for democratic control by which, if handled properly, inexperienced individuals can

learn to discuss problems, to display initiative, to make decisions and to acquire the confidence necessary for full community and individual development. By far the most important spin-off of such an approach would undoubtedly be the strengthening of the fabric of the community as an Irish-speaking community as the initiative in this regard would be engendered by the impetus of a vibrant community organism rooted in the local cultural milieu.

THE WAY FORWARD : SOME PROPOSALS:

Údarás na Gaeltachta may have only one last opportunity to assert its intention and demonstrate its ability to give moral and morale-boosting leadership to the Gaeltacht community. Comhlachas na Gaeltachta, representing the community development co-operatives, has recently submitted to the Board of Údarás na Gaeltachta a blueprint of immediate priorities which, if acted upon vigorously and expeditiously would enable Údarás to assert that leadership and earn for itself the full support of the people of the Gaeltacht.

These priorities, summarised, include: the releasing of the Ministerial stranglehold on Údarás na Gaeltachta and the transfer to that agency of all powers and functions necessary to enable it to proceed vigorously with an integrated Gaeltacht development plan; the recognition of the community co-operatives as local development agencies and to finance them accordingly; the transfer to Údarás na Gaeltachta of full responsibility for the Gaeltacht co-operatives and the formulation of a policy and structure which will accommodate their needs; the immediate provision of a T.V. service in Irish for the Irish-speaking community; the restructuring of



the educational system on a regional basis with a specific semi-autonomous Gaeltacht region; the initiation of a planning process in collaboration with the local co-operatives and community representatives in order to agree the priorities and the development strategy in each area.

Finding money and resources should not be an excuse for inaction. A country which find enough resources for an Airport at Barr na Cúige (Knock) or for the continued subventing on a massive scale of our national monopoly transport system, can surely find the resources to enable the minority Gaeltacht community to achieve its rightful place in the State with a full spectrum of services which parallel those of the majority English-speaking community. As a people we would seem to have a lot to learn about the sensitivities, susceptibilities and needs of minority groups!

There is a way forward and Údarás na Gaeltachta and the co-operative movement between them hold the key to its success. A successful programme for economic development which is not integrally and organisationally associated with a blueprint for community development could accelerate the erosion of the cultural distinctiveness of the Gaeltacht areas and frustrate the main purpose for which special action is merited in those areas.

Community needs are multi-dimensional: only a multi-dimensional agency can adequately cater for them. But, beneath the umbrella of the multi-dimensional state agency, an organism is required within and of the community to identify needs particular to the community; to articulate the fears, hopes and anxieties of the community; to verbalise the felt and real needs of the community; to demand priority for the serving of such needs; to insist on remedial measures or undertake these remedial measures themselves. The multi-

purpose community co-operative society is such an organism but has not yet reached its full potential. It is a means by which people can be educated to realise the resources and potential of their own environment. Proof of this can be seen in the achievements of these co-operatives over the past twelve years.

Despite the failure, neglect and omissions of the past, despite the seemingly insurmountable problems facing us at present, we must look with hope to the future. For the sake of the generations to come we must still dream our impossible dreams and say : "Why the hell not!"

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GAELTACHT DEVELOPMENT : A VIEW (2)

Frank Flynn, Chief Executive,
Údarás na Gaeltachta

INTRODUCTION:

This paper is primarily concerned with organisational models for Gaeltacht development. It would seem logical, in the first place, to examine the development agency models which exist or have existed for this purpose, to define the objectives for which they were established, to probe the methods and resources applied to meet these objectives and to assess the outcomes relative both to the objectives and to the performance of comparable or alternative agencies. Time constraints alone do not allow of such a detailed analysis, but I will attempt to touch on some of the issues involved, and, if the exposition only serves to clarify some of the issues, it should serve a useful purpose.

THE ÚDARÁS'S BRIEF:

Údarás na Gaeltachta commenced operations on 1st January 1980, succeeding to the rights and liabilities conferred on its predecessor, Gaeltarra Éireann, under the Gaeltacht Industries Acts dating from 1957. These included the management of various industries (either wholly owned or associated), the encouragement of new industries, the preservation and extension of the Irish language and the power to acquire land, premises and plant.

Perhaps the most important features which distinguished Údarás na Gaeltachta from Gaeltarra Éireann were:

- (a) that the Board of the Údarás was majority elected by Gaeltacht franchise, which could be interpreted as Government acceptance of the need to formalise the pre-eminence of local input into the affairs of the Údarás and
- (b) that the Údarás could be given additional powers which could be interpreted as provision by Government to allow of the Údarás evolving towards a comprehensive development agency.

Although Údarás was an entirely new body in the legal sense, the situation with which it was confronted was obviously heavily influenced by the prior activities and policies of Gaeltarra Éireann. Údarás's brief is defined as the linguistic, cultural, social, physical and economic development of the Gaeltacht. Údarás is empowered to make grants, purchase shares, and fund buildings for industries at its own discretion up to a limit beyond which Government approval is required. In effect, the legislation established Údarás as a regional development agency with a mission, i.e., to preserve the Irish language in its remaining habitat. The region to be developed was, from a purely physical planning standpoint, an illogical collection of land areas mainly along the Western seaboard comprising some of the least developed, most socially disadvantaged parts of Ireland with, historically, severe patterns of emigration and poverty. The task set out for, first, Gaeltarra and, subsequently, Údarás was to develop these regions and, as a result of the development process, to work as a counter-influence to the long established decline in Irish speaking in the localities.

In 1969-1970 there was a major upsurge in industrial development activity on the part of Gaeltarra Éireann. This stemmed directly from the 1965 Amending Act which gave Gaeltarra the powers of an industrial development agency. The underlying philosophy was that an upsurge in economic activity would automatically raise the socio-cultural base of the Gaeltacht and that this was a necessary precondition for language preservation and revival.

The Údarás legislation could be interpreted as giving it development agency status with a mission to preserve and extend Irish as a spoken language, but by indirect instruments. The main development thrust by Gaeltarra and initially by Údarás derived from, and was determined by, the IDA-type brief to attract and develop industries, the main variation with IDA in industrial promotion being that both Gaeltarra and Údarás operate their own industries as well as having, relative to scale, a significantly higher number of associated industries, i.e. companies in which the Údarás has a minority shareholding.

THE ÚDARÁS'S PERFORMANCE:

A recent independent study (which is in course of completion) has found that, in the decade 1971-1981, the activities of Gaeltarra/Údarás have had a profound impact on the economic development of the Gaeltacht. Studies of the Donegal and Galway Gaeltachts in particular by such as Mac Aodha in the fifties and sixties gave a picture of demoralised communities suffering heavy emigration (particularly among women and people in the productive age groups), physical poverty, absence of any industrial tradition, high unemployment and an extremely high level of dependency on

central government support and initiatives, financial, moral and physical. In summary, the Gaeltacht areas were among the most socially and economically disadvantaged areas of Ireland. Reporting at the end of 1981, the study illustrates:

- (a) That new jobs created in the Gaeltacht compare favourably with national performances both in terms of rate of actual job creation and cost. Given the limitations of the industrial base of the Gaeltacht and the excessive risk exposure of Gaeltarra in its subsidiary company portfolio, this performance represents a notable achievement.
- (b) The impact on employment of both the economic recessions and the necessary rationalisation of unprofitable subsidiary companies was much less marked in the Gaeltacht than that experienced nationally. By mid 1981, net jobs losses in Údarás-assisted firms were substantially less than in Irish industry as a whole. This favourable contrast was even more emphatic by end-1982 when, contrary to the national trend, a net annual growth in employment in Údarás-assisted industries was recorded.
- (c) The Gaeltacht, where from the middle of the last century population decline was the norm, recorded an increase of 11.16% in population as compared with a national average of 15.2% and, more significantly, compared with an increase of 1.93% in counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo (excluding Sligo Borough). (It should be noted that the dispersal of the increase has not been universal).
- (d) In the decade, some 7% of the population of the Gaeltacht found work, compared with a national figure of 1.4%. In fact, the

workforce employed in Údarás-assisted enterprises had increased from 11.2% of the Gaeltacht total in 1971 to no less than 27.2% in 1981.

- (d) While an agreed definition of quality of life remains elusive, such indicators as standards of housing levels, of disposable income, educational qualifications and social mobility clearly illustrate an unprecedented increase in prosperity in the Gaeltacht over the decade. Indeed, this very prosperity has been adduced as a major threat to the Irish language, a subject to which I shall return.

Another interesting statistic is that no less than 3,344 new houses were completed in the Gaeltacht over the period 1966 to 1981 relative to a population of some 79,500 in the Gaeltacht in 1981. Moreover, both as a measure of our own investment in necessary infrastructure and as a reflection of industrial needs, there were 142 factories built by Gaeltarra Éireann/Údarás in the Gaeltacht by end 1982 compared with 10 in 1967.

In terms of economic advancement, these facts disclose formidable achievements which, for many reasons, (some of them our fault) have not been adequately acknowledged. I would submit that the progress recorded is even more impressive against the background of relatively poor infrastructure, particularly roads and communications, and the marked absence of productive material resources (including people). On the question of infrastructure, one would expect that, in the provision of such services, priority would be given to areas of highest population concentration. It is not generally known that, outside the urban areas of Ireland, the Gaeltacht has the greatest concentration of population in the country. Yet these concentrations remain grossly under-

serviced. Unfortunately, the myth of equating the Gaeltacht with sparse population is perpetuated in the media which constantly refer to "stark remoteness" complete with bleak mountain and forelands of blanket bog. A photograph in a recent supplement captured such a scene to perfection: this perfection, however, was not helped by the fact that the area photographed was not in the Gaeltacht at all. By the same token, the national perception of the people of the Gaeltacht appears to me to derive more from the Celtic twilight romantic modes of Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold than the day-to-day realities confronting native speakers in finding gainful livelihoods in their own communities in the latter part of the twentieth century. These points are not by any means trivial: in my experience, metaphoric misrepresentations tend to attract perceived validity and it is extremely difficult for any agency to serve fully, and represent adequately, its external environment if key actors and components of that environment are subjected to powerful distortions in the national consciousness.

PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER GAELTACHT DEVELOPMENT

The importance of industrial development is heightened by the paucity of primary industry resources. In general, the agricultural resource base of the Gaeltacht is physically poor: most agricultural holdings in the Gaeltacht are of fundamentally uneconomic size and are owned by elderly farmers many of whom have no clear succession. Fishing, despite institutional and structural constraints, has considerable development potential but requires substantial and costly infrastructural investment which, I am glad to record, is a priority concern of the Minister. However, the commitment and realisation of such investment must be regarded as relatively long term both for direct and spin-off employment effects. Tourism is a significant contributor

to area income but, as an industry, it is highly seasonal and its seasonality inhibits major investment. Against this background, the need for increased industrial employment is further underlined by an increase of 23% in the population in the 15-35 year age group between the years 1971-79 which, in itself, was far greater than the national increase of 13% in the same age group. It is also highly significant that the female population of the Gaeltacht increased by 25% compared with a 21% increase in male population, a completely new trend which hopefully will be maintained in order to correct the traditional imbalance.

As an indication of the scale of the problems, the following data from a recent survey of agriculture in the Iveragh Gaeltacht of Kerry underline the dimensions of the development task. I might say that, prima facie, the agricultural resource of the Iveragh area is significantly greater than most other Gaeltacht areas:

Average total farm size is 73.1 acres but productive land averages only 14.4 acres with only 10.5 acres cuttable, i.e. capable of yielding hay or silage for winter fodder.

82% of farms have a valuation of less than £10.

Only 11.7% of the farmers spend more than £10 per acre on fertilisers.

Amount of winter fodder is inadequate: cattle lose weight over the winter months.

Investment in machinery is low: 70% of farmers have machinery with value of less than £1,000 and 40% milk by hand.

Efficiency is poor: average milk yield is 361 gallons (compared with 635 gallons per cow for Co. Kerry as a whole) and average weaning percentage for lambs is 70%.

Average farm income is low (only £1,538 per annum) supplemented by headage payments, children's allowance, social welfare (55% in receipt), old age pension (27% in receipt) and outside employment (involving 17% of farmers).

57% of farmers have total cash incomes of less than £4,000 per annum.

The number of farmers in the higher age groups is exceptionally high: 64% are over 50 years of age and only 5.6% are under 30 years of age.

56.7% of farmers have no contact with the Advisory Service.

On very many farms, little or no capital is available for development or expansion.

Having criticised classical misrepresentations, I do not by any means wish to suggest that the Údarás's performance fully serves or satisfies even the industrial development needs of the Gaeltacht. Certainly, if it does, the Gaeltacht communities have been singularly reticent in acknowledging the fact. I think it was Michelangelo who prayed the Lord grant that we may desire more than we can accomplish. Michelangelo was a genius but I suspect that, like the Gaeltacht communities, he was a hard taskmaster. Even solely in terms of job creation - and the Údarás writ runs much wider - we have, for example, an employment waiting list of over 1,500 seeking work on the Gweedore Industrial Estate alone

and the enormous increase in the population in the 15-35 year age group represents one of the most daunting challenges facing the Údarás. However, I would contend, and contend strongly, that an agency that has achieved such results - the out turn for 1982 and 1983 to date being far in excess of national performance - should not be dismissed lightly.

THE ÚDARÁS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

The key question is: how has the Údarás redefined its role in Gaeltacht development as distinct from the policies inherited from Gaeltarra? The answer lies in concentrated community development which rests on two principles: firstly, that the Údarás must operate as a community development agency and, secondly, that, as such, it must remit its brief through and for local Gaeltacht communities. We are working towards these principles with, I hope, greater appreciation and understanding. In effect, this implies a partnership contract where, jointly, Gaeltacht communities and the Údarás must transact productively and, through such transactions, define development needs, prioritise them and action them. This implies that needs are not merely confined to the quantitative but encompass also the qualitative and the structural. In effect, the process is one of integrated planning and action for the diverse needs of what are diverse communities with provision for joint review of progress or lack of it. Integration, by definition, means that problems and opportunities are viewed as part of a whole encompassing the economic, cultural and social. This approach allows for resources to be concentrated for problem resolution or opportunity realisation. Of equal importance, this approach recognises that the Údarás's own direct activities must be viewed not merely as centres of positive utility results in themselves but also as contributors to the

development of the communities in which the activities are located. For example, our own industries must be profitable in their own right but must also buttress and reflect community values. The attraction and development of new industries is not merely an Údarás administrative function but also a function shared with the community itself. Enterprise, innovations and initiatives taken by the Údarás must be coherent and consistent in the context of the communities to which they apply and can only be tested as such by prior consultation and agreement. Of even greater importance, this process allows for wider opportunities for the communities themselves and for individuals and groups within the communities to mobilise internally the full range of their capacities and resources as a dynamic for desired economic, cultural and social development.

In its most ambitious form, this process has been initiated in the Uíbh Ráthach Gaeltacht of South Kerry where it was perfectly clear that conventional development programmes had failed. As in other Gaeltachts, and in contrast with the generality of rural communities in the Gaeltacht, the communities are highly identified and organised with community-acknowledged leadership. These communities were brought together and through consultation and discussion decided, through a group committee which they formed, to draw up a comprehensive integrated development plan for the entire area covering all development needs - infrastructure, culture, agriculture, tourism, fisheries, education, industry and so on. The Údarás made staff available for the group and also arranged for group access to relevant state and semi-state bodies as well as access to necessary specialist advice and expertise.

The stage has now been reached where problems and opportunities have been defined and a prioritised action plan is being agreed. It is obviously much too early to form a definitive judgement on the exercise. I can say, however, that some fears expressed that the community aspirations would be unreal and excessive have not been realised. On the contrary, the exercise has been characterised by remarkable realism on the part of the communities as regards the problems and potentialities confronting them. We fully recognise that the point of actioning the development programme will be of critical importance since many of the action areas lie outside the Údarás's statutory competence. I do not propose, on this occasion, to address the vexed question of additional powers for the Údarás. That, under the terms of our legislation, is obviously an option. However, there is also the option of integrated inter-agency working and, given the nature of the development needs, we should not need to call on an organisational scientist to formulate a revolution in institutional frameworks to get the job done. Time will tell and I would hope that our joint capacity both to learn and to adapt will prove equal to the test.

We also recognise the threats and weaknesses confronting the community groups themselves, many of which are common to action groups and particularly the co-operative movement in the Gaeltacht. These include the absence of critical mass both in terms of continuing active local support and sufficiency of local productive enterprise resource and, indeed, the constant mediation between what is desirable and what is feasible. Overall, however, the fact remains that, while each of us knows that perfection of systems can never be reached, the effort to attain it must be sustained.

THE ÚDARÁS AND THE IRISH LANGUAGE:

* Given such a background, it is essential that we focus on the core mission of the Údarás, i.e. the preservation and strengthening of Irish as the vernacular of the Gaeltacht. In these surroundings, I may be forgiven Biblical allusion : it profits us nothing if the body is saved and the soul is lost. The central fact is that, if Irish disappears as the vernacular of the Gaeltacht, the Údarás, regardless of any achievements made, will have failed in the most profound and fundamental sense of failure. Assessment of the standing of the language in the Gaeltacht as a whole opens an area which is badly in need of scientific analysis. In the absence of such analysis we are assailed by contradictory value judgements. However, I would like to place some points before you in this connection. I have already mentioned that the economic prosperity generated in the Gaeltacht is in itself regarded as a threat to the language. There is evidence for and evidence against. However, I think that it is valid for me to ask what the condition of the Gaeltacht would be if the industrialisation which generated such prosperity had not taken place. My own view is that the language question must be viewed in the national context and not merely in the context of the Gaeltacht alone. Economists have created a concept of internal colonialism where, in a country, powerful dominant economic regions cause and maintain a state of under-development in other regions. I feel that the same concept can be readily applied to the cultural field and one can legitimately ask whether the main forces of the dominant culture wish, or have the capacity, even to tolerate a minority culture. Our concept of comprehensive integrated community development views the language as a vital artery of the development process. Realistically, I must say that, even with ourselves and the Gaeltacht communities fully mobilised, we would jointly represent only part of the solution.

CONCLUSION:

On this and on many other questions, I cannot pretend that we have adequate responses. There are many constraints, administrative, physical, financial and, indeed, psychological. We have chosen a particular course of development which will take many years to prove its success or failure. I, for one, am convinced that Gaeltacht development and, indeed, development in any rural area must be community-based. In the process, we face many risks, not least the arousal of expectations which cannot be realistically met. In this connection, a recent study on the Údarás underlined the local perceived importance of the agency by marked tendencies on the part of Gaeltacht communities to attribute blame to Údarás for social and other problems that lie far outside the Údarás's sphere of influence. The value systems which we must administer to are diverse and complex. To quote from a book published over 150 years ago "the sentimental against the rational, the intuitive against the inductive, the ornamental against the useful, the intense against the tranquil, the romantic against the classical, these are great and interesting controversies". These controversies remain great and interesting but, I feel, they reflect values which an agency, such as Údarás, must somehow comprehend.

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COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON GAELTACHT

DEVELOPMENT : A REVIEW OF SOME RESEARCH FINDINGS

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INTRODUCTION:

This paper presents some results from a questionnaire survey carried out as part of a broader research project concerning rural development strategies in the West of Ireland, and funded by the National Board for Science and Technology. This research project, which was designed to examine and compare state- and community-based strategies for rural development in the West of Ireland, arises essentially from broad changes in the conceptualisation of development, particularly rural development, in the nineteen seventies. These trends might be perceived as a reaction to the broad range of modernisation theory - and its ideological opposite, dependency theory - both of which present a highly centralised model or interpretation of the process of development. Friedmann summarises this process as one of functional integration, in which all areas are ultimately integrated into a national/international system, generally organised on an urban hierarchial basis, down which development (or 'dependency') operates.¹ The preoccupation with growth centres in the nineteen sixties, for example, reflects a belief in this model which was expected to filter development into the peripheral rural parts of problem regions.² This approach to development has been labelled (mainly retrospectively) a top-down approach. In the early nineteen seventies, with some evidence of a rural revival becoming stronger in many parts of Ireland (and Western Europe), came a reaction to this earlier approach to development. Questions were asked

about the centralist, top-down strategy, questions which increasingly represented the viewpoints of the recipients of development at the bottom of the hierarchy. A local community perspective was articulated - a bottom-up perspective - in which the recipients became, in Norman Long's terminology, actors, adopting what has been characterised as a strategy of territorial integration.³ This places emphasis on selective territorial closure, disrupting the functional integrationist tendencies of the earlier approach and emphasising the actor-oriented approach in which community development and control of local resources takes on a high profile.⁴

Ireland is a fairly obvious example of both approaches, as pointed out by Regan and Breathnach in 1981,⁵ and the presence of Údarás na Gaeltachta and local community development cooperatives (Comharchumainn) in the Gaeltacht regions provides an interesting case in point. The Údarás to some extent might be seen to represent the latest stage in the evolution of state-sponsored development activity in the Gaeltacht, while the Comharchumainn represent the community reaction which followed the Cearta Sibhialta (Civil Rights) campaign of the late sixties. This viewpoint must be qualified, however, by pointing out that the Údarás especially is in a state of change. Nevertheless while its links with the Comharchumainn appear to be growing, it is still reasonable to posit the Údarás as representative of a centralist, state-sponsored, top-down approach to development.

In comparing the two approaches to rural development, one obvious starting point is to try to discern the views of the rural communities - the recipients or the actors in the development experience, depending on one's perspective - concerning such development. In the words of Stöhr and Taylor (1981):

"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."⁶

How then do the various agencies of development in the Gaeltacht measure up to the expectations and desires of the Communities in situ? Do they consider that there is a match between Údarás na Gaeltachta policies and their needs? And if the Comharchumainn represent local development initiative, how are they perceived? How are both agencies compared?

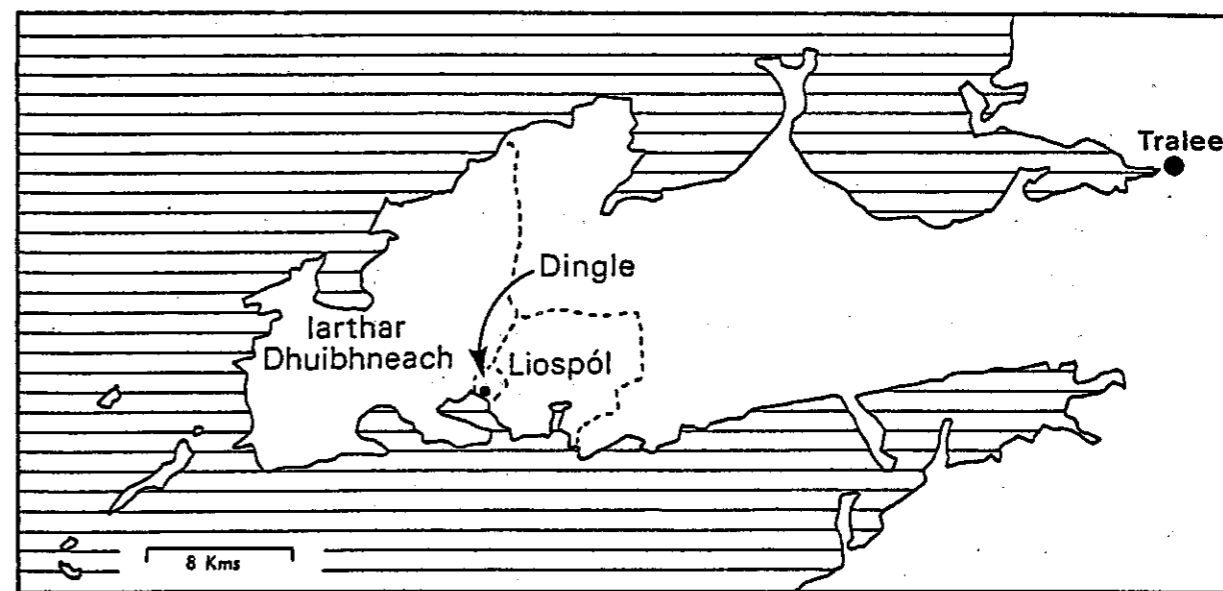
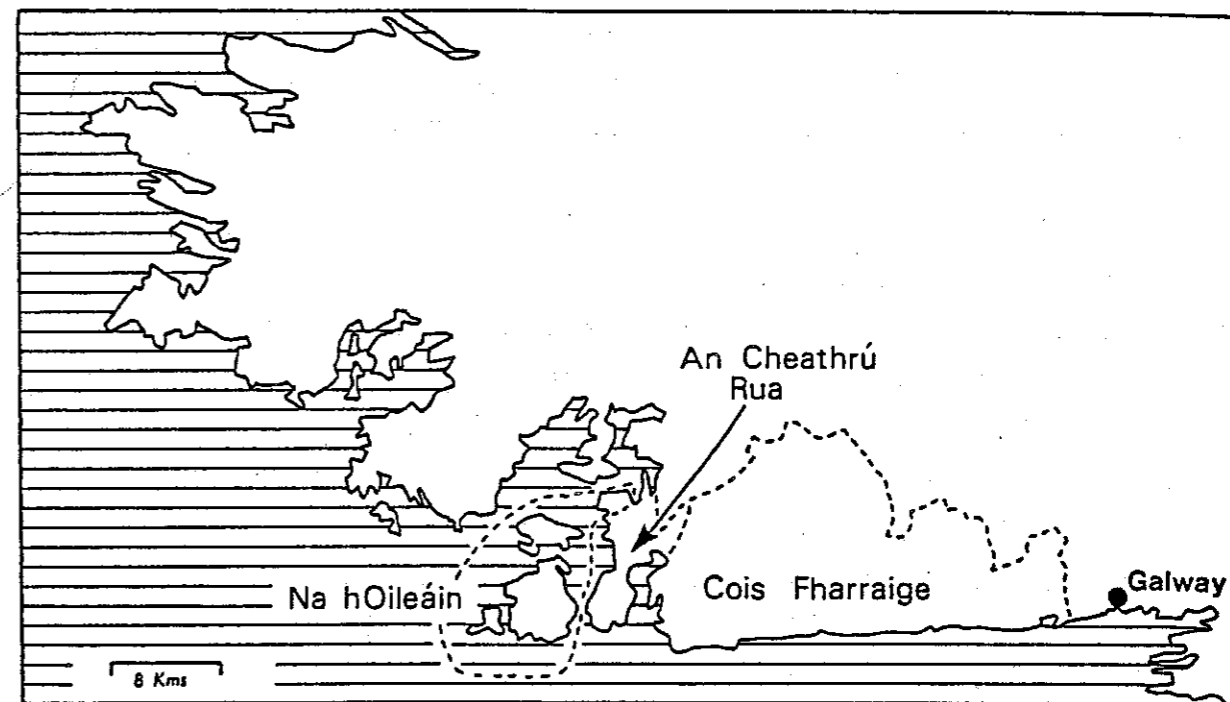
THE GAELTACHT SURVEY

The first part of the current research project was aimed at answering these and related questions concerning attitudes to development among the Gaeltacht communities. An attitude survey was undertaken in the Galway and Kerry Gaeltachtaí in March/April 1982 (Figs. 1 and 2). The Gaeltacht communities were chosen firstly because from an economic, social and environmental point of view they represent classic examples of rural poverty and marginalisation, tempered in some cases by fairly recent, urban-generated change. Secondly, the Gaeltacht areas for ideological and cultural reasons are subject to particular attention by the state. This is expressed by a separate Government Department (Roinn na Gaeltachta) to look after the linguistic and educational needs of the Gaeltacht, and Údarás na Gaeltachta to look after its economic development. The latter replaced its predecessor, Gaeltarra Éireann, in 1979. Thirdly, the Gaeltachtaí were selected simply because they clearly

represent highly distinctive, self-conscious, rural communities. Due no doubt to their high level of cultural community consciousness, the Gaeltachtaí have spawned a significant number of community development cooperatives.⁷

In the Galway Gaeltacht (Fig.1), three fairly homogeneous communities were identified, or emerged in the course of the survey. Firstly, there is Cois Fharráige, which on the surface appears to be one of the more prosperous communities in the West of Ireland. This is due partly to the presence of a large, comparatively affluent, largely middle-class population which works in Galway city. Separate from this group is the original, indigenous community, poorer in economic terms, and which was largely responsible for establishing Comharchumann Chois Fharráige (CCF), one of the biggest community cooperatives in the Gaeltacht. In addition, the Cois Fharráige area also contains the headquarters of Údarás na Gaeltachta and Roinn na Gaeltachta. The remaining two communities, An Cheathrú Rua and Na hOileáin, are considerably poorer and much more inaccessible than Cois Fharráige. Both may be separately identified on the basis of their physical isolation, which probably accounts for a community consciousness that has been accentuated by the concentration of Údarás industrial development in the Ceathrú Rua area, and the establishment of Comharchumann Forbartha na nOileán (CFNN) based in the area of Na hOileáin.

In the West Kerry Gaeltacht of Corca Dhuibhne (Fig.2) three fairly distinctive communities can be identified also : Liospól, Dingle and Iarthar Dhuibhneach. Altogether the West Kerry Gaeltacht is characterised by a much richer agricultural base than Galway, which makes agriculture much more viable and significant in the local economy. Dingle, the largest urban centre in all the Gaeltacht, is a distinctive community and separates Liospól and Iarthar Dhuibhneach from each other.



252 and 200 questionnaires were completed from the Galway and Kerry Gaeltachtaí respectively, selected partly from the electoral list and partly from "random" subjective selection on the part of the interviewers, and representing approximately 5% of the population over 18 years of age in each region. Statistical tests were carried out to test for differences between the samples chosen by the two different methods. In the one case in this paper where a significant difference was encountered, only the sample selected from the electoral list was used. In most cases opinions were sought through open-ended questions which were subsequently classified and coded for analysis.

The information elicited in the questionnaire relevant to the present paper can be roughly divided into three principal areas of enquiry:

1. Perceptions of the approaches to rural development represented by Údarás na Gaeltachta on the one hand and the Comharchumainn on the other.
2. The level of awareness of the Údarás and the Comharchumainn, involving questions designed to test the individual's knowledgeability about these agencies of development.
3. Assessment of the achievement of these organisations, i.e. to test the extent to which the community perceives these organisations as suiting the requirements of the local areas.

Interesting and significant variations in results can be discerned as between the Galway and Kerry Gaeltachtaí on the one hand, and within each Gaeltacht on the other, reflecting strong local identities, and the differential impact of development activities undertaken by Údarás or

the Comharchumainn, emphasising the need for development strategies that are tailored to the different needs and expectations of the local communities. Striking differences in attitudes to Údarás were apparent between Galway and Kerry. In the Galway Gaeltacht there were differences not only between Cois Fharráige, on the one hand and the other two communities, but also between Na hOileáin and Ceathrú Rua themselves. The most salient of these findings are presented below.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLES OF ÚDARÁS NA GAELTACHTA AND THE COMHARCHUMAINN

On its establishment in 1980, Údarás na Gaeltachta's brief was extensive - including linguistic, cultural, social, physical and economic objectives - but there is a considerable gap between its brief and its actual powers. Ultimately, the Údarás would admit that its major preoccupation is job creation through industrial development.

Respondents were asked to define the purpose for which Údarás na Gaeltachta was established (Table 1).

TABLE I.
ÚDARÁS PURPOSE (%)

	GALWAY	KERRY
Job Provision	44.5	26.7
Grant Provision	5.1	13.9
General Development	34.8	45.5
Language Promotion	5.9	6.1
Representative Body	3.9	6.1
Other	5.7	1.8
	(N=190)	(N=165)

The major functions of Údarás were perceived to be the provision of jobs, the allocation of grants for development projects, general development, language promotion, and community representation. The first three represented by far the most popular perceptions of the Údarás's function. As Table 1 shows, there were significant differences* in perception between Galway and Kerry, with 45% in Galway seeing employment creation as the major Údarás function as against little more than one-quarter in Kerry. In contrast grant provision was seen as being a more significant function of the Údarás in Kerry. These differences between Kerry and Galway may be ascribed to the much better performance of the Údarás as regards the provision of factory employment in Galway, with the result that assistance to small-scale local businesses has been a relatively more significant element in the Údarás's activities in Kerry. The widespread occurrence of Údarás-assisted factories (most of them in industrial estates) in the Cois Fharráige-Ceathrú Rua area, is in marked contrast to their paucity in Corca Dhuibhne (and indeed, in Na hOileáin).

'General development' (principally indicated in the form of the Údarás being there "to help/develop the area") was a function attributed to the Údarás by substantial numbers in both Kerry and Galway. The failure or inability to provide a detailed or more specific function reflects an unthinking attitude, or possibly an apathetic point of view, by almost half the respondents in Kerry and one third in Galway. More interestingly both Kerry and Galway ranked the linguistic and representative functions of Údarás - both of which are ostensibly important aspects of the Údarás structure - very low in the list of functions.

* $p < .05$ using χ^2 test is the general confidence limit for significance tests.

Associated with those views might be the public perception of the differences between Údarás na Gaeltachta, and its direct predecessor, Gaeltarra Éireann. For many years the latter was concerned with encouraging development in the Gaeltacht mainly through factory employment provision based on external enterprise. In 1980, Údarás na Gaeltachta was established to succeed Gaeltarra. It inherited all the assets and liabilities of Gaeltarra, but its structure was altered to make it more representative of the communities in the Gaeltacht by means of elections of representatives to the Board of the Údarás. Its brief, at least in theory, was also extended well beyond the relatively limited concerns of Gaeltarra. There are thus a considerable number of objective differences between Údarás and Gaeltarra, in spite of the misleading but obvious fact that many of the Údarás factories, for example, were formerly Gaeltarra - established projects. Convincing the local communities of these differences would seem to be an important element in the Údarás's future image.

In fact of 203 Galway respondents who answered the question on the difference between the Údarás and Gaeltarra (the question was not asked in Kerry) only 30% saw a difference between them.

TABLE 2.
THE PERCEIVED DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ÚDARÁS
AND GAELTARRA (%)

Údarás has....	
More power	10.0
More Local Representation	36.7
More Jobs	26.7
Other	26.7
	(N= 60)

Of the sixty who saw a difference between the Údarás and Gaeltarra, just over one-third correctly identified one of the principal differences (elected representatives), with 10% identifying what is largely a hypothetical difference, namely additional power. In other words only a small proportion of respondents approached an accurate assessment of the differences between Údarás and Gaeltarra Eireann.

In contrast to Údarás, the Comharchumann might be seen as representing a genuine community response to needs in the areas concerned. Most of the Comharchumann were established in the early seventies. In general, they originated as a response to particular infrastructural inadequacies (e.g. water supply), later expanding into other social and economic activities. Comharchumann Chois Fharráige, for example, initially developed around a group water scheme.

Respondents were first asked to give reasons why the Comharchumann were set up (Table 3).

TABLE 3.
WHY WAS THE COMHARCHUMANN SET-UP?
(%)

	CCF ¹	CFNN ²	CFCD ³
General Development	38.3	40.9	50.3
Job Creation	25.8	36.5	20.3
Community Self Help	14.8	3.1	3.9
Water Supply	3.9	13.2	-
Summer Colleges	8.6	1.3	11.8
Other	8.6	5.0	13.7
	(N=128)	(N=159)	(N=153) ⁴

- 1 = Comharchumann Chois Fharráige
- 2 = Comharchumann Forbartha na nOileán
- 3 = Comharchumann Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne
- 4 = Respondents selected from electoral list only

In general, the responses to this question were similar to the corresponding question relating to the Údarás, (Table 1), with between two-thirds and three quarters of respondents in all cases citing either "General Development" or "Job Creation". Again, the emphasis on job creation vis-a-vis general development was less in Kerry, perhaps reflecting a lower perceived need for jobs in an area with a much stronger agricultural base.

In the case of Galway, one notes significant differences in the perceptions of the roles of CCF and CFNN, with the latter emphasising job creation and water supply more than the former, which in turn places greater emphasis on community self-help and summer colleges. The greater stress on job creation in the case of CFNN may reflect the fact that Údarás factory provision on the islands has been minimal with the result that the Comharchumann is being looked to as a job provider to a greater degree than in Cois Fharráige. The fact that CFNN has only recently been established (1976) and immediately set about providing water supplies in its area undoubtedly accounts for the relatively high profile of this activity in the area. The relative prominence of the more abstract and ideologically-based "community self-held" factor in Cois Fharráige possibly reflects a more "intellectual" middle-class component in the population of this area.

Finally, it may be noted that very rarely indeed were the Comharchumann seen as having a role with respect to language maintenance/promotion, although this would be regarded as a big objective of many of the most prominent activists in the Comharchumann themselves.

Respondents were next asked to give a list of the activities in which the Comharchumann were engaged, with a view to determining the relative prominence associated with the different activities concerned (Table 4).

TABLE 4.

COMHARCHUMANN FUNCTIONS (%)

CCF		CFNN		CFCD	
Water Supply	24.1	Water Supply	27.6	Land Reclamation	42.5
Printing/ Publishing	18.8	Fish Farming	21.1	Irish Courses	16.5
Irish Courses	18.3	Holiday Homes	13.8	Job Creation	14.9
Bog Development	14.1	Handcrafts	12.5	Horticulture	8.3
Shop	10.5	Bog Development	11.2	Other	17.8
Other	14.2	Irish Courses	8.2		
		Other	5.6		
	(N=191) ¹		(N=232)		(N=188)

1 = Respondents were allowed more than one response

Table 4 clearly reflects the extent to which the Comharchumainn are engaged in local resource development (bogs, land reclamation, fish farming, holiday homes, Irish courses, horticulture), and service provision (water supply, shop). In Galway, the prominence attached to the role of the Comharchumainn in providing a public water supply is apparent, while in Kerry, where water supply did not arise as a factor, land reclamation is far and away the most widely-perceived function of CFCD, reflecting the agricultural orientation of much of the population, the sheer visibility of this activity in the landscape, and the extent to which the technological innovation of deep ploughing has captured the popular imagination.

LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF THE ÚDARÁS AND THE COMHARCHUMAINN

As a measure of the public awareness of each agency, respondents were asked to list representatives in the Údarás and in the Comharchumainn. This is a common device to assess perceptual variations in many behavioural studies. As has been noted, one of the innovations in the structure of Údarás na Gaeltachta was the introduction of elected representatives to the Board, in the hope that the Údarás would more closely and easily represent the wishes of local rural communities. In both Galway and Kerry there are two such representatives.

TABLE 5.

KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL ÚDARÁS REPRESENTATIVES (%)

	GALWAY	KERRY
Correctly identifying...		
2 Representatives	30.2	64.5
1 Representative	14.7	11.0
None	55.1	24.5
	(N=252)	(N=200)

As Table 5 shows, the communities' familiarity with their local representatives varies considerably as between Galway and Kerry. In Galway, over half of the respondents could not name, or incorrectly named, either of their Údarás representatives. The level of awareness was much higher in Kerry where nearly two-thirds of the respondents correctly identified their two representatives. This is undoubtedly

due in part to the smaller area and more intimate nature of the West Kerry Gaeltacht. Nevertheless, the extent of ignorance in Galway is surprisingly high.

Variations in knowledgeability about the Údarás representatives is replicated (and possibly explained) by the level of participation in the Údarás elections (Table 6).

TABLE 6.

DID YOU VOTE IN THE ÚDARÁS ELECTIONS?

	KERRY	CF ¹	CR ²	NH ³
YES	75.0	35.6	68.5	48.0
NO	25.0	64.4	31.5	52.0
	(N=198)	(N=104)	(N=54)	(N=75)

- 1 = Cois Fharráige
- 2 = Ceathrú Rua
- 3 = Na hOileáin

A much higher proportion voted in Kerry than in Galway. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents in Cois Fharráige did not vote - reflecting a high level of apathy in the district in which the Údarás headquarters is situated, but reflecting also, to a large degree, the extent to which a considerable number of non-Gaeltacht-orientated people have moved into this area. The highest proportion - outside Kerry - voted in Ceathrú Rua. These figures must have important implications for Údarás na Gaeltachta's image and status in the Galway Gaeltacht.

Respondents were next asked if they could name the Chairman and Manager of the Comharchumann in their area. As regards Chairman, a very high, though variable, level of ignorance was indicated. (Table 7).

TABLE 7.

KNOWLEDGE OF COMHARCHUMAINN CHAIRMAN (%)

	CCF	CFNN	CFCD
Correct Response	7.5	16.0	28.5
Incorrect Response	33.6	44.4	13.0
No Response	58.9	39.6	58.5
	(N=107)	(N=144)	(N=200)

Even among Comharchumann members, ignorance levels in respect of this question were high: in no case were over half those who said they were members able to give the correct answer, with the proportion dropping below one-fifth for CCF (Table 8).

TABLE 8.

CORRECT IDENTIFICATION OF CHAIRMAN BY CC MEMBERS (%)

CFCD	47.4
CFNN	37.5
CCF	17.9

In the cases of CFNN and CFCD, a significant sub-areal influence on knowledgeability on this question was identified. In the case of CFNN, a distinction was made between Na hOileáin (NH) proper (Leitir Móir, Leitir Mealláin and Garumna) - the main core area of the Comharchumann - and Ceathrú Rua (CR), which also comes within the Comharchumann's sphere of operations. As might be expected, a much higher proportion (23.2%) of those in NH was able to identify correctly the Chairman of CFNN, compared with CR (6.8%), although even this proportion is quite low.

In Kerry, as mentioned earlier, a sub-areal distinction was made between Liospól, Dingle Town and Iarthar Dhuibhneach. In this case, Iarthar Dhuibhneach is the core area of CFCD (commonly known locally as the "Ballyferriter Co-op") and hence one would expect knowledgeability to be higher in this area, as shown in Table 9.

TABLE 9.

CORRECT IDENTIFICATION OF CFCD CHAIRMAN BY SUB-AREA (%)

Iarthar Dhuibhneach	36.8
Liospól	20.0
Dingle	15.4

No similar sub-areal breakdown was carried out in the case of Cois Fharráige.

An important influence on these sub-areal variations is a corresponding sub-areal variation in levels of Comharchumann membership. Table 10 shows significantly higher levels of membership in the Na hOileáin and Iarthar Dhuibhneach sub-areas.

TABLE 10.

MEMBERSHIP OF COMHARCHUMAINN (%)

CCF	CFNN		CFCD		
	CR	NH	Liospól	Dingle	ID
26.4	21.1	35.4	6.7	10.0	28.4
(N=106)	(N=57)	(N=79)	(N=30)	(N=50)	(N=109)

A notable element in the responses to the question concerning the Comharchumann Chairman was the frequency with which the Manager was given as the Chairman in Galway. Of those who gave a name in response to this question, the proportions who named the Manager were respectively, 25.9% (Na hOileáin), 54.8% (Ceathrú Rua), and 50% (Cois Fharráige). By contrast, this happened rarely in Kerry, where over two-thirds of those who answered this question did so correctly (compared with 35.2% (NH), 12.9% (CR), and 18.2% (CF), respectively, in Galway). Of course, this identification of the Manager as the Chairman was particularly pronounced among non-members of the Comharchumann especially in the case of CFNN, where one-half of those non-members who gave an answer named the Manager, compared with less than one-fifth for members. The respective proportions for CCF were 25.9% and 11.8%. The high local profile of the CFNN Manager is undoubtedly a significant factor here.

The apparent community identification with Comharchumann Managers indicated above is brought out more clearly from the responses to the question which asked respondents to name their local Comharchumann Manager. In the cases of both CFNN and CCF, about one half gave answers to this question, and about 90% of these answered correctly in both cases. In the case of CFCD, the fact that over 80% of those who answered (45% of the total), did so correctly despite the fact that, in this case, the Manager had only recently taken up duties, is a good indication of the high profile of the Comharchumann Manager in the community.

It can be argued from the above evidence, that most people's relationship with the local Comharchumann is at a "material" rather than "ideological" level, with little interest, or involvement, in how the Comharchumann is organised, and much greater interest in the Comharchumann's day-to-day activities, as mediated through the Manager. This observation can be applied even to many Comharchumann members, as indicated by the low level of ability even among the latter to correctly identify their Comharchumann Chairman (Table 8), which may be related to the fact that in both Galway and Kerry, only about one-third of those who claimed to be members had attended the most recent annual general meetings of their respective Comharchumann. The lack of real commitment to the Comharchumann ideal on the part of many members is further indicated by the reasons given for being members (Table 11).

TABLE 11.
REASONS FOR MEMBERSHIP OF
COMHARCHUMAINN (%)

	GALWAY	KERRY
To help area	60.3	36.4
Self-benefit	30.9	48.5
Was canvassed	4.4	12.1
Other	2.9	3.0
	(N=68)	(N=32)

Table 11 shows that almost one-third in Galway and one half in Kerry were members out of self-interest (referring mainly to households whose membership is compulsory in order to be able to provide accommodation for students participating in Irish courses run by the Comharchumann). The sharp difference between Galway and Kerry in terms of the desire to help the local area (albeit self-declared) is also noteworthy.

Those who were not members of any Comharchumann were also invited to give reasons for this (in the Galway survey only). The results are presented in Table 12, broken-down by sub-area (between which there are significant differences).

TABLE 12.

REASONS FOR NON-MEMBERSHIP OF COMHARCHUMANN
(%)

	CF	CR	NH
No Interest	16.7)	18.9)	29.5)
) 33.4) 35.1) 36.3
Not Involved	16.7)	16.2)	6.8)
Not Asked	12.5)	24.3)	2.3)
) 30.6) 35.1) 11.4
No Information	18.1)	10.8)	9.1)
No Direct Benefit	8.3	10.8	25.0
Other	27.8	18.9	27.3
	(N=72)	(N=37)	(N=44)

In each sub-area, around one-third more or less opted out of any commitment to the area's development; in CF and CR, similar proportions seemed to be claiming some kind of ignorance on the matter, but the proportion in this respect was much lower in the case of NH (perhaps reflecting an intensive pre-establishment canvassing campaign in this area). Conversely, a much higher proportion in NH opted out because of a lack of perceived direct benefit for themselves.

EVALUATION OF THE ÚDARÁS AND THE COMHARCHUMAINN

Respondents were next asked about the perceived beneficial impact of the organisations under study on their local area. First they were asked whether they thought their area had benefitted from the Údarás (Table 13):

TABLE 13.

HAS ÚDARÁS BENEFITTED THE AREA? (%)

	CF	CR	NH	KERRY
YES	74.3	81.5	55.1	51.0
NO	25.7	18.5	44.9	49.0
	(N=105)	(N=54)	(N=69)	(N=178)

The high positive regard for the Údarás's impact in CF and CR is in contrast with the more moderate response in NH and Kerry. This contrast may be immediately linked with the much greater concentration of Údarás-sponsored factories in the former two areas compared with the latter two.

Those who responded positively to this question were then asked in what way the Údarás had been of benefit (Table 14):

TABLE 14.

HOW HAS THE ÚDARÁS BENEFITTED THE AREA?
(%)

	GALWAY	KERRY
Jobs	65.5	39.5
Grants	7.6	27.2
Living Standards	11.1	12.3
Housing	3.5	6.2
Other	12.3	14.8
	(N=171)	(N=81)

The differences between the Kerry and Galway responses to this question reflect the differences in perceived functions of the Údarás noted in Table 1, and support the above observation that the Údarás has been less successful as a direct job-provider in Kerry. Support for the observation that the Údarás has also been less successful in this respect in Na hOileáin is provided by the response to the question as to how the Údarás could do more for one's area (Table 15) - three quarters of the respondents (this question was only asked in Galway) agreeing that the Údarás could do more:

TABLE 15.

HOW CAN THE ÚDARÁS DO MORE? (%)

	CF	CR	NH
More jobs	19.0)	22.2)	39.7)
More local jobs	16.0) 46.0	1.6) 42.8	6.3) 57.1
More permanent jobs	11.0)	19.0)	11.1)
Local resource use	16.0	11.1	9.6
Roads	10.0	28.6	17.5
Social facilities	11.0	4.8	3.2
Other	17.0	12.7	12.7
	(N=100)	(N=63)	(N=63)

The relative emphasis on simple job provision in NH is evident. Otherwise, the concern for road improvement in CR (especially) and NH is clear, while the relative emphasis on social facilities and local resource use in CF may reflect the greater middle class/"intellectual" component in this area.

In relation to the Comharchumainn, there was a generally more positive appraisal of their impact. (Table 16):

TABLE 16.
HAS THE COMHARCHUMANN BENEFITTED THE AREA? (%)

	CF	CR	NH	KERRY
YES	76.0	77.1	94.6	87.1
NO	24.0 (N=96)	22.9 (N=78)	5.4 (N=74)	12.9 (N=163)

It may be noted that, while the position of the Comharchumann was on a par with that of the Údarás on this question in CF and CR, it was particularly strong in the other areas, where the Údarás was weakest, suggesting that the Comharchumann is to an extent seen as compensating for Údarás inactivity in these areas. This is corroborated by the strong emphasis on the Comharchumann's potential role as a job-provider in NH's responses concerning how the Comharchumann could do more for the area (Table 17 : Question not asked in Kerry):

TABLE 17.
HOW CAN THE COMHARCHUMANN DO MORE? (%)

	CF	CR	NH
Jobs	29.2	14.8	48.9
Roads	6.3	29.6	17.8
Social/Cultural Activities	18.8	18.5	2.2
Local Resources	22.9	3.7	11.1
Other	22.9	33.3	20.0

It is noteworthy that, apart from NH (where a degree of desperation as regards employment provision is evident), the Comharchumann are seen much less as job-providers than the Údarás, although their perceived alternative roles vary widely as between sub-areas. It may also be noteworthy that

only just over one half of the Galway respondents thought the Comharchumann could do more, compared with three quarters in the case of the Údarás, suggesting that for a significant number, the Comharchumann had done their best whereas the Údarás had not. This is brought out clearly in the last question asked, in which respondents were invited to state which was doing most for the local area - the Údarás or the local Comharchumann (Table 18):

TABLE 18.
WHO IS DOING MOST FOR THE AREA? (%)

	CF	CR	NH	LIOSPOL	DINGLE	I.D.
Comharchumann	42.4	44.7	68.7	53.6	41.0	72.5
Údarás	31.8	42.6	17.9	14.3	33.3	13.7
Equal	25.9 (N=85)	12.8 (N=47)	13.4 (N=67)	32.1 (N=28)	25.6 (N=39)	13.7 (N=102)
Non-responses as % of total	23.4	20.3	18.3	6.7	25.0	12.8

In no case was the Údarás seen as doing more than Comharchumann, although the differences involved were least in those areas where the Údarás has had greatest presence as a job-provider (CF, CR, Dingle). However, in line with previous findings, the gap between Údarás and Comharchumann is quite massive in the two areas most isolated, perhaps most community-conscious, and certainly least affected by Údarás job provision (NH and ID).

CONCLUSION ✱

This paper has been conceived in the context of the distinction between "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches to regional development which has become increasingly popular in recent years. However, the organisations which have been counterposed in this respect - Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Comharchumann - do not exclusively represent the two

sides of this dichotomy. Thus, the board of the Údarás contains a majority of locally-based representatives, representing a considerable "bottom-up" input, although its development approach continues to depend heavily on the distribution throughout the Gaeltacht of centrally-obtained externally-sourced enterprises, typical of the "top-down" approach. The need to refer virtually all expenditures of any size for ministerial approval further reflects the latter approach. At the same time, many Comharchumann activities are heavily funded by the Údarás so that, even if there are major differences between the two, there are also strong linkages between them.

It is clear from the above findings that both the Údarás and the Comharchumann are seen essentially as alternative means to the same end - namely the provision of employment and income opportunities. Very few people appear to be actively aware of, or concerned about, the potential function of either organisation as an agency for linguistic/cultural development. Nor was there much evidence of any attachment of a deeper ideological/philosophical meaning (in the form of a specific commitment to the concept of community self-help) to the Comharchumann's raison d'être, except perhaps among a select group in the Cois Fharráige area. Most people, in other words, would appear to relate to these organisations (Comharchumann and Údarás) in terms of how they themselves are likely to benefit from the organisations' activities.

There is also here clear evidence of strong local awareness of, and sensitivity to, spatial selectivity on the part of the Údarás in terms of the distribution of its development effort. Thus, those areas which have benefitted least from this effort - at least in terms of the provision of factory employment - are most critical of the Údarás and most appreciative, accordingly, of the efforts of the

local Comharchumann, which are seen especially in these areas as, to a large extent, compensating for Údarás inactivity rather than carving out distinctive development niches of their own.

Nevertheless, it would appear that, across the board, the Comharchumann are seen in a more favourable light than the Údarás, which may reflect, inter alia, the extent to which they have identified and sought to fill particular local needs, and the extent to which they are seen as being part of the communities in which they are based. The indications are that, for a majority of people - especially in Galway, where its headquarters are located - the Údarás is a distant organisation with limited local identification. Perhaps of even greater significance is the finding that where knowledge of the Údarás and participation in elections thereto were greatest (Kerry), its public esteem appeared to be least.

Finally, for the Comharchumann there is the important finding that, despite the general goodwill displayed towards them, they have largely failed to transcend their popular image as yet another agency - albeit locally based - which "delivers" development to a client community. In other words, they have - as yet - failed to overcome the attitude of dependency which generally characterises areas such as those under study.

In conclusion, then, it may be suggested that there is some support here for one of the key criticisms of "top-down" development - namely, a lack of sympathy between the agencies concerned and the people being served by them. By contrast, considerable sympathy is evident between these people and local, community-based organisations working on their behalf, although there remains a long way to go before the concept of "community self-help" extends beyond the efforts of the committed few.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE WEST OF IRELAND :
A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR DISCUSSION

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(1) INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to outline an institutional framework which, it is suggested, can considerably enhance the process of development in the disadvantaged rural areas of Ireland - areas which are mainly concentrated in the West. The proposed framework has crystallised from ideas derived from a wide variety of people via questionnaire surveys (see paper by Duffy and Breathnach), personal interviews, and literature both published and unpublished. However, it is thought that, whereas the essential ideas from which the proposed framework is derived are themselves by no means original, the framework itself may represent a certain degree of progress in thinking in this area - and, hopefully, the basis for some fruitful discussion.

(2) THE LOCAL COMMUNITY'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS:
SOME PROPOSITIONS

The basic tenet upon which the proposed framework is built is that the local community should assume a more central role in rural development planning than has hitherto been the case. This position is based on a number of considerations or propositions:

- (i) That the local community continues to constitute a significant element in the social and economic life of the individual in rural Ireland - especially in its more disadvantaged areas.
- (ii) That - to the extent that the process of development is perceived beyond the level of the individual at all - the local community is the most immediate and tangible level at which such perception takes place. In other

words, apart from the direct impact on himself or herself, the individual is most likely to assess the effects of development in terms of its impact in the immediately surrounding area.

- (iii) That, in a democratic society, the efficacy of development policies and processes ultimately is a function of the judgement not of expert observers or quantitative indices, but of those who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of development.
- (iv) That drawing on proposition (i) and (ii), the local community should be the central unit for articulating popular assessments of the development process.
- (v) That, apart from its role as assessor of development, the local community also has a key role to play in initiating and guiding development. This basic proposition gives rise to the following corollaries.
- (vi) That, while acknowledging that the local community can act as a medium for repression and divisiveness, it can at the same time command a high level of allegiance from among its members, which in turn can produce a level of commitment beyond that which is normal in larger organisations, whether public or private.
- (vii) That, in many, if not most, rural communities can be found individuals with abilities to match their commitment to community welfare, although frequently these individuals find themselves inhibited - if not frustrated - by the institutional jungle which surrounds them.
- (viii) That perceived community needs vary from community to community, and that a formalised system whereby such needs can be articulated is a prerequisite for an effective development process.
- (ix) That many - and probably most, if not all - rural communities possess both material and human resources capable of development, and that the identification

- and perhaps development - of these resources may frequently be best pursued at the community level.

- (x) That development agencies established by the central government tend to be more responsive to the needs of the central bureaucracy and the pressures brought to bear by national lobby groups, than to the communities who are supposed to benefit from their activities.
- (xi) That these agencies tend to apply uniform development strategies, without regard for the specific needs and potentials of individual local communities.
- (xii) Arising from (x) and (xi), that a reformed institutional structure will require such agencies to redirect their accountability downwards, to their "target" communities, rather than upwards to the central government.
- (xiii) Finally, that the role of the central state in the rural development process should be confined largely to acting as a medium for resource transfer to counter existing spatial inequalities, and as a general overseer of the manner of disposal of the resources so transferred.

(3) THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

The principal medium for promoting development at the community level at present is the multifunctional community development co-operative (henceforth CDC). We identify two main deficiencies in this model:

- (i) The CDC is not representative of all of the community in which it operates; and
- (ii) As structured at present, those who contribute financially as shareholders are not necessarily direct beneficiaries of CDC activities.

The following proposals are designed to address these perceived deficiencies.

- (i) That statutory provision be made for the establishment of community councils on the basis of universal suffrage. The establishment of such councils should not be mandatory, but rather should follow from local initiative. Communities therefore would be self-identifying rather than being determined a priori and externally.
- (ii) That a funding system adequate to give community councils real meaning be instituted. This could take the form of:
 - (a) A local levy or tax;
 - (b) An allocation to the Council of a portion of taxes raised within the community by central government; or
 - (c) Direct subvention from the state according to agreed criteria.
- (iii) While adequate funding in itself would give community councils real teeth, the possibility of providing the councils with statutory powers (e.g. physical planning, education) should also be considered.
- (iv) Each community council would have a development "arm" or Community Development Office (CDO) analogous to the existing CDCs (See Diagram I). The CDO would have two main functions:
 - (a) It would be responsible for directly organising projects and activities of community - wide benefit. These, it is anticipated, would be of a mainly "social" nature (e.g. community hall, cultural activities, community newsletter, community radio) and would be financed to some extent from the council's own funds.
 - (b) The CDO would also be responsible for promoting development activities where the benefits would accrue mainly to those directly involved. However, such activities would be financed by the latter. These would be mainly economic activities (e.g., turf supply, handcrafts, Irish Colleges, sheepfarming co-ops), and would normally be organised on a true co-operative basis. Apart from its function as initial stimulant, the CDO would provide ongoing office and administrative services (at a fee) for "affiliated"

co-ops and would act as mediator between the latter and outside government and other agencies.

The formal division between social and economic activities proposed here arises from the fact that many, if not most, existing community development co-ops find their desire to achieve commercial viability compromised by their desire to act as agents of social development also. A clearcut distinction between social and economic activities (subject, of course, to overall co-ordination between the two) provides the basis for a formula whereby desirable social activities could be recipients of ongoing financial assistance or subsidy from the general revenue of the community council, whereas economic activities would be subject to stricter commercial criteria. There will, of course, be some activities where this distinction cannot be easily made.

Social Development

The CDO would be staffed by a community development organiser, a manager, and back-up secretarial staff.

- (v) The successful functioning of the proposed system will require both preparatory and ongoing community education programmes to be provided by the Community Council with the help of a regional/national community education service.

(4) THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AT THE REGIONAL/NATIONAL LEVEL

A national federation of community councils is envisaged, with perhaps an intermediate layer of regional councils. This federation would take the form of an Assembly of delegates from community councils, which in turn would have responsibility for a Rural Development Board, analogous to the Highlands and Islands Development Board (See Diagram 2). Along the lines of the latter, the Rural Development Board (RDB) would comprise a mixture of fulltime and part-time members, the fulltime members having responsibility for different segments of the Board's activities. As these activities would depend to a large extent on government subvention, appointments to the Board would be the responsibility of a selection committee comprising members of the Assembly, government nominees (nominated via a proposed Department of Rural Development) and members of a consultative council (below) in agreed proportions. While general policy formulation would be the function of the Assembly, the board itself would have full executive powers.

A separate Consultative Council of personnel with expertise in various aspects of development is also envisaged, whose function would be advisory, with respect both to the Assembly and the Board itself.

The Rural Development Board would have various functions:

- (i) The provision of specialist support services (e.g. legal, technical, marketing) to individual community councils.
- (ii) Operation of Rural Development Bank (possibly in the form of a federation of local credit unions) for mobilising the personal savings of rural dwellers.
- (iii) Organisation/provision of professional and technical education (possibly through a Rural development College) relevant to the needs of member communities.
- (iv) Operation of a Rural Planning Unit, whose function would be to assess and monitor the individual development plans of CDOs. The prior formulation of such plans would be a prerequisite for the establishment of community councils. The Rural Planning Unit would also concern itself with co-ordinating individual community development plans and in facilitating joint endeavours by neighbouring community councils.
- (v) An adequately-funded Research and Development Unit, whose functions would be:
 - (a) To investigate the development potential of indigenous rural resources; and
 - (b) To advise on the development potential of ideas emanating from the local communities themselves.
- (vi) A Communications Unit, whose functions would include:
 - (a) Provision of technical advice and material for community newsletters and radio stations;
 - (b) Provision of technical/professional material for CDOs and Co-op staffs;
 - (c) Production of a central newspaper/journal;
 - (d) Either running a national radio station of its own, or the production of programmes for RTE radio/television services.

Apart from the above functions, which are mainly geared to servicing member community councils, the RDB would also be concerned with broad Sectoral Development policy formulation and implementation itself, involving the following:

- (i) The RDB would maintain the policy of promoting the establishment of private industrial undertakings within the region under its aegis, although this would clearly involve a process of consultation with local community councils.
- (ii) The RDB would pay particular attention to the formulation of a realistic agricultural development policy suitable to the needs and circumstances of disadvantaged rural areas, the implementation of which would be pursued in consultation with local communities. It is suggested that a community-based approach offers the best potential for mobilising (in a developmental sense) underused agricultural land in disadvantaged areas.
- (iii) The RDB would also formulate and implement policies for other areas of economic development e.g. Fishing, Forestry, and Tourism.
- (iv) The RDB would provide development finance, in the form of grants and loans to the co-operatives affiliated to local Community Development Offices.

In the formulation of development policy, the RDB should emphasise the need for co-ordination and integration not only between and within economic sectors but between the economic and social dimensions of such policy. A formalised system of consultation between the Board and local communities is an essential prerequisite in this respect. The fact that the Board would ultimately be accountable to local communities is regarded as a key element in this context.

(5) AN GHAELTACHT

It is envisaged that Gaeltacht development be an integral component of the overall framework being proposed here. This is based on the following propositions:

- (i) That a community-based approach is of particular relevance to the development of the Irish language in Gaeltacht areas.
- (ii) That, apart from the linguistic and associated cultural dimensions, general socio-economic development of the Gaeltacht requires a similar approach to that pertaining in other disadvantaged rural areas.
- (iii) Following from (ii), that the Gaeltacht therefore has much to gain-provided appropriate allowances and safeguards are instituted- from being an integral component of the powerful institutional framework for rural community development being proposed here.

These allowances and safeguards include the following:

- (i) A separate Comhairle na gComhairlfe Phobail Ghaeltachta (Council of Gaeltacht Community Councils) which would have the status of a sub-committee of the Assembly of the National Federation of Community Councils.
- (ii) A fulltime member of the Rural Development Board, to be appointed by a committee composed of nominees of the Comhairle, the Consultative Council, and the Minister for the Gaeltacht.
- (iii) A specific Gaeltacht Unit within the Board's structure, with separate funding from the department of the Gaeltacht.

The approach to financing Gaeltacht development would include the following:

- (i) The same general schemes for financial assistance as apply in other Board areas.
- (ii) Additional assistance for activities of direct relevance to language development, such as:
 - (a) Compensation for additional costs arising from the conducting of business through the medium of the Irish language e.g. document translation costs and delays arising from these.
 - (b) Bonuses for enterprises which conduct business through Irish.
 - (c) Grants and subsidies for socio-cultural activities designed to promote language development, such as newsletters, newspapers, radio, playschools, drama, etc.

It is our contention that a substantial degree of cynicism and discontent exists both nationally and locally arising from a belief that large amounts of money are being pumped into the Gaeltacht regardless of the potential consequences in terms of language development. It is envisaged, therefore, that the allocation of financial assistance to enterprises, organisations, and individuals would be based on their specific contribution to language development, and not just because they happen to be located in the Gaeltacht.

(6) FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

A number of supplementary observations relating to the proposed development framework are outlined as follows:

- (i) No specific reference has been made to the areas to be covered by the operations of the Rural Development Board, although the use of the term "disadvantaged areas" suggests an area similar to that designated by the EEC in this respect (see accompanying Map I); however, the initial focus might be on the "Severely Handicapped" portion of these areas. The EEC-defined Disadvantaged Areas are thought to be a more realistic representation of areas of need than the "Designated Areas" used by the IDA for grant-giving purposes (Map 2). In particular, this definition allows for the inclusion of local pockets of deprivation (e.g., West Wicklow, Slieve Felim) in the otherwise more developed Eastern part of the Country.
- (ii) The proposed institutional structure has been inspired in part by a desire to attenuate the influence of party politicking which, it is our belief, constitutes a very significant source of divisiveness and friction inhibiting the rural development effort. The apparent absence of this element in the rural development process in the Scottish Highlands and Islands is particularly striking. The proposed national-level structure is designed, therefore, to minimise political patronage in government appointments, while the system of local representation in the proposed assembly is also designed to avoid party political identification. This latter aspiration, however, is dependent on the exclusion of party politics from the elections to, or conducting of business of, the community councils.

It is our view that party politics is an unnecessary intrusion into the development process to the extent that no discernible difference in terms of overall development ideology exists between the two parties which dominate party politics in rural Ireland. Accordingly, party politicking tends to take the forms of patronage, clientilism, and personal projection up the political ladder - all pursuits likely to produce the aforementioned divisiveness, which we believe is detrimental to the achievement of broad developmental aspirations. However, so deep-rooted is party politicking (within as well as between parties, one might add) - at least in some areas - that one is by no means optimistic that any institutional framework can succeed in avoiding its ramifications.

- (iii) The type of approach being recommended here requires broad acceptance of both new definitions of development and new methods of measuring the success or failure of development initiatives. Hitherto, definitions of development have been too narrowly economic in conception, while the measurement of success has been too rigidly related to the commercial performance of business enterprises. Thus, for example, broadly commercial ventures which devote resources to socially - inspired activities may tend to be undervalued relative to more financially profitable ventures, while the estimation of the contribution of ventures which have ceased to function or operate at a loss, may ignore the general developmental impact of these ventures in terms, for example, of the imparting of useful skills to local individuals. Further, we advocate the abandonment of adherence to the prescription: "Economic development first - social development will follow" in favour of a formula whereby both social and economic development are recognised as being essentially intertwined.

- (iv) In the anticipation that the proposed development framework remains a long way off, we believe that steps should be taken now towards the creation of a corps of trained community development personnel capable of functioning as community organisers, co-op managers, etc., as a foundation upon which progress towards the realisation of the framework can be built. This calls for arrangements whereby suitable personnel can be trained via both professional courses (including units on financial and personnel management, administration, economics, sociology, etc.) and placement with existing community development co-ops. It is anticipated that the demand for such personnel will tend to expand in future years, as the community development movement itself gains momentum.

- (v) Finally, to return to the question of politics and political action. The achievement of the proposed institutional framework will clearly involve the transfer of powers currently residing elsewhere, within both the bureaucratic and political systems. There is little past evidence within institutional systems of powers being voluntarily conceded by existing power centres. In other words, the transfer of power requires forms of political action, broadly defined. What I am getting at here is that those

presently involved in, or committed to, the community development movement must seek to advance this movement through concerted action. In the type of democracy as practised in Ireland, political change arises frequently - if not usually - from powerful lobbying by interest groups, and the future progress of the community development movement may require an active acknowledgement at this fact.

(7) CONCLUSION:

The institutional framework for promoting rural development as outlined here must clearly be regarded as an abstract formulation with little chance of ever being operationalised in full detail. However, it seeks to identify various elements which we consider to be of key relevance to the promotion of rural development. In the event that broad agreement can be reached on the validity of some of these elements, then this will at least provide us with some immediate targets towards which future action can be directed.

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DIAGRAM 1

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT : THE LOCAL LEVEL

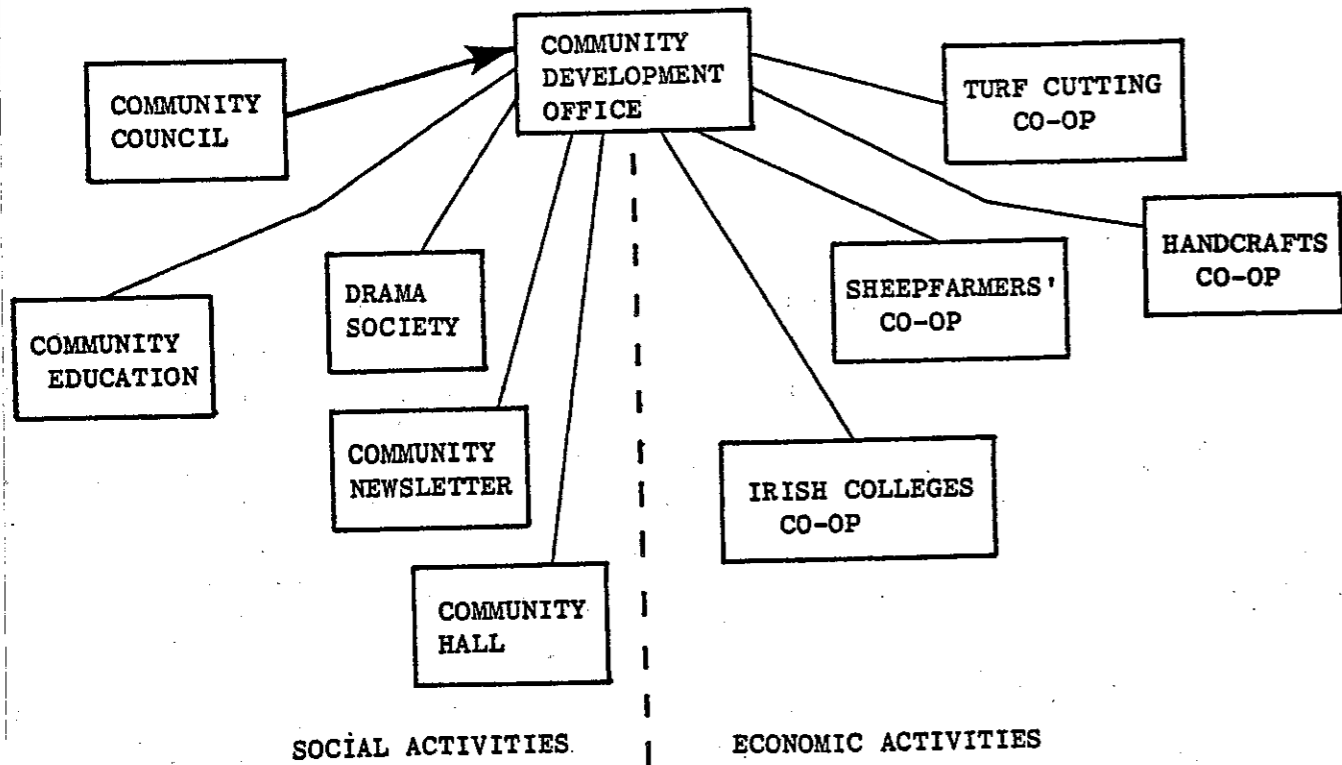
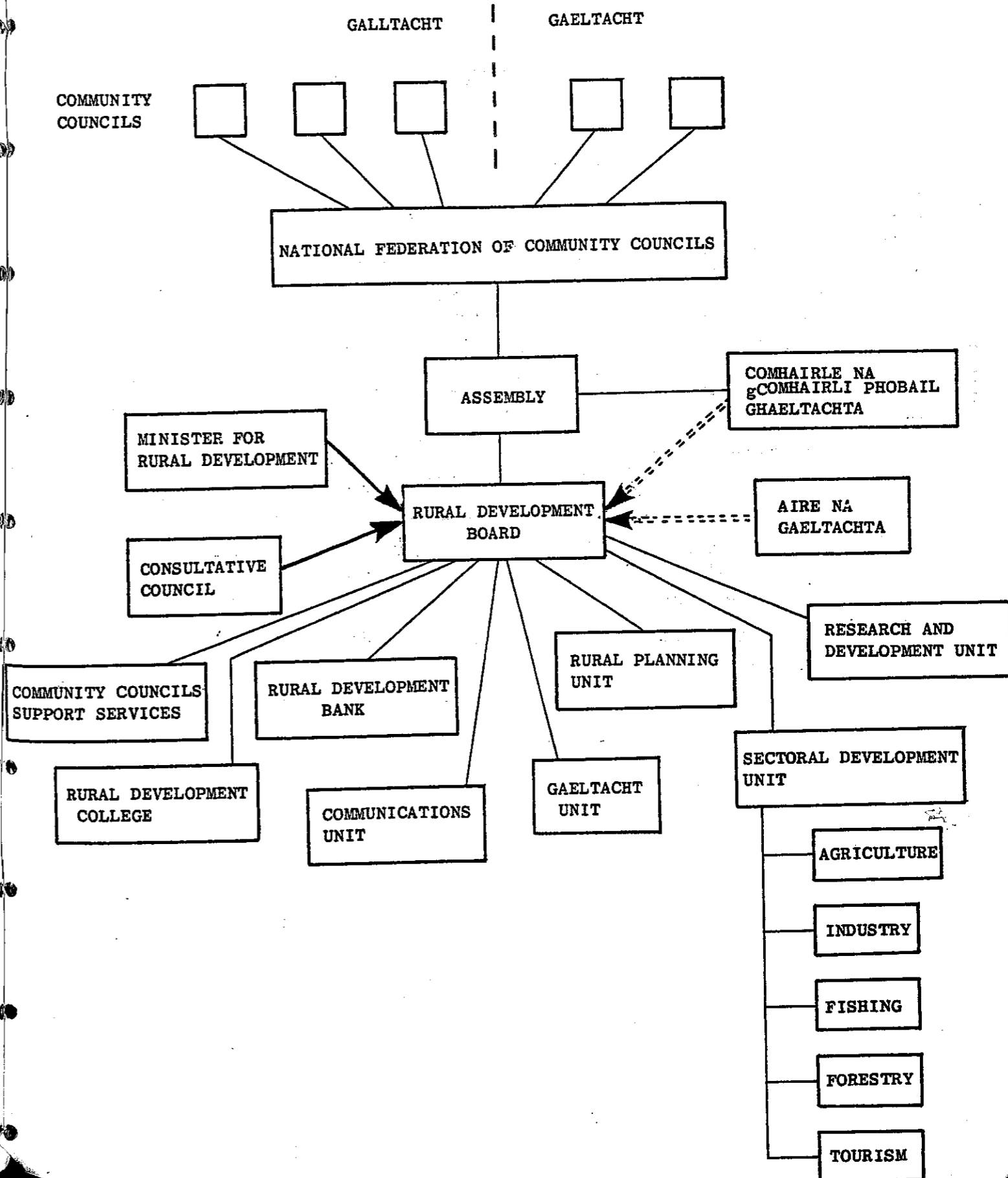
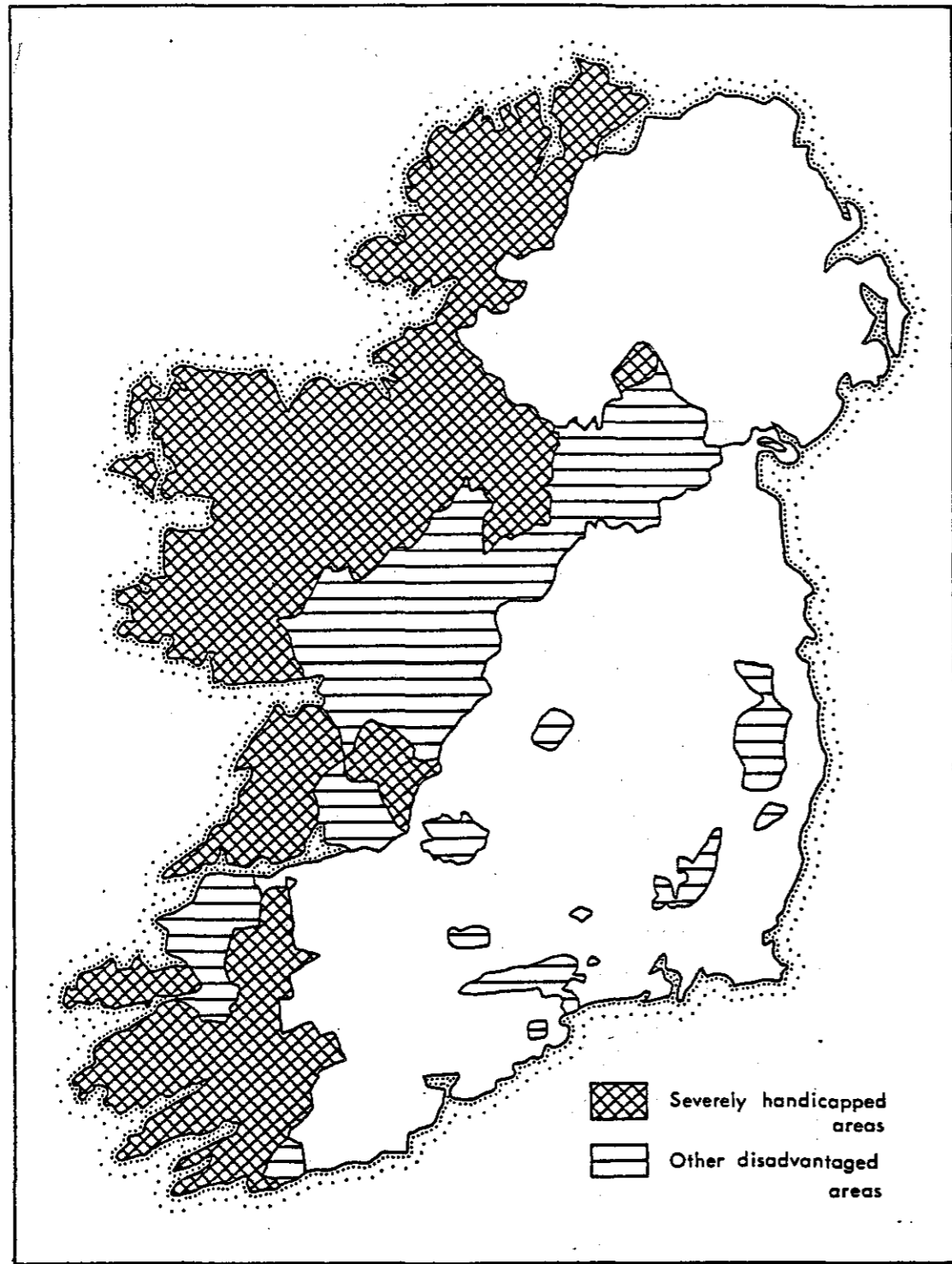


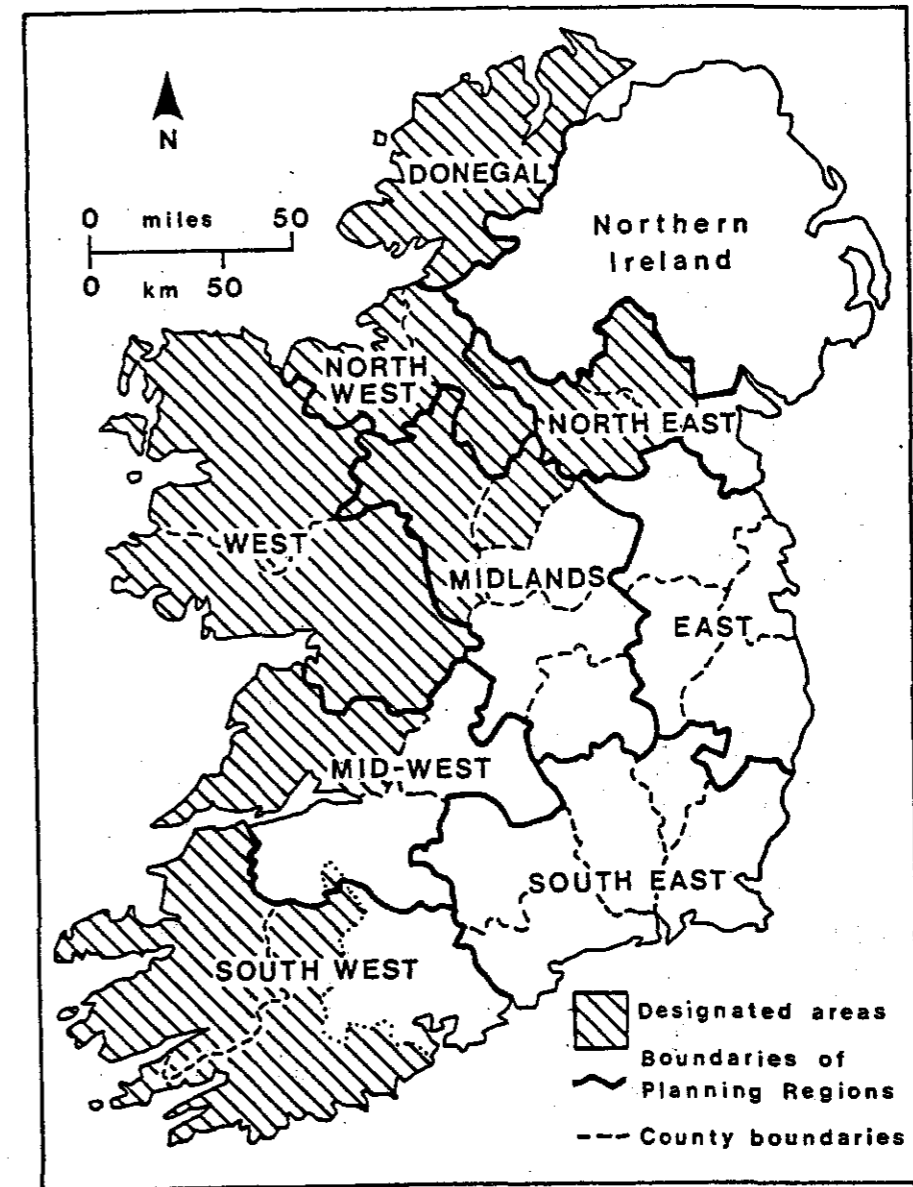
DIAGRAM 2

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT : THE NATIONAL LEVEL





MAP I. : Disadvantaged Areas



MAP 2 : Designated Areas

DISCUSSION

Compiled by Kay MacKeogh and
Jim Walsh

Items raised in the concluding discussion could generally be divided into community-related matters and issues relating to the role of local authorities and state agencies in rural development.

COMMUNITY-RELATED ISSUES:

The problem of identifying communities, and particularly of using a strict rural/urban divide in relation to the operations of the Rural Development Board proposed in Proinnsias Breathnach's paper, was raised. Proinnsias Breathnach did not envisage such a divide applying to the proposed Board's range of responsibilities - all areas within the region(s) under the Board's aegis would be incorporated in a comprehensive, integrated planning framework. Also, it was argued that communities should be self-defining, rather than being defined externally by standard criteria.

It was noted that there were many instances of non-Gaeltacht communities beginning to become organised for development purposes, e.g. Killala and Connemara West, although doubts were expressed concerning their chances of obtaining statutory recognition. Questions were also raised about the ability of local communities to handle sensitive and potentially-divisive local issues relevant

to development, such as agricultural restructuring and land transfer : in such cases it might be more effective to place responsibility at a scale removed from the local level. However, it was suggested that the more immediate issue was to generate some degree of local participation in the planning process : once this principle was established, then the question of degree of participation could be addressed. As against this, it was argued that the issue of participation/representation had attained the status of a 'sacred cow' : in some areas the prospects of achieving community-level participation were so remote that an interventionist 'social action' model of development focussed on specific disadvantaged groups within the community was required.

The role of education and access to information at the community level was the focus of some attention. It was postulated that, in a global context, the debate concerning community development was increasingly concentrating on the potential contribution of education, especially education for self-reliance : the ideas of Freire were specifically mentioned in this respect. The tremendous potential of local community radio as a means of information dissemination and the generation of community-level discussions and debate of key issues was also highlighted.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND STATE AGENCIES IN DEVELOPMENT

Discussion of the role of local authorities and state agencies in local development centred around the relevance of local authorities, the need for reform, the transfers of powers required, and the role of Údarás na Gaeltachta and other state agencies in both Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas.

It was argued that local authorities are no longer relevant, particularly in disadvantaged areas, because of declining powers and resources. However, it was also pointed out that while it might be considered that local authorities may be irrelevant, they do in fact control large amounts of money, which in turn has implications for job creation and infrastructural development.

It was generally agreed that the local government system is not going to disappear and that any plan for development must take account of existing structures. However, a radical reform of local authorities will be needed if the proposals put forward by Proinnsias Breathnach in his paper to the Seminar are to be implemented. It was noted that the re-organisation of local government structures in Scotland in 1975 paved the way for the success of the Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB) in developing a community-based approach to development, because of co-operation between the HIDB and the newly constituted Regional Councils.

Any reforms needed would entail a transfer of power to a more local level. It was pointed out that an Act of 1941 created permissive legislation to allow County Councils to give recognition to community councils, but this has never been acted upon. As it is, community councils have no statutory influence on policy making. It was stated that, in many cases, local groups were in a better position to decide on local spending. It was suggested that some 'respectful listening' to local needs and demands would be in order.

Party politics was regarded as a stumbling block to reform, particularly in the handing over of power. It was suggested that a more politically-educated citizenry

might be required to get over this. The power of county managers was also referred to. It was considered that some managers are more resistant to reform than county councils in some areas.

The necessity for financial reform, particularly in the form of local levies, was discussed. Opinion on the desirability of local levies was divided. Reference was made to French ideas of 'social economy' in relation to decentralising the funding of services to a local and/or voluntary basis. This was queried on the basis that local communities could be punished for being disadvantaged, if levies were proportionate to resources available locally. However it was generally agreed that, given current economic trends and decreasing levels of finance available from central funds, some reform of financing of local government is inevitable.

The role of other state agencies in development was discussed at length. Views were expressed that most state development agencies were not functioning due to inappropriate policies, inadequate staffing, and lack of resources, e.g. the potential for rural and urban development in the Mid West region was being lost because of political considerations, and an inadequate brief, which forces the regional development agency, SFADCO, to concentrate on the development of small industries. It was also suggested that there were too many agencies drawing on central funds, and that a 'retreat of the state' might be desirable.

Údarás na Gaeltachta was seen to have improved in recent months in its relationships with local communities. It has held a number of local meetings to explain policies. However, it should be aware of the need for local participation in the planning process, e.g. the HIDB provided a number of

staff and resources for the stimulation of local participation in the development process, although it does not have the resources necessary to service all the areas requiring such investment.

Development requirements in Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas were compared. It was stated that a combined Gaeltacht/Galltacht approach to development would be resisted by the Gaeltacht community. It was also suggested that all powers relating to Gaeltacht areas should be devolved to one Gaeltacht Authority. Reference was made to the problems experienced by those living in non-Gaeltacht disadvantaged areas, in the absence of a parallel agency devoted to their development.

In conclusion, it was agreed that development cannot be achieved without the full involvement of local communities in the planning process. This cannot be achieved without major reforms of local authorities and state agencies, involving transfers of power, changes in financing, and reorientation of development policies.

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