

# rurality

Sfr2013s April 8th-12th 2013

a Jointmaster of Architecture research seminar  
*the first ARENA alterRurality network event*



Shaker Lane © Alice & Martin Provensen

Prof. Dr. Pieter Versteegh  
Prof. Sylvain Malfroy

Practical information

*Sfr2013s rurality*

07h45 Train departure from Geneva  
08h34 Train departure from Bern

Venue conferences: EIA-FR Gremaud Auditorium  
common events: EIA-FR «A» basement hall

Workshops: Scotland: Fonderie2 20.05.  
Portugal: Fonderie2 20.04  
Ireland: Fonderie2 20.01 and 20.06  
England: Fonderie2 20.01 and 20.07  
Italy: Fonderie2 20.01 and 20.08  
France: EIA-FR A building Basement hall  
Switzerland: EIA-FR A building Basement hall

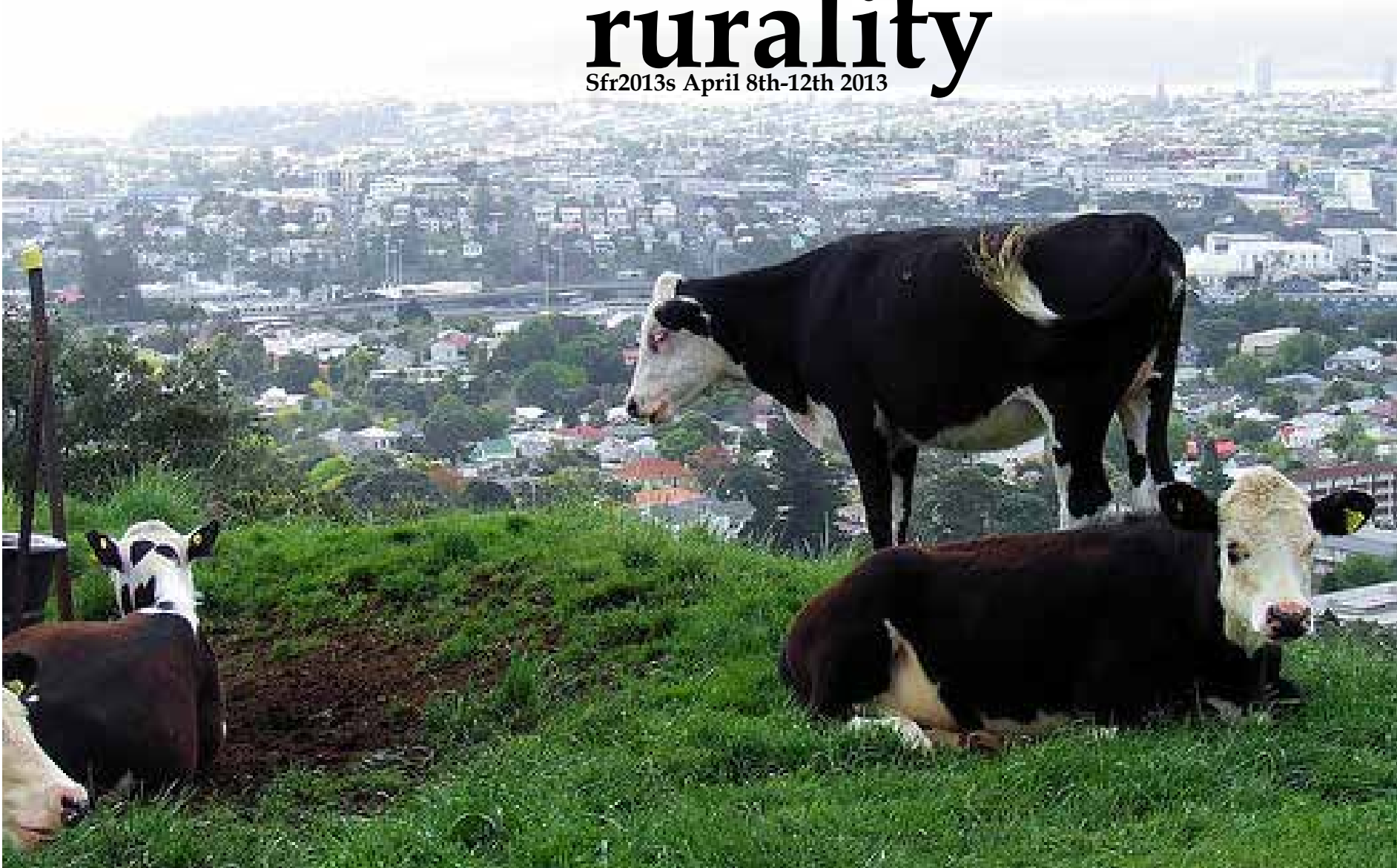
Lunch reserved tables at the EIA-FR cafeteria

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rurality

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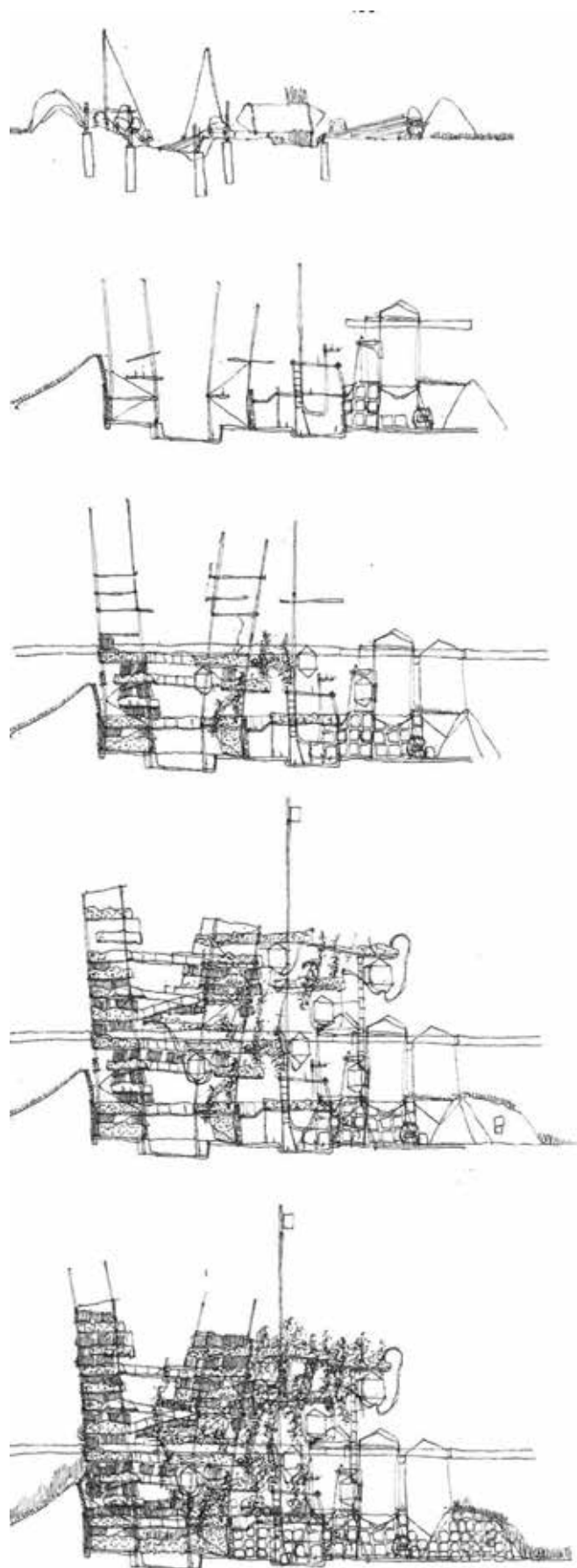
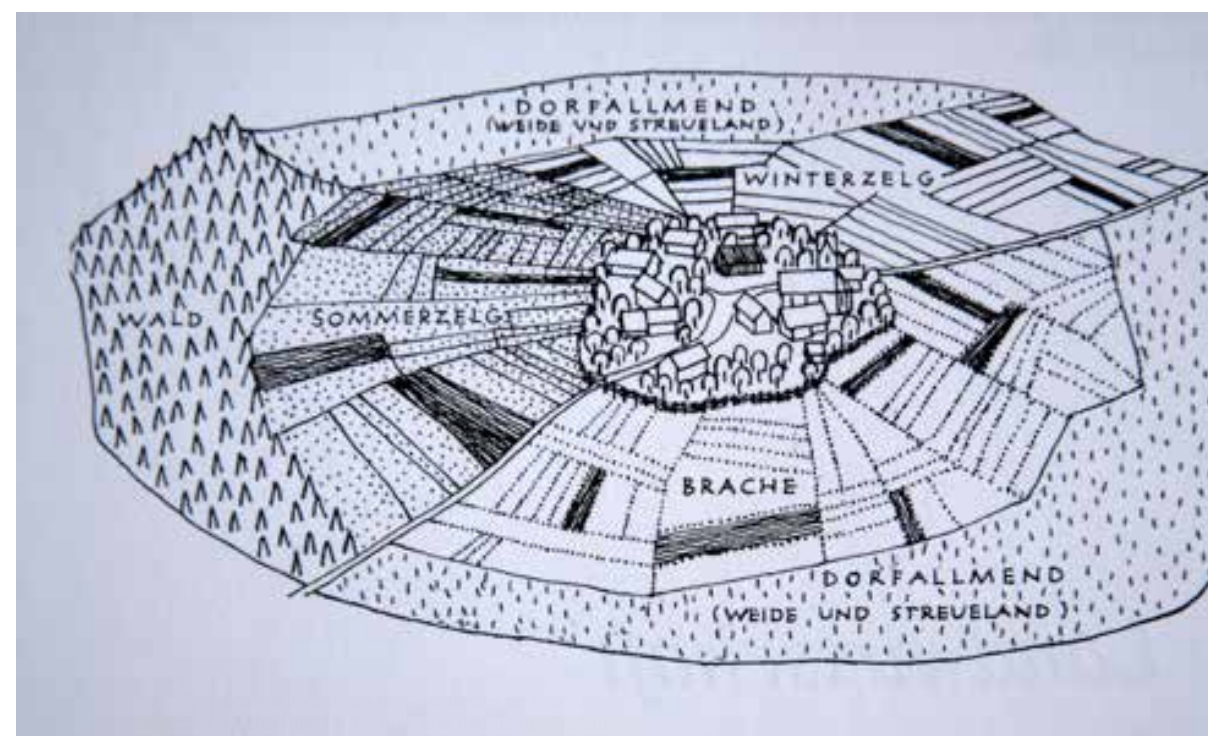


S2013s rurality		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
debate	09h15	Welcome	John Brennan	Xavier Guillot	Bunjak/Pesic	shops reviews
		Pieter Versteegh	Stefan Kurath	Ben Stringer	Axel Fisher	
		Sylvain Malfroy	Dominic Stevens		Nikos Skoutellis	
moderator			Sylvain Malfroy	Sophie Meeres	Martin Chénot	
	12h30	workshop presentations				
Scotland (John Brennan)	13h30	parallel workshops	parallel workshops	parallel workshops	parallel workshops	work-shops
Portugal (Ana Moya/Nuno Martins)						
Ireland (Sharon O Brien)						
England (Ben Stringer/ Jane McAllister)	15h30					
Italy (Giulia Tachini/Giuseppe Alizzi)						
France (Xavier Guillot)						Sophie Meeres
Switzerland (Stefan Kurath)	17h30					Martin Chénot
						Sylvain Malfroy
						Pieter Versteegh
Key-note	18h00	Dominic Stevens	Chris Younès	Mathieu Calame	Sylvain Malfroy	goodbye drink



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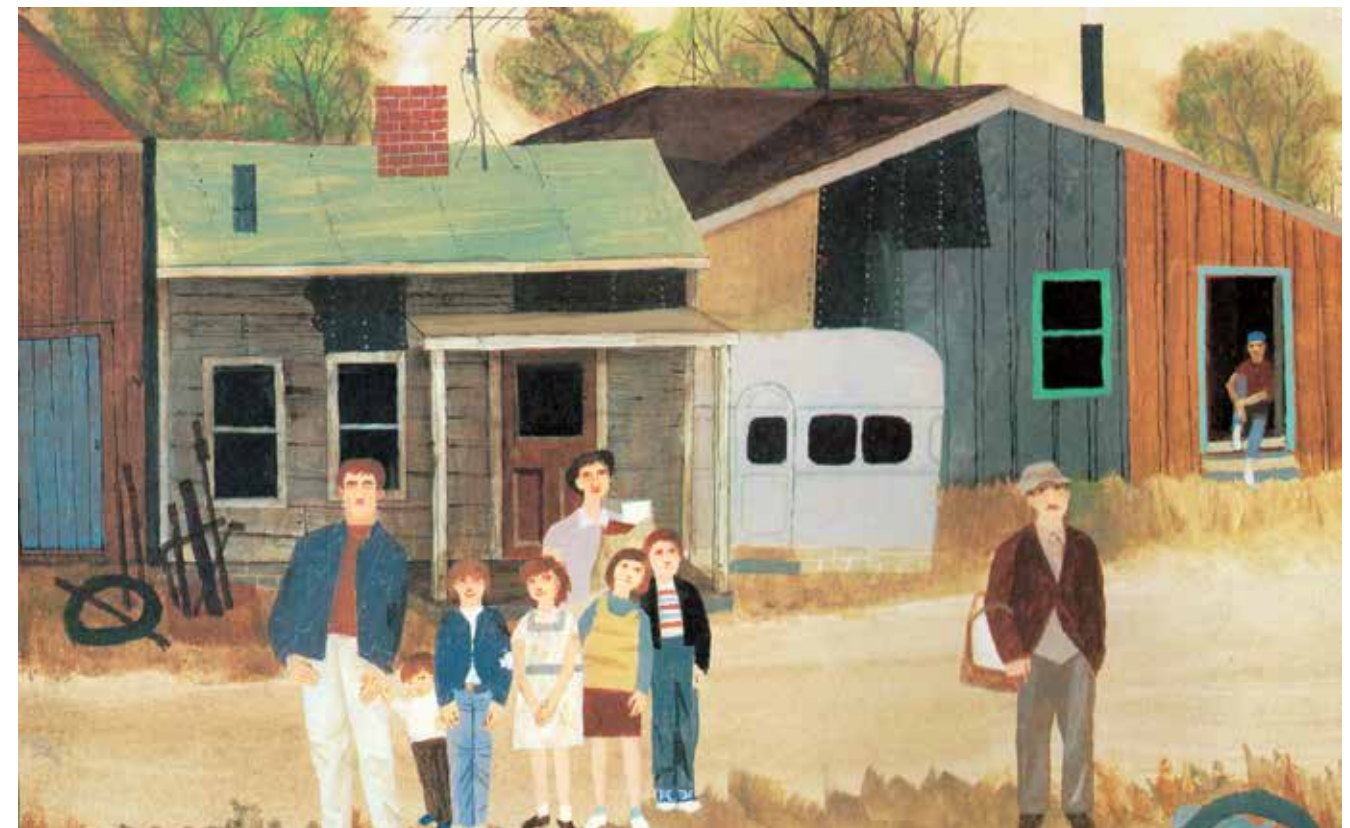
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Living tower: a vertical horse stable for Luxor, Dimitris ArgyroWW

# rurality

The people who lived on Shaker Lane took things easy.  
Their yards were full of stuff -  
old dressers to go inside,  
carts that would never roll again,  
parts of old trucks,  
stove-pipes, piles of rotten wire and tin cans.  
Some people would have liked to see that Shaker Lane disappeared forever.  
When the big yellow school bus came down Shaker Lane,  
the kids would yell'  
'Aker, baker, poorhouse shaker!'  
sometimes there were fights



Provinsen Alice and Martin, Shaker Lane, 1991



# rurality



*Le séminaire ruralités est le premier événement du réseau ruralité initié à Chania en septembre 2012 au sein de l'AEEA (Association Européenne d'Ecoles d'Architecture), qui vise à connecter des écoles situées en territoire rural autour de questionnements d'éducation et de recherche communs. Le séminaire est organisé comme une plate-forme hybride d'enseignement, de recherche et de réseautage. Il connecte des intervenants et enseignants d'ateliers de plusieurs pays européens avec une représentation estudiantine internationale du Jointmaster of architecture des Hautes écoles spécialisées de Suisse occidentale et de Berne.*

*Un appel à communications a été publié, les conférenciers et enseignants d'ateliers ont été sélectionnés par un comité scientifique. Le but du séminaire est de rendre visible différents enjeux et façons de comprendre et de travailler avec la ruralité dans diverses régions de l'Europe géographique.*

*Le séminaire s'organise autour de la thématique de la ruralité comprise comme un ensemble d'attitudes, de richesses et de qualités économiques, écologiques, sociétales et éthiques, dont la compréhension peut être renouvelée dans un contexte contemporain pour penser l'habitat humain. Nous chercherons à développer une sensibilité à l'habitat rural au delà de ses connotations économiques, politiques et culturelles, souvent péjoratives. Au delà de représentations et ressentis habituels - la paysannerie, le paysage esthétique, le territoire de ressources pour l'urbain, le village dortoir - il s'agira d'en rechercher les potentiels comme patrimoine intense de signifiants pouvant rivaliser en termes de densité et de qualité de vie avec d'autres formes d'habitat.*

The rurality seminar is the first event of the ARENA (Architectural Research European Network Association) alterRurality network, aiming to connect schools embedded in rural territory around common education and research issues. The seminar is organized as a hybrid platform for teaching, researching and networking. It connects speakers and workshop teachers from several European countries with a highly international student representation of the Burgdorf, Geneva and Fribourg sites of the Western Switzerland and Berne Universities of applied sciences, Jointmaster of architecture.

A call for conference and workshop abstracts has been published, speakers and workshop teachers have been selected by a scientific committee. The aim of the seminar is to make visible various challenges and ways in which rurality is understood and worked on in different areas of geographic Europe.

The seminar is articulated around the theme of rurality understood as a body of economic, ecologic, societal and ethical attitudes, richness and qualities, a renewed understanding of which in a contemporary setting can help us rethink the human habitat. Its aim is to develop a sensibility to the rural habitat beyond (often pejorative) economic, political and cultural connotations, and, beyond usual representations and feelings - as peasantry, an esthetic landscape, an urban resource territory, a dormitory suburb - to look for its potential as an intense heritage of signifiers that may rival with other forms of habitat in terms of density and living qualities.





## Réseau alterRuralités

La civilisation rurale cependant n'est pas encore morte. Elle survit plus ou moins, même aujourd'hui, dans les sociétés surdéveloppées du monde occidental, d'une existence minoritaire et végétative. Elle n'y a peut-être pas dit son dernier mot.<sup>1</sup>

alterRuralités est un projet de réseau rassemblant des équipes multidisciplinaires autour d'un questionnement prospectif de sociétés rurales. Le but est de construire une compréhension plus approfondie de définitions, de valeurs et de qualités rurales, et de les reconsidérer dans un contexte contemporain de transformation territoriale. La notion de rural est comprise ici dans un sens large, au-delà de définitions réductives telles que non-urbain, paysannerie, réserve territoriale pour l'expansion urbaine, paysage, ou de classifications statistiques relatives à la taille de populations établies. Le réseau cherchera à s'adresser à ses dimensions philosophiques, écologiques, sociétales, économiques, culturelles, humanistiques, politiques et architecturales. La ruralité traite d'une manière d'habiter, une attitude éthique et sociale. La ruralité a à faire avec le « naturel », « approprié », avec la « qualité » et la « caractéristique ».<sup>2</sup> Elle parle de fertilité, de dimension critique, de subsistance et de durabilité dans le sens du soutenable. Comment apprendre de et pour des territoires ruraux et villageois afin d'explorer et de développer des nouvelles formes d'habitat humain pour le futur ?

Ruralités s'adresse à des écoles et à des communautés de recherche ayant un intérêt dans le développement de tels aspects de la transformation territoriale. Maintes écoles sont situées dans des territoires ruraux et, attentives à ses qualités, travaillent sur une compréhension contemporaine de la ruralité et sur des façons d'inscrire son potentiel dans l'expansion et la globalisation idéologiques, conceptuelles ou phénoménales de l'urbain. Le réseau se veut une scène internationale pour connecter de telles institutions et un lieu pour diffuser, débattre et consolider des travaux prospectifs sur la ruralité.

### Urbain – rural?

Aujourd'hui encore, les formes et les types d'habitat reflètent le passé d'une société perdue.<sup>3</sup>

Les perceptions de l'urbain et du rural sont multiples, et varient selon les disciplines, domaines et cultures. Explorer le rural demande une conscience de l'urbain, sans pour autant le positionner en opposition, assujéti ou inscrit dans l'urbain. Afin de permettre des approches transdisciplinaires, une certaine base commune de réflexion est nécessaire.

L'urbain est enraciné dans le commerce : la ville Européenne est

1 C LE ROY LADURIE, Emmanuel, in : Encyclopedia Universalis.

2 « Rural: ... natural, appropriate to the country, unpolished, simple. Off, pertaining to or characteristic to the country or country life, as opposed to the town. » « Rurality: quality or character; rusticity; country life, manners, or scenery. » The Shorter Oxford English dictionary.

3 LE ROY LADURIE, Emmanuel, ibid.



## alterRurality network

*Rural civilization is not yet dead. It survives more or less, even today, in the occidental world's overdeveloped societies, of a minority and vegetative existence. We may not have heard the last of it.<sup>1</sup>*

alterRurality is a network project gathering trans-disciplinary teams around a prospective questioning of the rural society. The aim is to build a deeper insight in the definition, values and qualities of rurality and to reconsider them in a contemporary setting of territorial transformation. The notion of rural is understood here in a broad sense, beyond reductive definitions such as non-urban, peasantry, territorial reserve for urban expansion, landscape, or statistic ones relative to the size of settlement populations. The network will try to address its philosophical, ecological, societal, economical, cultural, humanistic, political, and architectural dimensions. Rurality is about a way of living, an ethical social attitude. It is about “natural”, “appropriate”, about “quality” and “characteristic”.<sup>2</sup> It deals with fertility, criticality, subsistence and sustainability. How can we learn from and for rural and village territories in order to explore and develop new forms of human habitat for the future?

Rurality addresses schools and research communities that have an interest in developing such aspects of territorial transformation. Many schools are embedded in rural territories and, closely attentive to its qualities, work on a nuanced contemporary understanding of rurality and ways to inscribe its potential within urban ideological, conceptual or phenomenal expansion and globalization. The network tries to offer a scene for connecting such institutions and a place for bringing out, debating and consolidating prospective work on rurality.

### Urban – rural?

*Today still, the forms and types of habitat and dwelling reflect the past of lost society.<sup>3</sup>*

Perceptions of the urban and rural are multiple, and vary according to disciplines, domains and cultures. Exploring the rural demands an awareness of the urban, without positioning it in opposition to, subjected to or inscribed

1 « La civilisation rurale cependant n'est pas encore morte. Elle survit plus ou moins, même aujourd'hui, dans les sociétés surdéveloppées du monde occidental, d'une existence minoritaire et végétative. Elle n'y a peut-être pas dit son dernier mot. » C LE ROY LADURIE, Emmanuel, in : Encyclopedia Universalis.

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3 LE ROY LADURIE, Emmanuel, ibid.



souvent un village doté de privilèges ou droits commerciaux. Très tôt, elle est liée à la production industrielle. La croissance urbaine est ancrée dans la révolution industrielle, elle répondait à un besoin de concentration de productions et de populations importantes autour d'un centre géographique dû à une mobilité lente et des techniques de communication rudimentaires. Elle incorpore la notion de croissance économique.<sup>4</sup> Elle est construite sur une séparation du lieu de travail et de l'habitat. Les ressources de la ville en croissance sont importées, « sous-traitées ». Son inertie est immense : cependant que ses forces motrices initiales ont drastiquement changé (protection – industrialisation – tertialisation – révolution informationnelle), l'urbain continue son expansion au delà de dimensions critiques.<sup>5</sup>

Non seulement le monde devient de plus en plus urbain, mais l'urbain en tant qu'idée (de mode de vie, de pouvoir, de production, de consommation, d'occupation du territoire, de planification) est devenu global.<sup>6</sup> « La dimension sociale de l'urbanisation tend à imprégner, au-delà des seules populations urbaines, toute la société, dans ses conditions d'existence et ses mentalités. »<sup>7</sup> L'idée de l'urbain est l'idée de la Capitale: c'est l'idée même de l'idée Européenne, un cap exemplaire et, en tant que telle, elle peut être vue comme colonialiste.<sup>8</sup> L'« urbain » tend à, ou veut être confondu avec le « civilisé ».

L'opposition entre l'urbain et le rural a été créée par l'urbain et suspendue en tant que telle dans la mesure où l'urbain a absorbé le rural comme une condition urbaine. Le rural est vu comme une extension, interstice ou arrière-plan de l'urbain.<sup>9</sup>

## Rural ?

La recherche sur l'urbain est aussi nécessaire qu'abondante. Or d'immenses territoires ruraux existent toujours, habités par 20 à 50% des populations mondiales (chiffres qui dépendent des statistiques, définitions, lieux, etc.) Que sont ces territoires ?

« La ruralité survit plus ou moins, même aujourd'hui, dans les sociétés surdéveloppées du monde occidental, d'une existence mi-

4 « La ville fonctionnelle du xixe et du xxe siècle devient valeur d'échange, au service de l'argent, du commerce et de la production industrielle. BONNET JACQUES, Encyclopedia Universalis. « La métropolisation de l'économie accompagne l'internationalisation des échanges. Les grandes métropoles mondiales gèrent à l'échelle de la planète à la fois les échanges commerciaux, les mouvements monétaires, les flux d'informations et de services, les déplacements des hommes, ainsi que toutes les interactions entre ces réseaux. Une ville est d'abord un lieu de production. »

5 See also : VERSTEEGH, Pieter et.al. Méandres, PPUR 2005

6 Da Cunha, Antonio et al, Institut de géographie de l'Université de Lausanne

7 « La dimension sociale de l'urbanisation tend à imprégner, au-delà des seules populations urbaines, toute la société, dans ses conditions d'existence et ses mentalités. Le monde rural est considéré par la ville comme un espace interstitiel, cerné par les zones d'influence des aires métropolitaines. La société urbaine s'y est diffusée peu à peu. Par définition, la ville est un organisme ouvert, percé de toute part par des axes de communications qui la prolongent et projettent son rôle très loin de son centre. » Bonnet Jacques, in : Encyclopedia Universalis.

8 Voir DERRIDA Jacques , L'autre cap, Minuit, Paris 1991.

9 Des votations récentes en Suisse l'ont illustré : le développement de territoires ruraux ont été freinés par les populations urbaines afin de préserver l'image (urbaine) de leur paysage, ce que l'anthropologue Bernard Crettaz a qualifié de « coup colonialiste, reproduction de 150 ans de stéréotypes urbains ». (RTS, 12.03.2012)



within the urban. In order to allow for trans-disciplinary approaches, a certain general and common ground of reflection is necessary.

The urban is rooted in protection and trade: the European town (ville) is often a village that has received trading rights. Very early, it becomes linked to industrial production. Urban growth stems from the industrial revolution and responds to a need for concentrating production and large populations around a geographic center, due to slow mobility and communication techniques. It incorporates the notion of economic growth.<sup>4</sup> It is built on the separation of living and working. Its resources are imported, “outsourced”. Its inertia is tremendous: although its initial driving forces have drastically changed (protection – industrialization – tertialization – information revolution), the urban continues expansion beyond critical size.<sup>5</sup>

Not only does the world become more and more urban, but the urban as an idea (of living, of power, production, consumption, of occupying territory, of planning) has become global.<sup>6</sup> “The social dimension of the urban tends to impregnate the entire society, beyond urban populations, with its conditions of existence and mentalities”.<sup>7</sup> The idea of the urban is one of the capital: it is the idea of the European idea, a heading, exemplary and, to such an extent, can be seen as colonialist.<sup>8</sup> The urbanized thus tends, or wants to be confounded with the civilized.

The opposition between the urban and the rural has been created and suspended by the urban inasmuch as the idea of the urban has absorbed the rural as an urban condition. The rural is seen as an extension, interstice or background for the urban.<sup>9</sup>

## Rural ?

Research on the urban is as necessary as abundant. Yet tremendous rural territories still exist, inhabited by 20-50% of world populations (figures depending on the statistics, definitions, areas etc). What are they?

Rurality “survives more or less, even today, in the occidental world’s overdeveloped societies, of a minority and vegetative existence.” Today the understanding of the rural is often reduced to an esthetic resource landscape subjected to the urban (dormitory space, energy or food provider, esthetic leisure

4 « La ville fonctionnelle du xixe et du xxe siècle devient valeur d'échange, au service de l'argent, du commerce et de la production industrielle. BONNET JACQUES, Encyclopedia Universalis. « La métropolisation de l'économie accompagne l'internationalisation des échanges. Les grandes métropoles mondiales gèrent à l'échelle de la planète à la fois les échanges commerciaux, les mouvements monétaires, les flux d'informations et de services, les déplacements des hommes, ainsi que toutes les interactions entre ces réseaux. Une ville est d'abord un lieu de production. »

5 See also : VERSTEEGH, Pieter et.al. Méandres, PPUR 2005

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7 « La dimension sociale de l'urbanisation tend à imprégner, au-delà des seules populations urbaines, toute la société, dans ses conditions d'existence et ses mentalités. Le monde rural est considéré par la ville comme un espace interstitiel, cerné par les zones d'influence des aires métropolitaines. La société urbaine s'y est diffusée peu à peu. Par définition, la ville est un organisme ouvert, percé de toute part par des axes de communications qui la prolongent et projettent son rôle très loin de son centre. » Bonnet Jacques, in : Encyclopedia Universalis.

8 See DERRIDA Jacques , L'autre cap, Minuit, Paris 1991.

9 Recent votings in Switzerland have illustrated this : the rural areas' development has been restricted by the urban populations in order to preserve the (urban) image of their landscapes. Sociologist Bernard Crettaz qualifies this as a « colonialist blow, reproduction of 150 years of urban stereotype ». (RTS, March 12th, 2012)



noritaire et végétative. » Aujourd'hui la compréhension du rural est souvent réduite à celle d'un paysage de ressources esthétisé et assujéti à l'urbain (espace d'habitat, fournisseur d'énergie ou d'aliments, paysage esthétique de loisirs, ...).

D'origine et en tant que phénomène, la ruralité possède une richesse et une complexité différentes. L'idée du territoire rural et villageois est proche des valeurs du développement soutenable : Elle combine le social, l'écologique et l'économique de façon critique. Le village est organisé en relation étroite avec son territoire proche. C'est un habitat humain d'auto-soutien, de dimension critique nécessaire à maintenir une communauté sociale soutenable (en termes de logement, de culture, de production, de services, de mixité générationnelle, ...) ; Il connecte à et organise des ressources proches (matériaux, bois-forêts, ...), tout en assurant leur continuité quantitative et qualitative (gestion saisonnière des terres, mise en friche, gestion des surplus, recyclages, ...), il maintient une économie raisonnée, mesurée. Sa collectivité remplit la plupart des activités économiques (production – consommation), culturelles et sociales. C'est une symbiose de vie et de travail, de culture, de nature.

Quelques pistes de réflexion :

Si l'urbain est le cap de l'Europe et, par logique de globalisation, du monde : sa capitale et tête donc, alors la ruralité peut être vue comme le corps de l'habitat humain. Refoulé comme primitif, marqué par des connotations historiques, culturelles, économiques et politiques péjoratives : comment mettre en lumière ses valeurs dans une époque d'incertitude économique et politique ?

« La civilisation rurale se révèle capable d'obtenir cette « croissance démographique zéro » qui constitue aujourd'hui le rêve (difficilement réalisable) des démographes du monde entier, nostalgiques de l'équilibre. Au prix d'épreuves et de privations aiguës, cette civilisation démontre qu'elle porte en elle-même l'énergie nécessaire à son autostabilisation ». <sup>10</sup> Que pouvons-nous apprendre de la ruralité face à la limite, voire à l'échec de la croissance comme base économique / démographique ?

L'économie rurale diffère de l'économie industrielle et globalisée à laquelle elle est cependant sommée de se plier. « Une certaine confusion de production et de consommation, de famille et de force de travail, crée une économie de subsistance et de surplus où les concepts de salaire, de capital, de revenu, de bénéfice ont moins de sens. » <sup>11</sup> Comment la ruralité peut-elle contribuer à notre compréhension de l'économie ? Cette dernière, est-elle encore redevable à son étymologie, l'art de gérer la maison, l'habitat ?

La gouvernance du rural nécessite des processus spécifiques. « Les relations entre la société rurale et la société et l'économie environnantes et englobantes sont stratégiques pour tous et demandent des mécanismes de médiation. » <sup>12</sup> Le territoire rural n'est pas planifié (d'en haut), mais organisé (de l'intérieur). Sa structure est organique et adaptative. La ruralité peut-elle inspirer de nouvelles méthodes et outils – participatifs – de développement ?

Un territoire rural n'est pas nécessairement un territoire éclaté de



landscape, ...).

Originally and as a phenomenon rurality has a different richness and complexity. The idea of the rural / village territory is close to sustainability: it combines the social, the ecologic and the economic in a critical way. The village is organized in close relationship to its surrounding territory. It is a human habitat of critical size necessary to guarantee a subsisting social community (housing, culture, production, services, multigenerational, ...) ; it connects to and organizes its surrounding resources (materials, wood – forest, ...), maintaining their quantitative and qualitative continuity (seasonal fields / fallow land, surplus management and recycling, ...), it maintains a reasonable and measured economy. Its collectivity fulfills most of its economic (production – consumption), cultural and social activities. It is a symbiosis of living, working, culture, nature.

Some leads for reflection:

- If the urban is the heading of Europe and, by globalization, of the world: its head and capital, then rurality may be seen as the body of human habitat. Repressed as primitive, marked by pejorative historic, cultural, economic, political connotations: how to uncover its values in an age of cultural economic and political uncertainty ?
- “Rural civilization reveals itself capable of obtaining this “zero demographic growth”, that constitutes today the (difficultly realizable) dream of the entire world’s demographs, nostalgic of equilibrium. At the price of tests and hardships, this civilization shows that it carries in itself the necessary energy for self-stabilization”. <sup>10</sup> What can we learn from rurality facing the limits or failure of growth ?
- Rural economy differs from industrial and globalized economy to which it is asked to comply. “A certain confusion of production and consumption, of family and workforce, creates an economy of subsistence and of surplus where concepts of salary, capital, revenue, profit have less meaning”. <sup>11</sup> What can rurality offer to our understanding of economy? Is economy still indebted to its etymology, the art of managing our household: habitat ?
- Governing the rural calls for specific processes. “The relationships between rural society and the environing and encompassing society and economics are strategic for all and call for mechanisms of mediation”. <sup>12</sup> The rural territory is not planned (from above) but organized (from within). Its structure is organic and self-adaptive. Can rurality inspire new (participative) planning methods and tools ?
- A rural territory is not necessarily a scattered one of low density. Villages have often lost their density, due to varying factors ranging from fires

<sup>10</sup> « La civilisation rurale se révèle donc capable d'obtenir cette « croissance démographique zéro » qui constitue aujourd'hui le rêve (difficilement réalisable) des démographes du monde entier, nostalgiques de l'équilibre. Au prix d'épreuves et de privations aiguës, cette civilisation démontre qu'elle porte en elle-même l'énergie nécessaire à son autostabilisation ». Encyclopedia Universalis.

<sup>11</sup> Encyclopedia Universalis

<sup>12</sup> ibid



faible densité. Nos villages ont souvent perdu leur densité, en raison de facteurs variables allant d'incendies ou risques d'incendies (condamnant la contiguïté) à l'exode rural ou la croissance d'exploitations rurales. La ruralité peut atteindre des densités d'habitat comparables à celles de territoires urbains. Comment créer ou restaurer de telles densités à une échelle contemporaine ?

La ruralité est basée sur une mobilité critique de connections locales et voisines. Est-ce qu'une mobilité rurale est concevable dans une société d'information ?

La ruralité est un mode de vie, une attitude éthique – sociale. Elle touche au « naturel », à l'« approprié », à la « qualité » et au « caractéristique » Comment interpréter ces termes face à l'économie prédominante des nombres ?

L'idée du rural a été celle de la présence d'êtres humains à la nature – non pas une nature sauvage, intouchée, vierge, esthétique, mais une nature comme un processus continu de renouvellement, de naissance continue qui demande à être accompagnée. Elle est donc idée de fertilité, de maïeutique et de soins. « Après avoir opposé l'homme et la nature en cultivant l'idée d'un progrès en marche, la modernité semble se réorienter quant à sa conception du rapport à la nature. »<sup>13</sup> C'est cette modernité qui a conduit à de nouvelles sensibilités : développement durable / soutenable, humanisme, .... Est-ce qu'un renouveau des valeurs rurales peut donner un nouveau sens à notre présence à la nature ?

L'urbain alors, pourrait être une condition, phénomène ou valeur de renouveau contemporain : des aspects ruraux peuvent-ils se réinscrire dans l'habitat urbain ?

## Ruralité

Comment s'occuper de territoires ruraux dans le futur ? Cette question sera de toute évidence centrale dans le réseau. Une autre question cependant, bien plus importante, sera celle de définir et de développer notre compréhension de qualités, potentiels, valeurs et enjeux ruraux, en explorant de nouvelles façons d'organiser un habitat humain futur, sous diverses formes comprenant l'urbain. Qu'est-ce qui organise la ruralité ? Dans un âge de plus en plus humaniste et conscient des enjeux d'une durabilité, face aux limitations d'un système urbain/économique hérité de la révolution industrielle, pouvons-nous réapprendre de la ruralité afin de repenser notre manière d'habiter la terre ?

Pieter Versteegh, Fribourg 2012

<sup>13</sup> « La nature d'une chose est ce principe même qui la met en mouvement ou qui l'arrête, chaque chose naturelle ayant ainsi en elle-même son propre principe de mobilité, à savoir la potentialité de devenir autre, de se déplacer, de s'accroître ou de diminuer. Le mot latin « natura » qui traduit le grec « physis » désigne plus particulièrement « l'action de faire naître » ou « le fait de naître. Après avoir opposé l'homme et la nature en cultivant l'idée d'un progrès en marche, la modernité semble se réorienter quant à sa conception du rapport à la nature. » Younes Chris, 2008



(condemning contiguity) to rural exodus and rural exploitation growth. Rurality can reach densities comparable to urban territories. How can such densities be created or restored at contemporary scales ?

- Rurality is based upon critical mobility connecting local adjacent. Is rural mobility conceivable in an information-age setting ?
- Rurality is about a way of living, an ethical social attitude. It is about the “natural”, the “appropriate”, about “quality” and “characteristic”. How to interpret such terms, facing the predominant economy of numbers ?
- The idea of the rural has been one of human beings' presence to nature – not nature as esthetic, untouched, virgin wilderness, but nature as an ongoing process of renewal, of continuous birth to be accompanied. Hence it is about fertility, maieutics and care.
- “After having opposed Man and Nature by cultivating the idea of an ongoing progress, modernity seems to reorient itself in terms of its conception of the relationship to nature.”<sup>13</sup> It is this modernity that has lead to a new sensibilities: sustainability, humanism, ... Can renewed rural values give new meaning to our presence to nature ?
- The rural then, may be a condition, phenomenon or value of contemporary renewal: can aspects of the rural re-inscribe themselves within the urban habitat?

## Rurality

How to deal with rural territories in the future? Evidently this is one of the questions that will be central in the network. A far more valuable one however, is to define and to develop our understanding of rural qualities, potentials, values and stakes when exploring new ways to organize a future human habitat, eventually addressing varieties of forms including the urban. What is it that organizes rurality? In an increasingly humanist age of sustainability and facing the limitations of an urban/economic system inherited from industrial revolution, can we learn from rurality in order to rethink our way of inhabiting earth?

Pieter Versteegh, Fribourg 2012

<sup>13</sup> « La nature d'une chose est ce principe même qui la met en mouvement ou qui l'arrête, chaque chose naturelle ayant ainsi en elle-même son propre principe de mobilité, à savoir la potentialité de devenir autre, de se déplacer, de s'accroître ou de diminuer. Le mot latin « natura » qui traduit le grec « physis » désigne plus particulièrement « l'action de faire naître » ou « le fait de naître. Après avoir opposé l'homme et la nature en cultivant l'idée d'un progrès en marche, la modernité semble se réorienter quant à sa conception du rapport à la nature. » Younes Chris, 2008





# Program and organization

## Practical information

Fribourg Seminar  
 Jointmaster of architecture core course  
 3 ECTS, presence in all events is mandatory

## Scientific committee

Stéphanie Cantalou, EIA-FR, HES-SO  
 Martin Chénot, ENSAP Bordeaux  
 Sophie Meeres, University College Dublin  
 Alain Saudan, EIA-FR, HES-SO  
 Pieter Versteegh, EIA-FR, HES-SO  
 Chris Younès, ENSA Paris la Vilette

## Pedagogic goals

Development of skills:

- . to evolve in an interdisciplinary surrounding
- . to select relevant knowledge relative to a questioning
- . to implement knowledge and skills in an architectural praxis
- . to synthesize a work with regards to its interdisciplinary dimensions

## Evaluation

Acquisition and relevant use of knowledge and skills : preliminary readings, active participation in the conferences, debates and workshops (50% of the evaluation), personal synthetic work ((50% of the evaluation)

## Personal work

A personal work will be solicited from the students according to specifications at the end of the seminar week

**deadline: Wednesday May, 21st, 2013**



## Monday April 8th

9h15	welcome, registration, workshop distribution.
10h00	<b>introductory conference: Rurality</b> Prof. Dr. Pieter Versteegh, architecte, Joint master of architecture
11h15	break
11h30	<b>presentation of workshop teachers and themes</b> <i>Scotland:</i> Prof. John Brennan, University of Edinburgh. <i>Portugal:</i> Profs Ana Moya, Nuno Martins, ISMAT Grupo Lusofona, <i>Ireland:</i> Prof. Sharon O'Brien, Waterford institute of technology <i>England:</i> Ben Stringer & Jane McAllister, Westminster & Metropolitan Universities, London <i>Italy:</i> Giulia Tacchini and Giuseppe Alizzi, Politecnico Milano <i>France:</i> Prof. Xavier Guillot, ENSA St. Etienne <i>Switzerland:</i> Prof. Stefan Kurath, ZHAW Winterthur
12h30	Lunch
13h30	<b>parallel workshops:</b>
18h00	<b>Key-note lecture:</b> <i>«Research in the Field... Learning about the Rural»</i> Prof. Dominic Stevens, Architect, Dublin School of Architecture.

## Tuesday April 9th

9h15	student registration
9h30	<i>Architecture, aesthetics and making a working countryside</i> Prof. John Brennan, University of Edinburgh
10h30	coffee break
10h45	<i>Ruralism – towards a relational understanding of nature and sustainability</i> Prof. Stefan Kurath, ZHAW Winterthur
11h45	<b>debate (Professor Chris Younès, ENSA Paris la Vilette, moderator).</b>
12h30	Lunch
13h30	<b>parallel workshops:</b>
18h00	<b>Key-note lecture (en français):</b> <i>Métamorphoses des représentations des milieux habités</i> Prof. Chris Younès, Philosopher, ENSA Paris la Vilette

## Wednesday April 10th

9h15	student registration
9h30	<i>Tackling the challenge of « rural design » in architectural education</i> Prof. Xavier Guillot, ENSA St. Etienne
10h30	coffee break
10h45	<i>Rurality in the City: designing a farm in an english city</i> Prof. Ben Stringer, University of Westminster
11h45	<b>debate (Sophie Meeres, University College Dublin, moderator).</b>
12h30	Lunch
13h30	<b>parallel workshops:</b>
18h00	<b>Key-note lecture (en français):</b> <i>Les enjeux alimentaires de l'espace rural</i> Mathieu Calame, Agronomer, Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer

# Program and organization

Venue    conferences: EIA-FR Gremaud Auditorium  
          common events: EIA-FR «A» basement hall

*Scotland workshop: Fonderie2 20.05.*  
*Portugal workshop: Fonderie2 20.04*  
*Ireland workshop: Fonderie2 20.01 and 20.06*  
*England workshop: Fonderie2 20.01 and 20.07*  
*Italy workshop: Fonderie2 20.01 and 20.08*  
*France workshop: EIA-FR A building Basement hall*  
*Switzerland workshop: EIA-FR A building Basement hall*

Contact    Tania Versteegh +41(79) 958 9216

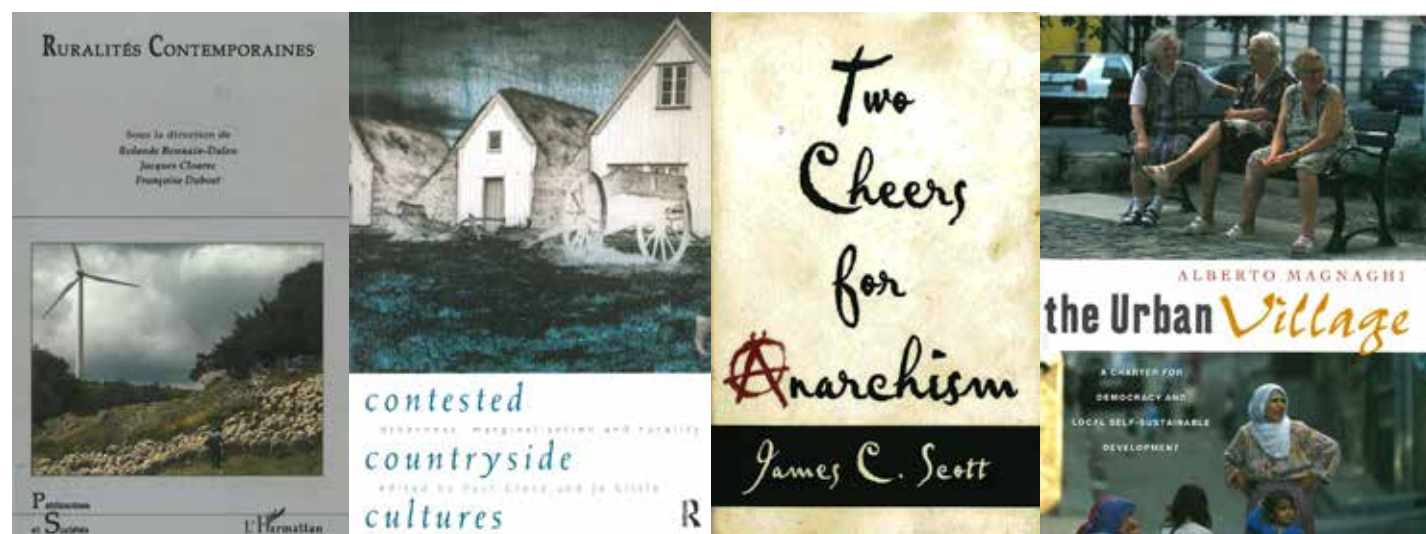
WIFI        PUBLIC-HEFR: UID ruralities, PWD Cfxcneu9

## Thursday April 11th

9h15	student registration
9h30	<i>Serbian Village Atlas: Possibilities of creating EcoVillage Networks</i> Ksenia Bunjak and Mladen Pesic, University of Belgrade
10h15	<i>Rurality as project territory? The 1920's agricultural sionist village</i> Axel Fisher, Maître conférencier, Université Libre de Bruxelles
11h00	coffee break
11h15	<i>Crete: rurality is never lost</i> Prof. Nikos Skoutelis, Technical University of Crete
12h00	<b>debate (Professor Martin Chénot, ENSAP Bordeaux, moderator).</b>
12h30	Lunch
13h30	<b>parallel workshops:</b>
18h00	<b>Key-note lecture:</b> <i>Mapping the territory: recent advances at Schools of Architecture</i> Prof. Sylvain Malfroy, Jointmaster of Architecture, Fribourg

## Friday April 12th

9h15	student registration
9h30	<b>workshop feedback</b> <i>Scotland</i> <i>Portugal</i>
10h45	coffee break
11h15	<i>Ireland</i> <i>England</i>
12h30	lunch
13h30	<i>Italy</i> <i>France &amp; Switzerland</i>
15h30	<b>closing debate</b> Sophie Meeres, Martin Chénot, Sylvain Malfroy, Pieter Versteegh
17h00	Goodbye-drink



# Reader

The seminar week will be characterized by predominantly architectural view-points on rurality. The aim of the rurality network however, is to create a trans-disciplinary field of “reflection in action”. For this reason we try to complete architectural viewpoints with ones from different domains.

## Contemporary rurality and agriculture

Rurality seems to be less and less connected to agriculture. In France, agriculture has been given three essential state missions: “provide a more and more varied and healthy alimentation, participate in preservation of biodiversity and the maintenance of rural landscapes, respond to the citizens’ environmental expectations by being involved in local development projects.” Is this so? Agriculture may also be innovation in itself. Today, even when marginally, Michel Streith, Anthropologist at LADYSS (CNRS/Paris 1) writes, “the reconstruction of the social cohesion between rural and urban populations are the signs of an increasingly important social ascendancy of alternative agricultures.

(PV)

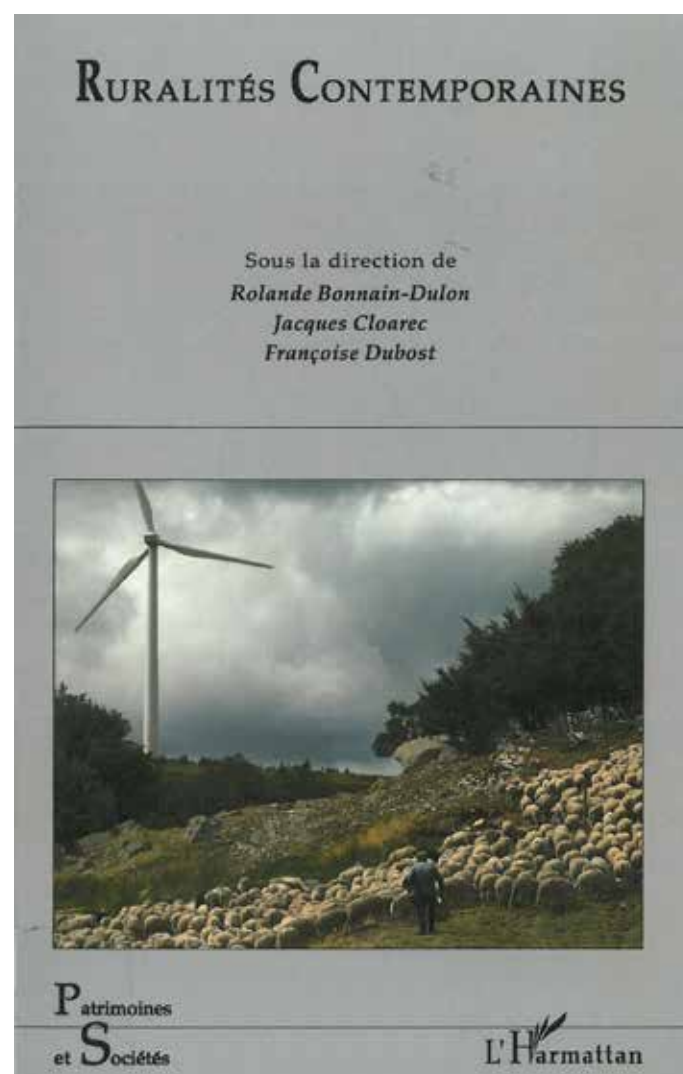
STREITH Michel, “quand les agriculteurs innovent”, in Bonnain-Dulon Rolande et al., *Ruralités Contemporaines*, L’Harmattan, Paris 2011

## Quand les agriculteurs innovent

Michel Streith

*S'interroger sur la place de l'agriculture dans le processus de recomposition des sociétés rurales aurait paru incongru il y a encore 40 ans tant l'agriculture s'identifiait à la société rurale. Mais, l'importance sociale ou économique de ce secteur est en baisse. Le nombre d'agriculteurs diminue constamment et leur présence dans la vie locale décroît. Les dégâts environnementaux provoqués par les systèmes de production intensifs et le coût de la politique agricole commune pour les contribuables ont jeté la suspicion sur la profession. Le métier, qui demande d'énormes sacrifices et repose sur beaucoup d'incertitudes, n'est guère attractif pour les jeunes générations.*

*En dépit de cette perte d'influence, l'agriculture est toujours présente dans le paysage, tout au moins en terme d'occupation de l'espace, et elle est chargée par la société civile ou politique de répondre à trois missions essentielles : fournir une alimentation de plus en plus saine et variée, participer au maintien de la biodiversité et à l'entretien des paysages ruraux, répondre aux attentes environnementales des citoyens en s'impli-*





quant activement dans les projets de développement local. Comment les agriculteurs s'insèrent-ils dans ces enjeux sociétaux devenus majeurs ?

### Un terrain, des alternatives

Pour rendre compte de ces transformations dans le statut même du métier d'agriculteur, nous avons choisi de mener des enquêtes en Haute-Normandie, plus précisément dans le Pays de Caux. Nous sommes là dans un territoire emblématique des évolutions contemporaines de l'agriculture française. Autrefois, symbole d'une certaine France paysanne, celle des bocages, des herbages, de la crème et du beurre, symbole d'un certain art de vivre, du bien manger, des joies du bord de mer, des stimulations de l'esprit (des écrivains comme Victor Hugo, Flaubert, Maupassant, Proust et de nombreux peintres y ont séjourné), la Haute-Normandie est aujourd'hui le fleuron de l'agriculture productiviste. Les rendements sont très élevés, les cultures sont spécialisées et à vocation exportatrice (céréales, pommes de terre/lin), le prix du foncier est l'un des plus élevés de France. Mais ce succès est terni par les conséquences sociales et environnementales qu'il a engendrées. Entre 1988 et 2000, 64% des exploitations de 20 à 50 hectares ont disparu au profit des unités de plus de 100 hectares. Le phénomène de concentration s'est accéléré. Les exploitations de plus de 50 ha représentent 79 % de la Surface agricole utile (SAU) régionale. En deux décennies, les fermes familiales ont perdu 40 % de leurs effectifs. Le nombre d'exploitations continue de décroître : on observe une installation pour trois départs.

Dans les zones de grandes cultures comme le Pays de Caux, sont apparus deux nouveaux problèmes environnementaux liés à l'eau. Tout d'abord, le ruissellement qui provoque des inondations lors des orages et mobilise une part très importante des impôts locaux affectée à la construction de dérivation des circuits d'eaux de pluie et de bassins de rétention. Ensuite, la pollution des nappes phréatiques par les nitrates ou les pesticides oblige à de nouveaux forages ou à des traitements particulièrement coûteux. Nous sommes en présence d'un « cas d'école » des problèmes posés par le développement durable. En effet, dans ce contexte, le devenir de l'agriculture dépend de sa capacité à prendre en compte les dimensions économique, sociale et environnementale.

Pour répondre à ce défi, des agriculteurs adoptent des stratégies agricoles en rupture avec le modèle dominant. Dans le cas de notre terrain d'étude, les transformations sont mises en œuvre par des producteurs qui se réclament de modèles alternatifs : l'agriculture durable, la production fermière, l'agriculture biologique.

L'agriculture durable se définit comme la « pratique d'une agriculture économiquement viable, saine pour l'environnement et socialement équitable » (Féret, 2007). La durabilité renvoie à l'idée d'une préservation de l'environnement et de la transmission d'un bien aux générations futures. D'un point de vue technique, elle se caractérise par des changements importants du système de production : réduction des intrants, rotations culturales longues, priorité aux pâturages dans l'alimentation animale, autonomie dans l'approvisionnement en protéines. Elle promeut une dimension sociétale par le biais d'actions citoyennes à destination des populations non agricoles et s'appuie sur des outils institutionnels tels que les réseaux d'agriculture durable et les structures de l'enseignement agricole.

La production fermière a quatre objectifs : créer de la valeur ajoutée par la transforma-

tion et la vente, améliorer la qualité des produits, organiser les échanges entre producteurs et consommateurs, inscrire la production dans un territoire. L'accent est mis sur l'implication de l'agriculture dans des tâches dépassant le cadre strictement productif. Mais cela nécessite pour l'agriculteur des savoir-faire dans les domaines de l'artisanat, du commerce ou de la pédagogie selon qu'il transforme ses produits à la ferme, pratique la vente directe ou reçoit des publics scolaires. Ces tâches supplémentaires sont généralement dévolues à un ou plusieurs membres de la famille mais elles peuvent faire l'objet de création d'emplois salariés. Le consommateur identifie aisément les produits fermiers grâce aux signes d'indications territoriales qui participent à la traçabilité du processus de production.

L'agriculture biologique possède une légitimité et une reconnaissance dues à son antériorité et à sa labellisation. Elle lie des préoccupations éthiques et environnementales et fait l'objet, en France notamment, d'un encadrement institutionnel important (Fédération nationale des agriculteurs biologiques, associations de producteurs et de consommateurs). Depuis quelques années, l'agriculture biologique représente un enjeu majeur pour la résolution des problèmes environnementaux dans les campagnes (lutte contre la pollution des sols et des nappes d'eau) ainsi que pour le maintien de la biodiversité et la protection des paysages. Confinée à un rôle marginal durant quatre décennies, elle connaît un développement spectaculaire depuis une petite dizaine d'années. Cela tient à une demande croissante des consommateurs en produits alimentaires sains et à une forte injonction gouvernementale lors du « Grenelle de l'environnement » en vue d'augmenter les capacités productives du bio.

Les agriculteurs engagés dans ces nouveaux modes de production sont peu nombreux. À l'échelle du département de Seine-Maritime, l'association des « Défis ruraux » recense environ 50 membres impliqués dans l'agriculture durable, l'association « Vente directe de produits laitiers » mentionne 107 adhérents en production fermière laitière et 36 agriculteurs sont titulaires du label « Agriculture biologique ». Sur un total de 6 934 chefs d'exploitations, ces trois alternatives représentent moins de 200 agriculteurs. Le phénomène reste marginal au sein de la profession, mais il est très visible en raison de l'investissement de ces acteurs dans le tissu économique et social, local ou régional.

En dépit d'approches privilégiant des optiques différentes, les acteurs des agricultures durable, fermière et biologique présentent des caractéristiques communes qui les distinguent nettement des agriculteurs conventionnels. Ils sont à la recherche d'une autonomie optimale dans la gestion de leur exploitation en privilégiant les solutions « maison ». Chez les partisans de l'agriculture durable, il s'agit de limiter le recours aux intrants et de produire ses engrais au sein de l'exploitation par compostage ou fumure animale. Les agriculteurs « bi os » n'utilisent aucun produit chimique de synthèse. Les agriculteurs « fermiers » transforment et vendent la totalité ou une partie de leurs produits à la ferme. Toutes ces positions impliquent une indépendance de la production, en amont et en aval, par rapport aux firmes de l'industrie chimique ou de la grande distribution.

La recherche d'autonomie passe par une diversification des activités. À titre d'exemple, sur un petit échantillon de 18 agriculteurs bios interrogés en Pays de Caux, nous trouvons toutes les formes de commercialisation. En plus de la formule « classique » de livraison à un grossiste ou à une coopérative, les agriculteurs déclinent toutes les

possibilités de la vente directe: les Associations pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne (AMAP), les marchés de ville, la vente à la ferme, les foires et les salons, la livraison à domicile, l'approvisionnement de restaurants ou de cantines scolaires. Les activités de transformation ou d'accueil obligent aussi à des apprentissages différents. Ces phénomènes sont observables dans les trois types d'agriculture.

La diversification nécessite une réorganisation des rapports de production au sein de l'exploitation. Elle oblige à augmenter le nombre d'employés ou d'avoir recours, c'est le cas le plus fréquent, à la main-d'œuvre familiale. À ce titre, il est intéressant de noter le retour des femmes dans l'activité agricole. Toujours à partir de notre échantillon d'agriculteurs bios en Pays de Caux, nous notons 11 femmes sur 18, chefs ou « co-chefs d'exploitation ». Les observations menées en agriculture bio ou en agriculture durable nous autorisent à confirmer le rôle actif des femmes dans les activités agricoles et/ou commerciales de l'exploitation.

Enfin, il est un point commun plus sociétal des agricultures alternatives : le souci de reterritorialisation et de reconstruction du lien social. La reterritorialisation correspond à la prise en compte de cultures ou d'élevages qui ne sont pas guidés par la volonté exportatrice qui existe chez les grands producteurs céréaliers. La priorité est donnée aux productions écoulées à l'échelle locale. Nous trouvons une grande variété de végétaux et d'animaux commercialisés, parfois des espèces ou des races anciennes. La reconstruction du lien social avec les populations non agricoles est un élément essentiel d'une nouvelle façon de travailler. L'identification de la provenance et de la constitution des aliments représente pour le consommateur un gage de sécurité. La diminution des effets polluants de l'agriculture contribue à la baisse des dépenses publiques et restaure la confiance des populations locales.

Cet aperçu de la problématique des voies alternatives rappelle la prégnance du rôle social de l'agriculture. Pour sortir des impasses actuelles de l'agriculture, les agriculteurs « innovants » ont recours à des ressources qui dépassent le cadre technique et qui mobilisent le territoire, transforment la division sexuelle du travail, la formation et le lien avec des populations non agricoles. Nous assistons à un véritable changement de paradigme social, et cela autorise à tester une analogie avec les grandes transformations qui ont marqué l'agriculture au début des années 1960.

### **L'injonction de modernisation**

Les processus de modernisation agricole font l'objet de fortes injonctions politiques. Le message de la législation des années 1960 et 1962 en matière de modernisation agricole était le suivant: vous, agriculteurs, avez une mission fondamentale, nourrir convenablement et à moindre frais la population française ; vous disposez de moyens techniques accrus, l'État met à votre disposition les structures d'enseignement et de recherche, vos organismes professionnels seront associés aux prises de décision vous concernant, et votre niveau de vie sera comparable à celui des travailleurs urbains.

Le message énoncé dans le texte finalisé du « Grenelle de l'environnement » du 6 juillet 2007 est le suivant : nous avons aujourd'hui de quoi nous nourrir et nourrir même une partie de la planète, notre industrie agroalimentaire est puissante mais nous payons le prix environnemental de cette situation. Il faut privilégier des produits plus respectueux de l'environnement (mode de production, qualité et quantité d'emballage,

provenance géographique) et des produits fabriqués dans des conditions sociales acceptables (rémunération à un juste prix, conditions de travail corrects).

L'analogie entre la modernisation des années 1960 et les changements en cours actuellement met en relief l'importance des échelles de décisions et d'analyse. Nous sommes toujours dans des écarts très importants entre « le pays légal » et le « pays réel ». Prenons l'exemple de l'agriculture bio durant ces dernières années. L'injonction politique est très forte (6% de la SAU doit être cultivée en bio en 2012, 20 % en 2020). Or, le bio se développe actuellement principalement dans des secteurs à faible utilisation de foncier (maraîchage, arboriculture, viticulture). Dans ces filières, la demande est très élevée, notamment à proximité des centres urbains et l'offre n'est pas assurée faute de terres. Dans le même ordre d'idée, les collectivités territoriales font de gros efforts pour promouvoir une alimentation bio dans la restauration scolaire mais ces politiques ont plus pour effet d'organiser le marché que la production. Les décideurs pensent le développement de l'agriculture bio avec les outils de l'agriculture conventionnelle (la surface, le marché).

La question de l'injonction est fondamentale car elle donne les grandes directions politiques du développement agricole. Cependant, elle ne suffit pas à garantir des modifications de pratiques. L'expérience des années 1960 rappelle qu'un changement est effectif s'il est porté, relayé, diffusé et réinterprété par des individus et des groupes sociaux qui, en retour, valident ou infirment les orientations politiques et économiques.

### **Le groupe social porteur des innovations**

Dans les années 1960, le groupe social porteur des innovations est principalement celui constitué d'agriculteurs issus du mouvement des Jeunesses agricoles catholiques (JAC). Claude Servolin (1985) souligne l'homogénéité des origines sociales, des formations intellectuelles et des attitudes morales de ces « militants » de la modernisation. Ce sont en grande majorité de jeunes agriculteurs qui succèdent à leurs parents dans la ferme familiale. Ils sont en rupture avec les comportements jugés trop « paysans » de leurs parents à qui ils reprochent le manque d'ouverture intellectuelle, le repli dans la sphère villageoise et la crainte des innovations techniques. Ils ont une foi certaine dans un progrès humaniste. Henri Mendras (1958), Placide Rambaud et Monique Vincienne (1964) ont mis en évidence le sentiment d'identité professionnelle et la solidarité de génération qui les animaient.

À première vue, tout oppose les « jacistes » d'hier aux agriculteurs innovants d'aujourd'hui. D'homogénéité, il n'est plus question. Nous avons montré les différences entre les approches technique, commerciale et culturelle des agricultures biologique, durable et fermière. À l'échelle de notre terrain d'enquête, les profils sociologiques sont aussi très variés. Les agriculteurs « fermiers » sont des producteurs laitiers, regroupés pour la plus grande part dans la zone géographique herbagère du Pays de Bray et insérés dans une logique de filière. À l'inverse, les agriculteurs bios sont présents dans toutes les productions (maraîchage, arboriculture, polyculture, élevage bovin viande et lait, élevage caprin, élevage équin). De même, les membres de l'association des « Défis ruraux », orientés vers des systèmes à vocation durable ont des trajectoires très diversifiées. Il y a des producteurs issus du monde agricole ou des « hors cadre », des exploitants en grandes structures, d'autres installés sur des micro-exploitations, voire un agriculteur sans terre (éleveur caprin itinérant négociant des droits à paître auprès



des collectivités territoriales en vue de « nettoyer » des terrains communaux).

La question de la solidarité générationnelle, évoquée à propos des « jacistes » est moins évidente actuellement. Certes, les agriculteurs innovants ont en majorité moins de 40 ans, et l'on peut parler alors de « génération ». Toutefois la solidarité ne semble pas toujours de mise. Lors des entretiens, des agriculteurs émettent des critiques à l'encontre de leurs collègues. Ainsi, les « bi os » reprochent aux « durables » de se référer à l'expression « agriculture biologique » sans recourir aux contraintes imposées par la labellisation. Les durables affirment que les bios ne peuvent pas satisfaire les demandes des consommateurs locaux et qu'il faut promouvoir des systèmes plus souples en matière de réglementation. Les bios pointent les limites du « fermier » en affirmant qu'une mention d'origine rassure le consommateur mais ne dit rien de la qualité environnementale du système de production. Plus que des jugements, ces propos expriment la volonté de sauvegarder des prérogatives quant au choix de système de production. Mais ils traduisent également des tensions qui brouillent la lisibilité des agricultures alternatives auprès du grand public.

Sont en concordance avec les expériences passées de la modernisation agricole, les modalités de construction et de diffusion des savoirs techniques, le creuset de « l'identité professionnelle » dont parle Bertrand Hervieu (1993). Ces savoirs, aujourd'hui comme hier, s'élaborent et se consolident dans le cadre d'actions collectives. Au sein d'associations ou de groupes de professionnels, les connaissances s'énoncent, les nouvelles orientations se testent. Au fil des échanges, les acteurs apprennent aussi à travailler ensemble, à réduire les conflits et à établir de nouvelles valeurs ou de nouvelles normes qui font consensus. Dans les années 1960, les Centres d'études techniques agricoles (CETA) et les Instituts de gestion et d'économie rurale (IGER) remplissaient ce rôle. Il s'agissait « d'associations de volontaires qui se réunissent pour mettre en commun leurs expériences et s'assurer le concours d'un ingénieur-conseil » (Mendras, 1958). Ces regroupements permettaient de conforter les agriculteurs dans leur choix, de s'assurer une visibilité auprès des organisations professionnelles et d'accélérer la diffusion des innovations de ferme en ferme.

De nos jours, les Réseaux d'agriculture durable (RAD), les Centres d'initiatives pour valoriser l'agriculture et le milieu rural (CIVAM) ou les Groupements régionaux de l'agriculture biologique (GRAB) par exemple remplissent une fonction similaire. Nés de l'initiative de quelques producteurs, ces réseaux acquièrent généralement une notoriété locale et régionale. Ainsi en est-il de l'Association de vente directe de produits laitiers en Seine-Maritime. Elle est créée en 1999 à l'initiative de cinq éleveurs en l'absence d'organisme d'aide au développement pour leur filière. La première année voit l'adhésion de 60 producteurs. Leurs demandes sont multiples. Elles ont trait aux conduites de troupeau, à la recherche de formations spécialisées et, pour une grande part, à la volonté de refonder le mode de commercialisation des produits laitiers. L'association décide donc d'orienter ses activités vers l'aide à la mise en place d'ateliers de vente directe. Le but est de valoriser au mieux le lait en le transformant au sein de l'exploitation et en le vendant en circuit court. En 2009, l'association compte 110 membres. Elle reçoit des subventions de l'État et de la Région et emploie une animatrice chargée d'organiser les activités de formation, de promotion et de coordination.

Les modalités de mise en place de ces expériences d'action collective sont communes aux différentes expériences décrites. Ce groupe d'individus « pionniers », proches géo-

graphiquement et animés d'une volonté de changer les choses, fondent une association qui acquiert progressivement une reconnaissance au sein de la profession. Sa notoriété institutionnelle la rend visible auprès de populations non agricoles. Un tel processus dépend davantage des modes d'action collective qu'il induit que des lois ou décrets qu'il nécessite. La question de la temporalité et de la spatialisation des procédures de modernisation permet d'illustrer ce propos.

### Les étapes de la modernisation

Les lois de modernisation de 1960 et de 1962 ou de 2004 ne disent rien de la dynamique du processus amorcé. Les traductions juridiques arrivent généralement a posteriori. Le modèle des années 1960 prend sa source dans les développements technologiques amorcés après la Première Guerre mondiale. À la fin des années 1930, un auteur stigmatise dans un ouvrage qui fait alors référence la nécessité de sortir du mode de fonctionnement paysan (Maspétol, 1939).

De la même manière, les préoccupations environnementales actuelles en agriculture dont se targue le « Grenelle de l'environnement » sont portées par différents mouvements sociaux et agricoles depuis presque quatre décennies. Par ordre d'apparition chronologique, citons: le travail des pionniers du bio dans les années 1970, le développement des pratiques d'agriculture paysanne promues par la Confédération paysanne depuis la fin des années 1980, les réseaux d'agriculture durable mis en place au début des années 1990 (Pochon, 1991). Voici quelques étapes qui jalonnent le cheminement de la prise de conscience écologique dans le milieu agricole. Elles sont très partielles, mais elles reflètent une permanence d'engagements militants sur ces questions.

### Les échelles d'intervention

La modernisation des années 1960 s'opère à l'échelle du village et de l'État. C'est tout d'abord au sein de la ferme et de la communauté villageoise que doivent disparaître les structures paysannes traditionnelles. La ferme devient une exploitation spécialisée et en ceci elle rompt avec les pratiques de polyculture/élevage. De même, l'usage de l'autoconsommation se réduit. Le paysan doit augmenter son volume de vente. Il cesse d'être paysan pour devenir agriculteur, c'est-à-dire un acteur économique qui doit tirer prestige de ses résultats comptables. Le travail et les terres sont mis au service de l'accroissement du capital. Pour cela, la modernisation est activement soutenue par les organismes étatiques, notamment dans le domaine de la formation et de la recherche. À cet effet, le service public de l'enseignement (lycées, écoles d'ingénieurs) et de la recherche (INRA) est mobilisé. Ce sont de véritables « machines de guerre » destinées à accélérer l'intégration des paysans les plus réticents au progrès. Dans la même optique, l'État associe le syndicat agricole majoritaire et, par voie de conséquence, les structures dont il est partie prenante (banque, assurance, mutualité sociale), au processus de décision au point d'en faire un co-gestionnaire en matière de politique agricole (Luneau, 2004).

La caractéristique essentielle du mouvement de modernisation actuelle est la multiplication des niveaux d'intervention. Certes, les échelles locales et nationales sont toujours présentes mais de nouveaux intervenants sont présents dans les débats et les financements: le département, la région, l'Union européenne et bien entendu, le monde dans sa globalité. De plus, pour chacun des niveaux, il peut y avoir des actions

coordonnées. Ainsi, les questions agricoles sont rarement du ressort du seul secteur de l'agriculture. Des institutions liées à l'environnement, à l'aménagement du territoire, au développement rural, peuvent avoir leur mot à dire. Cette multiplication des échelles et des secteurs d'intervention nécessite un travail particulier d'élaboration de la prise de décision.

### L'apprentissage des innovations

Henri Mendras insiste sur le concept de diffusion des innovations. Généralement en agriculture, les changements sont très lents. Or, entre 1950 et 1960, le parc de tracteur décuple. McKim Marriott (1966) parle même à cette époque de « surdéveloppement ». Cette situation oblige le paysan à une adaptation rapide mais, rappelle Mendras, « telle technique peut être introduite facilement dans un système mais le perfectionnement peut scléroser le système ».<sup>1</sup> Une illustration de cette thèse est fournie dans le célèbre chapitre sur le maïs hybride de La Fin des paysans publiée en 1992.

Henri Mendras s'interroge à partir d'enquêtes sur la difficile introduction du maïs hybride dans les exploitations agricoles du Sud-Ouest. Le maïs a objectivement de meilleurs rendements mais il faut acheter la semence ainsi qu'un volume important d'engrais et de produits phytosanitaires. Les paysans hésitent, certains affirment qu'il « faut acheter le maïs avant de le récolter », or, dans la logique paysanne, « les premiers sous économisés sont les premiers gagnés ». De plus, le maïs est l'aliment des porcs et des volailles, dans le secteur dévolu aux femmes. Augmenter le rendement en maïs, c'est augmenter le volume de travail féminin et cela est impossible. L'agronome répond qu'il suffit de réduire les surfaces cultivées en maïs, la hausse des rendements compensant la perte de surfaces qui pourront être affectées à d'autres cultures. Le paysan lui rétorque que cette variation modifie son assolement. ... L'analyse de Mendras montre que l'introduction d'un changement technique a des effets plus complexes que prévus sur le système agricole de l'exploitation toute entière. En fait, le maïs hybride finit par s'imposer avec la fin du modèle de la polyculture/élevage qui lui-même provoque le départ progressif des femmes en raison de la fin des « petits élevages ».

Dans les années 1960, l'apprentissage de la modernisation est un travail d'acceptation d'une nouvelle « civilisation ». Il faut abandonner l'agriculture paysanne pour une agriculture industrielle. Au-delà des nouvelles techniques, ce sont de nouveaux modes de pensée et de vie qui doivent être intégrés. Un long travail d'éducation, pris en charge par l'État ou élaboré dans des groupes locaux de réflexion, conjugué à des contraintes structurelles (politiques publiques) vient à bout des résistances mais la « victoire » est de courte durée. Vingt ans après, ressurgissent des formes atténuées, partielles ou « réappropriées » de cette agriculture « d'avant la modernisation » à travers l'extension des agricultures dites alternatives (agriculture paysanne, biologique, durable).

Aujourd'hui, la multiplicité des acteurs et des niveaux d'intervention dans la dynamique environnementaliste de l'agriculture bouleverse les mécanismes de diffusion. Plutôt que de diffusion, il faudrait d'ailleurs parler de médiation ou de concertation (Latour, 2007). Les concepts mobilisés pour analyser l'innovation sont les suivants : le réseau (un ensemble d'acteurs réunis pour une action commune), le fait (ce que

les membres du réseau s'accordent à établir comme vrai), l'entre-définition (le fait n'existe que par le réseau qui le porte), la traduction (il faut traduire les énoncés et les discours de chacun au sein du réseau afin d'assurer une intelligibilité commune), l'irréversibilité (l'avancée du travail en réseau se traduit par une cristallisation de l'engagement des acteurs de ce réseau). Ces travaux abordent le volet formel du travail d'apprentissage des innovations. Au point de vue du contenu, il s'agit pour ces collectifs d'individus d'élaborer des normes et des valeurs partagées, donc de réduire les tensions et les conflits lors des prises de décision. En ce sens, l'introduction d'une nouvelle façon de produire ou de consommer par exemple doit faire l'objet d'un relatif consensus. Les multiples innovations actuelles dans les circuits de commercialisation (AMA ~ point de vente collectif), où il s'agit tout autant pour les acteurs de changer un mode d'achat que de se reconnaître entre « gens engagés », sont des exemples de ce cheminement.

### Un contexte favorable ?

La modernisation agricole des « Trente Glorieuses » peut être qualifiée d'industrialisation. Les industries chimiques, mécaniques et agroalimentaires trouvent des débouchés considérables dans l'agriculture, elle-même dynamisée par l'augmentation de la demande en produits alimentaires de la part de la population dont le pouvoir d'achat s'accroît. Dans la phase de reconstruction qui suit la Seconde Guerre mondiale, le capitalisme est en pleine expansion. L'État soutient et renforce ce développement. Dans l'agriculture, cela passe par un interventionnisme fort pour garantir les revenus et par une mise à disposition de moyens financiers considérables dans les domaines de l'enseignement et de la recherche. Il est évident que les thèses des « jacistes » ont rencontré un écho favorable auprès de la bourgeoisie « moderniste » de l'époque. L'heure n'est plus à la traditionnelle opposition entre les secteurs agraires et industriels, l'un jugé passéiste, l'autre « dans son temps ». L'agriculture offre un débouché très important pour les industries en amont (chimie, métallurgie) et en aval (agro-alimentaire, grande distribution).

Le contexte actuel est moins favorable à une transformation des rapports de production dans l'agriculture. Tout d'abord, le modèle de l'agriculture conventionnelle est en parfaite adéquation avec le développement du capitalisme industriel et financier. Dans une phase d'expansion forte, la demande favorise la production intensive et la captation par l'industrie de biens alimentaires transformables à bas coût. Les récentes émeutes de la faim (manifestations pour un prix « décent » des denrées alimentaires) qui ont secoué de nombreux pays d'Afrique, d'Asie ou d'Amérique centrale ont mis à jour l'existence de pratiques spéculatives sur les productions végétales et animales.<sup>2</sup> Le phénomène s'étend même au foncier. La terre devient pour certaines entreprises ou certains États un placement financier autorisant des profits élevés en cas de récession, l'alimentation restant le poste d'achat prioritaire. Par ailleurs, ce que l'on pourrait appeler un « capitalisme vert », n'est pas actuellement dans une phase d'expansion. Un capitalisme vert, c'est-à-dire « un capitalisme qui réussirait à prendre en charge les problèmes environnementaux 'à sa manière' (marchande) et réussirait en même temps à s'ouvrir de nouveaux champs d'accumulation et de nouveaux débouchés ».<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Le Monde diplomatique, 14 avril 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Michel HUSSON, « Un capitalisme vert est-il possible? », Contretemps, n° 1, 1<sup>er</sup> trimestre, 2009 : 94.

<sup>1</sup> Henri MENDRAS, les paysans et la modernisation de l'agriculture, Paris, Édition du CNRS, 1958:9.



Une telle situation placerait en position commerciale favorable les agricultures déjà engagées dans un processus « d'écologisation des pratiques ». On retrouverait une situation analogue à celle des années 1960 où les agricultures « modernisantes » ont bénéficié du développement du capitalisme industriel.

### L'enjeu environnemental

Les expériences décrites à partir du terrain ne permettent pas de conclure à une transformation radicale des modes de production agricole comparable à celle des années 1960. Ce ne sont sans doute que les prémisses d'un changement. Dans une approche quantitative et macro, les agricultures alternatives restent un phénomène marginal. Plusieurs indicateurs révèlent la fragilité de ce type d'exploitation : le nombre d'agriculteurs peu élevé, les revenus faibles, des structures rarement pérennes, l'absence d'aides. Dans une approche qualitative et micro, le bilan est différent. Un contremodèle, presque insidieusement, fait son chemin. La forte demande sociale en faveur de produits sains et de qualité, la légitimité croissante de ce type d'agriculture auprès du monde politique, l'adéquation de ces productions avec les préoccupations environnementales du moment, la reconstruction du lien social avec les populations rurales et urbaines sont les signes d'une emprise sociale de plus en plus importante des agricultures alternatives.

Avec l'émergence des questions environnementales, une problématique nouvelle redéfinit l'activité agricole. L'enjeu n'est plus aux débats qui ont caractérisé les années qui suivent la Seconde Guerre mondiale où les choix de modèles de production se déclinaient autour des dualités entre tradition et modernité, passéisme et modernisme, individualisme et professionnalisation. Aujourd'hui, le débat se pose en termes d'ambivalence entre référence et marginalisation. L'agriculture doit se transformer pour devenir un secteur référent des espaces ruraux en matière de respect des ressources naturelles, de gestion de la biodiversité et de protection des paysages. Les agricultures telles qu'elles se sont développées ces quarante dernières années seront de plus en plus marginalisées par les populations et les pouvoirs publics. Cet enjeu est pris en compte par les agriculteurs conventionnels qui sont de plus en plus nombreux, pour des raisons de marketing ou par conviction, à intégrer des pratiques issues des agricultures alternatives dans leurs systèmes de production ou de commercialisation. À ce titre, l'agriculture trouve son mot à dire dans le devenir des « ruralités contemporaines ».

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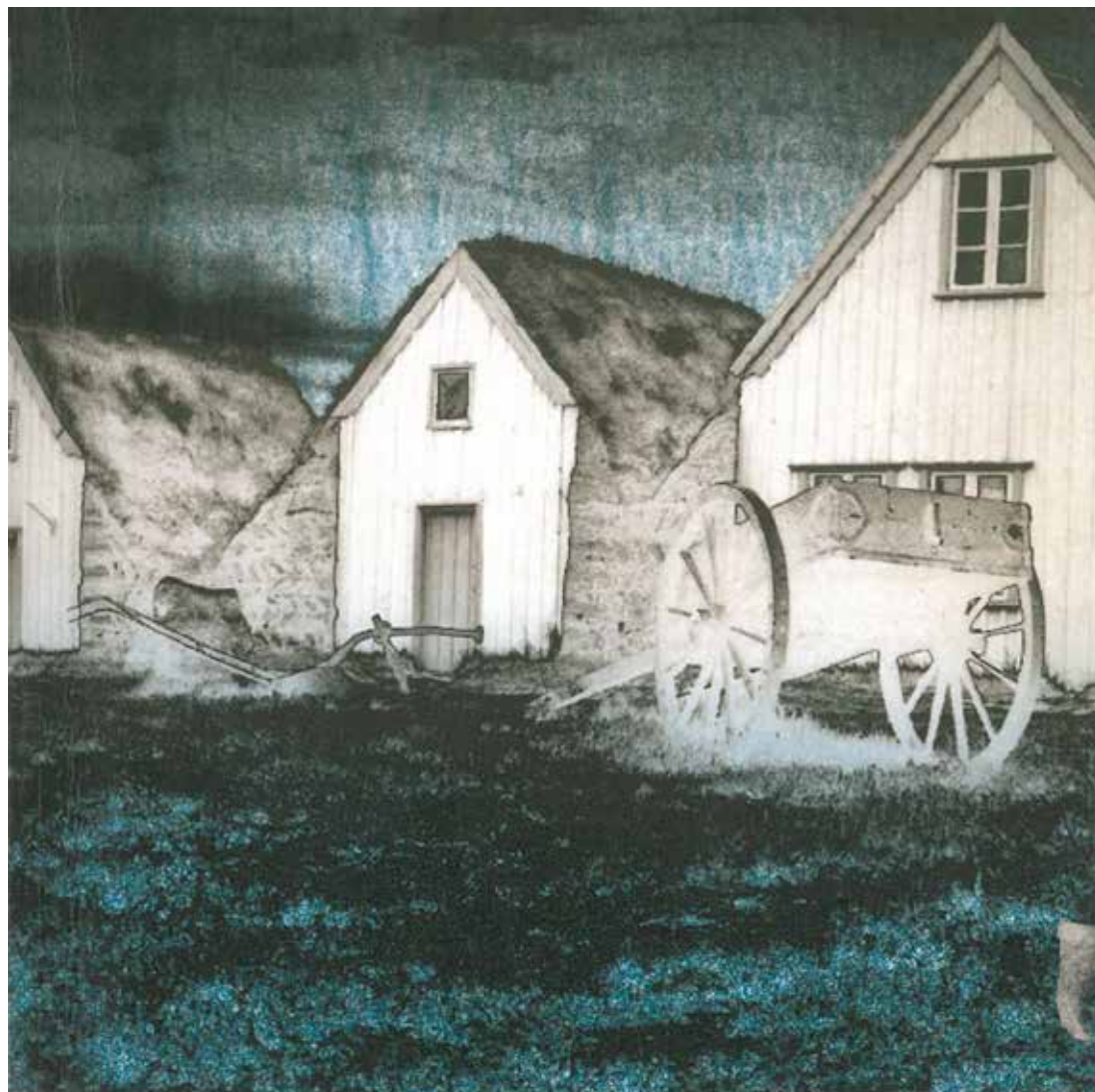
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# contested otherness, marginalisation and rurality countryside edited by Paul Cloke and Jo Little cultures



## Countryside cultures contested?

What is rurality? In "Contested countryside cultures, authors develop notions of rurality linked to "otherness" and marginalization. Rural space is a (white male heterosexual) space where otherness is defined. This does not mean that otherness is necessarily repressed, contained or excluded. The role of women for instance is central in rurality, although marginalized according to normally admitted standards. Rurality is hence a space where otherness becomes a subject.

The following text, a « discourse on strange ruralities », is an interesting glance into the complexity of the rural space, as seen from a sociologist point of view. It is set in a political context contrary to the Swiss : whereas the latter's territorial policy desperately tries to centralize governance (Swiss politics remain indeed structurally rural as many decisions are made on a local level), the U.K. policy is to decentralize policy on rural questions. Jonathan Murdoch, City and regional planning, University of Wales, Cardiff and Andy Pratt, London School of Economics and Political Science, claim it is necessary to have a multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary understanding of the rural. The topographies of the rural, they explain, is made up of coexisting dimensions of region, network and fluidity.

(PV)

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## *From the Power of Topography to the Topography of Power. A discourse on strange ruralities*

Jonathan Murdoch and Andy C. Pratt

### Introduction

The terms 'rural' and 'countryside' tend to evoke images of harmony and consensus. In Britain such images derive much of their power from the proximity of the countryside ideal to British national identity, and it has always seemed to enshrine those timeless qualities that make this 'sceptred isle' forever 'England'. Rural land is considered a priceless part of the nation's heritage. It has traditionally been a 'cosy corner' in which an 'Anglocentric' culture, one opposed to the multiculturalism increasingly evident in many cities, could nestle down safe from harm (Lowe et al. 1995). A not dissimilar view of the countryside has often been (unwittingly) rehearsed in academic writing on rural Britain. Thus academic texts have frequently portrayed the rural as a homogeneous social space, one which seems in many ways to exist in some timeless zone where old-fashioned virtues and their associated forms of life still linger. And while in the past thirty years or so a more critical approach to the countryside has been evident, as



recent debates, to be discussed below, have shown, even these accounts have sometimes thrown up new versions of the same old rural myths.

At the present juncture, and as the present volume indicates, a much more critical stance is being adopted towards such dominant images of rurality. Much academic writing currently emphasises how our received views of the rural landscape and county life disguise conflictual, competitive and exploitative sets of social relations. Thus the countryside that lies behind the images has become subject to a great deal of attention and, unsurprisingly perhaps, does not seem to quite match up to rural ideals (e.g. Thrift 1989). In this chapter we will briefly assess some of this work with the intention of sounding a note of caution. Before hurrying to the conclusion that we have now discovered some essential truth about the rural, we believe it is apposite to take note of Chambers' (1994) comment on many current theoretical concerns: that what we might be witnessing is the same old academic 'will to power' extending its reach over new research subjects. This warning relates in part to the charge that is frequently levelled at academic writing, namely, that it simplistically seeks to sweep up the world into 'tidy' or, perhaps even more damning, 'abstract' concepts and categories. While such critiques are often overdrawn, we will argue below that this worry ought to be taken seriously and it should require that we look reflexively upon our own ways of doing things and should provoke us into continually monitoring the ways in which we conduct social science.

The aim of this chapter is to argue that a reflexive awareness should permeate current theoretical and methodological approaches in rural studies. It is our contention that such an awareness is increasingly necessary. Its necessity does not derive only from issues intrinsic to social science. The UK government has recently published its White Paper on the countryside; this represents the first wide-ranging survey of countryside and rural policies in the UK for fifty years (Department of the Environment 1995). A major element in prompting this reappraisal has been the changing role and definition of the countryside within British society, as expressed in the competing and often conflicting demands made on rural resources. The White Paper, which is effectively an attempt to bring some co-ordination to the multitude of policies bearing upon rural Britain, reflects, in part, a fragmentation of 'the' rural experience. But its policies also represent a retreat from the governance of the rural as a coherent and unified space; the White Paper now proclaims that the value of the countryside lies in its diversity and local character and that its governance might be best achieved at the lowest level. Thus rural communities are asked to become more and more responsible for their own affairs, picking up many of the services and activities which were once the provenance of a (national) welfare state. We should be wary, then, of allying our new concerns with difference and diversity to particular policies at a time when government is seeking to retreat from many of its traditional (welfarist) responsibilities in rural areas. Such concerns should, therefore, be presented with an attention to the sets of power relations that both surround and constitute academic discourses.

Attending to the configuration of power surrounding academic discourse has many implications for writing and researching. One aspect, which we wish to emphasise here, is the role of reflexivity in making arguments and proposals; that is, how can we critically interrogate, in an on-going fashion, our ways of seeing and organising the rural world? What motivates our concern here is the belief that social scientific

understandings of 'rurality' do matter; they matter because the way in which we 'see' the countryside affects perception (some aspects become 'visible', i.e. acknowledged as a problem and potentially amenable to modification, and others invisible, or overlooked), evaluation (the relative valuing or moral worth attributed to what is 'visible'), and policy proposals (the policies and the politics used to achieve particular ends).

In this chapter we also hope to clarify the contours of the 'new' ruralities that are emerging from recent work and highlight the extent to which these offer a radical challenge to the more traditional modes of analysis which are, usually, brought to bear upon the 'rural', a challenge which is captured in our title, drawn from a quotation by Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 8-9). In a critique of social anthropology they note 'the power of topography to conceal successfully the topography of power'. Gupta and Ferguson are referring to the way that traditional social anthropology has reified the village as a bounded, sealed space and has ignored the flows of social relations across boundaries. We will have more to say about boundaries later in this chapter, but for now this quotation stands as a neat way of summarising our concerns about rural studies (by which we mean those academic disciplines concerned with the rural: geography, sociology, social anthropology, agricultural economics, etc.); namely, that the particular constructions of the rural that rural studies deploy – the topographies of the rural – have obscured or concealed that which sustains them – the topographies of power.

### **From Postmodern Rural Studies to 'Post-Rural? Studies: A Review**

There has been considerable discussion recently within the pages of the Journal of Rural Studies on the implications of 'postmodernism' for rural studies (see Halfacree 1993; Murdoch and Pratt 1993, 1994; Philo 1993; Pratt 1996a, 1996b). This has been supplemented by a recent book (Cloe et al. 1994) which also draws upon a postmodernist sensibility to articulate a series of 'positions' on the rural. The flavour of these contributions and the issues they raise can be explored through an exchange between Chris Philo and ourselves (Philo 1992, 1993; Murdoch and Pratt 1993, 1994) in the aforementioned journal.

The article which more than any other prompted recent discussions about the scope and status of rural studies is Chris Philo's (1992) extended review of Colin Ward's book *Child in the Country*. In this piece Philo identifies a 'blind spot' in rural studies: that of an unwarranted focus upon, and concern with, the interests and activities of powerful groups within the countryside (e.g. middle-class incomers, farmers, planners). He claims that this oversight has resulted in the active exclusion of many other actors and social groups from the academic discourse. Philo seeks to formalise this critique using a term popularised in postmodern analyses: the Other (Philo has outlined his version of postmodern geography in Cloe et al. (1992)). 'Others' are those regarded as in some way illegitimate members of society as a result of a variety of social characteristics such as being gay, a single parent, a traveller, a black person and so on. Philo thus calls for rural geography to be open to diversity and urges geographers to explore a range of different 'voices' or experiences of the rural. A new rural studies can be fashioned which both recovers and includes a range of 'other' voices, voices which have previously been neglected.

In many ways Philo's concerns could be seen as congruent with quite long-standing

research interests on the part of those traditionally working within the rural studies genre. For instance, a persistent concern within rural geography and sociology has been that of 'insider-outsider' relations, developed most notably within work on migration and counterurbanisation (see reviews by Halfacree 1995; Murdoch and Marsden 1994). Writers such as Pahl (1970) and Ambrose (1975), for instance, have sought to identify the divisions that have emerged within rural communities as a result of migratory (or counterurbanisation) trends. Although they used the concept of class (see Murdoch 1995 for an overview) as their main analytical tool, and thus concentrated upon class relations, they were nevertheless interested in how social groups in rural areas are changing as a result of dynamic processes of transformation. They were thereby continuing a tradition that can be traced from Wirth's (1938) classic study which questioned the inter-class difference between urban and rural spaces and suggested that intra-class differences may be just as significant. Ambrose and Pahl identified discrete types of 'incomers' in villages, some of whom have a pronounced impact on rural social formations, resulting in increased social tension. One important consequence of such analyses was that they effectively destroyed the idea that rural society is some kind of organic whole (it is riven by class relations at least) and sparked off a whole series of studies into the social processes that effectively transgress urban-rural distinctions (the work of Howard Newby in the late 1970s (Newby 1980; see also Newby et al. 1978) followed this line of analysis, as did much of the work on the political economy of agriculture during the 1980s (see Marsden et al. (1990) for a summary). Philo's concerns for rural Others could be simply taken as a rather belated acknowledgement that there is a greater diversity in the social relations which constitute the rural than has previously been recognised. However, Philo is concerned to explore a far more fractured set of identities than was evident in the earlier body of work and he urges researchers to be sensitive to the diversity of interests represented in the countryside.

We were stimulated to reply to Philo's article (Murdoch and Pratt 1993) for several reasons. First, we believe that the issues he addressed are significant and should not be ignored. Second, we agree with his identification of a partial rural geography, skewed in its research priorities. Third, we feel that his call for an epistemological engagement with postmodernism (spelled out more clearly in Philo 1993) is timely. However, although we agree with the general thrust of Philo's critique, we are reluctant to go along wholeheartedly with his prescription for rural studies. We are particularly worried by his attempt to resolve the problems of rural geography by simply 'adding in' a concern with 'new voices' or identities, particularly if the conceptual and methodological tools of analysis are set to remain the same. Our concern is that this can easily be seen as an indication that rural studies can continue in time-honoured fashion. Yet at present it is unclear how difference, diversity and fragmentation can be understood, given our current frames of reference, and there is a real danger that these new concerns will simply be grafted on at the margins. In short, our worry is that hidden and neglected 'Others' may remain peripheral to a subdiscipline still oriented towards the modernisation or rational organisation of the rural sphere. In our view the only way to counter this threat effectively is by reconstituting the 'core' of the subdiscipline: that is, by turning to a consideration of the organising frameworks that make up rural studies/geography/sociology. We may then begin to understand how these 'Others' came to be 'Othered'. Thus, what is required is more than bricolage; it is a

reflexive reconstruction of the academic terrain.

In our responses to Philo we proposed that there is a need to understand how we come to know the 'rural'. One answer to this question can be found, we argued, within an analysis of the theorisations and methodological tools deployed by researchers of the rural domain. We offered as evidence a short (and partial) history of rural studies. We were inspired in this approach by Foucault's earlier works, such as the *Archaeology of Knowledge* and *The Order of Things*, where the aim is to 'create a history of the different modes by which . . . human beings are made subjects' (Foucault 1982: 208). Rabinow (1986: 7-8), in a commentary on Foucault, summarises the impetus as an investigation of the objectification of subjects through 'dividing practices' or 'scientific classification'. In short, we identified structures of knowledge about the rural that have created particular effects. One of these effects is what comes to be regarded as within the legitimate scope of rural studies; analytical frameworks determine what is seen and what is not.

We offered the idea that the modernist frameworks that have traditionally been used to make sense of rural society have consistently 'purified' (Sibley 1988) rural space and have reproduced particular socio-spatial dualisms. There has been a tendency to create divisions, categories or classifications which in turn 'perform' (Callon and Law 1995) different (but closely related) versions of the rural (established against, and usually inferior to, the urban). As a result, particular practices, spaces and persons are constituted as (il)legitimate on the basis of these (usually purified) categories (evidence on this process in another, non-academic domain is provided by Halfacree (1996)). A similar observation is made by Marc Mormont (1990: 22) when he says of the rural:

*The category that evolved was not only empirical or descriptive ... it also carried what I shall call a representation or set of meanings, in that it connoted a more or less explicit discourse ascribing a certain set of characteristics or attributes to those to whom it was applied. As any social category in ordinary use likewise implicitly ascribes properties to groups, the set of meanings underpinning it is necessarily linked to a representation of society overall.*

Moreover, he goes on to say, 'such a category alludes not only to objective conditions, but also to social legitimation' where a particular set of meanings will 'confer a greater or lesser degree of validity on each social group'. On these grounds, we should be extremely wary of attempts to definitively define the rural. It is perhaps preferable to argue that the rural is no longer 'mappable' as a set of physical or social distinctions (or perhaps more accurately, as we shall explore below, while the rural is clearly 'performed' by mapping exercises these should be seen as only particular, partial and incomplete versions of what the rural might be (come)). There is no essential rural condition, no point of reference against which rurality can be measured. Every practice of dividing and distinguishing the rural is saturated with assumptions and presuppositions. It is, of course, impossible to step outside these; the only alternative, we believe, is to adopt a reflexive approach to rural studies, one that takes account of the ways in which we do the dividing and the distinguishing, and that considers the way in which our categories and concepts, the very accounts that we write, perform power relations so that these might become more visible and contestable (Murdoch and Pratt 1994).

A first step here is to admit that the Other has always lain at the margins of our worlds. In constructing the rural we have often implicitly and sometimes explicitly drawn a line across which only the most notable figures in the landscape have been



allowed to tread (e.g. Philo's powerful groups). For this reason the rural is easily portrayed as a 'civilised retreat' (Lowe et al. 1995), a zone where Sameness (British or English middle-class whiteness and heterosexuality) is reasserted in the wake of a profound postcolonial anxiety. The role that rurality plays in the process of Othering is, therefore, reasonably clear; what remain unclear, however, are the experiences and identities of Otherness which might legitimately be encompassed within a rural framework. We must push our analyses further, therefore, as Philo suggests, into social realms that are occluded within the zone of Sameness. But this move must be accompanied by some rethinking of how we do what we do: too often 'to name is to possess, to domesticate is to extend patronage. [For] we are usually only willing to recognise differences so long as they remain within the domain of our language, our knowledge, our control' (Chambers 1994: 30). The challenge is now to throw ourselves into that ambiguous space 'in which differences are permitted a hearing, in which both speakers and the syntax of conversation run the risk of modification' (ibid: 31). It is to embrace an 'ethics of difference', one which 'can express and encourage an openness of outlook based upon a freedom to move across border and boundaries in pursuit of new senses of self and other' (Pile and Thrift 1995: 21).

To summarise this section, we are claiming that whichever conceptions of space come to predominate will do so, as often as not, as a result of social struggles and the imposition of certain sets of power relations (see also Pratt 1991). However, once a web of meanings has been imposed and stabilised it will, in turn, give rise to a further set of effects; that is, ways of ordering the world, in which certain thoughts, statements, practices are deemed legitimate or illegitimate. As we have implied above, categories such as the rural, and the identities which are implicated in particular definitions, can be traced in terms of power effects. Thus, the concern with neglected Others in the rural domain points up the systems of classification which have dominated rural studies and how these have resulted in particular effects (i.e. neglect). This concern requires that we take a fresh look at our concepts and methods. Having considered some of the most general categories which guide academic work, in the next section we turn to elaborate in a little more detail some of the frames which have traditionally 'organised' analysis of the rural.

### **Topographies of the Rural: Region, Network and Fluidity**

It should by now be clear that the time for some modification in the conceptual and methodological tools that guide academic analysis is nigh. Our aim here is to take on board the challenges that confront us, as outlined above, while leaving scope for social scientific analysis of the rural. We are not sympathetic to the view that social science is inherently and irredeemably 'modernist' and, therefore, inappropriate to the study of such postmodern themes as difference and Otherness. We believe it is possible to be sociological and to be sensitive to diverse experiences and histories, and we believe sociology can still chart a course through the multiple spaces and territories that constitute the rural terrain. This sociology must, however, now recognise, as Marc Mormont puts it (1990: 34), that the rural 'is no longer one single space, but a multiplicity of social space ... each of them having its own logic, its own institutions, as well as its own specific network of actors'. Thus there is no one unique and privileged vantage point, no one centre from which the rural can be captured and assessed. Rather, we must accept that academic studies of the rural will be characterised by partial, incom-

plete and contingent views of increasingly complex ruralities. Once we recognise this we must also acknowledge that

*we are no longer at the centre of the world. Our sense of the centre is being displaced ... The zone we now inhabit is open, full of gaps: an excess that is irreducible to a single centre or point of view. In these intervals ... other stories, languages and identities can also be heard, encountered and experienced.*

(Chambers 1994: 24)

The rural is contingent, fluid, detached from any necessary, stable sociospatial reference point. Its meanings are asserted relationally (most notably in contradistinction to the urban) and are situationally specific; that is, we can know the rural only from and through particular socio-spatial positions. Moreover, taking Other ruralities seriously means that we must attend to the frameworks of organisation that allowed these so-called Others both to disappear from view and then to re-emerge into the light of academic attention. Therefore, in this section we consider three main ways of seeing rural space. First, we examine the boundaries that can encircle our spaces, directing attention to those who lie within but excluding those without. Second, we move on to the relationships in which our subjects are enmeshed and show that, while this concern allows for the examination of processes of interaction and relations of power, it ignores those who are not incorporated, those who lie outside dominant configurations of the rural. This leads us into a realm that lies in between inclusion and exclusion, inside and outside. In this third framework our rurals are open and fluid. The investigation of this in-between type of rurality requires modes of analysis which are flexible enough to follow these relatively fluid social spaces as they emerge, stabilise and fragment.

The terms we use to characterise these three ways of seeing are region, network and fluidity. We have adopted these from a study in the sociology of science (a forum which we have found particularly useful in the conduct of rural studies - see Murdoch and Pratt 1994; Murdoch and Marsden 1995) by Anne Marie Mol and John Law (1994). We recognise that our own use of these concepts may not accord with theirs. However, our intentions are comparable, for we also wish to explore the 'topological suppositions which frame the performance of difference' (Mol and Law 1994: 642; emphasis in the original). We are concerned to understand how topographies of the rural might be employed in ways which render sets of power relations transparent. And, again in common with Mol and Law, we believe our mode of analysis should make such an aim explicit and should be tailored to meet that requirement. It is in this spirit that we employ their terms.

In line with Mormont's conception of the rural, Mol and Law do not believe that the 'social' exists as a single spatial type. Rather, they argue,

*it performs several kinds of space in which different 'operations' take place. First, there are regions in which objects are clustered together and boundaries drawn around each cluster. Second, there are networks in which distance is a function of the relations between the elements and difference a matter of relational variety... However sometimes, we suggest, neither boundaries nor relations mark the difference between one place and another. Instead, sometimes boundaries come and go, allow leakage or disappear altogether, while relations transform themselves without fracture. Sometimes, then, social space behaves like a fluid. [Fluid spaces] do without the solidity of regions and the formality of networks [emphasis added].*

(Mol and Law 1994: 643)

We will briefly outline our understanding of each of these terms - region, network,

fluidity - and will provide a preliminary assessment of their potential utility in rural studies.

## Region

Of the three concepts, region is the most familiar to rural geographers. This concept has had a variable history within the (sub)discipline, being seen, on the one hand, as simply a physical concept - that is, a differentiated segment of earth space - and, on the other, as a social concept - that is, as a series of settings for social interaction (Thrift 1983). In line with our earlier comments on the relational nature of space within poststructuralism, Mol and Law see the region as an inherently social construct but one wherein

*space is exclusive. Neat divisions, no overlap. Here or there, each space is located at one side of a boundary. It is thus that an 'inside' and an 'outside' are created. What is similar is close. What is different is elsewhere.*

(Mol and Law 1994: 647)

This sense of the region has many resonances when we turn to consider the rural. In England, for instance, we need only think of the landscape, that great creation of the eighteenth century, to imagine how the rural comes to be a delimited, exclusive space. As Barrell (1992: 131) says of the representation of labourers within the paintings of Constable, 'the farmworkers are either invisible, their presence in the countryside to be inferred only from the effects of their labour, or else they are minute and distant, diminished into children, into specks of white in the far background'. This view of the countryside acutely illustrates how the rural can be captured and rendered exclusive through an individualistic yet dominant way of seeing, 'a way of seeing which separates subject and object, giving lordship to the eye of a single observer' (Cosgrove 1984: 262).

Such exclusive representations of rural space might seem, at first glance, a long way from regionalism within geography. Yet positivism imbued geography with the scientific urge to tame the landscape in a not dissimilar fashion. As Thrift (1994: 206) points out, for Vidal de la Blache (a pioneer of geographical analysis), geography was the science of landscape. He quotes Ross (1988), who argued that 'Vidalian geography takes its model from the taxonomic dream of the natural sciences and is resolutely turned towards description; the geographer finds himself [sic] facing a landscape: the perceptible, visible aspect of space'. And as geography matures as a discipline so a variety of techniques are employed to render this landscape even more visible: Harley (1992: 231), in a discussion of cartography, believes that 'one effect of accelerated technological change - as manifest in digital cartography and geographical information systems - has been to strengthen its positivist assumptions'. This positivist way of seeing is summarised by Pile and Thrift (1995: 45) as a scopic regime which

*valorises the neutrality of seeing: the world is turned into a set of geometrical arrangements based on an abstract, fixed, universal, isotropic and material understanding of space; indeed, it is this 'space' which is properly presented in the generic map - a flat, supposedly all-seeing (if not all-showing) picture of (part of) the world.*

The rural has been bound up into this science of the landscape. One need only think of the geographer L. Dudley Stamp and the way his interwar land use survey influenced the ideas of urban containment which became so central to the post-war planning sys-

tem (see Hall et al. 1973) to recognise the power of this form of representation. Even where the social characteristics of rurality have become pre-eminent, attempts to map rural space tend to reproduce the neat divisions, the insides and outsides. As Halfacree (1993: 23) notes, definitions of rurality, such as Cloke's rurality index (Cloke 1977; Cloke and Edwards 1986), tend to concentrate upon that which is observable and measurable. Such 'empiricism', he believes, 'accepts that the rural exists and concerns itself with the correct selection of parameters with which to define it'. It is tempting, therefore, to simply dismiss this rural geography of the region out of hand; to portray it as outmoded, irredeemably positivist or modernist, unsuited to the fractured and diverse countrysides that we now see before us. This would be a mistake for a number of reasons. First, the region is undoubtedly a powerful construction. The portrayal of space as an exclusive domain in which diverse entities are standardised and homogenised can be studied as a process of 'normalisation' (Harley 1992, after Foucault) which in itself gives rise to powerful representations of the world. In turn, these representations influence 'powerful' actors (e.g. planners) and the ways they choose to intervene in the world. Second, these techniques are also powerful in their own right; they inscribe what is visible and thus, in Latour's (1987) phrase, allow 'action at a distance' on entities far removed in space and time (using a map we can, in a very real sense, 'visit' a place without ever 'leaving home'). As Chambers (1994: 92) reminds us, 'with a map in our hands we can begin to grasp an outline, a shape, some sort of location'. There may be more to this location than can ever be mapped, yet the demarcation of regions does capture some elements even if it is just those that are the most visible. While such visions of the rural are always incomplete, and are never enough, they should be seen for what they are: sets of powerful inscriptions which 'perform' certain powerful ruralities.

## Networks

Of course, by demarcating 'insides' regional ruralities alert us to 'outsides'; they shadow the 'landscapes of exclusion' that Dave Sibley (e.g. 1992) has long insisted remain intrinsic to the arrangement of rural (and urban) spaces. However, the main problem with regional rurals is that they not only obscure the fragmented nature of contemporary socio-spatial formations, but leave opaque the processes of change that continually give rise to regional shapes. The processes of change, it is argued, do not respect the discrete boundaries that circumscribe the rural; they transgress such distinctions and travel over much longer distances and times. Thus spatially proximate clusters such as regions neglect the way in which relationships are forged over long distances. These relations, Mol and Law believe, are better thought of as 'networks' wherein the network brings together two or more locations that may be far away from each other on a regional map:

*In a network space ... proximity isn't metric. And 'here' and 'there' are not objects or attributes that lie inside or outside a set of boundaries. Proximity has, instead, to do with ... the network elements and the way they hang together. Places with a similar set of elements and similar relations between them are close to one another, and those with different elements or relations are far apart.*

(Mol and Law 1994: 649)

Here the region is folded by the network configurations. Within the networks, spaces are constructed as nodes form and links are imposed. Networks give rise to regional effects, as crosscutting sets of relations issue outcomes that may coalesce in the form



of 'places'. Yet to make sense of the key social relations that give rise to such regional effects the task becomes that of following the networks as actors are bound together, identities are forged and power relations stabilised.

In the rural domain this type of work is still at an early stage but has been utilised most notably in studies of the food system and the development process. In the former body of work the incorporation of agriculture into the food system shows how local (agricultural) effects (such as changing farm structures, patterns of cropping, inputs and so on) result from sets of power relations established higher up the food chain (by, for instance, retailers) (see Fine 1994). This approach, as Whatmore (1994) explains, has taken studies of agriculture beyond the farm gate to the technological and economic interrelations between farming, agricultural input suppliers, scientific research and development, food processing, retailing and the regulatory activities of various state agencies. A vast web of interlinkages called the food chain has been uncovered. In the process, it has become clear that agriculture is tied into sets of 'vertical' relations in this chain which are far more important than 'horizontal' relations to other aspects of life in rural areas (Marsden et al. 1990). The rural cannot, therefore, be equated, in a regional sense, with the agricultural.

In the latter (horizontal) area, the processes giving rise to exclusive regional ruralities (e.g. the English middle-class, white, heterosexual spaces we are all familiar with) have been analysed in work on rural development as networks, showing how local actors are tied into long chains of power relations (Murdoch and Marsden 1994, 1995). In the case of land development interests, for example, it is clear that change at the local level can be properly understood only when we chart the relations between the local agents of change and those situated much further away (at, for instance, the 'national' level); It has also become evident that patterns of development and conservation or preservation consistently emerge from forms of collective action (e.g. Cloke and Little 1990; Lowe, 1977; Murdoch and Marsden 1994; Short et al. 1986). In order to shape rural space – the protection or development of which acts as a spur to much political action – actors need to pool resources, build alliances and act in concert with others.

Effectively this work is a study of the powerful and shows in detail how these actors become powerful and sustain their power. The rural is configured by these networks (they provide in Massey's (1991) terms its 'power geometry'), and in part the analysis of these helps explain how landscapes become exclusive, how Others are excluded from the scene by powerful actors. The problem with this approach, however, is that it forces the social scientist to follow the network builders and, as Law (1991: 11) notes, 'it becomes difficult to sustain any kind of critical distance from them. We take on their categories. We see the world through their eyes. We take on the point of view of those whom we are studying' (emphasis in the original). Moreover, it is only powerful actors who tend to get followed. While the network approach is good at showing the contingency of power relations by documenting in detail how the powerful become powerful it tells us nothing about those who lie outside the (power) networks. Those who lack resources, a voice, visibility, will continue to be neglected if we simply concentrate on powerful networks. Although network analysis helps in understanding how the rural becomes an exclusive, homogeneous terrain it does not direct us towards those who fall into the gaps between the networks. It does not enable us to hear Other voices, Other experiences or to understand Other rurals.

## Fluidity

We are driven again, therefore, to ask whether there are other spaces around, 'spaces that have topographical properties which aren't like those of regions and networks' (Mol and Law 1994: 653). We have already stressed our willingness to conceptualise the rural as a fluid malleable space, one comprising heterogeneous flows and complexities. Thus we now confront a third space, a fluid space, in which Mol and Law (ibid) believe that

there are often no clear boundaries. Typically the objects generated inside them – the objects that generate them – aren't well defined. Thus, even the boundary between the normal and pathological ... isn't given once and for all. Any attempt to fix it tends to falter [original emphasis].

In this fluid space nothing comes neatly packaged into insides and outsides, Sames and Others, here and there. Fluidity ensures that there are varying shades and colours, that things are much more mixed up:

A fluid space ... isn't quite like a regional one. Difference inside a fluid space isn't necessarily marked by boundaries. It isn't always sharp. It moves. And a fluid space isn't quite like a network, either. For in a fluid elements inform each other. But the way they do so may continually alter. The bonds within fluid spaces aren't stable. Any single component – if it can be singled out – can be missed.

(Mol and Law 1994: 663)

It is fair to say that this fluid space is now gripping the social science imagination. Postcolonial writers, such as Homi Bhabha (1990), have suggested the notion of a 'third space' as an in-between, fluid, intertextual space. It is the acknowledgement of this 'third', 'ambiguous' or 'hybrid' space which has brought to light the Other and forced a reassessment of the Same, ensuring that no sharp boundaries between Us and Them can be maintained. Now static binary divisions give way to fluid, incomplete, open forms of identity: as Chambers (1994: 82) says,

to talk of differences, even radical and incommensurable ones, in economic, political and cultural terms, and of their embodiment in ethnicity, gender and sexuality, is to talk of an understanding of the making of identities in movement, under and in, processes.

There are now no fixed points of reference, no privileged points of view; simply a swirling, viscous, partially stable, partially enclosed, movement of social entities.

In rural studies the call to attend to neglected Others forces a recognition of this third, fluid space. As yet, however, work of this kind is still thin on the ground (a situation to be partially rectified by the present volume), but a few studies which emanate from the earlier traditions of rural studies do give some sense of what a third rural space might look like. We are thinking here of anthropological work on rural communities. While much of this work has traditionally been the object of criticism, notably for its representation of these social forms as overly consensual and stultifyingly harmonious (the classic critique is Bell and Newby {1971}), the anthropological method of long-term residence in the community has often led to great sensitivity to the diversity of communal identities. Fiona Bowie (1993: 168-9), for instance, makes the following comment on the virtues of an anthropological approach in the context of Wales:

Wales presents to the rest of the world a coherent picture of cultural self-sufficiency and a firm sense of identity. What outsiders see, however, is not so much Wales as their own reflection, or stereotypes of Welshness. ... As one begins to penetrate beyond this refracted image of Welshness, not least by learning the Welsh language, the unproblematic and monolithic nature of Welsh

identity begins to fragment. One is left not so much with a coherent notion of Welshness ... as with a sense of many conflicting and interlocking definitions of identity which actively compete for symbolic space and public recognition.

It is in the course of this 'penetration' of rural cultures that in-between spaces emerge. This is strikingly evident in Nigel Rapport's (1993) study of the village of Wanet in Cumbria, which shows an acute sensitivity to 'the seeming sameness' of such analytical categories as 'rural', 'community', 'kinship', 'class', 'social structure' and so forth. In a rural community such as 'Wanet', Rapport (1993: 41) believes,

*we might find that rather than building blocks which always cause the replication of one kind of collective structure (an overarching, equilibrating community) items of routine behaviour serve as ambiguous and malleable forms which may crop up in very different circumstances, be combined in different ways, and, to their protagonists, mean different things.*

Despite his identification of many communal forms of behaviour, Rapport finds no standard definition of what these entail among the inhabitants of 'Wanet': in use, the forms which many would agree upon as common and proper come to be mediated by a diversity of individual ends. Any one behavioural form can, in specific situations, have a number of different meanings:

*behavioural commonalities are personalised in usage and come to be animated in possibly idiosyncratic fashions. They become instruments of diversity and difference, and yet the conditions of their use remain essentially public, and it is in co-ordination with significant others and in certain routine and limited ways that these meanings come to be made.*

(Rapport 1993: 170)

The distinction between individual difference and communal similarity begins to be blurred in this analysis. In Rapport's 'Wanet' the community works only by maintaining a balance between the idiosyncrasy of personal expression and the reproduction of routine behavioural norms. He thus points to a 'tension' between what is shared or exchanged and the idiosyncrasies of creative expression:

*The beauty of the exchange for me is this awful tension between the surface exchange, the orderly conversational form, the shared knowledge of interactional systematics - how to speak, when, and in what manner - and the unique visions, the limitless avenues of thought, the wild disorders of contradiction that can be motivating the exchange, causing its regular reoccurrence, and dancing delightedly but invisibly around its expression.*

(Rapport 1993: 163-4)

A third space begins to emerge, therefore: it is a gap between the accepted (regional) conception of a homogeneous community and stable selves; it is a fluid, ambiguous space full of the complexities of norm and difference, forever changing in situation after situation.

Rapport successfully renders this fluid rurality using the language of symbolic interactionism, a mode of analysis which is well suited to situationally grounded research. However, it is also important to recognise the role of methodology in all this. Rapport's experience of 'fitting in' shapes his analysis in profound ways. Much of Rapport's own experience of 'Wanet' is a sustained attempt to strike a balance between normal community behaviour and self-expression. By immersing himself in the rural, while opening himself up to the experience of others, insights into a 'third' space are achieved. There is much to be recommended in this type of social science enquiry, for in some ways it forces the analyst to enter into an experience of Otherness. By becoming a 'stranger' in the rural, by coming from elsewhere, from 'there' and not 'here', and

hence by being both 'inside' and 'outside' the situations at hand, we can begin to experience that estrangement, that 'uncanny displacement' (Chambers 1994: 6), which can so often characterise the experience of Otherness. In other words, we are forced to confront strange ruralities.

To summarise this section, then, we have identified three types of rural space: regional space, network space and fluid space. It should be noted that the portrayal of these spaces has included a mixture of concepts or ways of seeing and that which is seen: the rural(s). The distinction between ways of seeing and that which is seen is difficult if not impossible to draw and we have not attempted to do so. We have no wish to argue that these three spaces can be considered in developmental terms; that is, we are progressing from a regional space to a fluid space. On the contrary, along with Mol and Law (1994: 663), we want to emphasise that the 'three topologies have intricate relations. They co-exist.' They perform the rural in their different ways and the effects are all around us. Social science is implicated in these performances, for it plays its role in conjuring up certain rurals and neglecting others. We have proposed these three rural spaces in order to allow more balanced accounts of diverse and complex rurals to be formulated. The three concepts are offered here in the hope that they enable rural studies to capture this diversity and complexity in terms which allow Other experiences and voices to be heard.

## Conclusion

We began this chapter by acknowledging that rural studies has traditionally tended to focus upon the powerful in rural areas and has been concerned with understanding the rural in terms of modernisation and rationalisation. We can discern shifting research priorities leading to increasing attention on division and difference in the countryside. This movement culminates in Chris Philo's plea for rural studies to engage with previously neglected Others, for the subdiscipline to understand that there is far more within the rural terrain than has previously been imagined. Our own contribution to this shift in focus has been to ask that we are careful about our conceptual and methodological approaches to these new rurals. In order to facilitate a careful reconsideration of academic work in this area we have provided three 'middle-level' concepts which might fruitfully organise future discussions of the increasingly strange ruralities that are likely to confront us. Region is proposed as emblematic of traditional approaches to the rural and as such stands for the purified representations of rural space that have characterised both rural studies and other rural discourses. The term network captures many current research concerns which seek to illuminate the activities of the powerful as they order the rural and marginalise Others. Fluidity is introduced to clarify the nature of the 'third' space which contemporary poststructuralist writers have marked out as their chosen terrain. Here identities are only provisionally stabilised, boundaries only provisionally marked and rurality rendered increasingly strange. For the critical social scientist this third, fluid space is currently the most challenging aspect of rurality.

While these concepts have been introduced to allow rural studies to represent the rural more fairly - giving voice to the previously neglected, for instance - they should also mark out the limits of what social science can and should do: no longer can one framework render the whole rural world for all to see. We should, therefore, in the spirit



of reflexivity, aspire to modesty in our endeavours. To emphasise this point we close with a quote by John Law (taken from Callon and Law 1995: 504) which attempts to mark out the legitimate scope of our ambitions in relation to the neglected Others that will soon be crowding onto the rural studies research agenda:

To imagine that we can assimilate the Other in any of its forms is hubris. Instead, it seems to me that these Others will ignore us for most of the time. Instead, they will continue, as they always have, to perform their specific forms of agency to one another. And all that we can do is to say that these performances go on. And then to create appropriately monstrous ways of representing them on those rare occasions when our paths happen to cross and we find, for a moment, that we need to interact with them.

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## Rurality and governance

Is rurality about local governance? James Scott, professor of anthropology and co-director of the agrarian studies Program at Yale University, is author of numerous studies on peasantry throughout the world. He has explained what's wrong with looking at rurality from a state's viewpoint. In his last book, "two cheers for anarchism", he describes a sensibility for local knowledge, common sense and creativity of ordinary people. He describes the way state-defined industrial - and urban - consumerist society tends to erase difference and bottom-up governance. "Over the past two centuries, vernacular practices have been extinguished at such a rate that one can, with little exaggeration, think of the process as one of mass extinction akin to the accelerated disappearance of species. And the cause is also analogous: the loss of habitat." Rurality is also about vernacular practices.

(PV)

SCOTT James C. *Two Cheers for Anarchism*, Princeton University Press, 2012

## Vernacular Order, Official Order

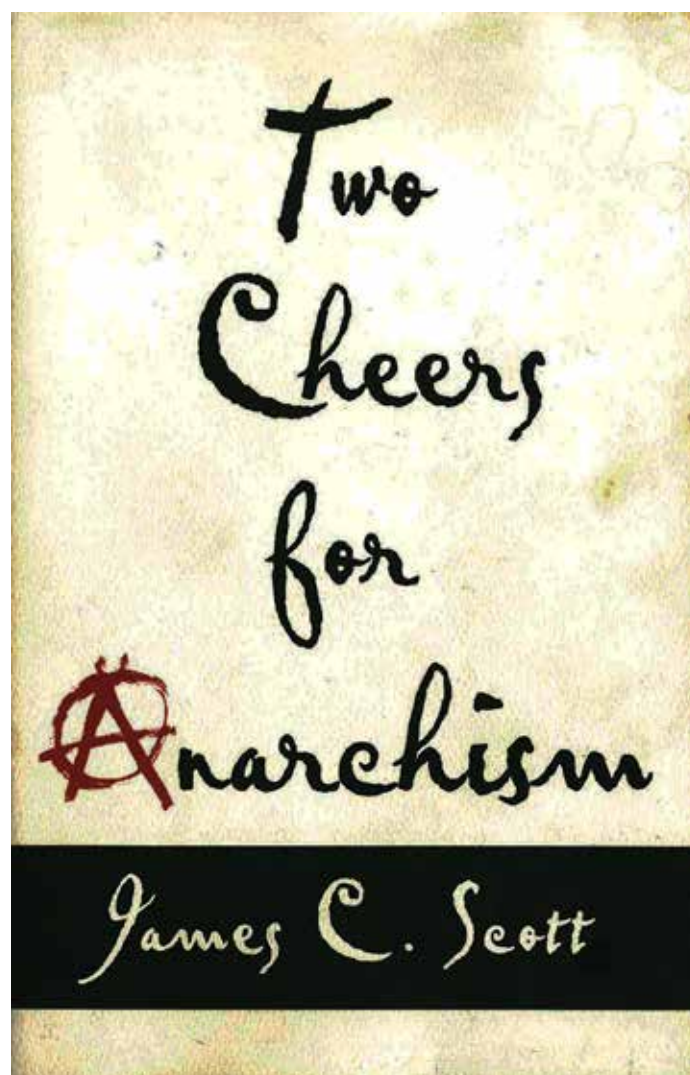
James C. Scott

### FRAGMENT 5

#### Vernacular and Official Ways of "Knowing"

*I live in small inland town in Connecticut called Durham, after its much larger and better-known English namesake. Whether out of nostalgia for the landscape left behind or a lack of imagination; there is scarcely a town in Connecticut that does not simply appropriate an English place-name. Native American landscape terms tend to survive only in the names of lakes and rivers, or in the name of the state itself. It is a rare colonial enterprise that does not attempt to rename the landscape as a means of asserting its ownership and making it both familiar and legible to the colonizers. In settings as disparate as Ireland, Australia, and the Palestinian West Bank, the landscape has been comprehensively renamed in an effort to smother the older vernacular terms.*

*Consider, by way of illustration, the vernacular and official names for roads. A road runs between my town of Durham and the coastal town of Guilford, some sixteen miles to the south. Those of us who live in Durham call this road (among ourselves) the "Guilford Road" because it tells us exactly where we'll get to if we take it. The same road at its Guilford terminus is naturally called the "Durham Road" because it tells the inhabitants of Guilford exactly where they'll get to if they take it. One imagines that those who live midway along the road call it the "Durham Road" or the "Guilford Road" depending on which way they are heading. That the same road has two names depending on one's location demonstrates the situational, contingent nature of vernacular naming practices; each name encodes valuable local knowledge-perhaps the most important single thing you would want to know about a road is where it leads. Ver-*





vernacular practices not only produce one road with two names but many roads with the same name. Thus, the nearby towns of Killingworth, Haddam, Madison, and Meriden each have roads leading to Durham that the local inhabitants call the "Durham Road."

Now imagine the insuperable problems that this locally effective folk system would pose to an outsider requiring a unique and definitive name for each road. A state road repair crew sent to fix potholes on the "Durham Road" would have to ask, "Which Durham Road?" Thus it comes as no surprise that the road between Durham and Guilford is reincarnated on all state maps and in all official designations as "Route 77." The naming practices of the state require a synoptic view, a standardized scheme of identification generating mutually exclusive and exhaustive designations. As Route 77, the road no longer immediately conveys where it leads; the sense of Route 77 only springs into view once we spread out a road map on which all state roads are enumerated. And yet the official name can be of vital importance. If you are gravely injured in a car crash on the Durham-Guilford Road, you will want to tell the state-dispatched ambulance team unambiguously that the road on which you are in danger of bleeding to death is Route 77.

Vernacular and official naming schemes jostle one another in many contexts. Vernacular names for streets and roads encode local knowledge. Some examples are Maiden Lane (the Lane where five spinster sisters once lived and walked, single file, to church every Sunday), Cider Hill Road (the road up the hill where the orchard and cider mill once stood), and Cream Pot Road (once the site of a dairy, where neighbors bought milk, cream, and butter). At the time when the name became fixed, it was probably the most relevant and useful name for local residents, though it might be mystifying to outsiders and recent arrivals. Other road names might refer to geographic features: Mica Ridge Road, Bare Rock Road, Ball Brook Road. The sum of roads and place-names in a small place, in fact, amounts to something of a local geography and history if one is familiar with the stories, features, episodes, and family enterprises encoded within them. For local people these names are rich and meaningful; for outsiders they are frequently illegible. The nonlocal planners, tax collectors, transportation managers, ambulance dispatchers, police officers, and firefighters, however, find a higher order of synoptic legibility far preferable. Given their way, they tend to prefer grids of parallel streets, consecutively numbered (First Street, Second Street), and compass directions (Northwest First Street, Northeast Second Avenue). Washington, D.C., is a particularly stunning example of such rational planning. New York City, by contrast, is a hybrid. Below Wall Street (marking the outer wall of the original Dutch settlement), the city is "vernacular" in its tangle of street forms and names, many of them originally footpaths; above Wall Street it is an easily legible, synoptic grid city of Cartesian simplicity, with avenues and streets at right angles to one another and enumerated, with a few exceptions, consecutively. Some midwestern towns, to relieve the monotony of numbered streets, have instead named them consecutively after presidents. As a bid for legibility, it is likely to appeal only to quiz show fans, who know when to expect "Polk," "Van Buren," "Taylor," and "Cleveland" streets to pop up; as a pedagogical tool, there is something to be said for it. Vernacular measurement is only as precise as it needs to be for the purposes at hand. It is symbolized in such expressions as a "pinch of sale," "a stone's throw," "a book of hay," "within shouting distance." And for many purposes, vernacular rules may prove more accurate than apparently more exact systems. A case in point is the advice given by Squanto to white settlers in New

England about when to plant a crop new to them, maize. He reportedly told them to "plant corn when the oak leaves were the size of a squirrel's ear." An eighteenth-century farmer's almanac, by contrast, would typically advise planting, say, "after the first full moon in May;" or else would specify a particular dace. One imagines that the almanac publisher would have feared, above all, a killing frost, and would have erred on the side of caution. Still, the almanac advice is, in its way, rigid: What about farms near the coast as opposed to those inland? What about fields on the north side of a hill that got less sun, or farms at higher elevations? The almanac's one-size-fits-all prescription travels rather badly. Squanto's formula, on the other hand, travels well. Wherever there are squirrels and oak trees and they are observed locally, it works. The vernacular observation, it turns out, is closely correlated with ground temperature, which governs oak leafing. It is based on a close observation of the sequence of spring events that are always sequential but may be early or delayed, drawn out or rushed, whereas the almanac relies on a universal calendrical and lunar system.

## FRAGMENT 6

### Official Knowledge and Landscapes of Control

The order, rationality, abstractness, and synoptic legibility of certain kinds of schemes of naming, landscape, architecture, and work processes lend themselves to hierarchical power. I think of them as "landscapes of control and appropriation." To take a simple example, the nearly universal system of permanent patronymic naming did not exist anywhere in the world before states found it useful for identification. It has spread along with taxes, courts, landed property, conscription, and police work—that is, along with the development of the state. It has now been superseded by identification numbers, photography, fingerprints, and DNA testing, but it was invented as a means of supervision and control. The resulting techniques represent a general capacity that can be used as easily to deliver vaccinations as to round up enemies of the regime. They centralize knowledge and power, but they are utterly neutral with respect to the purposes to which they are put.

The industrial assembly line is, from this perspective, the replacement of vernacular, artisanal production by a division of labor in which only the designing engineer controls the whole labor process and the workers on the floor become substitutable "hands." It may, for some products, be more efficient than artisanal production, but there is no doubt that it always concentrates power over the work process in those who control the assembly line. The utopian management dream of perfect mechanical control was, however, unrealizable not just because trade unions intervened but also because each machine had its own particularities, and a worker who had a vernacular, local knowledge of this particular milling or stamping machine was valuable for that reason. Even on the line, vernacular knowledge was essential to successful production.

Where the uniformity of the product is of great concern and where much of the work can be undertaken in a setting specifically constructed for that purpose, as in the building of Henry Ford's Model T or, for that matter, the construction of a Big Mac at a McDonald's, the degree of control can be impressive. The layout, down to the minutest detail at a McDonald's franchise, is calculated to maximize control over the materials and the work process from the center. That is, the district supervisor who arrives

for an inspection with his handy clipboard can evaluate the franchise according to a protocol that has been engineered into the design itself. The coolers are uniform and their location is prescribed. The same goes for the deep fryers, the grills, the protocol for their cleaning and maintenance, the paper wrappers, etc., etc. The platonic form of the perfect McDonald's franchise and the perfect Big Mac has been dreamed up at central headquarters and engineered into the architecture, layout, and training so that the clipboard scoring can be used to judge how close it has come to the ideal. In its immanent logic, Fordist production and the McDonald's module is, as E. F. Schumacher noted in 1973, "an offensive against the unpredictability, unpunctuality, general waywardness and cussedness of living nature, including man."<sup>1</sup>

It is no exaggeration, I think, to view the past three centuries as the triumph of standardized, official landscapes of control and appropriation over vernacular order. That this triumph has come in tandem with the rise of large-scale hierarchical organizations, of which the state itself is only the most striking example, is entirely logical. The list of lost vernacular orders is potentially staggering. I venture here only the beginning of such a list and invite readers, if they have the appetite, to supplement it. National standard languages have replaced local tongues. Commoditized freehold land tenure has replaced complex local land-use practices, planned communities and neighborhoods have replaced older, unplanned communities and neighborhoods, and large factories and farms have replaced artisanal production and smallholder, mixed farming. Standard naming and identification practices have replaced innumerable local naming customs. National law has replaced local common law and tradition. Large schemes of irrigation and electricity supply have replaced locally adapted irrigation systems and fuel gathering. Landscapes relatively resistant to control and appropriation have been replaced with landscapes that facilitate hierarchical coordination.

## FRAGMENT 7

### The Resilience of the Vernacular

It is perfectly clear that large-scale modernist schemes of imperative coordination can, for certain purposes, be the most efficient, equitable, and satisfactory solution. Space exploration, the planning of vast transportation networks, airplane manufacture, and other necessarily large-scale endeavors may well require huge organizations minutely coordinated by a few experts. The control of epidemics or of pollution requires a center staffed by experts receiving and digesting standard information from hundreds of reporting units.

Where such schemes run into trouble, sometimes catastrophic trouble, is when they encounter a recalcitrant nature, the complexity of which they only poorly comprehend, or when they encounter a recalcitrant human nature, the complexity of which they also poorly comprehend.

The troubles that have plagued "scientific" forestry, invented in the German lands in the late eighteenth century, and some forms of plantation agriculture typify the encounter. Wanting to maximize revenue from the sale of firewood and lumber from domain forests, the originators of scientific forestry reasoned that, depending on the soil, either the Norway spruce or the Scotch pine would provide the maximum cubic

meters of timber per hectare. To this end, they clear-cut mixed forests and planted a single species simultaneously and in straight rows (as with row crops). They aimed at a forest that was easy to inspect, could be felled at a given time, and would produce a uniform log from a standardized tree (the Normalbaum). For a while—nearly an entire century—it worked brilliantly. Then it faltered. It turned out that the first rotation had apparently profited from the accumulated soil capital of the mixed forest it had replaced without replenishment. The single-species forest was above all a veritable feast for the pests; rusts, scales, and blights that specialized in attacking the Scotch pine or the Norway spruce. A forest of trees all the same age was also far more susceptible to catastrophic storm and wind damage. In an effort to simplify the forest as a one-commodity machine, scientific forestry had radically reduced its diversity. The lack of tree species diversity was replicated at every level in this stripped-down forest: in the poverty of insect species, of birds, of mammals, of lichen, of mosses, of fungi, of flora in general. The planners had created a green desert, and nature had struck back. In little

more than a century, the successors of those who had made scientific forestry famous in turn made the terms "forest death" ("Waldsterben") and "restoration forestry" equally famous.

Henry Ford, bolstered by the success of the Model T and wealth beyond imagining, ran into much the same problem when he tried translating his success in building cars in factories to growing rubber trees in the tropics. He bought a tract of land roughly the size of Connecticut along a branch of the Amazon and set about creating Fordlandia. If successful, his plantation would have supplied enough latex to equip all his autos with tires for the foreseeable future. It proved an unmitigated disaster. In their natural habitat in the Amazon basin, rubber trees grow here and there among mixed stands of great diversity. They thrive amid this variety in part because they are far enough apart to minimize the buildup of diseases and pests that favor them in this, their native habitat. Transplanted to Southeast Asia by the Dutch and the British, rubber trees did relatively well in plantation stands precisely

because they did not bring with them the full complement of pests and enemies. But concentrated as row crops in the Amazon, they succumbed in a few years to a variety of diseases and blights that even heroic and expensive efforts at triple grafting (one canopy stock grafted to another trunk stock, and both grafted to a different root stock) could not overcome.

In the contrived and man-made auto-assembly plant in River Rouge, built for a single purpose, the environment could, with difficulty, be mastered. In the Brazilian tropics, it could not. After millions had been invested, after innumerable changes in management and reformulated plans, after riots by the workforce, Henry Ford's adventure in Brazil was abandoned.

Henry Ford started with what his experts judged to be the best rubber tree and then tried to reshape the environment to suit it. Compare this logic to its mirror image: starting with the environmental givens and then selecting the cultivars that best fit a given niche. Customary practices of potato cultivation in the Andes represent a fine example of vernacular, artisanal farming. A high-altitude Andean potato farmer might cultivate as many as fifteen small parcels, some on a rotating basis. Each parcel



Scientific forest, Lithuania.



is distinct in terms of its soil, altitude, orientation to sun and wind, moisture, slope, and history of cultivation. There is no "standard field." Choosing from among a large number of locally developed landraces, each with different and well-known characteristics, the farmer makes a series of prudent bets, planting anywhere from one cultivar to as many as a dozen in a single field. Each season is the occasion for a new round of trials, with last season's results in terms of yield, disease, prices, and response to changed plot conditions carefully weighed. These farms are market-oriented experiment stations with good yields, great adaptability, and reliability. At least as important, they are not merely producing crops; they are reproducing farmers and communities with plant-breeding skills, flexible strategies, ecological knowledge, and considerable self-confidence and autonomy.

The logic of scientific extension agriculture in the Andes is analogous to Henry Ford's Amazonian plantations. It begins with the idea of an "ideal" potato, defined largely but not entirely in terms of yield. Plant scientists then set about breeding a genotype that will most closely approximate the desired characteristics. That genotype is grown in experimental plots to determine the conditions that best allow it to flourish. The main purpose of extension work, then, to retrofit the entire environment of the farmer's field so as to realize the potential of the new genotype. This may require the application of nitrogen fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides, special field and soil preparation, irrigation, and the timing of cultivation (planting, watering, weeding, harvesting). As one might expect, each new "ideal" cultivar usually fails within three or four years as pests and diseases gain on it, to be replaced in turn with a newer ideal potato and the cycle begins again. To the degree that it succeeds, it turns the fields into standard fields and the farmers into standard farmers, just as Henry Ford standardized the work environment and workers in River Rouge. The assembly line and the monoculture plantation each require, as a condition of their existence, the subjugation of both the vernacular artisan and of the diverse, vernacular landscape.

## FRAGMENT 8

### *The Attractions of the Disorderly City*

It turns out that it is not only plants that seem to thrive best in settings of diversity. Human nature as well seems to shun a narrow uniformity in favor of variety and diversity.

The high tide of modernist urban planning spans the first half of the twentieth century, when the triumph of civil engineering, a revolution in building techniques and materials, and the political ambitions to remake urban life combined to transform cities throughout the West. In its ambitions, it bears more than a family resemblance to scientific forestry and plantation agriculture. The emphasis was on visual order and the segregation of function. Visually, a theme to which I shall return, utopian planners favored "the sublime straight line;" right angles, and sculptural regularity. When it came to spatial layout, virtually all planners favored the strict separation of different spheres of urban activity: residential housing, commercial retail space, office space, entertainment, government offices, and ceremonial space. One can easily see why this was convenient for the planners. So many retail outlets serving so many customers could be reduced to something of an algorithm requiring so many square feet per store,

so many square feet of shelf space, planned transportation links, and so forth; residences required so many square feet of living space per (standardized) family, so much sunlight, so much water, so much kitchen space, so many electric outlets, so much adjacent playground space. Strict segregation of functions minimized the variables in the algorithm: it was easier to plan, easier to build, easier to maintain, easier to police, and, they thought, easier on the eye. Planning for single uses facilitated standardization, while by comparison, planning a complex, mixed-use town in these terms would have been a nightmare.

There was one problem. People tended to hate such cities and shunned them when they could. When they couldn't, they found other ways to express their despair and contempt. It is said that the postmodern era began at precisely 3 p.m. on March 16, 1972, when the award-winning Pruitt-Igoe high-rise public housing project in St. Louis was finally and officially dynamited to a heap of rubble. Its inhabitants had, in effect, reduced it to a shell. The Pruitt-Igoe buildings were merely the flagship for an entire fleet of isolated, single-use, high-rise public housing apartment blocks that seemed degrading warehouses to most of their residents and that have now largely been demolished.

At the same time that these housing projects, sailing under the banner of "slum clearance" and the elimination of "urban blight," were being constructed, they were subjected to a comprehensive and ultimately successful critique by urbanists like Jane Jacobs, who were more interested in the vernacular city: in daily urban life, and in how the city actually functioned more than in how it looked. Urban planning, like most official schemes, was characterized by a self-conscious tunnel vision. That is, it focused relentlessly on a single objective and design with a view to maximizing that objective. If the objective was growing corn, the goal became growing the most bushels per acre; if it was Model Ts, it was producing the most Model Ts for the labor and input costs; if it was health care delivery, a hospital was designed solely for efficiency in treatment; if it was the production of lumber, the forest was redesigned to be a one-commodity machine.

Jacobs understood three things that these modernist planners were utterly blind to. First, she identified the fatal assumption that in any such activity there is only one thing going on, and the objective of planning is to maximize the efficiency of its delivery. Unlike the planners whose algorithms depended on stipulated efficiencies-how long it took to get to work from home, how efficiently food could be delivered to the city-she understood there were a great many human purposes embedded in any human activity. Mothers or fathers pushing baby carriages may simultaneously be talking to friends, doing errands, getting a bite to eat, and looking for a book. An office worker may find lunch or a beer with co-workers the most satisfying part of the day. Second, Jacobs grasped that it was for this reason, as well as for the sheer pleasure of navigating in an animated, stimulating, and varied environment, that complex, mixed-use districts of the city were often the most desirable locations. Successful urban neighborhoods-ones that were safe, pleasant, amenity-rich, and economically viable-tended to be dense, mixed-use areas, with virtually all the urban functions concentrated and mixed higgledy-piggledy. Moreover, they were also dynamic over time. The effort to specify and freeze functions by planning fiat Jacobs termed "social taxidermy."

Finally, she explained that if one started from the lived, vernacular city, it became

clear that the effort by urban planners to turn cities into disciplined works of art of geometric, visual order was not just fundamentally misguided, it was an attack on the actual, functioning vernacular order of a successful urban neighborhood.

Looked at from this angle, the standard practice of urban planning and architecture suddenly seems very bizarre indeed. The architect and planners proceed by devising an overall Vision of the building or ensemble of buildings they propose. This vision is physically represented in drawings and, typically, in an actual model of the buildings proposed. One sees in the newspapers photographs of beaming city officials and architects looking down on the successful model as if they were in helicopters, or gods. What is astounding, from a vernacular perspective, is that no one ever experiences the city from that height or angle. The presumptive ground-level experience of real pedestrians-window-shoppers, errand-runners, aimlessly strolling lovers-is left entirely out of the urban-planning equation. It is substantially as sculptural miniatures that the plans are seen, and it is hardly surprising that they should be appreciated for their visual appeal as attractive works of art: works of art that will henceforth never be seen again from that godlike vantage point, except by Superman.

This logic of modeling and miniaturization as a characteristic of official forms of order is, I think, diagnostic. The real world is messy and even dangerous. Mankind has a long history of miniaturization as a form of play, control, and manipulation. It can be seen in toy soldiers, model tanks, trucks, cars, warships and planes, dollhouses, model railroads, and so on. Such toys serve the entirely admirable purpose of letting us play with representations when the real thing is inaccessible or dangerous, or both. But miniaturization is very much a game for grown-ups, presidents, and generals as well. When the effort to transform a recalcitrant and intractable world is frustrated, elites are often tempted to retreat to miniatures, some of them quite grandiose. The effect of this retreat is to create small, relatively self-contained utopian spaces where the desired perfection might be more nearly realized. Model villages, model cities, military colonies, show projects, and demonstration farms offer politicians, administrators, and specialists a chance to create a sharply defined experimental terrain where the number of rogue variables and unknowns is minimized. The limiting case, where control is maximized but impact on the external world is minimized, is the museum or theme park. Model farms and model towns have, of course, a legitimate role as experiments where ideas about production, design, and social organization can be tested at low risk and scaled up or abandoned, depending on how they fare. Just as often, however, as with many "designer" national capitals (e.g., Washington, D.C., St. Petersburg, Dodoma, Brasilia, Islamabad, New Delhi, Ahuja), they become stand-alone architectural and political statements at odds, and often purposely so, with their larger environment. The insistence on a rigid visual aesthetic at the core of the capital city tends to produce a penumbra of settlements and slums teeming with squatters, people who, as often as not, sweep the floors, cook the meals, and tend the children of the elites who work at the decorous, planned center. Order at the center is in this sense deceptive, being sustained by nonconforming and unacknowledged practices at the periphery.

## FRAGMENT 9

### *The Chaos behind Neatness*

*Governing a large state is like cooking a small fish.*

Tao Te Ching

*The more highly planned, regulated, and formal a social or economic order is, the more likely it is to be parasitic on informal processes that the formal scheme does not recognize and without which it could not continue to exist, informal processes that the formal order cannot alone create and maintain. Here language acquisition is an instructive metaphor. Children do not begin by learning the rules of grammar and then using these rules to construct a successful sentence. They learn to speak the way they learn to walk: by imitation, trial, error, and endless practice. The rules of grammar are the regularities that can be observed in successful speaking, they are not the cause of successful speech.*

*Workers have seized on the inadequacy of the rules to explain how things actually run and have exploited it to their advantage. Thus, the taxi drivers of Paris have, when they were frustrated with the municipal authorities over fees or new regulations, resorted to what is known as a grève de zèle. They would all, by agreement and on cue, suddenly begin to follow all the regulations in the code routier, and, as intended, this would bring traffic in Paris to a grinding halt. Knowing that traffic circulated in Paris only by a practiced and judicious disregard of many regulations, they could, merely by following the rules meticulously, bring it to a standstill. The English-language version of this procedure is often known as the "work-to-rule" strike. In an extended work-to-rule action against the Caterpillar Corporation, workers reverted to following the inefficient procedures specified by engineers, knowing that it would cost the company valuable time and quality, rather than continuing the more expeditious practices they had long ago devised on the job. The actual work process in any office, on any construction site, or on any factory floor cannot be adequately explained by the rules, however elaborate, governing it; the work gets done only because of the effective informal understandings and improvisations outside those rules.*

*The planned economies of the socialist bloc before the breach in the Berlin Wall in 1989 were a striking example of how rigid production norms were sustained only by informal arrangements wholly outside the official scheme. In one typical East German factory, the two most indispensable employees were not even part of the official organizational chart. One was a "jack-of-all trades" adept at devising short-term, juryrigged solutions to keep machines running, to correct production flaws, and to make substitute spare parts. The second indispensable employee used factory funds to purchase and store desirable nonperishable goods (e.g., soap powder, quality paper, good wine, yarn, medicines, fashionable clothes) when they were available. Then, when the factory absolutely needed a machine, spare parts, or raw material not available through the plan to meet its quotas and earn its bonuses, this employee packed the hoarded goods in a Trabant and went seeking to barter them for the necessary factory supplies. Were it not for these informal arrangements, formal production would have ceased.*

*Like the city official peering down at the architect's proposed model of a new development site, we are all prone to the error of equating visual order with working order and visual complexity with disorder. It is a natural and, I believe, grave mistake, and one strongly associated with modernism. How dubious such an association is requires but a moment's reflection. Does it follow that more learning is taking place in a classroom with uniformed students seated at desks arranged in neat rows than in a classroom*



with un-uniformed students sitting on the floor or around a table? The great critic of modern urban planning, Jane Jacobs, warned that the intricate complexity of a successful mixed-use neighborhood was not, as the aesthetic of many urban planners supposed, a representation of chaos and disorder. It was, though unplanned, a highly elaborated and resilient form of order. The apparent disorder of leaves falling in the autumn, of the entrails of a rabbit, of the interior of a jet engine, of the city desk of a major newspaper is not disorder at all but rather an intricate functional order. Once its logic and purpose are grasped, it actually looks different and reflects the order of its function.

Take the design of field crops and gardens. The tendency of modern "scientific" agriculture has favored large, capitalintensive fields, with a single crop, often a hybrid or clone for maximum uniformity, grown in straight rows for easy tillage and machine harvesting. The use of fertilizers, irrigation, pesticides, and herbicides serves to make the field conditions as suitable to the single cultivar and as uniform as possible. It is a generic module of farming that travels well and actually works tolerably well for what I think of as "proletarian" production crops such as wheat, corn, cotton, and soybeans that tolerate rough handling. The effort of this agriculture to rise above, as it were, local soils, local landscape, local labor, local implements, and local weather makes it the very antithesis of vernacular agriculture. The Western vegetable garden has some, not all, of the same features. Though it contains many cultivars they are typically planted in straight rows, one cultivar to a row, and look rather like a military regiment drawn up for inspection at a parade. The geometric order is often a matter of pride. Again, there is a striking emphasis on visual regularity from above and outside.

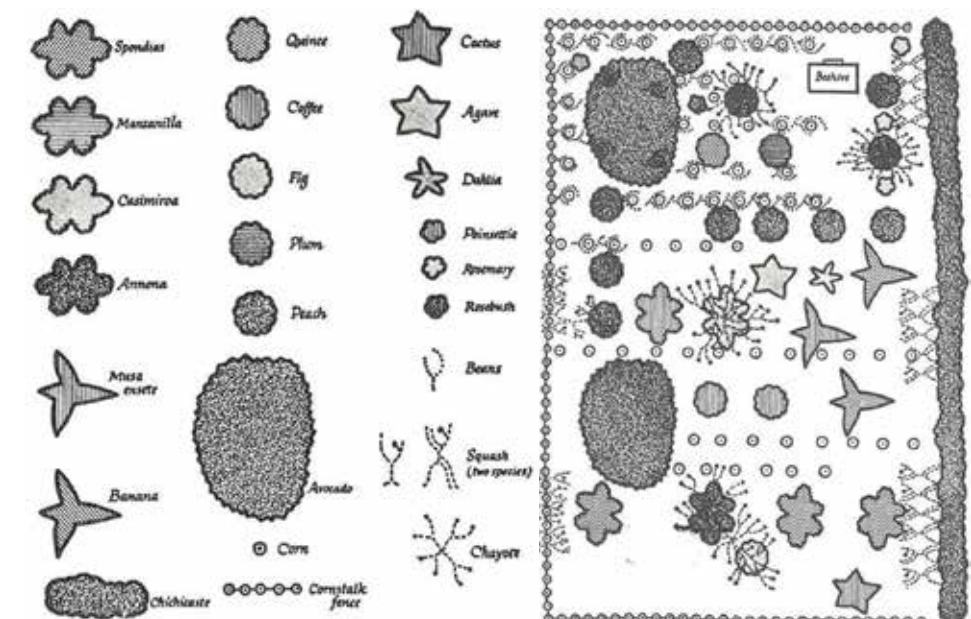
Contrast this with, say, the indigenous field crops of tropical West Africa as encountered by British agricultural extension agents in the nineteenth century. They were shocked. Visually, the fields seemed a mess: there were two, three, and sometimes four crops crowded into the field at a time, other crops were planted in relays, small bunds-embankments-of sticks were scattered here and there, small hillocks appeared to be scattered at random. Since to a Western eye the fields were obviously a mess; the assumption was that the cultivators were themselves negligent and careless. The extension agents set about teaching them proper, "modern" agricultural techniques. It was only after roughly thirty years of frustration and failure that a Westerner thought to actually examine, scientifically, the relative merits of the two forms of cultivation under West African conditions. It turned out that the "mess" in the West African field was an agricultural system finely tuned to local conditions. The polycropping and relay cropping ensured there was ground cover to prevent erosion and capture rainfall year-round; one crop provided nutrients to another or shaded it; the bunds prevented gully erosion; cultivars were scattered to minimize pest damage and disease.

Not only were the methods sustainable, the yields compared favorably with the yields of crops grown by the Western techniques preferred by the extension agents. What the extension agents had done was erroneously to associate visual order with working order and visual disorder with inefficiency. The Westerners were in the grip of a quasi-religious faith in crop geometry, while the West Africans had worked out a highly successful system of cultivation without regard to geometry.

Edgar Anderson, a botanist interested in the history of maize in Central America, stumbled across a peasant garden in Guatemala that demonstrated how apparent vi-

sual disorder could be the key to a finely tuned working order. Walking by it on his way to the fields of maize each day, he at first took it to be an overgrown, vegetable dump heap. Only when he saw someone working in it did he realize that it was not just a garden but a brilliantly conceived garden despite, or rather, because of, its visual disorder from a Western gardening perspective. I cannot do better than to quote him at length about the logic behind the garden and reproduce his diagrams of its layout.

Though at first sight there seems little order; as soon as we started mapping the garden, we realized that it was planted in fairly definite cross-wise rows. There were fruit trees, native and European in great variety: annonas, cheromoyas, avocados, peaches, quinces, plums, a fig, and a few coffee bushes. There were giant cacti grown for their fruit. There was a large plant of rosemary, a plant of rue, some poinsettias, and a semi-climbing tea rose. There was a whole row of the native domesticated hawthorn, whose fruit like yellow, doll-sized apples make a delicious conserve. There were two varieties of corn, one well past bearing and now serving as a trellis for climbing string beans which were just coming into season, the other, a much taller sort, which was tasseling out. There were specimens of a little banana with smooth wide leaves which are the local substitute for wrapping paper, and are also used instead of cornhusks in cooking the native variant of hot



tamales. Over it all clambered the luxuriant vines of various cucurbits. Chayote, when finally mature has a nutritious root weighing several pounds. At one point there was a depression the size of a small bathtub where a chayote root had recently been excavated; this served as a dump heap and compost for waste from the house. At one end of the garden was a small beehive made from boxes and tin cans. In terms of our American and European equivalents, the garden was a vegetable garden, an orchard, a medicinal garden, a dump heap, a compost heap, and a bee yard. There was no problem of erosion though it was at the top of a steep slope; the soil surface was practically all covered and apparently would be during most of the year. Humidity would be kept during the dry season and plants of the same sort were so isolated from one another by intervening vegetation that pests and diseases could not readily spread from plant to plant. The fertility was being conserved; in addition to the waste from the house, mature plants were being buried in between the rows when their usefulness was over.

It is frequently said by Europeans and European Americans that time means nothing to an Indian. This garden seemed to me to be a good example of how the Indian, when we look more than superficially into his activities, is budgeting time more efficiently than we do. The garden was in continuous production but was taking only a little effort at any one time: a few weeds pulled when one came down to pick the squashes, corn and bean plants dug in between the rows when the last of the climbing beans was



picked, and a new crop of something else planted above them a few weeks later. 2

## FRAGMENT 10

### *The Anarchist's Sworn Enemy*

*Over the past two centuries, vernacular practices have been extinguished at such a rate that one can, with little exaggeration, think of the process as one of mass extinction akin to the accelerated disappearance of species. And the cause is also analogous: the loss of habitat. Many vernacular practices have made their final exit, and others are endangered.*

*The principal agent behind their extinction is none other than the anarchists' sworn enemy, the state, and in particular the modern nation-state. The rise of the modern and now hegemonic political module of the nation-state displaced and then crushed a host of vernacular political forms: stateless bands, tribes, free cities, loose confederations of towns, maroon communities, empires. In their place stands everywhere a single vernacular: the North Atlantic nation-state, codified in the eighteenth century and masquerading as a universal. It is, if we run back several hundred yards and open our eyes in wonder, nothing short of amazing that one can travel anywhere in the world and encounter virtually the same institutional order: a national flag, a national anthem, national theaters, national orchestras, heads of state, a parliament (real or fictitious), a central bank, a league table of similar ministries similarly organized, a security apparatus, and so on. Colonial empires and "modernist" emulation played a role in propagating the module, but its staying power depends on the fact that such institutions are the universal gears that integrate a political unit into the established international systems. Until 1989 there were two poles of emulation. In the socialist bloc one could go from Czechoslovakia to Mozambique, to Cuba, to Vietnam, to Laos, to Mongolia and find roughly the same central planning apparatus, collective farms, and five-year plans. Since then, with few exceptions, a single standard has prevailed.*

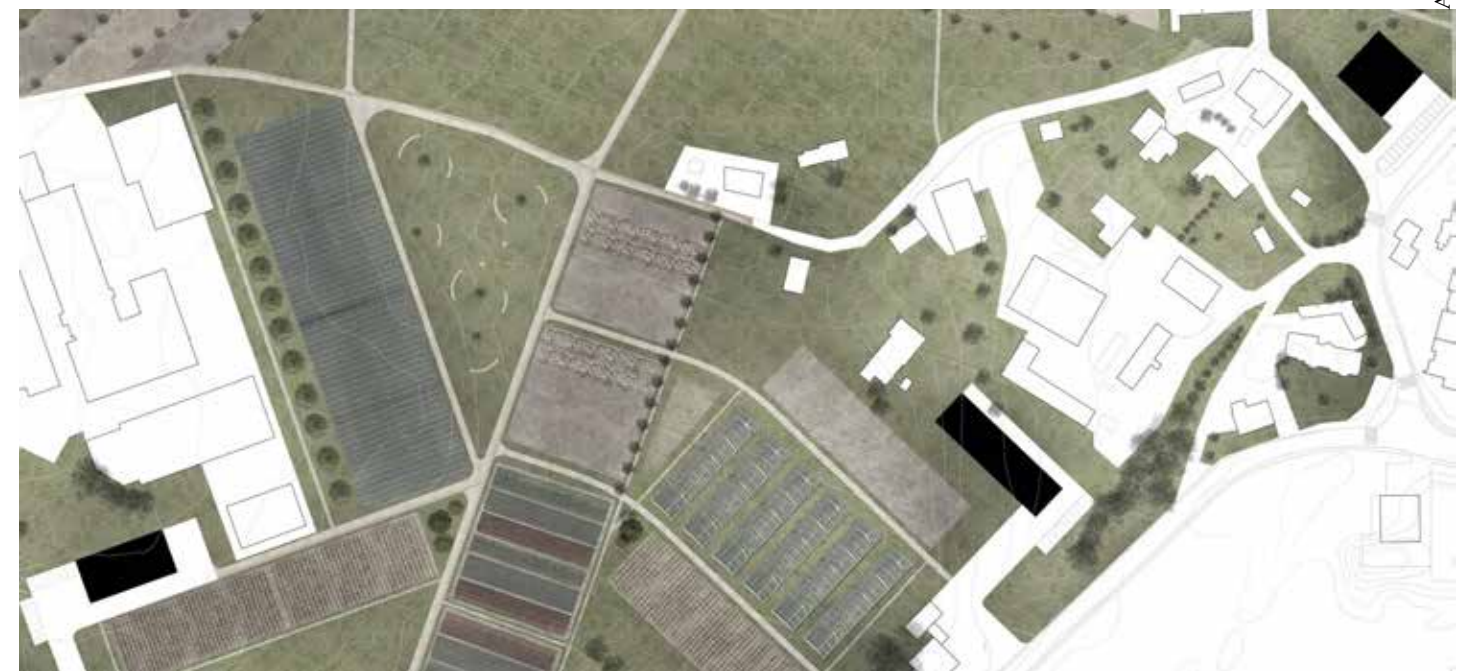
*Once in place, the modern (nation-) state set about homogenizing its population and the people's deviant, vernacular practices. Nearly everywhere, the state proceeded to fabricate a nation: France set about creating Frenchmen, Italy set about creating Italians.*

*This entailed a great project of homogenization. A huge variety of languages and dialects, often mutually unintelligible, were, largely through schooling, subordinated to a standardized national language - often the dialect of the dominant region. This led to the disappearance of languages; of local literatures, oral and written; of music; of legends and epics; of whole worlds of meaning. A huge variety of local laws and customary practices were replaced by a national system of law that was, in principle at least, everywhere the same. A huge variety of land-use practices were replaced by a national system of land titling, registration, and transfer, the better to facilitate taxation. A huge number of local pedagogies- apprenticeships, tutoring by traveling "masters;" healing, religious instruction, informal classes- were typically replaced by a national school system in which a French minister of education could boast that, as it was 10:20 a.m., he knew exactly which passage of Cicero all students of a certain form throughout France would be studying. This utopian image of uniformity was seldom achieved, but what these projects did accomplish was the destruction of vernaculars.*

*Beyond the nation-state itself, the forces of standardization are today represented by international organizations. It is the principal aim of institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, UNESCO, and even UNICEF and the World Court to propagate normative ("best practice") standards, once again deriving from the North Atlantic nations, throughout the globe. The financial muscle of these agencies is such that failure to conform to their recommendations carries substantial penalties in loans and aid forgone. The process of institutional alignment now goes by the charming euphemism of "harmonization." Global corporations are instrumental as well in this project of standardization. They too thrive in a familiar and homogenized cosmopolitan setting where the legal order, the commercial regulations, the currency system, and so on are uniform. They are also, through their sales of goods, services, and advertising, constantly working to fabricate consumers, whose needs and tastes are what they require.*

*The disappearance of some vernaculars need hardly be mourned. If the standardized model of the French citizen bequeathed to us by the Revolution replaced vernacular forms of patriarchal servitude in provincial France, then surely this was an emancipatory gain. If technical improvements like matches and washing machines replaced flint and tinder and washboards, it surely meant less drudgery. One would not want to spring to the defense of all vernaculars against all universals.*

*The powerful agencies of homogenization, however, are not so discriminating. They have tended to replace virtually all vernaculars with what they represent as universal, but let us recall again that in most cases it is a North Atlantic cross-dressed vernacular masquerading as a universal. The result is a massive diminution in cultural, political, and economic diversity, a massive homogenization in languages, cultures, property systems, political forms, and above all modes of sensibility and the lifeworlds that sustain them. One can look anxiously ahead to a time, not so far away, when the North Atlantic businessman can step off a plane anywhere in the world and find an institutional order-laws, commercial codes, ministries, traffic systems, property forms, land tenure-thoroughly familiar. And why not? The forms are essentially his own. Only the cuisine, the music, the dances, and native costumes will remain exotic and folkloric ... and thoroughly commercialized as a commodity as well.*





## The territorialist approach

The Italian territorialist approach challenges top-down planning and centralized governance. "The concept of self-sustainability is based on the assumption that only the new jointly evolving relationship between dweller/producer and the territory is able – through caring – to create lasting balances between the human settlement and the environment. (it) implies radically rethinking the hegemony of the 'economic', and the much greater role for local institutions." Alberto Magnaghi, professor of Land Use Planning at the University of Florence, suggests local socio-economic systems as a way of freeing the standardized dependence on globalization. From economic growth to well-being: rural values are uncovered to rethink the human habitat.

(PV)

MAGNAGHI Alberto, *The Urban Village*, Zed Books, London, 2005

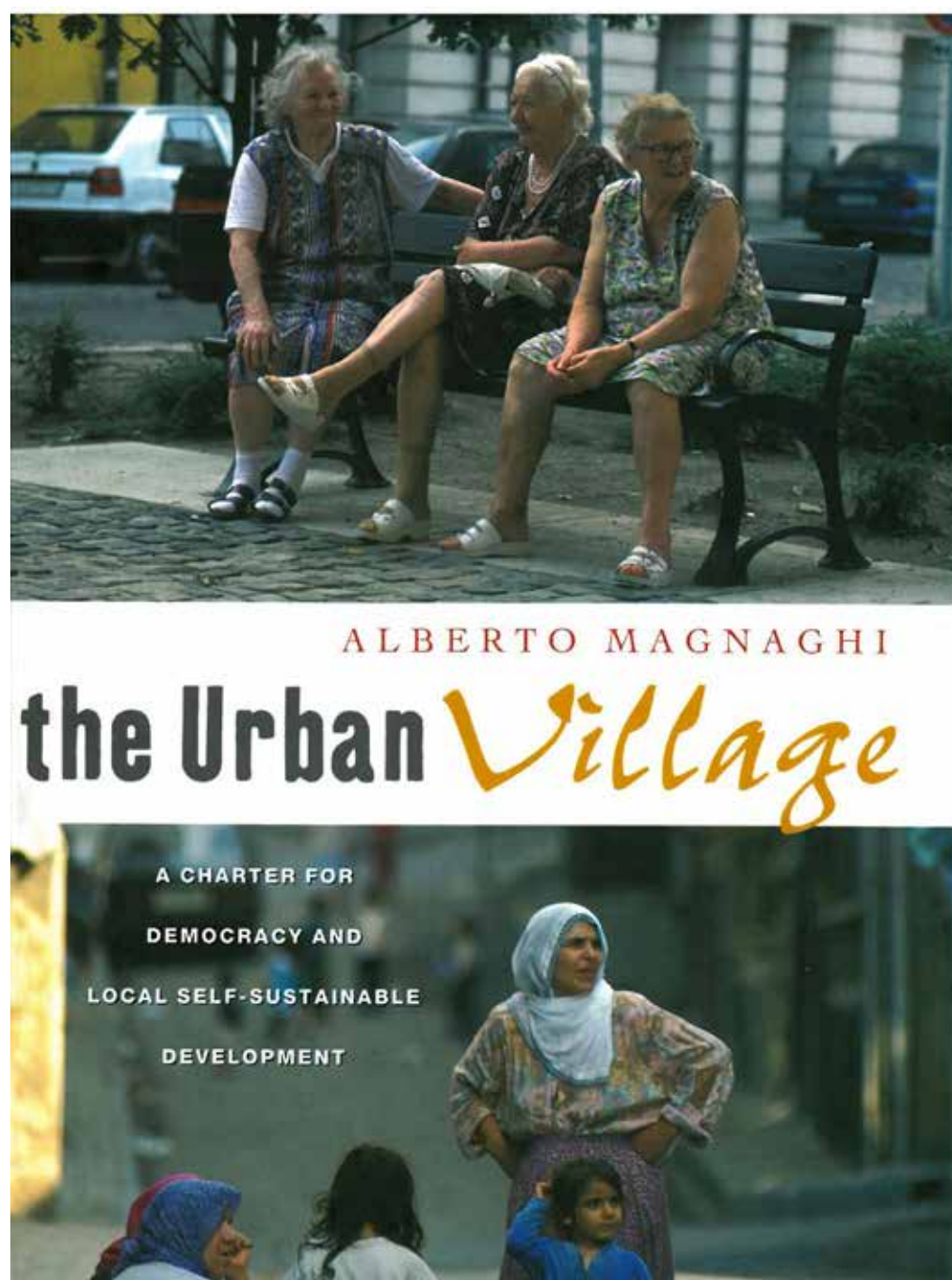
## Local self-sustainable development

Alberto Magnaghi

*In the previous chapters I put forward 'local self-sustainable development' as a response to the problem of sustainability. The terms 'local' and 'self-sustainable' are not contradictory since sustainability is an immanent component in the genetic code for the socio-territorial organization of a local place, which can sustain its own processes of transformation.*

*The concept of local development I refer to considers various prescriptive approaches (self-reliance, basic needs, ecological development), which insist on the enhancement of territorial resources and local identities as the foundation for alternative development models. With the concept of self-sustainability I stressed the need to search for settlement rules (environmental, urban, productive, economic etc.), which per se produce local homoeostasis and long-term balances between the human settlement and environmental systems.*

*This approach is inter-disciplinary (and partly trans-disciplinary), since it involves the main variables of development and their interrelations. The concept of local self-sustainable development requires a radical transformation in terms of its analytical and design paradigms at various levels: at the analytical level the transition from functional descriptions of space to descriptions giving an identity to places, the milieu, settlement environments, environment systems; while at design level the concept sectoral plans to integrated multi-sectoral plans with a strategic and interactive value. At the assessment stage it means a change from the environmental impact to multi-purpose models referring to the integrated and multi-sectoral concept of sustainability. In this chapter I should like to explore the meaning of the key terms in this approach: 'development', 'local' and 'self-sustainable'.*



## 'Development': from economic growth to well-being

On the obsolescence of the term 'development', I refer to the critical analysis of the concept identifying well-being with economic growth and its assessment with the yardstick of the GOP (Daly and Cobb 1994). I also refer to the radical approaches to the problem adding adjectives to the term development in the pursuit of remedial tactics<sup>1</sup> and proposing ideas such as 'degrowth' (W Sachs 1992a; Shiva 1988; Larouche 1991). Although we share many of the criticisms that have led some experts to speak of *après développement* (post-development), here we continue to use the term but with a specific meaning. Since we are speaking of self-sustainability, the term development inevitably refers to the growth of local society and its capacity for self-government (and not only economic growth) to produce individual and collective well-being<sup>2</sup> (Dematteis 2003; Carmen 1996; Hines 2000), while the development of local societies -with independent and differentiated development styles (1. Sachs 1993) and non-hierarchical networks - is assumed as an alternative strategy (Magnaghi 1990) to economic globalization.

## 'Local': place as heritage

### The contested local

Today the 'local' is the real ground of conflict. Everyone needs the local: the relocated multi-national enterprise practising wage and environmental dumping, the systems of national states in crisis, and regional economic systems and cities competing among themselves. The problems of the sustainability of development constantly have to take into account local factors (environmental, urban and territorial quality) as indicators. Moreover, the world market increasingly demands more and highly differentiated goods and consumption by developing local milieus, which in turn add quality and value to products (including the cities and regions) for competition on the global market. It can thus be argued that the local, a marginal issue for Fordist organizations became central in the debate on alternative development in the 1990s and is now a focus of attention for everyone: network enterprises, virtual enterprises, localists and globalists, separatists, nationalists, federalists and so on.

The way local sources are appropriated and managed is one of the main grounds in the conflict for models of future development. The main elements revealing differences in local development projects are the stakeholders and the ways of using the local heritage. At this point we can outline three main types of approach characterizing the local-global relationship.

### The approach serving economic globalization (top-down, from the centre to local)

1 'We have witnessed the birth of participatory endogenous self-centering, communitarian, integrated autonomous and people's development movements ... not to mention local development, micro-development, endo-development and even ethno-development! But adding an adjective to the concept of development does not really call into question capitalistic accumulation ... rather it adds a social aspect or ecological component to economic growth.' 'The Manifesto of READ (Réseau européen pour l'après développement)' in .MAUSS 2, Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2004. See also the INCAD Declaration (International Network for Cultural Alternatives to Development), Orford, Quebec, Canada, 4 May 1992.

2 'The political economy should be rethought as the study of the process of the production of well-being in production and consumption, and in the places where people live. This takes us straight to the problem of conceptualizing places and local development' (G. Beattini, 'Le condizioni dello sviluppo locale', supplement to La Nuova Città, Florence, 2002).

In this case projects for local development are stunted, on the one hand by the search for wage and environmental differences by multi-national companies through the extreme globalization of investments on the world scene and, on the other, by competition between production areas, cities and regions in the race to reach higher positions through growing economic exploitation by strong local stakeholders of the territorial resources (environmental, production, anthropic) in a given competitive context. In fact globalization not only produces processes of standardization but also encourages differentiation and the search for products characterized by unique specific local features. Economic globalization forces local governments, however, to implement these differentiation processes and to tackle them in isolation and in competition with each other according to the general rules of competition. In this approach (local development as an increase in the competitiveness of the global economic system) local resources are exploited to the hilt and then energies are simply moved elsewhere in the world. Also at national level, however, policies may turn out to be contradictory in the way the central government selects strong local stakeholders and stifles the potential and intellectual resources of the local milieu.<sup>3</sup>

### The search for balances between local and global ('glocal')<sup>4</sup>

This is basically a remedial approach aiming to create a balanced relation between the need to develop specific local features for the competitive differentiation of goods on the market and the simultaneous strengthening of local society as a tool for spreading out the decision-making centres in the globalization process. This approach focuses on the notion that only local societies able to associate with the 'long networks' of the global (Bonomi 1997) or connect in an active way with the 'vertical' relations of a local place through horizontal external relations will be able to renew the use of the local territorial heritage as a resource – otherwise there is a danger of decline through isolation. Although it is important to stress that local places not in the global networks may be unable to produce processes redeveloping their own heritage, this approach tends to underestimate the fact that at present the relation between the local and the global is biased in favour of the global (especially in the long networks of financial capital), which establishes criteria, rules, constraints, technologies and general development models. The danger of the glocal theory is that the local places will be 'ensnared' in the long global networks, since every local place stands alone in the competition and may join in only by adapting to pre-established development rules.

One example comes from the crisis in many Italian industrial 'districts' in which the predominantly economic and manufacturing character of the local system, faced with world competition, produces effects of polarization and internal hierarchy, resulting in there only being one leader company able to compete. This process leads to a reduction in the complexity of the district and its self-reproducing capacity or even the relocating

3 Limits of this kind are found, for example, in the Italian Territorial Pacts, where the selection criteria decided by the central government inter-ministerial economic committee (CIPE) favour the powerful economic stakeholders who often negate the premises of the pacts themselves (i.e. the development of micro-enterprises, greater complexity for the networks of local stakeholders etc.).

4 The term 'glocalization' (Swyngedouw 1992) was elaborated by Goldsmith and Mander (1996) into glocalism: local development as a communitarian and bioregional construction to oppose economic globalization and the power of the big multi-nationals.

5 'In local development, the crucial local conditions ... are those creating a certain milieu, as a prerequisite for the formation and reproduction of a «local system». It will be the local system which generates internally certain specific external features for «horizontal relations» to which the system may have access ... they give positive sum games since in the local system the useful effects produced by an individual stakeholder are increased by the behaviour of all the others' (Dematteis 1995: 103).



of whole sections of the productive cycle to areas with lower labour costs. The growth of local societies' capacity for self-government, and not only their economic system, is thus essential in reinforcing their independent ability to respond to the pressure from economic globalization.

**Local development versus global development (or bottom-up globalization, from the local to the centre).**

These approaches interpret the growth of local society and development styles specific to each context as the beginning of a multiverse able to encourage non-hierarchical cooperative relations between cities, regions, and nations towards a shared system of global relations built from 'the bottom up'. According to this idea, local development adopts local heritage values (cultural, social, productive, territorial, environmental and artistic) as the main element in the driving force required to implement models of self-sustainable development. The construction of a socially wide-ranging pact to enhance the territorial heritage as the basic material for the production of wealth provides guarantees for environmental protection (environmental sustainability) and territorial quality (territorial sustainability), since constructing the project creates conditions of solidarity and trust for the defence and enhancement of the common good. But only the presence in the pact of the needs of the least powerful stakeholders will guarantee social sustainability, otherwise there will be exploitation (and destruction) of the human and material resources in the competition on the market by the powerful stakeholders. Seen in this way, local development goes beyond exogenous rules and constraints towards rules of self-government concerted and supported by a common meaning (political sustainability). By taking into account these measures, a local project creates the conditions at the construction stage for transforming lifestyles, consumption and production, developing self-employment, crafts, micro-firms and fair-trading companies. This complex molecular productive fabric, if endowed with its own statutes, can provide the production base for sustainable local development in all sectors from agriculture to the advanced tertiary (economic sustainability).

In the second and, most importantly, the third approach local development takes on the political connotations of a search for development styles as an alternative to the processes of standardization induced by globalization. These styles will found a plural non-hierarchical world as a strategic solution to the sustainability (not only environmental) of the current development model. Reinforcing local societies through projects for local self-sustainable development can enable the implementation of Lilliputian strategies, establishing non-hierarchical networks (South-South, South- North, between cities and regions), in a closely-knit structure able to compete with the strongly centralized long networks of economic globalization.

Thus the way we draw on the local heritage becomes crucial in the approaches to local development as regards the problems of sustainability (preserve and/ or develop the heritage for future generations) and the problems of those who use the resources.

For this purpose, I believe that it is crucial to introduce some conceptual distinctions in the on-going debate on local development:

a) the value of the heritage must not be identified with its use value and even less with its trade value as a resource;

b) the territorial heritage is made up of a highly complex living system and as such must be treated as a resource for producing wealth;

c) local development founded on enhancing the heritage has no pre-established boundaries, scales or stakeholders.

**Distinguishing between values and resources**

The first conceptual distinction we must make is between values and resources, or rather between the heritage (understood as a value) and a resource (understood as a specific form of the interpreted heritage).

Territorial values suggest the constituent elements of the long-term heritage of a place, which is independent of the specific contingent forms of its use. These values may be seen as a resource when a given society actively reinterprets them. The same society can use the historical heritage, defined in the way suggested by Françoise Choay,<sup>6</sup> in wasteful or conservative forms (preserving them for the future generations) or in terms of growth and development.

Adopted in the territorial approach as the basis for the construction of lasting wealth, the territorial heritage is defined as the outcome of the historic process of territorialization, a longer-term 'deposit' whose identity and character emerge in the way the environmental components in the process (neo-ecosystems produced by successive civilizations) are integrated with the built elements (monuments, historical cities<sup>7</sup> permanent long-term invariable structural features or infrastructures, farm layouts, building, urban and landscape types, and rules for building and transformation) with the anthropic components (social, identity-giving, cultural, artistic, productive and political models). The way these components are integrated expresses the relational values of the heritage and its potential for producing lasting wealth.

I will thus use an extended complex definition of the territorial heritage which inevitably involves the study of mutual long-term relations between its components. The territorial and landscape type characterizing the identity of a place, like the type of milieu, are the lasting outcome of a longer process of joint evolution of the settled community and the environment.

The territorial heritage thus goes beyond the use made by a given civilization or generation according to their own cultural models, use requisites and ways of developing. Accordingly, I believe it is important to distinguish between value and resource, so as not to impoverish the interpretation and the use of heritage to suit the modalities of interpretation and uses made by a single civilization or generation.

On this subject we note that the planning literature mainly uses the word resource: the value of a place is identified with its potential use by contemporary society. Arguing that there must be a distinction in the concept of long-term heritage (and its protection) from the specific use by a given generation does not mean the concept of heritage should not be historicized. As, for example, Francesca Governa (1997) claims, the

<sup>6</sup> Choay (1992) extends the concept of value (national, cognitive, educational, economic and aesthetic) to monuments in the historical city, the rural landscape and industrial architecture, thus anticipating the concept of 'territorial heritage'.

<sup>7</sup> 'The architectural and urban heritage of the pre-industrial age takes on a new indispensable function. It is directly used to invent our future. What other tool do we have to teach us again how to see ... to rediscover how to arrange, articulate, differentiate and proportion buildings in space' (Choay 1992).



milieu is only such when there is a project by local society reinterpreting the long-term heritage for its own ends, just as every period has historically rebuilt the landscape according to its own cultural models. In this sense I share Dematteis's polemical warning against the 'conservation' of the landscape: only reinterpreting through active transformation can preserve identifying features. We would also mention on this subject the reference by Françoise Choay (1965) to Geddes's notion of heritage as including the concept of continuity in time and history and at the same time radically excluding an idea of conservation as repetition, rather than reinterpretation and transformation.<sup>8</sup>

We may reasonably argue that heritage, seen as a cultural and economic category, does not exist per se, but only in the interpretation made by those using it. In distinguishing between 'material' and 'resource', Raffestin illustrates the cultural character of the concept of resource: 'It is effectively man who, with his work (informed energy), invents the properties of materials. The properties of materials are not given but invented ... A resource is a relationship which brings out some specific properties of the materials required in satisfying needs' (Raffestin 1981: 225).

Raffestin's argument on the properties of materials can be applied, with due caution, to the territorial heritage. The concept of heritage implies a value judgement: see, for example, the changing attitude towards monuments, the historical heritage and the landscape in various periods, cultures and civilizations. In his commentary on the Athens Charter, for example, Le Corbusier sees the historical city as scrap iron of little use value for the purposes of reorganizing space in the modern factory city according to mass macro-functions and zoning. Similarly, the territory (as an identifying and environmental heritage) was of no interest to the economic operators in the Fordist period, since territory did not interact with the development of capital, other than as a technical logistic support for the factory city and its reproduction processes. In the information city, on the other hand, the molecular network organization of work in



the advanced tertiary sector reassesses the functional and cultural complexity of the historical city and the quality of the communications environment for the 'catchment area of social intelligence' (Bonfiglioli and Galbiati 1987). The crisis in the system of large factories led to the social productive system reconsidering the territory (local cultures and knowledge, diffuse structures of production, settlement environments) as the active element in development. Environmental and urban quality in particular was seen as a qualifying element of a settlement for advanced tertiary activities.

Thus the concept of territory understood as a heritage must certainly be historicized, but I believe it is useful to distinguish the concept of heritage (which is long-term, built and cumulative) from its use as a resource (contingent and related to the role given it by a specific civilization).

In fact, in a given historical phase the territorial heritage may not be used as a resource, since the socio-cultural model of that phase does not attribute it any economic value, but - and this is the key issue- if the long-term heritage is irreversibly destroyed, when the present civilization model attributes it no value, future generations will not be able to use it (the basic concept of sustainability), even if they intend to attribute value or reinterpret it as a resource.

Last, for the purposes of sustainability, I believe we must reconcile two apparently contradictory statements: the first considers the concept of heritage as 'usable' only through the reinterpretation of a local society; the second - through the distinction between heritage and resource - warns that projects for a specific contingent transformation of a local society must guarantee the preservation of the structural features of places, preventing the long-term heritage from being degraded or irreversibly destroyed.

### Treating the heritage as a living system

The territorial heritage (made up of the physical, built and anthropic environment) exists as a jointly evolving historical construct, the outcome of the reifying and structuring anthropic activity transforming nature into territory. Obviously, the physical and built territory as the outcome of continuous anthropic transformation - with its increasing 'territorial mass' and the production of gradually developing neo-ecosystems - is an unstable structure, far from being in equilibrium. The dynamic trans-



formation is the outcome of areal and reticular relations. Through mainly 'invisible' rules it produces 'visible' landscapes. When defining the territory as a highly complex living system, I mean an entity produced by the long-term interaction between human settlements and the environment, cyclically transformed by successive civilizations. As a living entity ('living' in so far as it is not a totally artificial work), the territory takes on the features of an individual organism which grows, develops, is differentiated, but also has limits and 'finitude' (Bateson 1979). Over time, therefore, anthropic action produces neo-ecosystems<sup>9</sup> on the land cover. They are characterized by a high degree of complexity and survive if practised by the culture and the rules generating them or by new cultures and other rules, provided they are cared for, preserved and encouraged to grow through continuous transformations (unlike Gaia or nature, which can reach new biological balances even in the absence of human beings). In the organization of contemporary settlements the break in the bond between culture and nature, giving rise to life and the historical growth of territory, is in danger of causing its death. This event is no drama for nature, but it may well be for the human species and future generations.

Here is a simple example: a terraced hill system is a living system, a highly complex 'neo-ecosystem' constantly evolving over time, produced through the constant work of construction, transformation and maintenance of the stone terraces, determining new and more complex balances between human action and nature: exposure to the sun, and the yield and fertility of the soil increase; water is controlled and channelled, microclimates and hydro-geological safeguards are created. This leads to special farming techniques and crops and therefore is an information, technical and cultural heritage. In short, an anthropic landscape is created.

If abandoned, however (in other words if it is not continually used and 'nourished' and cared for), the terracing is degraded and ultimately dies as a territory with its value as a heritage (as regards the environmental, urban, constructional, productive and cultural aspects). The landscape thus reverts back to 'nature' through processes of washing away, erosion, subsidence, land caving in, larger landslides, and the growth of vegetation and wild woods with new fauna and so on until it reaches a new hydro-geological natural 'climax'.

This example corroborates the claim that the territory as a living system exists as a long-term entity. It can be driven towards degradation and death (as when its use is of no interest), or it can be transformed towards new ecosystems (when a new use can be identified). In the second case, however, we must take into account the fact that every living system has rules of growth and reproduction which must be respected in transformation projects (in biology these rules are based on the concept of 'structural invariance').

Thus the 'structural invariants' of a territory could be seen as informing the rules for its transformation, enabling the reproduction of a living system, rather than the conservation of a historical territory (unless it has a specific archaeological or museum use). It must be stressed, however, that, unlike natural resources (minerals, coal or

oil), which may or may not be used but endure in long geo-biological time-scales, the territory can deteriorate in short historical time-scales.

The transformation of territorial and environmental resources for new uses must take into account the contingent character of the transformation compared to the long-term formation of values to be conserved. Thus the very concept of resource must include the potential for variations in its relational value in time. Consequently, the overall value of the territorial heritage is not only its use value (deriving from its direct use in production and consumption). We must take into account its optional value (derived from potential uses, from the probability of a future use with different value meanings) and its value as a living entity (value attributed to a resource as such, material, artefact, ecosystem, transformed in time and become part of the natural and territorial heritage). The need to guarantee a subsequent series of transformations thus in any case implies that the heritage must not be destroyed irreversibly during one of them.

To sum up, according to this definition of the territorial heritage, we find three trends.

Dissipation - neglect, lack of maintenance and the consumption of non-renewable resources leading to the degradation of whole areas, structures, techniques and settlement environments. Even worse than dissipation there may be destruction: deterritorialization actions deliberately destroying those elements of the heritage standing in the way of economic interests. This is basically what has happened with the socio-economic model identifying development with economic growth, which has been freed of territorial constraints and even the territory itself, treating it as a mere support for economic processes, as the source of resources to be exploited to produce goods for the market.

Conservation for future generations: the patrimonial 'revenue' may be used, but to a limited degree to ensure the heritage (environmental, territorial and cultural resources) is not depleted: this is the kind of thinking in the Brundtland Report, setting limits to the consumption of resources (energy, and material and territorial resources) by making economic development environmentally friendly, by taking into account the ecological carrying capacity of environmental systems<sup>10</sup> without changing the laws of development.

Enhancement - producing new territorialization actions to increase the value of the territorial heritage through the creation of additional resources. In the latter case economic production (in agriculture, industry and the tertiary sector) redefines its own contents for the purposes of enhancing territorial and environmental resources. From this point of view the territory's resources are carefully interpreted and assessed as primary sources of the specific local quality of the lasting production of wealth.<sup>11</sup>

The renewed focus on the identity of places acquires a strategic significance if we follow this line of thinking: considering the territory as a heritage to be used to produce wealth, attributing it new values as a resource and continuing - through the production of new territorializing actions - constantly to increase its value.

### The distinction between local development and localism

<sup>10</sup> For a systematic treatment of the indicators of sustainability to limit the consumption of resources, energy and territory, see Wuppertal Institut (1997).

<sup>11</sup> See Magnaghi (1998).

<sup>9</sup> The concept of neo-ecosystem, elaborated by contemporary ecology, was already present in authors like Elisee Reclus. When criticizing deterministic descriptions of relations between the physical milieu and settled society ('not all islanders are good seamen'), he highlights the fact that changes in use of a natural milieu produce new ecosystems, of which man is the agent créateur (Reclus 1908, 1998).

A further distinction is required: having a local-based vision is not simply a question of following small-is-beautiful policies (even though it inevitably shares many of their assumptions). Rather, it is a point of view that brings out and enhances the specific features of a place (the socio-cultural milieu, the genetic heritage, the structural invariance and the individual nature of landscape) independently of geographic size. The enhancement of specific local features may concern a local territorial system, an urban quarter, a town, or even a transnational system like an Alpine valley. In indicating the place in which the local is formed, Raff Carmen, for example, suggests various sizes: 'Site (locus) indicates the space- village, zone, shanty town, enterprise, neighbourhood, landscape, cityscape - where beliefs, knowledge, skills, modes of behaviours, attitudes and practice aggregate and interact. Because of the enormous variety of the cultural dynamics involved, the symbolic site is unique and always complex' (Carmen 1996).

Thus the possible transformations in a local project are based on the enhancement of 'unique and complex' specific endogenous features, independently of the size of territory in question.

While the local approach is a way of interpreting the territory to recognize and treat the values in transformation projects so as to increase the heritage, obviously this cannot mean an a priori identification of the values of the local with the historical inhabitants of the place.

Often, for example, the 'vandalistic local' (Tarozzi 1990b), or destructive attitude towards the heritage is practised precisely by the local populations culturally colonized by models of modernization originating in the metropolis, while the ideas and practice of preserving and developing the local heritage are pursued by the new inhabitants (often outsiders or foreigners) who bring cultural models reflecting the crisis in metropolitan modernization. This is an important issue, if we consider the multi-ethnic city and the new role for agriculture in sustainable development. In both cases the founding rite of a local project is the return to caring for places in new ways of thinking and by new stakeholders (new inhabitants and new producers) who reinterpret them, appropriate the knowledge and landscape, and transform them through crossovers with different cultures.

Thus if local development is a cultural attitude, a point of view and a project, it has little to do with localism, mainly seen as the defensive behaviour of a community rooted in the territory (which, as recent history has demonstrated, can also be retrograde, vandalistic, 'sad', intolerant, fundamentalist, violent etc.). Local projects, on the other hand, create relationships, denote and enhance the stakeholders and behaviours (contrasting with others) in the territory. They bring a virtuous relationship with the territorial heritage, and as such are an agent in the process of constructing future local society and its empowerment.

### **'Self-sustainability': reuniting dweller and producer**

The concept of self-sustainability is based on the assumption that only the new jointly evolving relationship between dweller /producer and the territory is able - through caring - to create lasting balances between the human settlement and the environment, forging new uses, new knowledge and new technology for the historical unders-

tanding of the environment. Thus self-sustainability, self-determination, sustainable development and self-centred development become closely interdependent concepts. The concept of self-sustainability implies radically rethinking the hegemony of the 'economic', and a much greater role for local institutions. A strong process of decentralization is required to reinforce the practices of co-operation and participation and to develop new forms of community. They in turn can guarantee new processes of accumulation of social capital. Reconstructing the community is the key element for self-sustainable development. A community sustaining itself will ensure that the natural environment can sustain that community in its actions. All conservation actions that do not come from internal trust and self-reliance will create resistance and be doomed to failure.

### **From participation to the social production of the territory**

Thus what emerges is a process evolving from participation towards the 'social production of planning' (Crosta 1984; Ferraresi 1998) and eventually to the 'social production of the territory'.

Historically speaking, participation has mainly been a kind of aid for technicians who developed demands, projects, self-realizing forms and solidarity with the involvement of the inhabitants. It has often, however, been the pursuit of passive consensus or non-resistance to pre-constituted projects. In both cases, the inhabitants were either residents or consumers who did not possess their own means of producing the neighbourhood, city or territory. At times they do not know where their electricity, food and materials come from, or where waste goes, and they do not know why their waged labour produces given goods. Often, as in the case of the virtual enterprise, for example, they do not even know exactly whom they work for.

The women, children, young people, adults and elderly who in recent years have taken part in planning meetings in their neighbourhoods have lost almost all environmental knowledge, skills and the practical possibility of taking part in the social construction of their habitats. This phenomenon of dispossession and delegation of the production of goods and services to large organizations - in Fordism the radical division of activities in the territory became the rule - led to the construction and maintenance of urban and rural environments being totally delegated to functional and technological systems.

The globalization of the individual and family in the metropolitan space is fortuitous and anomie. The relation is one of alienation and non-identity. The organization of space, stripped of collective places, is alien to the individual, and the community - whether permanent, immigrant, nomad or creole.

A residual topography of hypermarkets, retail parks and diffuse urbanization has created the new neuralgic points and public space of the producers-consumers. It has atrophied their life as city dwellers in a confused geography of randomly scattered objects in an overall neglect with only a few clumsy attempts to restore individual and consumer meaning to the last shreds of inhabiting seen as a social phenomenon.

There was, therefore, a structural reason for the limited participation in many planning experiments in the 1970s. Participation in what? How can waged consumers, now unable to repair their roofs, grow vegetables or socialize civic uses participate in the production of the urban environment, which implies possessing knowledge about



it and the means of producing it?

In the age of the radical separation between the dwellers (atrophied as residents only) and producers-consumers (with houses in dormitory zones, the urban space as a speed-way, and the territory as a leisure park), participation was mainly the expression of demands (for housing, pedestrian precincts, efficient waste deposits, nurseries and schools, green areas, buses and environmental quality) subordinate to the dominant metropolitan model. When participation was production, it was in piecemeal forms (planting trees, do-it-yourself repairs of courtyards, or abandoned buildings, gardens, farms, etc.) without actually becoming the social production of the territory.

In the meantime, however, some conditions have changed, opening up ways for dwellers to play an active part in the production of the territory.

### **From waged labour to self-employment: towards new societal statutes**

For better or for worse, self-employment and micro-firms, together with the growth in non-commercial economic relations, are potentially paving the way to going beyond waged labour as the dominant historical form of social relationship in production and conflict. These forms of labour may be crucial as collective agents in constructing an environmentally and socially sustainable alternative model of society.

In waged labour, the worker has no say about the ends of production: by exchanging his labour for a wage he has no direct influence on the choice of production or the use value. The extreme fragmentation of tasks and the transfer of knowledge to machinery exacerbated the gap between workers and the enterprise in production decisions. In post-Fordism the self-employed worker can also be the super-exploited last link in a network of global companies. But because of the very nature of the molecular production organization and the role played by knowledge and information in creating value, the self-employed can make important coherent production decisions in line with lifestyle, ethics, cultural and political convictions, thus participating in the production of use value. In fact the 'second generation'<sup>12</sup> self-employed and micro-firms have the potential to be both dwellers and producers, and producers and consumers (these figures were completely separate in the culture of waged labour), who may bring into play new forms of self-government and democracy for local society in the direction of sustainability.

Self-employment as a form of production has a number of advantages:

- responsible direct access to the ends of production (on the grounds of self-enterprise's potential for self-realization and self-determination intrinsic to self-employment) and if supported by public policies, the self-employed can choose socially useful productions, going beyond the solely economic/employment criterion for working activity;
- a molecular relational technical knowledge potentially diffuse and useful for communicating co-operation;
- as a large part of the third sector and volunteer work, the self-employed can extend

<sup>12</sup> Sergio Bologna clearly describes the features of second-generation self-employment in post-Fordism as a potential constructor of new societal statutes going beyond the civilization of waged labour towards new balances between the newly rooted self-governed local society and the global context (Bologna 1997).

the range of activities based on mutual exchanges and co-operation, instead of only purely commercial relations.

In highly complex local territorial systems the 'molecularized' production system, the overlapping between the 'socio-affective domestic sphere and the spatial-temporal work sphere' (between the home and the workplace), can bring the figures of the dweller and the producer closer together, thus going behind the extraneousness to the local place, typical of the waged worker. In this system the fact of dwelling conditions the forms, times and modalities of work. Overlapping and integration between the places and times of work and of dwelling tend to make the interests of the dweller and producer coincide by establishing synergy between dwelling and producing. The sectors of activity involved can pave the way to the care, maintenance and enhancement of the territorial and environmental heritage, strengthened by a new sense of belonging, and has the potential for new social life, new democracy and new municipalism in the production of shared territorial values.

This potential can be seen in strategies making self-employment independent and resocializing the self-employed work as a creative activity directed at the construction of shared local projects in which the dweller-producer plays a leading role in the development project, the search for quality, a specific identity and its 'statutes': by acting on what, where, how much and how to produce transformations of the territorial heritage in lasting forms, since 'space will take the place of the wage form in establishing the social relationship between capital and independent labour' (Marazzi 1997: 71).

The spread of self-employment, micro-firms and personal entrepreneurship leads not only to the spread of the ownership of the means of production and technical knowledge, but also an overlapping between places and dwelling styles and places and work styles: the new relation ship of family- work-territory radically changes the relations between housing, services, work and public space.

In the context of a political project of sustainability founded on the development of local self-employment, diffuse self-enterprise can thus become the productive mainstream for local socio-economic systems, freeing the standardizing dependence on globalization. In this context: 'Self-employed labour can aspire to administer the city as a universitas of skills and acquired knowledge resources in the twofold role of labour and enterprise. It can also aspire to construct "places" as the guarantor of pragmatism and innovation.'<sup>13</sup> These new socio-territorial aggregates have forerunners in the Italian manufacturing 'districts'. These systems of small enterprises were founded on the existence of a local community with communications networks between economic stakeholders, mutual trust and internal circuits of accumulation.<sup>14</sup>

This feasible coming together of labour and territory can determine a new stakeholder by conflating the figure of dweller and producer in local society aggregates which, through the self-enhancement of the territorial heritage, can identify new forms of social life and forms of reconstruction of the polis. A 'new alliance' of dwellers and producers can reorganize in sustainable forms the economy of small and medium sized towns, implementing networks of urban activities in the territory, revitalizing the

<sup>13</sup> Bologna (1997: 42).

<sup>14</sup> In the case of the districts the local milieu supported the economic production systems, but not vice-versa: a purely economic use of the local resources led to their unbalanced exploitation, unsustainability and eventually a loss in competitiveness.

local commercial networks, craft firms and small producers to develop specific production features, joining up diffuse networks of services. The presence of strong local identities, the recovery of the historical heritage of the manufacturing and entrepreneurial culture of the independent farming families, craftsmen and small firms are all factors which restore those forms of craft production - side-lined by the mass-production development model since the early twentieth century - to a central position in the production process founded on networks of companies and flexible specialization.<sup>15</sup>

From this point of view, the transition from participation to self-government, from residents' demands to a process of self-determination in the social production of the territory, is the ground for research and planning work, highlighting the on-going processes of reterritorialization involving dwellers/ producers as leading players in the reconstruction of territorial values. If dwelling also means producing the quality of your own environment through the production of territorial values, participation means taking part in this productive act and not only as regards individual problems of residence.

The new productive relations between the settled community and environment, through the care, maintenance and enhancement of the territory, have encouraged the growth of relations of solidarity and social bonding. Social bonding becomes an essential component in the production of a territory by the local community and vice-versa.

### **Towards self-government**

A model of local self-sustainable development requires, on one hand, the reappropriation of widespread environmental knowledge and skills by the settled community, and on the other, a redefinition of municipality and local government institutions towards the direct use of these forms of knowledge with specific powers and policies to encourage their development.

Wherever development is due to the presence of factories more or less parachuted into the local territory, communal administrations simply provide services, regulate some possible repercussions and set preconditions: urban plans and the supply of services (schools, welfare, primary housing, workers' housing etc.). When the enhancement of the territorial heritage depends on its dweller-producers, however, the municipality must take on the role of promoting development as regards: a) the economy (harmonizing sectors and production types to be introduced, implementation of environmental and territorial economies, development of agricultural policies and environmental policies as public services); b) the production and management of energy; and c) public finance for projects involving ecological transformations. The process of territorial enhancement can thus encourage the development of micro-social activities pursued by co-operatives and communities, self-organized on a local scale (Gorz 1983), and the construction of local networks of stakeholders round the transformation projects.

The 'New Municipium' is the outcome of a process aimed at transforming local municipalities from bureaucratic administration offices into social workshops for self-government.

The growth of self-employment, micro-enterprises, voluntary work, and welfare, environmental and ethical activities, makes possible new forms and objectives for self-government, in which the

role of the dweller/producer becomes central in caring for places. The importance of this new actor emerges in the change from the Fordist society; characterized by a dwellers/producers divide, to a post-Fordist society where these two roles merge into a single shared responsibility for local production and life quality. (Charter for a New Municipium 2002; see Chapter 11, appendix)

From this point of view, with a stronger focus on the economics of ecological transformation, the role of local government lies in indicating, selecting and encouraging stakeholders with positive energy for the sustainability of projects and 'styles' of differentiated development through the lasting enhancement of endogenous resources. In the planning process, new forms of consultation with 'mute stakeholders' are required through communication policies in which participation becomes self-awareness, empowering the weaker stakeholders, and guiding social interaction towards sustainability.

Interpreting the system of governing the territory as a complex context of transformation implies that the planning agency is collective. The territorialist approach offers a more radical vision of a government system made up of multiple stakeholders through the idea of participation and by introducing a 'third stakeholder' (in addition to the two traditional big stakeholders: the state and the market) made up of the dwellers and their importance as producers.

In this way we create the conditions for participation to evolve towards self-government by the settled community in the contradictory and conflictual forms that social complexity implies, with the introduction of local bargaining and participatory decision-making in which the local system of stakeholders working on a strategic and planning scenario manages to establish pacts of co-operation and bargaining forms of planning.<sup>16</sup> New forms of socialization should not be sought in the local defence of separate identities, but in new 'social pacts' (De Rita and Bonomi 1998), reflecting the social composition of 'living people' (Gambi 1986) in each place who construct new community forms linked in an innovative and transforming way to long-term socio-cultural and territorial patterns.

The strategic force of this process opposing centralized forms of globalization lies above all in strengthening a plural world of local societies able to link up in non-hierarchical networks, recognizing the differences in development styles and establishing relations of subsidiarity.<sup>17</sup>

These objectives involve a selective innovative implementation of networks, measuring the degree of openness and closure in relations as a function of the self-preservation of the system's identity: '"Delinking" -rather than "autarky"-therefore means assessing all economical, political and cultural decisions according to the criteria of popular values. It does not mean breaking off all external links, but the subordination of those links to the logic of an endogenous, culture-sensitive, ethically just development, based on the principles of economic self-reliance, cultural identity and political autonomy' (Carmen 1996: 86).

Seeing globalization as the outcome of a process constructing 'long' networks by com-

<sup>16</sup> These new contractual and negotiated forms are included in the territorial pacts promoted by the Italian National Council for the Economy and Employment (CNEL), the creation of local development agencies, the development missions promoted by the European Union, the French and Belgian *contrats de rivière*, the *contrats de pays*, etc.

<sup>17</sup> This is the concept of 'superior-order local' (Giusti 1990), only partially covered by the principle of subsidiarity introduced to regulated different levels of local government.

<sup>15</sup> This process has been reconstructed in historical terms by Piore and Sabel (1984). They noted strong dependencies of modern technology on craft-scale production, injecting new energies into associations which have traditions going back to the pre-industrial age.



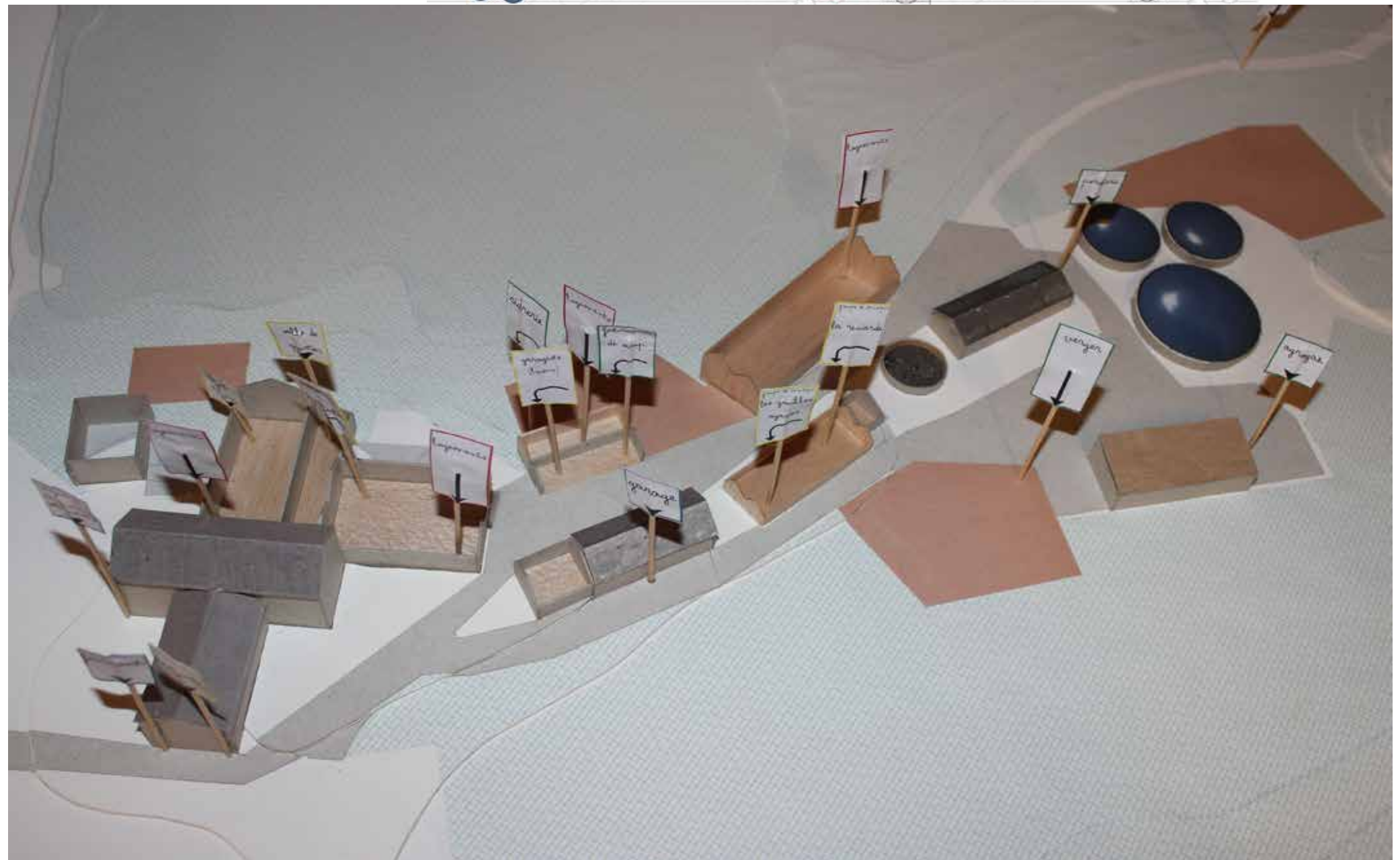
plex systems of self-governing local societies involves a different way of understanding the accumulation of long-term strategic resources. In current development ideology, investments for these resources are focused on a few capital-intensive strongly innovative sectors: biotechnology, space technology, advanced chemistry etc. The development strategies and leading sectors are thus decided by production networks and the dominant governments in the 'world system', while the local systems inevitably adapt to the pre-established development patterns ranking the individual local economic systems in the overall hierarchy of the global system.

The model proposed by bottom-up globalization empowers the networks of local systems with decision-making on strategic investments and the production sectors characterizing them. The production sectors will be influenced by decisions on the requisites for self-sustainable development and the enhancement of the heritage produced by local societies: appropriate technology, renewable energy, production sectors for the ecological economy etc.

In this picture it is the development of local societies that guides the forms, types and sectors of global economic development, and not vice-versa. This involves inverting traditional classifications distinguishing between central and peripheral production activities, since the former will become the outcome of decision-making by local systems.

Last, in the project of local self-sustainable development, conflict is focused on the theme of outside manipulating government versus self-government, or centralized globalization versus the construction of local societies proposing different models for the organization of labour, different social relations of production and different production strategies, establishing a relationship with the world system through non-hierarchical networks of independent cities, which are both separate and linked to the 'islands in the archipelago',<sup>18</sup> in order to free themselves from the selective and hierarchizing rules of competition on the world market and move towards new forms of competition / co-operation based on the rules of solidarity.

<sup>18</sup> 'Are «communities» of islands perennially sailing one contra-versus the other conceivable? Only if each is able to become and show itself to be - not as a simple individual entity - a finite, complete and satisfied entity to be set in the middle of a hierarchically organized space. Only if each, through self-awareness, discovers in itself, the same variable and unpredictable geometries making up the harmony of the archipelago' (Cacciari 1997: 31-2).



Afr2012f Le Mouret rurality project, Julian Bernard