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## **Knowledge Dynamics and the Non-Agricultural Economy in European Rural Development**

### **Abstract**

This paper discusses some basic characteristics of various development projects implemented in the rural areas of contemporary Europe. The peculiar bias of the projects has been located in the rural economy. In the conceptual part the authors have developed the typology of rural areas based on various types of non-agricultural economy as well as some considerations of the usefulness of various types of knowledge carried by different actors involved in the projects. In the second part using selective data from the CORASON project the authors consider issues focused on some characteristics of discourses and practices as well as the interaction between different types of knowledge and their contribution to rural sustainable development.

**Keywords:** rural sustainable development; non-agricultural economy; types of knowledge; extended case method

### **Actors and their knowledge: the basic mechanism of rural sustainable development**

The problem of rural development seems to lie in the significant switch from agricultural modernization to a more diversified rural change, called sustainable. Such an approach has been considered by various authors (Marsden, 2003). As other authors stress: "All the rural development practices that we have analysed represent *a rupture* with the well-established schemes, patterns and relations established in the years between the 1960s and 1990s – the modernization

period in European agriculture" (van der Ploeg and Renting, 2000: 527). Such a perspective immediately draws our attention to a particular mechanism of development described as "neo-endogenous" (Ray, 2006). It has been characterized especially by the interaction of local and extra-local actors involving both local initiatives as well as "[...] regional, national, European and even global scales [...]" (Ray, 2001, p. 279). In such a perspective the development process has to be treated as multi-level, multi-actor and multifaceted (Van der Ploeg, et al. 2000: 392). However, we are not necessarily convinced that farmers have to play a strategic role in such a process. We would argue that the organization of the non-agricultural rural economy and society has been based not on commodity chains but rather on the circuit of activities performed by various types of actors (Ray, 1998). We agree with those who say that: "Unlike chains, circuits have no beginning and end but are constructed and reconstructed through complex interactions between consumer knowledge, producers, retailers, and so on" (Keafsey, Ibery, Jenkins 2001, p. 298).

Therefore, one may argue that the network of particular types of actors seems to be a key element of developmental processes. Such an assumption brings about the need to consider various perspectives possessed by these actors. In other words, one may stress the importance of various types of knowledge shaping the way of contribution of particular actors to the whole process. In recent literature especially the role of the so-called local/lay/tacit knowledge as such a contribution has been highly evaluated. As the editors of one of the most important books in the field claim: "We assume that local knowledge should be the basis for building local capacity and competence, and that it should be applied as a counter-model to global science." (Bicker, Sillitoe, Pottier, 2004: XI) One may even argue that this type of knowledge could be treated as an important key to success of any development project. However, the essential issue seems to lie elsewhere. As has been argued by Bruckmeier (2004), the problem should be identified as a "co-existence" and "co-operation" between various types of knowledge. Therefore, we have to stress that the problem lies not in the peculiar type of knowledge but in knowledge dynamics.

Such knowledge dynamics also seems to contribute to the evaluation of local rural economies in particular contexts. As has been stressed: "Reflexive coping strategies are to a large extent about creating local identities and images, or reinventing old ones, which can be marketed to outsiders: in other words, "culturalisation" of local economies. Such identity formation occurs not in a vacuum, but in a space which is saturated by interpersonal relations and socially formed institutions" (Johannesson, Skaptadottir, Benediktsson, 2003,

p. 9). One may argue that such a complex set of various types of knowledge brought together by various actors leads to the perception of the economic activity as well as environmental recognition. Those two have been conceptualized as two major "pillars" of sustainable development (Bruckmeier, 2005). Moreover, it also leads to the development of "social density" among the mentioned actors as some authors tend to stress: "Networking between actors in social fields involves sharing knowledge, building trust and developing shared rules and inter-subjective meaning" (Floysand, Sjøholt, 2007, p. 206). Therefore, the third "pillar" of rural sustainable development beside economic and environmental ones, namely: civil society (social organisation) completes the picture (Bruckmeier, 2005).

#### **Sustainable rural development and the challenge of the non-agricultural rural economy**

De-agriculturalisation of rural communities seems to be the most important process observed in rural Europe nowadays. It has been the direct result of growing productivity in agriculture resulting, first of all, from its modernisation and the introduction of the industrial agricultural model based on the economy of scale. The results of such a process lead to the formulation of different strategies for rural communities. In such a context one can observe the rural out-migration and de-population of some rural areas. At the same time the increasing tendency towards multi-faceted activity among rural households still involved in agriculture has become quite visible. Moreover, the growth of non-agricultural economic activity among the rural population can also be perceived. Rural communities also consist, to a growing extent, of former city dwellers who have come in search of better living conditions. These divergent paths of development have resulted from both the changing economy and its demands and consciously designed policies formulated by the state and/or other agencies. Ongoing discussions concerning the reform of the CAP and the importance of the so-called "second pillar" of this policy may be treated as a direct intellectual as well as political reaction to the processes mentioned above. Marsden (2004, p. 141) frames the whole process into the context of changing demands reflecting the rising awareness of the disadvantages of industrial and intensive economic development logic, as well as the introduction of new types of knowledge and technologies in rural areas.

Some changes in the rural economy mentioned here do not lead, however, to the replacement of agriculture by any single particular type of economic activity performed either by rural inhabitants or by incoming city dwellers in rural areas. On the contrary, they may represent the whole set of practises and products. According to Marini and Mooney: "Rural economies are quite varied insofar as they are grounded in such different bases in agriculture, fishing, forestry, mining, tourism, etc. Even within agriculturally dependent regions, for example, the broadest contours of a rural economy will vary with the specific commodity mix of that rural place" (2006, p. 93). Such a diversification of rural economies may be additionally shaped by several types of factors. For example, Fonte (2001), Kasimis and Papadopoulos (2001) and Gorchach et al. (2006b) identify peculiarities of rural tradition as well as different concepts of rurality in various parts of the world that may also be conceptualised in the frames of "cultural economy" (Ray, 1998). In turn, McGranham (2003) as well as Krannich and Petrzalka (2003) emphasise some other issues, like: the cost of land, the cost of labour and natural amenities. As the latter authors claim: "Increasingly, the potential for amenity-based development has been held out as a key economic development strategy for rural communities, particularly those wishing to counter the erosion of traditional rural economies" (2003, p. 191). Natural amenities can have an impact only if other factors are at work, for example, a tradition of tourist services in the particular area, the significant and well advertised type of local natural amenities, etc. Such changes in rural economy are also under the impact of various external forces, especially globalisation. As for example Falk and Lobao stress: "[...] globalisation and trade policy are affecting rural areas to a greater extent than in the past [...]" (2003: 161).

Trying to grasp the issue of diversity among rural economies Marini and Mooney (2006) have developed an interesting and useful typology of rural areas. Moreover, in our view, they made a rather successful attempt to connect their typology, based on the types of economic activities, with another one earlier developed by Marsden (2003), based on the structure of dominating group interests. Marini and Mooney's typology, based on the type of economy, contains only three categories (2006, p. 96–99). The first type is called the *rent-seeking* economy and is associated with rural areas based on agriculture and other extractive industries. The main characteristic contains the deep embeddedness of natural resources in a specific locality forming the "rent-seeking" strategy because of their non-replicable character. However, such a strategy nowadays forms an obstacle to development and results in the declining level of income as well as the marginalisation of the area since the

“natural resource comparative advantage” does not form a sustainable type of development because of its concentration on extractive activities. The second type is called the *dependent* economy and is associated with the localities having an income primarily flowing from external sources. It does not form a solid and sustainable base for future economic development simply because of its dependence on external sources and forces. In turn, the third type is portrayed as an *entrepreneurial* economy drawing its income “[...] mainly from the valorisation of local resources” (Marini and Mooney, 2006, p. 98). Its activity has not been based on the attraction of external capital and external sources but rather on filling the demand “[...] for high quality goods promoted by the globalisation process through their local, but socially widespread, tacit knowledge” (Marini and Mooney, 2006: 98). The relatively more expensive labour has been another characteristic of this type. Therefore, the areas associated with it have not been particularly attractive for external industries seeking rather cheap labour localities. And last, but not least, such areas have also been characterised by an important cultural factor, namely the entrepreneurial capability located in mainly small and medium businesses which are not vertically integrated. One may argue that the whole set of factors characterising the third type of economy seems to be in line with the idea of sustainable development, mainly because of its diversified character.

However, what seems to be the most interesting issue can be found in the impact of different types of knowledge on each type of rural economy as well as its contribution to sustainable rural development. We may hypothesise that the process of change towards a rent-seeking economy, either dependent or entrepreneurial may be based on the different combination of various types of knowledge and their dynamics. In the first case, two basic types of knowledge, i.e. lay and expert (Bruckmeier, 2004), seem to be separate and not interactive. One may assume that this is the lay/local knowledge that dominates the discourse and forms the frame stressing the significance of local natural resources seeking to make extraction profitable for external markets. Expert and managerial types of knowledge seem to be a part of external forces influencing the situation of the area while developing the demands for extracted goods. In the second case, however, the situation seems different. The strong domination of external capital supporting and developing, for example, manufacturing industries (including industrialised agriculture) results in the domination of managerial as well as expert knowledge and the marginalisation or even elimination of the tacit/lay/local one. It is, in fact, the third case where one might observe an intensive interaction as well as the coexistence of various

types of knowledge. The valorisation of endogenous, local resources, both natural and cultural, definitely requires an extensive use of lay/local knowledge. However, we would argue that, at the same time, such a valorisation requires managerial and expert types of knowledge in the form of entrepreneurial culture, marketing techniques, promotion of the area, etc.

We would therefore, argue that the latter path of economic development of rural areas has an important contribution to sustainable development. What could form indicators of such a type of development? Following Marsden's (2003, p. 4) categorisation we may point out revised combinations of nature/value/region and quality, associational designs and networks, the agro-ecological approach and development, re-embedded food supply chains, etc. Such characteristics may be found in the third case, namely: the entrepreneurial rural economy. The valorisation of local natural and cultural resources, the combination of endogenous and exogenous factors and sources shaping development strategies, and a less intensive and not extractive approach towards nature seem to be among the most important characteristics. Moreover, in this particular context agriculture may be treated as a kind of service, an integral part of the whole regional economy emphasising not only its productive/economic aspect but also the socio-cultural one.

### **Discussion of case studies**

Further to the above-mentioned considerations we may formulate some general hypotheses that may be verified below in the context of particular case studies<sup>1</sup>. Such statements address three basic issues of particular interest to us. Firstly, the role of relations between various actors involved in development processes. Secondly, the role of various types of knowledge carried by the actors. Thirdly, the role of both factors, namely: actor networks and knowledge dynamics contributing to sustainable development. We would prefer to treat such statements as points of departure in order to look at the concrete processes described in various cases. We use the following analysis as an exploration of the aforementioned statements based on the rules of the so-called extensive case method (Foster, Gomm, Hammersley, 2003). We follow the connection

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<sup>1</sup> Some data presented in this paper have been gathered as part of the CORASON project (6 Frame Programme) under the Workpackage 7 focused on the non-agricultural economy by research teams from UK, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Germany and Sweden.

between theory and data in this particular method as conceptualised by Burawoy: "Instead of inferring generality directly from data, we can move from one generality to another, to more inclusive generality. We begin with our favourite theory but seek not confirmations but refutations that inspire us to deepen that theory. We do not worry about the uniqueness of our case since we are not as interested in its 'representativeness' as its contribution to 'reconstructing' theory" (2004, p. 16).

### *Development and social actors*

Various cases show the complex networks of various actors involved in the projects, both from the public and private sector as well as from government agencies, business and other organisations, including NGOs. As has been summarised in the Irish report: "This illustrates EcoBooleys place in a wider network for the development of sustainable livelihoods, while Weyerhaeuser's dealings with external organisation, such as the other facilities, are primarily economic" (Mooney, Tovey, Stapleton, 2006, p. 47). The division between public and private sector actors should be especially stressed in this context. While the public sector actors, especially when democratically elected, may be focused on the general well-being of local people, private ones have tended to realise mainly private interests and tried to get much profit (Veiga, Rodrigo, 2006, p. 29). Different aims may be followed by different logic of activity that may sometimes turn into conflict and emerge as a disadvantage in the process of development.

Moreover, the actors act in particular social contexts. And these social contexts, as actors themselves, may be different (Ferrer, Buciega, Esparcia, 2006, p. 25). Especially strong involvement from a local community may sometimes be decisive as a pro-sustainability factor in the processes of economic development. But not only communities matter. We may say the same about the involvement of particular individuals. UK cases show the importance of particular individuals using their primary relation to particular communities and places and introducing new types of business there (Dargan, 2005). Such a role for highly motivated, even passionate individual actors and personalities sometimes seems absolutely essential (Kucerova and Sevcikova, 2006, p. 18). As Sacco and Fonte stress considering their Italian case: "The efforts and passions of single individuals have been decisive in starting up the analysed initiatives. Local institutions come into the process only later" (2005, p. 24).

However, the role of such highly motivated individuals may turn the opposite way. Private interests and the high motivation to make a quick profit may be a barrier to the idea of sustainable development. "These entrepreneurs show an opportunistic behaviour, thus they are not interested in the long-term perspective of the area [...]" (Koutsouris, Kasimis, 2006, p. 14). However, passionate individuals may emerge in a different role. They are not the driving force or, on the contrary, an obstacle in the process of sustainable development. They may be a kind of link between the world of local community and that of authorities and institutions. As has been considered in the Polish report: "[...] the lack of social leaders/activists who could be the agents between authorities and inhabitants has been an additional negative factor" (Gorlach, Adamski, Pilichowski, Starosta, Dzwonkowska, 2006a, p. 15).

Bearing in mind the significant phrase from the Italian report that "institutions come later" we have to focus on some of the characteristics of such institutions. Support from some local institutions exclusively does not seem to be enough due to their limited financial resources. Various reports bring us the picture that it should be supported from higher level institutions (province, region). According to an Italian team: "It is the synergy between the territorial and extra-territorial forces that may give the impetus to processes of local development" (Sacco, Fonte, 2006, p. 25). Sometimes this "extra-territorial" involvement may be the decisive factor, especially if it goes together with the burden of assets. As has also been noticed: "The empirical research from CORASON confirmed statements [...] that sustainable and integrated rural development in the area has been pushed by external initiatives, combined with financial incentives" (Siebert, Dosch, Laschewsky, 2006, p. 26). But again, the role of this "external initiative" has been reduced here to "the push" factor. Many cases confirm that the role of local, rural actors should be decisive. In conclusion of the evaluation of successful projects described in the Swedish report where a large number of actors has been involved the author clearly puts that: "[...] projects are dominated by rural [that means "local" – K. G. et al] actors and their interests" (Hoj Larsen, 2006, p. 20).

The response from the local population seems to be absolutely essential in the process of economic development.. Acceptance has to be one of the key factors resulting in the success of various projects. Consequently, resistance and rejection cause an entirely different situation, namely: the failure of particular projects, strategies or initiatives. In the analysed reports, there are interesting considerations focusing on particular aspects of this problem. Firstly, some negative reaction from the local people may be caused by support for private



businesses from public institutions. Using public money to support private enterprises that should become the driving force of local rural economies may be negatively evaluated by local inhabitants. Such a situation has been described in the UK report: “[...] some resistance to the idea of using public funding to support private businesses” (Dargan, 2006, p. 13). Another aspect may be connected not with the game, shall we say, between public and private actors as well as public funds and private profits but with the content of the development proposal addressed to the local people. Their response may be, at least partly, based on the evaluation of whether or not all basic needs of the local population could be fulfilled. This particular issue has been raised by the Portuguese team observing that: “The response of local people to the two projects is regarded as good, but projects do not meet all their needs and expectations” (Veiga, Rodrigo, 2006, p. 29). We may then draw a conclusion concerning this particular issue using the quote from the Greek report: “The ‘failure’ of the projects is that, so far, they are not widely adopted or adapted by the local people [...]” (Koutsouris, Kasimis, 2006, p. 17).

### *Development and knowledge*

In all the analysed cases local knowledge seems to be an important factor but only in the context of other types of knowledge that, in particular contexts, may be even absolutely essential to convert the local one into a valuable asset. Managerial knowledge seems to play such a role, for example, in the case described by the UK team. As has been stressed, “This [managerial] knowledge was then combined with the knowledge that comes from simply living in Skye and observing its wildlife and places to walk, to expand the business from offering activities such as kayaking, to hill walking and wildlife tours” (Dargan, 2006, p. 13). Moreover, such local knowledge was even less important than the other factor. Again we quote the UK report: “Neither of local knowledge [...] but the strong embeddedness in local society is extremely important in both cases” (Dargan, 2006, p. 14). However, local knowledge is not only traditional but also practical, created nowadays in the situation when formal, expert, scientific knowledge does not fit to the particular context. In the UK cases such knowledge has been created as a part of business operations in the remote rural area. As has been shown: “Where gaining formal qualification is not necessary or applicable to a particular situation, knowledge is gained through trial and error” (Dargan, 2006, p. 12).

The peculiar and interesting type of relation between local and scientific knowledge has also been observed in the Irish case. Let us extensively quote from this report: Combination of various types of knowledge in which both historical and lay knowledge has been used “[...] in conjunction with the new environmental knowledge, as a selling tool [...] The concept of tourism changed from being regarded as an economic positive and an environmental negative to becoming sustainable for both economy and environment [...] The concept of Irish tourism, of the ‘clean green Isle’, has been redefined with the introduction of environmental knowledge. The Irish cottage is still steeped in history, but now it is a functional part of the local infrastructure [...] The cumulative effect of these changes is to minimise effects to the land and culture of the region while simultaneously introducing external knowledge in the form of environmentally sustainable techniques [...] This reflects the reflexive adaptation of tacit and external knowledge” (Mooney, Tovey, Stapleton, 2006, p. 47–49). Let us stress two important issues raised in the statements presented above. First, scientific (new environmental knowledge in this case) may be identified as a tool revalorising traditional, local knowledge. Thanks to that, traditional knowledge has become a part of current reality. Therefore, in fact, we have to talk about a kind of hybrid structure in which important elements of traditional and scientific knowledge co-exist and interact with each other. A similar situation has been considered in the Swedish report where local knowledge, together with a variant of expert knowledge, has been the dominant form. It has been simply said that: “Dominant knowledge forms in both projects are variant kinds of expert and local knowledge [...]” (Hoj Larsen, 2006, p. 20). Such a statement has been immediately supported by the next phrase: “Combined with that and building further on the strengthening of tacit knowledge, projects such as these analysed can be seen as part of process of re-building that has been described in ecological research as: ‘enhancing social-ecological memory’ [...]” (Hoj Larsen, 2006, p. 21).

Such a hybrid structure is also observed in Portugal. “In terms of knowledge [...] expert and managerial knowledge is combined with local knowledge” (Veiga, Rodrigo, 2006, p. 30). But sometimes even such a structure does not seem to be enough. “The most desperate need, however, is for links with scientific knowledge” (Veiga, Rodrigo, 2006, p. 30). Therefore, such a structure does not seem to be the result of any kind of mechanical unification, since the differences between various types of knowledge may materialise in differences in discourses and practises performed by various actors. Therefore, the creation of a common perspective has been required. The best solution for creating such

a hybrid but not a mechanical structure seems to lie in the role played by individuals who may possess on the one hand, scientific knowledge, but might also have some experience of tradition of any particular community or area. An interesting picture of such a role has been presented in the Northern Italian case with the conclusion that: "It is worth noting that transfer between 'higher' forms of knowledge and trivial ones is made possible mostly due to interests and persistence of someone who belongs to both worlds [...]" (Osti, 2006, p. 18).

Another important issue seems to be connected with the peculiar role of managerial knowledge. We would argue that such importance of this particular type of knowledge seems to result from the nature of current development in rural areas that is based on the ideas of a neo-endogenous mechanism (van der Ploeg et al., 2000; Ray, 2006). As we remember, in such a type of development local resources have to be valorised and connected to external resources. We found confirmation of such a general statement in the Spanish report stressing that: "Management knowledge is fundamental in both cases because rural development involves an efficient management of local resources [...] Lay knowledge is materialised in different traditional practises that tourism has contributed to maintain and enhance" (Ferrer, Buciega, Esparcia, 2006, p. 27). If the particular project lacks this important type of knowledge then the risk of its failure seems higher. "What really missed in clams farming experience [...] was a managerial knowledge, a deficiency that risked making it crumble the whole sector, not to say the local community" (Osti, 2006, p. 18). Similar perspectives have been exposed in other cases. According to the Polish team: "However, one has to also stress that the importance of the managerial knowledge [...] cases show that the managerial knowledge is playing a key role in promoting the local resources on a supra-local level [...] as well as attracting investors from outside [...]" (Gorlach, Adamski, Pilichowski, Starosta, Dzwonkowska, 2006, p. 14). And later they add: "It is the managerial knowledge that allows rural actors to function on the market of services" (Gorlach, Adamski, Pilichowski, Starosta, Dzwonkowska, 2006, p. 14). Such reasoning has been strongly supported by German authors formulating a powerful and generalising statement that: "Managerial knowledge and business skills are of highest priority for non-agricultural economy" and "[...] managerial knowledge and management capacities nowadays are a crucial precondition for sustainable and integrated rural development" (Siebert, Dosch, Laschewski, 2006, p. 24).

Local knowledge does not seem to be the asset that is immediately taken for granted in any situation we think may be useful. To the contrary, in many cases it should be rediscovered, quite ironically, by the carriers of the scientific and/or

managerial knowledge. That has been the case analysed by the Italian team saying that: "Intellectuals and environmentalists positively encouraged local people to rediscover local history and culture [...] together with the territorial natural beauties and trekking paths" (Sacco, Fonte, 2006, p. 25). Sometimes it is even more than rediscovery. It is the full process of creation using the dispersed parts of tradition and local history. Again let us quote the Italian report: "In the trekking network case it is important to underline the empirical construction of local knowledge of nature by the pioneers of the trekking initiative" (Sacco, Fonte, 2006, p. 26).

Moreover, it should be stressed that combination of various types of knowledge under the frame of one project does not only mean that different actors may be treated as carrying different types of knowledge. Such a combination may also be the case of particular actors. That means that he or she may already carry some combination of various types of knowledge. As an example in the Greek report we may find particular actors referred to by the authors of the report as "new generation businessmen." As has been stated: "The 'new generation' of businessmen, like the ones in the case studies, comprises a mix of rural and non-rural individuals who hold both expert and lay/local/practical knowledge with various degrees of integration" (Koutsouris, Kasimis, 2006, p. 16). And it seems to be even more stressed in another phrase, namely: "As revealed by the case studies, the successful entrepreneurs have a mix of types of knowledge originating in both their affection to the area and/or their work and their wide experiences (including, to quite some extent, their educational background)" (Koutsouris, Kasimis, 2006, p. 19). In turn, in the case of a music festival project analysed by the Hungarian team, a similar situation occurs among festival organisers, however, concerning other types of knowledge. It has been put as follows: "In the Valley of Arts the dominant form of knowledge is the expert and managerial knowledge of the festival organisers. They are experts in the field of culture and management and their social network is significant" (Kovach, Kristof, 2006, p. 15).

### *Development and sustainability*

As we remember (Bruckmeier, 2005), the idea of sustainable development has been framed under three main dimensions of social change, namely, environmental, economic, as well as social. Quite interestingly, the latter aspect has been exposed in the UK report. The author claims that the connection of the

considered businesses to the life of a particular rural community is significant. Therefore, the economic initiative becomes not only a tool for gaining profit for its owners and stakeholders but, as seems especially important, serving as a kind of activity centre. As has been mentioned in the report: “[...] our case studies are strongly socially embedded, undertaking pro bono work for local people, engaging with young people, and working with other local actors to start projects and bring in funding” (Dargan, 2006, p. 15). However, even such a powerful engagement of local businesses into a local social life does not seem sufficient. The knowledge focused on local issues shared by external actors is identified as another important factor contributing to the idea of sustainable development. Serious lack of such knowledge inside national and regional institutions concerning the need for peculiar functioning of small businesses in remote rural areas may be perceived as a serious obstacle in the process of sustainable development. Such a connection has been clearly identified by the UK team stressing that “[...] this would suggest that there is a knowledge deficit *within* those institutions, which, in turn affects local businesses in terms of the quality of advice offered, and the expectations that businesses can generate profit, invest in technology, expand and employ new people in the same way that urban businesses can” (Dargan, 2006, p. 15). If local peculiarities are not recognised by external actors the development strategy will not be applicable in the particular context. That has been a serious problem in the case described in the UK report, namely: “There was a sense that founders respond more to what is deemed ‘en vogue’ in rural development (e.g. the use of I. T.), than to what rural areas genuinely need” (Dargan, 2006, p. 16). In such a situation the process of sustainable development seems to be uncertain. We are, therefore, able to accept the bitter remark formulated as a conclusion of this particular analysis that: “The extent to which the non-agricultural economy on Skye is a sustainable economy in the long term is not yet clear” (Dargan, 2006, p. 17).

In many cases analysed in the contributing reports there appears a kind of clash between the so-called “traditional” as well as “new” image of sustainability. The former which is limited to the environmental aspect seems connected to the idea of non-agricultural economic development in rural areas. Such development may result from the exclusive activity of external actors bringing projects that are rooted in the idea of extractive economy, establishing mostly exclusively economic links with particular communities. Such a situation has been analysed in the Irish report focusing on the performance of Weyerhaeuser, namely, “Weyerhaeuser encourages sustainable development in the management of its processes and their affects on the environment” (Mooney, Tovey, Stapleton,

2006, p. 50). However, this is exactly what we call "the traditional" approach towards the idea of sustainability. It becomes even more visible in the context of another Irish case that has been essentially characterised in the report as follows: "One of the mandates of the Eco-Booley project is to educate others in sustainable and environmentally responsible strategies for building and the tourist trade" (Mooney, Tovey, Stapleton, 2006, p. 50). As a result, there appears a particular dissemination effect of development processes. It has been put in such a way: "In conjunction [...] the expansion of the Eco-Booley would also potentially lead to a wide network of environmentally sustainable spin-off projects, such as significant growth of organic food production, and the growth of ecologically aware tourist networks through the tourist trade" (Mooney, Tovey, Stapleton, 2006, p. 53). This therefore leads us to a clear conclusion that: "This illustrates a commitment to not simply the economic growth of the region, but a consciousness of the necessity for the development of local economies embedded in the local community itself" (Mooney, Tovey, Stapleton, 2006, p. 53). Such a traditional approach towards the idea of sustainability has also been presented in the Portuguese report: "Although all the environmental legal requirements are complied with, in the discourse and strategic practices there are no well defined visions of ecological sustainability" (Veiga, Rodrigo, 2006, p. 30). Moreover, this particular dilemma has been encapsulated in the analysis contained in the Spanish report, in which tension between the traditional and the current approach to sustainability has been clearly presented. Let us examine the actual quote from the Spanish report: "Though in an initial moment sustainability was understood as only environmental, now it is adapting towards a more integral concept" (Ferrer, Buciega, Esparcia, 2006, p. 29). Such "a more integral concept" has been focused not only on two "traditional" aspects, i.e. the environmental and the economic ones but also the third: "the social" one.

The other issue taken into consideration is mainly connected with the economic aspect of the idea of sustainable development. As should be stressed, sustainability does not seem to be rooted in the logic of profit but, instead, in the logic of diversity. Such a dilemma is clearly illustrated by the Spanish case of the thermal dependent spa. According to the report: "[...] the Montajenos' thermal centre is highly dependent on *socio-thermal* tourism, and this depends on the annual public plans for this type of services: even when these plans are solidly consolidated, it is necessary to think of a possible scenario where they could be cancelled in order to face public health deficits" (Ferrer, Buciega, Esparcia, 2006, p. 25). Therefore, the sustainable character of the rural area development always remains uncertain, exactly as it has been formulated in the following

conclusion, namely: “[...] it is difficult to know in what degree the rural sustainable development has penetrated in the analysed territories” (Ferrer, Buciega, Esparcia, 2006, p. 32).

Diversification of economic activities seems to have yet another important dimension. It is not connected with the specific type of activity but, rather, with the source of financing. Such an important issue has been considered as an example in the Italian report. The more sustainable character of a particular project lies in the economic (financial) contribution of participants. Such a contribution has been perceived as an important link bringing various actors to the core of the project and resulting development processes. Therefore, the festival has been recognised as ‘less sustainable’ because of its dependence on public funds, while the trekking project has been framed as ‘more sustainable’ because of its dependence on contributions from participants. Let us bring the fitting phrase: “[...] Paleariza festival is strongly and continuously dependent on public funds [...] The trekking initiative is instead financially more sustainable, since tourists pay for the services” (Sacco, Fonte, 2006, p. 23).

### Conclusions

In this article we have identified the network of actors as a pre-condition for developmental processes in rural areas. However, as some of the case studies under analysis have shown such a network should probably have a peculiar character. Such a character has been based on the significance of “local actors”. It does not matter whether they are organised in some kind of formal or informal association or simply a local NGO. What is important seems to lie in their acceptance of particular development strategies implemented in particular communities or regions. Local actors may take part in the process of its formation or in the phase of its implementation. Their role seems to be crucial. There seems to be no success in any development project without the presence of local actors. External factors seem to play at least the role of “push” ones in such a context.

Moreover, a special role has been ascribed to both individual and collective actors. They may play the role of a link between external, extra-territorial and internal, local factors. Therefore, some individuals, especially local leaders are a decisive factor in the process of rural development. But this is not the only role of actors that may be identified. The analysis of case studies has shown that different actors are in charge of particular dimensions of development, namely: environmental, economic and social ones. In other words, they are in charge of various aspects of sustainability.

In turn, the analysis of the knowledge dynamics issue seems to confirm such a conclusion. The perspective or type of knowledge brought about by local actors has to be a part of the knowledge hybrid structure containing other types of knowledge carried by other "non-local" actors. Such a local/lay knowledge plays various roles in the formation and implementation of developmental projects. It is a kind of starting point or a kind of legitimising one simply part of a hybrid cognitive structure forming the background of the whole process. In any case it seems to be a key element.

However, what seems to be equally important lies in the process of combining various types of knowledge or in the process of creating the hybrid structure mentioned above. As the case studies have shown this is not a case of mechanical unification. On the contrary, the essence of knowledge dynamics lies in the process of establishing a common perspective that has to be shared by all actors involved in particular development projects.

In the context of various types of knowledge one of its type seems to be especially significant. Quite surprisingly this has not been the case of local/lay/tacit knowledge as has been stressed elsewhere (Bicker, Sillitoe, Pottier, 2004). Our case studies have shown the special role of managerial knowledge as a kind of bridge between the scientific as well as local ones. Moreover, due to this particular type of knowledge the local one may be re-invented or re-discovered. Therefore, we can argue that any success in rural development seems to lie, among others, in the process of "bringing back" local knowledge that exists as a hidden tradition of the local people.

Our initial statements have pointed out that various types of knowledge have been brought to the development processes by various actors. Some of them have been perceived as carriers of scientific knowledge. Others have been pointed out as carriers of managerial knowledge. In turn, locals have been recognised as "depositors" of the lay/local one. Quite surprisingly, case studies under consideration have shown that various types of actors have carried out mixed types of knowledge. For example, experts have to learn local/lay knowledge while the locals have to learn, at least to some extent, the scientific and managerial ones. Only such a combination may lead to successful development.

Finally, the analysed case studies have also confirmed the more "complex" nature of sustainable development. The perspective on the protection of natural environment or the type of development that may be called as the "friendly to environment" one does not seem to be enough in the current discourse on the economic development in rural areas. As the presented material shows



environmental, economic as well as a social dimensions seem to be of equal importance to actors involved in development strategies. However, what seems to be extremely important lies in the economic involvement of local actors in the processes of development. Financial contribution by local people may help to convert the development project into a success story of a particular community. At the same time external actors have to be, to a large extent, focused on the local perspective. Once they are oriented exclusively towards general issues or towards global development that may hinder the whole process of development strategy formulation and implementation.

An additional issue may be identified simply as an answer to the question of what type of non-agricultural economy is most suitable for rural sustainable development. Some authors present such a simple picture: "At a broader level and in theory, agritourism is a sustainable strategy: in its stated objectives, it promotes the conservation of a broadly conceived rural environment through its socio-economic development" (Sonnino, 2004, p. 286). There will be no simple answer. And, again, the stories we have been told in the case studies show a rather complex and various set of characteristics. Clearly, that may be economies based on the valorisation of local resources (including local knowledge), using other types of resources as well as knowledge. Using a conceptual framework elaborated in an earlier part of this article we may put forward the statement that such an agritourist perspective may contribute to the sustainable development of any particular rural community only if it becomes part of a more diversified economic development. What is even more interesting, is that non-agricultural economies need not be "instead of agriculture" or "independent of agriculture." On the contrary, it seems to us that their connection to agriculture may be a characteristic favouring sustainable development because of the emergence of diversified economic organisation. This particular aspect has been clearly shown in the Swedish report, in which we read as follows: "Non-agricultural economy need not be an economy independent of agriculture or neglecting agriculture but can be built from economic activities that strengthen simultaneously the role of agriculture and local producers. This is the specific feature of both projects analysed, and this may be seen as a part of a more general model for sustainable rural development which can be described under the strategy of sustainable rural livelihoods" (Hoj Larsen, 2006, p. 22).

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