Rural Development and the Natural Environment

Dr Mark Scott

Department of Planning and Environmental Policy
University College Dublin

Mark.Scott@ucd.ie
Introduction

- Growing emphasis in the EU is being given to the objectives of rural sustainable development

- Reconciling 3 deeply held set of values: economic growth; social vitality; ecological integrity

- Shift in rural policy from sectoral support policies (agriculture) to integrated, territorial and spatial development

- However, rural sustainable development remains a deeply contested and fragmented area of policy formulation
Introduction

- Presentation will examine changes in Rural Development policy and impact on spatial and regional development;

- Three key ESPON Reports:
  - The Territorial Impact of CAP and Rural Development Policy
  - Urban-Rural Relations in Europe
  - Management of the Natural Heritage

- Irish perspective
Presentation outline

- Key trends in Rural Europe
- Key policy trends
- ESPON themes
  - CAP and Rural Development Policy
  - Urban-Rural Relations in Europe
  - Management of the Natural Heritage
- Rural Development and Spatial Planning
  - National – Ireland
  - Local
- Conclusions
Key trends in Rural Europe

Throughout history the imperative of rural areas has been to produce more food in order to satisfy a growing no. of mouths, or – in phases of demographic stability – to feed the population more effectively.

Traditionally, 2 means to reach this objective:

1. By **increasing the cultivated surface** at the expense of other landscapes – e.g. woodlands, marshes, moors, rough grazing and other marginal environments.

2. To **intensify food output** from the existing cultivated surface. This was accomplished by devising complex rotations, increasing livestock densities, and more recently, introducing new strains of crop, using chemical fertilizers and machines and rationalising farms.
Key trends in Rural Europe

- Fundamental changes have taken place in Europe’s rural economy and society (Marsden, 1999):
  - The decline in agricultural employment
  - The emergence of environmentalism as a powerful ethic and political force
  - Emergence of new uses for rural space
  - Increased personal mobility – commuting, migration, tourism
  - The emergence of new winners and losers from change processes – social exclusion

- Shift from productivist to post-productivist era

- The consumption countryside
New Uses for Rural Space
New Uses for Rural Space
New Uses for Rural Space
The Changing Visual Appearance of the Countryside
Key policy trends

- Shift in rural policy from sectoral support policies (agriculture) to integrated, territorial and spatial development

- 1990s: Local rural development
  - Area-based, community-driven, integrative
  - Partnership governance

- 2000s: the rural in a regional context
  - Urban-rural relations
  - Rural development as a multi-level process

- Reappraisal of the rural resource base
Impact of Common Agricultural Policy and Rural Development:

- CAP has traditionally been the dominant EU policy, with the largest budget
  - But ... not a spatial policy, but a sectoral support policy
- Components of a reformed CAP
  - Pillar 1: includes commodity market support regimes, direct payments)
  - Pillar 2: includes agri-environmental schemes, aids for farming in LFAs, Article 33 and LEADER-type measures)
- Key conclusion of ESPON Report (2.1.3):
  - Pillar 1 does not support territorial cohesion
  - Pillar 2: more consistent with cohesion, but runs counter to EU-wide cohesion in the way it is currently structured
Pillar 1 Measures:
Pillar 2 Measures:
Impact of Common Agricultural Policy and Rural Development:

- Good practice for Rural Development
  - Potential to contribute to balanced regional development

- ESPON Recommendations:
  - There is a need for greater complimentarity between agricultural policy measures and policies for broader regional development
  - Pillar 2 budget should be increased progressively
  - Shifting resources to rural development
  - Include measures which address sustainable rural development beyond agricultural sector, which have a territorial dimension
Urban-Rural Relations:

- ESDP calls for a strengthening of urban-rural partnerships:
  - ‘To overcome the outdate dualism between city and countryside’
  - Integrated approach to regional problems

- Two-way interdependent relationship characterised by a complex ‘space of flows’

- ESPON Project (1.1.2) on urban-rural relations:
  - Attempts to measure urban-rural relations on European scale
  - Identifies 6 rural areas types based on degree of urban influence and degree of human intervention
Percentage of population increase 1996-2002, Ireland.
Urban-Rural Relations:

- Report’s key themes:
  - Strengthening the regional level of spatial planning
  - Develop strategies to limit the out-migration of urban populations towards rural areas
  - Potential of small and medium sized centres
  - Redefining the role of agriculture and rural areas (e.g. local food systems)
  - Explore possibility of ‘user-driven’ non-speculative modes of development (e.g. to prevent urban sprawl)
Management of the Natural Heritage:

- Sustainable development, prudent management and protection of natural and cultural heritage is a core theme of ESDP

  *ESPON Report (Project 1.3.2) highlights:*
  - Negative impacts of intensive agriculture; urbanisation and urban sprawl; and increased tourism;
  - The importance of landscape and environmental attributes to regional identity, quality of life and economic competitiveness

*Report recommends:*
- Enhanced inter-state and inter-regional cooperation
- Balanced development in corridors
- Concentrated development in nodes
- Attention should be given to addressing the ecological/hydrological network as well as urban network in spatial planning
- Regional development vision
Rural development and spatial planning

- Potentially, an increased role for spatial planning in managing/regulating rural space?
  - ‘Place-making’
  - Mediate between conflicting conservation and development goals
  - Integrating rural and urban dimensions
  - Non-agricultural interests shaping rural space

- Poor integration of CAP and spatial/regional objectives

- Criticism of ESDP’s ‘urban bias’
  - Richardson, 2000
  - Hadjimichalis, 2003
Rural development and spatial planning – An Irish Perspective

- Ireland’s National Spatial Strategy: the influence from Europe
- Rethinking rural Ireland
  - A rural typology
- Urban-Rural partnership or urban bias?
- Managing rural settlement growth
The National Spatial Strategy
2002 - 2020

Places to Live: Good planning will be essential to manage Ireland’s growing population and simultaneously support a balanced economy and a high quality of life. Places to work: Jobs and people can be brought closer not only within a stronger structure of cities, towns and rural areas, but increasingly important, not only to people but the competitiveness of places and good planning is a key instrument to deliver this. Good planning, bringing people and jobs and other activities closer together, within a structure of strengthened cities, enabling rural areas to play to their strengths, efficient transport – public and private.

Getting Things Done: The importance of having good and integrated plans at national, regional and local levels and communication between public, local authorities, departments and agencies and the private sector.
Rural development and spatial planning – local case study research

- **Planning policy:**
  - Central theme: landscape quality
  - ‘Constant threat from inappropriate pressures’
  - Linked to the tourism economy
  - Shallow assessment of rurality (contrast with National Spatial Strategy)

- **Local development perspective on landscape:**
  - Landscape protection aimed at tourists, not locals
  - ‘Living and working countryside’
  - Conflict over new demands for rural space (residential versus recreation uses)

- **Local development - Central narrative of the rural**
  - Depopulation and out-migration
Rural development and spatial planning – local case study research

The Development/Spatial Plan as a tool for rural sustainable development

- Majority of local rural development programmes had a clear spatial emphasis, however...
- The local authority development plan viewed as irrelevant
- Development plan perceived as a negative and technical document and as a regulatory instrument
- Conflict and disconnect between environmental goals and social and economic development e.g. rural housing
- Marginalisation of spatial planning:
  - Limited spatial vision for rural areas
  - Preoccupation with incremental development
  - ‘Muddling through’
Spatial Policy development

- Recognise that non-agricultural interests have moved central in shaping rural space

- Developing holistic approaches to rural sustainable development
  - A need to consider the economic and social health of rural settlements as aspects of sustainability alongside environmental dimensions
  - Social vitality/sustainable livelihoods/employment-led regeneration
  - Addressing the disconnect between agricultural and regional policy measures and between environmental goals and economic and social issues in local policy making

- Addressing multi-level governance and institutional arrangements
Final thoughts:

- ESDP has provided a pivotal document in shaping spatial policy action, but often criticised from a rural perspective.

- However, ESPON Reports have provided a crucial ‘link’ between policy concepts and application.

- ESPON reports and other research findings suggest a clear rationale to integrate agricultural and rural policy, environmental policy, and regional development policy, requiring imaginative spatial frameworks.

- Further research is required to identify and transfer best practice.