



“Resilient Communities: Pillars of Sustainable Rural Development”

*Midleton, Cork, Ireland, and the surrounding area,
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PRESENTATIONS



INTRODUCTION

Background and aim

Resilience is a complex concept with a variety of interpretations. It means the preparedness of the community to deal with disasters, but also ecosystems management and community planning. Resilient communities cannot only handle shocks in a planned and organised way, including earthquakes, fires, floods etc, but also deal with stressful situations that may emerge from economic crises, such as high unemployment, endemic violence, food and water shortages or even inefficient public transportations systems. It is argued that by being able to address both the shocks and stresses, a community is more likely to deliver basic functions to all its members, in both good and bad times.

Resilience is the ability to anticipate risk, limit impact, and bounce back rapidly by activating a communities' potential for survival, adaptability, evolution and growth in the face of radical change; and by building self-help mechanisms that fortify the community against unforeseeable events and situations. Hence it is important for the community to plan forward for different options in the future, and apply wise ecosystem management methods. The many crises that emerged in the 21st century – energy, environmental, economic and equity crises, are posing complex and often unpredictable challenges to communities. Rural communities are smaller and more vulnerable than urban communities, but can more easily muster their capabilities and mobilise their members, so that they address the challenges when they arise: they need to build their resilience so that they can plan their future and manage their environment when they are stressed and only part of the needed support may come from outside sources.

The 16th Summer Academy of Euracademy Association aims to explore how resilience can be built and sustained within rural communities, and what are the options for these communities to plan their future in times of economic and environmental stress, mobilising their own resources and managing emerging crises in ways that assure the community's sustainability.

Discussion topics

Questions to be addressed by this year's Summer Academy include the following non-exhaustive list:

- What are the definitions of resilience and how can they apply to rural Europe?
- What are the converging economic and ecological challenges rural communities in Europe face today?
- What are the links between resilience and sustainable rural development?
- What are the changes in lifestyle rural communities need to bring about in order to become more resilient?
- What can we learn about resilient communities from best practices in Europe and elsewhere in the world?
- How can we identify community resources and needs, and design an environment from which creativity and collective effort can emerge?
- How can we organise strategies and models to shift current policies to support and foster community resilience?
- What are the steps a rural community needs to take in order to establish a resilience-building plan?

What is “community resilience” and how should it link to sustainable rural development?

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What is community resilience?

“Community resilience” is a term which has gained popularity in recent years – in research and particularly in national policies – as a key route towards sustainable rural development. Resilience is also seen as a **positive quality** which communities should reach for. It is seen as desirable and increasingly necessary, particularly in times of declining public sector resources and greater national and international uncertainties. Below, I outline the different concepts of resilience, focusing mostly on those relating to rural communities, and give some examples which illustrate key conceptual points.

The traditional use of resilience is around **absorption of**, and **resistance to, shocks**, and then **perseverance** and **recovery** – or “**bounce-back**” - from shocks towards a similar, or adjusted, **equilibrium**. These shocks are typically **external** to the system being studied, and are usually described primarily as environmental, social or economic.

However, the definition of resilience as bounce-back from external shock is **not universally accepted** by academics or development practitioners, for three main reasons. Firstly, there is frustration with the dominant view of “bounce-back” of a system which does not take **human creativity and forward-thinking** into account. Secondly, there is frustration with thinking about systems as being only **reactive** to shocks, rather than systems and communities of people actually planning ahead (being **proactive** and **socially resilient**). Thirdly, there is evidence that **change is always happening**, so we should not just think in terms of periodic shocks, but instead recognise that people and communities exist within a situation of constant flux.

Figure 1 (below) shows the **spectrum** of concepts and thinking around (rural) **community resilience**, which shows the evolution of this important term. As we move from left to right across the diagram, we can see a shift from physical to human agency systems, broadly representing the change in thinking over time, from **reactive to proactive** definitions. There is still no consensus; however, there is a gradual shift towards recognising the importance of people as agents of forward-looking change.

Human agency is a critical part of the evolving definition. If you recognise human agency, you believe that humans act deliberately and consciously, that they network, imagine futures, and make decisions between perceived options. They even dream of possible futures, and work towards preferred futures and away from undesirable options. Humans can anticipate, they can act collectively, they can postpone actions; they have memory and can learn. Importantly, human agency is **unequally distributed**.

It is important to note that community resilience involves **balancing** the community’s **assets and vulnerabilities**. It is therefore not a description of a static state, but is an **on-going process**, where **pathways** are being identified by individuals and communities so that they remain constantly able to **adapt to change** (“**adaptive capacity**”). Diversity, rather than narrowness, of resource base, is seen as centrally important to this.

It is also important to note that, in this context, we are talking about **communities of place** that: have “communities within communities”; are “messy”; have unequal and asymmetrical power structures inside them; are dynamic rather than static; and do not have fixed boundaries.

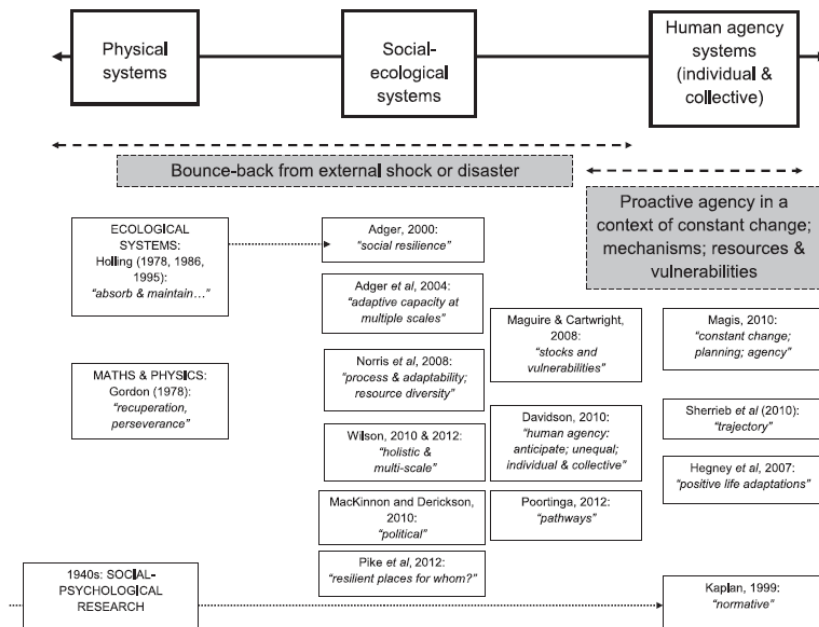


Figure 1: Typology or spectrum of resilience research, showing key authors, concepts and evolution of terminology. Source: Skerratt, 2013, p.39.

When you take these elements and complexities into account, the **definition** that satisfies them most closely is from Magis in her work in NW America (2010) which she developed in the context of forest management:

"Community resilience is the existence, development, and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterised by change, uncertainty, unpredictability and surprise. Members of resilient communities intentionally develop personal and collective capacity that they engage to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community, and to develop new trajectories for the communities' future" (p.402).

Magis' definition reflects the wider understanding of "**resilience pathways**" rather than one-off moments of simply assessing community assets or deficits, where **always being prepared for change** is all-important.

Before we leave this definitions section, a key point we must note is that "**community resilience**" has **normative associations**. In other words, there are strong (and rapidly growing) political, policy, and societal *expectations* that communities *should* be resilient; they *should* take responsibility for securing their own futures, for being *strong* and *providing solutions* to their own difficulties, e.g. in providing services such as health and broadband. It is important that we make these assumptions and norms really explicit and clear, so that we are open about what is being expected of rural communities. I discuss this in the next section.

Problems with use of the word "resilience":

As we have just heard, there are normative associations with the term "community resilience". In addition, the word "resilience" is used very lazily – some people mean passive bounce-back, while others mean

proactive human agency. These differences matter because they impact when you move into the real world. I discuss these two issues below.

Normative associations:

Rural and community development policy is focusing more and more on pushing for resilient and empowered communities – I will talk about **three examples** from:

- Northern Ireland (“Rural Needs Act”);
- Wales (“Well-being of Future Generations Act”)
- Scotland (“Resilient communities” as part of the National Performance Framework).

This deliberate policy drive has been taking place because of a **strong normative push** where community-led local development is believed to: (1) be desired by many people at community level; (2) increase self-confidence and shift power; (3) improve infrastructure and demographic trends; and (iv) create solutions that fit – e.g. LEADER programme across Europe. Ultimately, it is seen to lead to **increased community resilience**. However, resilience remains vague and undefined...

Community land ownership in Scotland is **another very strong example** of this policy and political trend which is directly linked to community resilience.

What this means is that there are **increasing expectations** on communities to be stronger, and to put more and more of their own resources into their development. This works for some, but not all communities, leaving some communities behind.

While this process gathers momentum, it is necessary to have a “reality-check” because:

- no individual or community starts from the same place;
- belief, self-belief and interest differ greatly within and between rural communities.

Two examples of this can be seen with reference to:

- **rural poverty** and
- **mental ill health** in rural areas.

Given that this **diversity** exists *between and within* communities, how can all communities take advantage of “community empowerment frameworks” equally? How can all communities “be resilient” in the way that is being increasingly demanded of them by policy, by funders, and by service providers?

Passive rather than proactive:

The perception *in policy* that community resilience is still mainly about **passive resistance to shocks** can lead to communities being viewed in a limited way: support mechanisms then foster much more limited engagement with rural community development. This has been called “**commissioning empowerment**”. That is, services have been closed down in rural areas; this constitutes the “shock”. Rural communities are advised that the only way the services can be re-opened is for them to be delivered by communities. Such communities are then “empowered” by being commissioned to deliver the services. However, some rural community development commentators question whether this is *genuine* empowerment because it is to deliver something that was previously a State responsibility and does not necessarily strengthen the wider, forward-looking resilience of these communities.

In Scotland, the **National Centre for Resilience** (NCR) encourages communities in remote rural areas to be prepared for climate change, especially flooding and the local mobility difficulties that come from this. For the NCR, resilience is defined very narrowly by Scottish Government, with communities being encouraged to respond to, and plan for responding to, environmental shocks. This pre-existing, reactive definition limits the scope of community ideas, resilience pathways and developments to what has already been prescribed in policy.

What is the impact?

We are seeing, in policy and practice, imprecise use of language around **resilient and empowered communities** in rural areas, coupled with a *normative increasing reliance on resilient communities*.

However, the mechanisms for supporting growth in rural community resilience are inconsistent.

This means that we are seeing a new landscape emerging, which shows a *new* “resilience distribution failure”, where we have:

- Darwinian development
- The already-empowered becoming more empowered
- With social justice implications

This is because there are “empowerment frameworks” and “Guidance”, but no legislation that insists that the same effort is put into making sure resilience and empowerment are spread in a just and equitable way.

New inequalities are emerging:

- This matters for social justice reasons.
- It also matters because services in rural areas will increasingly be delivered through rural communities, which means that *service inequalities* (including health and wellbeing) will increase in and for rural communities.

Conclusion:

It is important to acknowledge that rural community development is complex and is not the same experience for everyone. This has implications for resourcing, for policy and for politics.

I conclude by suggesting that we have a duty to remember those rural communities that do not, or cannot, show resilience.

We therefore have to be open-minded and rigorous in our evidence-gathering, making sure we are inclusive of multiple perspectives and experiences. Only then will we gather a fuller picture that will inform and support sustainable rural development.

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Skerratt, S. (2013), Enhancing the analysis of rural community resilience: Evidence from community land ownership, *Journal of Rural Studies* 31 (2013) 36-46

Five questions for discussion:

1. Where do you “sit” in terms of *your* understanding and belief, on the “resilience spectrum” – reactive systems through to proactive human agency? Can you explain why?
2. What evidence do you have that (rural) community resilience, or rural community empowerment, is being promoted in your region or country, in policy, political or service contexts?
3. Based on your experience and knowledge, do you think all communities can be resilient, or will we see Darwinian development where some communities will fall behind? Is this natural evolution? What should we then do?
4. How would you (or have you already) addressed the inequalities that I have talked about in my presentation?
5. What needs to be done in the “bigger system” – at international or national levels – to make sure rural community resilience is within the reach of all rural communities?

Community resilience through self-help: social enterprise activity in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland

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Introduction

Community resilience is commonly understood as the capacity of communities to harness *'resources and expertise to help themselves prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies'* (Scottish Government, 2013). However, in a rural community context, its meaning is attached to long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability and development, rather than emergency response (Steiner & Atterton, 2014, 2015). Magis (2010:1) describes this as *'the existence, development, and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterised by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise'*. In order to be resilient, communities must have the ability, capacity and willingness to adapt to such change as well as the existence of social, economic and environmental community 'capital' that is essential for their development (Steiner & Atterton, 2014; McManus et al., 2012; Wilson, 2012). The concept of community resilience is commonly discussed in relation to rural communities as these communities are frequently exposed to severe socio-economic uncertainty and flux.

The Highlands and Islands has some of the most remote and rural areas in the UK and is one of the most sparsely populated areas in Europe. The area accounts for 18% of the entire population of Scotland (approx. 450,000 out of 5.2million) and consists of a significant number of geographically isolated small communities (Scottish Government, 2015). At a basic logistical level, populations in this region face challenges of communication, transport and retention of populations (Farmer et al., 2008; O'Shaughnessy et al., 2011; Steinerowski et al., 2008). Geographically dispersed communities have limited access to markets and economic activity; and to access healthcare and education, rural residents need to travel large distances (Munoz et al., 2014b; Steinerowski & Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Scottish Government, 2008). The Highlands and Islands also have the highest out-migration levels in Scotland, particularly the depletion of youth, leaving a high proportion of residents over 65 years (Jamieson & Groves, 2008; Scottish Government, 2015). This continued loss of economic and human capital increases the fragility of communities highlighting the need for communities to enhance their sustainability and resilience.

On a policy level, the Scottish Government has introduced the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill to help communities in Scotland to build both capacity and resilience, stating that *'communities are a rich source of talent and creative potential and the process of community empowerment helps to unlock that potential. It stimulates and harnesses the energy of local people to come up with creative and successful solutions to local challenges'* (Scottish Government, 2012: 6). Rural communities in particular can be better suited to this grassroots community-led development based on local narrative, informal networks and existing experience (Farmer et al., 2008; Nimegeer et al., 2011). Rural populations are also more likely to have stronger social networks, denser communities and higher levels of social cohesion than their urban counterparts (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Hofferth & Iceland, 1998; Shucksmith, 1996). This can often mean that rural entrepreneurship is more likely to be socially orientated and based on collective community development rather than individual economic gain (Kay, 2003; Williams, 2007; Shucksmith, 1996). These cultures of self-help and collective resilience are often the perfect breeding ground for enterprising activity that contributes to the sustainability rural regions (Kay, 2003; Shucksmith et al, 1996).

In Scotland, social enterprises can be defined as 'businesses that trade for the common good rather than the unlimited private gain of a few' (Social Value Lab, 2015:6). Therefore, the aim of this type of enterprising activity is to focus on social and environmental issues, such as strengthening communities and protecting eco-systems through the reinvestment of profits into communities. In rural Scotland, social enterprise activity commonly comes in the form of community businesses and development trusts. The development of rural social enterprise is high on the agenda for the Scottish Government (Scottish Government, 2008; Vision 2025), and the Community Empowerment Bill in Scotland is expected to contribute to social enterprise development in allowing communities to acquire land to increase their assets (Scottish Government, 2014).

Recent Social Enterprise Census figures showed that 22% of social enterprises in Scotland are located in the Highlands and Islands; 16% of which exist in 'fragile' areas characterised by '*weakening of communities through population loss, low incomes, limited employment opportunities, poor infrastructure and remoteness*' (Social Value Lab, 2015). This is an average of one social enterprise per four people, compared to one per 1,000 people in urban areas of Scotland (Social Value Lab, 2015). Nevertheless, there is scarce research on the drivers of this growing social enterprise activity in rural locations (Steiner et al., 2012, Steinerowski & Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Munoz, 2011). Moreover, there is a need to understand if and how social enterprise activity may be contributing to developing resilience of communities in remote and rural areas. This is of particular importance in small communities where the ability to be resilient is crucial for their very survival.

This paper will seek to explore how social enterprise activity may be used as a tool of 'self-help' to contribute to growing community resilience. The paper will outline findings from the 'Growth at the Edge' project, which is part of a five-year collaborative research programme, called 'Commonhealth', that aims to develop methods to evaluate new pathways to health creation and health inequalities reduction arising from social enterprise. Growth at the Edge aims to investigate the health and wellbeing impacts of social enterprise in rural, remote and fragile communities in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and how such activity may contribute to the sustainability and enhanced resilience of these communities.

Methodology

The Growth at the Edge project focuses on 8 social enterprises case studies from remote, rural and fragile communities across the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. The organisations represent various sectors of rural social enterprise activity, such as housing, transport, leisure and tourism and education. Stakeholders from each social enterprise, including board members, service users and staff were interviewed using in-depth qualitative methods over a one-year period. The research simultaneously used ethnographic methods to understand each individual rural context, and the dynamic economic and social factors affecting their sustainability and resilience. This involved spending time working for organisations, interacting with wider community members, and exploring the rural environment.

For the purpose of this paper, 3 case studies will be presented outlining issues of housing, transport and education in rural settings, and the nature of the social enterprise activity that exists to enhance the sustainability and resilience of rural communities.

Case studies

Helmsdale & District Development Trust (HDDT)

Helmsdale is a coastal village in the North East region of Sutherland, with a current population of approximately 760 residents. Once prosperous for its fishing and harbour port, the village took an economic downturn over the past century as fishing stocks depleted, and is now categorised as an area of deprivation. Helmsdale has continually suffered from depleting populations of youth and ever-ageing inhabitants. Of particular concern is the lack of suitable housing to attract and retain young people to the area. Current housing in Helmsdale has a high rental cost, lacks modern amenities, and still uses traditional expensive fuel methods.

Helmsdale & District Development Trust was formed in 2010 by local residents to reverse the trends of depleting populations and resources. Community consultation identified housing as a priority for the area, with HDDT taking on a major housing project, which included: -

- Purchasing land to build modern housing
- Offering affordable rental costs
- Installing updated power lines, gas and water to plots of land using renewable sources

- Improving internet connectivity to houses

The results of this project have increased the sustainability Helmsdale by attracting new young families into the area, which has increased their population size and brought fresh entrepreneurial skills and ideas to the community. The project also promoted the idea of community land ownership and building of further infrastructure in the village, which has led to a feasibility study for a community owned windfarm. In improving the internet connectivity to the area, new residents are now able to work from home and the population feels less isolated.

Transport for Tongue (T4T)

Tongue is a coastal village on the North coast of Scotland, with a population of approximately 550 residents. The area is sparsely populated with houses spread out across the Kyle of Tongue, with a small central area containing 2 shops, a bank and a petrol station. Public transport infrastructure in the area had drastically decreased, with local authority services withdrawn local residents were left isolated or were forced to move out of the area. In particular, access to education and health services were of particular concern for locals therefore transport was identified as a priority need.

Transport for Tongue was founded in 2009 by local community members and was registered as a Community Transport Company to tackle the problem of connectedness and isolation. The service started as a one-car operation and within 8 years of operating now offers the following: -

- 3 minibuses, one Eurobus and a wheelchair accessible car
- Daily and weekly services connecting locals to other villages and towns in the area
- Daily service for college students to reach educational institutions in nearest town
- Daily and weekly travel to healthcare services
- Weekly travel to the nearest large city (Inverness)
- Door to door car service for elderly residents and those with limited mobility
- Volunteer driver and car share initiative for general public use

T4T is now a vital service in the area which has had numerous effects on the population of Tongue. Access to educational institutes has increased the educational levels and skills of the general population. Such skills can then be reinvested into this small community, and young people are no longer required to leave the area for academic opportunity. Regular transport to healthcare services means that the health of the population is also felt to have increased. Importantly, in tackling a major issue of transportation, young people and families are now being attracted to the area, and the population is no longer remotely isolated.

Cothrom

South Uist is an island on the Outer Hebrides of Scotland, with a population of approximately 1,800 residents. The area is very sparsely populated with few settlements, making access to services and facilities difficult, with many having to travel to the mainland for higher education and employment, often never returning. The Scottish Government had also recognised low levels of literacy in the general population.

Cothrom started as a small group of women living in South Uist who were concerned by the lack of training, employment and education opportunities on the island. The group was later formalised in 1992 and their first project offered childcare to local people in the area to allow them to be able to work and train. The

began by offering small sewing classes to young mothers, and have grown substantially over the 25 years they have been running, and now offer the following:-

- Courses in adult learning and vocational qualifications- including computing, numeracy and literacy, business studies
- Life skills and personal development training- including household budgeting, washing, cooking, self-esteem and independence
- Modern apprenticeships for school leavers
- A full time nursery and childcare facility
- A furniture upcycling centre where students can learn woodwork and retail skills

South Uist now has its very own central base for training and education, which means that people do not have to leave the island for skills and qualifications. The centre has also increased the numeracy and literacy levels of the general population, with these new skills reinvested into the community. As well as tackling the depleting population, the centre also provides a vital childcare service to parents, who are now able to both work and train on the same premises as the nursery.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this paper suggest that community-led social enterprise activity can be used as a tool for developing community resilience in rural settings. Social enterprise is a tool that is particularly suited to rural community development due to already existing cultures of self-help and collective action. The impact of social enterprise activity that has been presented, both directly and indirectly, has exemplified how community resilience can be built through the acquisition of assets, and the use of existing skills and entrepreneurship within communities. Most importantly, that communities are recognising their priority needs and taking innovative steps to tackle socio-economic issues on a wider community level using a platform that allows for both economic and social growth concurrently. The adoption and development of relevant skills and knowledge within communities through social enterprise activity will contribute to longer term economic sustainability and entrepreneurship within small populations.

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Rural Vibrancy and Community Resilience – Perceptions and Roles of Civil Society

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Introduction

This paper presents data from a comprehensive survey of rural dwellers in South-West Ireland, in which they articulate their perceptions of the vibrancy of place, based on economic, socio-cultural and environmental indicators. The survey, which paralleled a profiling of civil society organisations and a mapping of public service provision, sought to test indicators for the measurement and analysis of vibrancy levels in micro-geographies in tandem with promoting community development and a reflection on public policy impacts on rural locales.

Literature Review and Context

Over the past four decades, rural communities have experienced considerable upheaval and restructuring (Walsh and Harvey, 2013). While many of the changes affecting rural regions are recorded, documented and enumerated in statistical and official sources and in literature – popular and academic (Cloke *et al.*, 2006; Butler Flora *et al.*, 2016), there is a need to ensure a focus on citizens’ perceptions of their own communities (Ledwith, 2005; Pitchford, 2008). A reliable and popular first step in the community and local development trajectory is that of taking stock of local assets. Such a process not only clarifies baselines against which interventions can be assessed, it can also serve as a tool of community empowerment, and be repeated cyclically, so as to animate and sustain the momentum of community development. As Butler Flora *et al.* (2016: 461) observe, “asset-mapping is important because it allows communities to move beyond a victim mentality and recognize that working together locally, changes can be made.” The processes associated with local stocktaking and strategic planning can be expanded beyond the utilisation of secondary data sources and community consultation mechanisms, as citizens’ perceptions audits offer means of reaching out to, and engaging those who may be less likely to participate in community structures or attend community meetings.

In local and regional development literature and discourses the terms ‘resilience,’ ‘vitality’ and ‘vibrancy’ are often used interchangeably. While it must be acknowledged that they are not synonyms in the strictest sense, they are inter-related and are all associated with territorial development and communities’ experiences and perceptions. They are integral concepts in the growing body of work that acknowledges and promotes the merits of place-based development and the valorization of territorial capital (Douglas 2010; Zasada *et al.*, 2015). A stronger focus on regional and territorial assets and development potential, coupled with multi-level governance, is seen as contributing to increased innovation and an enhanced ability on the parts of regions and locales to stimulate development from within and to respond more effectively to the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization. Drawing on extensive reviews of policy and practice, the OECD Secretary General argues that “the success of large numbers of rural regions highlights the potential that can be tapped when rural communities are able to mobilize their place-based assets” (OECD, 2015: 4), thereby promoting local resilience. Community vibrancy and resilience are also shaped by externalities, including government policy and the approaches of public bodies, and the impacts these have on rural territories. Public sector investment, including in infrastructure and service provision are significant determinants of vitality (Skerratt, 2010).

While vibrancy and resilience are widely-celebrated and acknowledged, they lack a singular definition or measure, but are instead, multi-dimensional concepts, as well as being objectives and policy goals associated

with rural, territorial and community development. Therefore, indicators need to cover development outputs, impacts and processes, and in the context of rural territorial dynamics, they need to examine indigenous, endogenous, external and exogenous factors and interfaces. The use of scales and metrics enables benchmarking, so that communities are enabled to monitor change and progress longitudinally. Scales also allow for multi-variate analysis, so as to establish any possible associations between variables such as geography and demographics on perceptions of vibrancy. Considering these factors, this research pursued a mixed-methods approach to data collection in a case study location in South-West Ireland.

Case Study Location - South Kerry (Ireland)

South Kerry (pop. 55,000) comprises the southern half of County Kerry in the South-West of Ireland. It covers a total geographic extent of 2,529 km² and a land area of 2,462 km². The density of population is 21.4 persons per km². The eastern part of the area is more urbanised, with the main population centre being Killarney, one of Ireland's most popular tourist destinations. In contrast, the west, on the Atlantic fringe, is more peripheral.

Methodology

There were three parallel data collection strands to this project:

- i. A questionnaire survey of citizens (aged 15+) in South Kerry the objective of which was to measure their perceptions of community vibrancy;
- ii. A survey of civil society groups across the territory in the form of a questionnaire (per group) and workshops;
- iii. A mapping of service provision.

The citizens' survey presented participants with a Likert scale on which they could express their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements about community vibrancy under three broad headings – economic, socio-cultural and environmental vibrancy. The statements corresponded to a series of vibrancy indicators, which have been tested in communities in Canada (Stolte and Metcalf, 2009). The greater the respondents' levels of agreement with the statements provided, the greater the perceived level of vibrancy of their community. This approach allowed for a calculation of a vibrancy score for each community as well as scores for their performances in respect of economic, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions. A total of 972 citizens responded to the questionnaire, with the majority completing it face-to-face. The response rate was 76%.

The second strand involved surveying civil society organizations (n=102) across South Kerry to establish their membership profiles, map their activities and understand governance mechanisms and interfaces. Questionnaires were circulated at Community Forum (local networks) meetings and in each case, group officers completed it. The officers then took part in a facilitated discussion about community development issues and experiences. They were subsequently provided with the survey results, at which point, further facilitated discussion ensued.

The third complementary and parallel strand involved mapping public service provision in each community, thereby generating quantitative spatial data on vibrancy. This element of the investigation allowed for a benchmarking of service provision levels against the targets specified in public policy, specifically Ireland's National Spatial Strategy (2002-2020) (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2002).

South Kerry Development Partnership, which is the LEADER Partnership and Local Development Company for the area, facilitated data collection by enabling the researcher to attend Community Forum meetings and make direct contact with civil society organisations.

Results

The survey findings show that a majority of citizens agree with the affirmative statements about economic vibrancy that relate to, or are governed by local variables – attitudes and behaviour. These include the relationship between local businesses and customers, the levels of entrepreneurship locally and the supports provided to people with business ideas. However, levels of agreement fall below fifty percent with respect to the statements that relate to variables that are shaped by more external than indigenous factors, such as public transport provision and the area's ability to attract investment. Moreover, the findings suggest that many communities in South Kerry are struggling to meet the challenges associated with rural economic restructuring, and that public / statutory bodies and policy are unfavourably perceived. There are also distinct spatial patterns in the responses, with higher levels of vibrancy in the more peri-urban areas, and the findings suggest a relationship between public sector investment and vibrancy. Citizens expressed grave concern at the direction of rural development policy in Ireland, and specifically the attempts by central government to curtail the activities and scope of LEADER partnerships

The data show that rural dwellers in South Kerry perceive their communities to have high levels of socio-cultural vibrancy, as indicated by the friendliness of the people, the recognition of civil society and the presence of spaces and places for community interaction and bonding. Levels of vibrancy on these indicators, as well as levels of volunteerism are higher in the more rural and peripheral parts of South Kerry, relative to those in peri-urban communities and in Killarney Town.

The findings show that citizens have a generally positive perception of their local environment, and most agree that recycling facilities, farming practices and the quality of drinking water are satisfactory. However, they have a more jaundiced view of the quality of the built environment, and there are concerns locally over the impact on the landscape of holiday homes and buildings that are unsympathetic to the landscape.

The survey of community and voluntary organisations revealed that they have become increasingly active in the provision of local services and the development and management of amenities and facilities. In many respects, civil society in rural Ireland is filling gaps that are occurring due to austerity and the retrenching and neo-liberal State. Indeed, volunteers are carrying out functions that local governments / municipal authorities execute in many other European jurisdictions. While their roles and responsibilities are expanding, and they are managing considerable amounts of funds, many groups are under pressure to implement rotation and succession strategies and some claim to have difficulties in recruiting officers. Consultations also reveal groups' frustrations with the absence of vertical governance mechanisms, thus delimiting their capacity to input into policy formulation.

Public service provision in South Kerry, as in many rural territories, is very variable. Over the past twenty years the vibrancy and resilience of communities, and their capacity to generate economic development has been hampered by the closure of post offices, garda (police) stations and banks, and by the tardy roll-out of broadband connectivity. On average, the level of public service provision stands at 75% of that specified in Ireland's National Spatial Strategy, well over a decade into the Strategy's life. Thus, the South Kerry experience suggests that as the Strategy was non-binding on public bodies, and not supported by legislation, service providers regrettably failed to pay it due heed.

In general the three sets of findings record high levels of vibrancy with respect to those dimensions thereof over which local citizens have assumed a degree of responsibility and control. These include community amenities, facilities and social services (e.g. childcare, youth development and conservation projects).

However, there are widespread concerns locally over the territory's economic resilience; and the more peripheral the community, the greater these concerns are. It is noteworthy that for all of their expansions over recent decades, only a minority of civil society groups in South Kerry are directly involved in income generating projects or derive an income from commercial activities. Thus, they tend to rely on fundraising and government grants to fund the services they provide. LEADER and successive local development programmes emerge as the most significant enablers of civil society organisations. Yet, LEADER itself and endogenous local development are, due to government policy, under very considerable pressure in contemporary Ireland.

Discussion and Conclusion

The research findings and the data collection experience in South Kerry highlight the significance of bottom-up development and they verify the assertions by Markey and Halseth (2015, 100-101) that rural places "are proving themselves to be highly innovative [and] are about adaptability and resilience, with many showing strong leadership in environmental protection, commodity production, new technologies and others." EU policies in the form of LEADER and the resourcing of community-led local development and social enterprises are strengthening socio-cultural vibrancy through making investments in community facilities and infrastructure and enhancing social, cultural and knowledge capital. The abilities of endogenous actors to foster and sustain vibrancy levels are however influenced and shaped by the responsiveness, or lack thereof, and the attitudes of exogenous actors and public policy frameworks and orientation. The promotion of neo-liberal and austerity policies over recent decades and the consequent scaling back of the presence of the welfare state and public services in many rural communities, while galvanizing the determination of civil society to assume leadership roles, is also depriving communities of vital components of economic vibrancy, which in the medium to long-term, propel a downward demographic spiral and lead to social and environmental fall-out, as already evidenced in other parts of Europe (Silva and Figueiredo 2013). The South Kerry experience resonates with that recorded by Skerratt (2010) in rural Scotland, which highlights the significance of volunteers in maintaining the vibrancy of communities, and who do so in a climate of, and in response to, market failures and declining public sector spend. In this context, Skerratt anticipates further increases in the activities of third sector organisations, as government devolves service delivery functions to them. While devolved responsibilities can carry with them the opportunities for communities to tailor services to suit local conditions and meet specific needs, the mechanisms through which such services are funded and administered in Ireland are defined and operationalised centrally, with little scope for community inputs. Thus, communities are increasingly on the receiving end of government policy, and there is a need to bring about vertical governance mechanisms whereby rural communities can shape the policies and programmes that clearly affect rural vibrancy. Indeed, there is a compelling case for institutional recognition of the contributions and role of civil society, not just in service provision, but in deliberative democracy. The Irish case study also points up a need for increased transparency in the monitoring of public expenditure, and while the efforts of the (national) Rural Development Monitoring Committee in this respect are welcome, monitoring and goal setting need to happen at sub-regional level.

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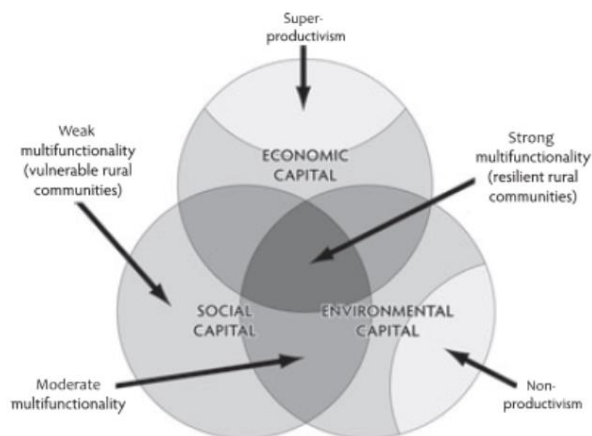
Irén Szörényiné Kukorelli, Patrícia Honvári¹

Depopulated villages in Hungary – does resilience exist?

Community resilience itself is not a popular topic among Hungarian settlements. Neither the single settlements, nor the settlement associations prepare resilience strategies. However, several communities make local economic development strategies, rural development strategies; furthermore, many settlements located in endangered areas also own a disaster management plan against floods. Except for the last one, these existing strategies do not intend to prepare the settlements for a certain shock, so that they will be able to answer different social, political or environmental changes. However, several parts of these strategies can be considered as elements of resilience, especially those concerning the use of local resources and the involvement of local community.

According to Bourbeau resilience is not a state, but a process (Bourbeau 2015), which can be described as an attitude, a mentality and community commitment. It requires expertise in order to build a strong community, which is able to give proper answer to the challenges and to deal with vulnerability. Renewal, preservation and creativity are needed all at once, which can be achieved by place-based approach, by the mobilization of own resources and by the increase of community capacities. For example, when a community is able to preserve and transmit the cultural identity, it took a step towards resilience. If it builds on identity, then not only the resistance against changes prevails, but the self-organisation as well, and through continuous renewal, it can lead the community to resilience (Farág, L. 2017).

Figure 1: Interrelations of economic, social and environmental capital



Source: Wilson (2010) p 367.; after Van Huylenbroek et al (2007)

According to Huylenbroeck et al (2007) through multi-functionality a community can overcome its vulnerability. In order to reach multi-functionality, it is essential that the economic, social and environmental capitals are interlinked and have a mutually reinforcing effect (Figure 1). In those communities, where these

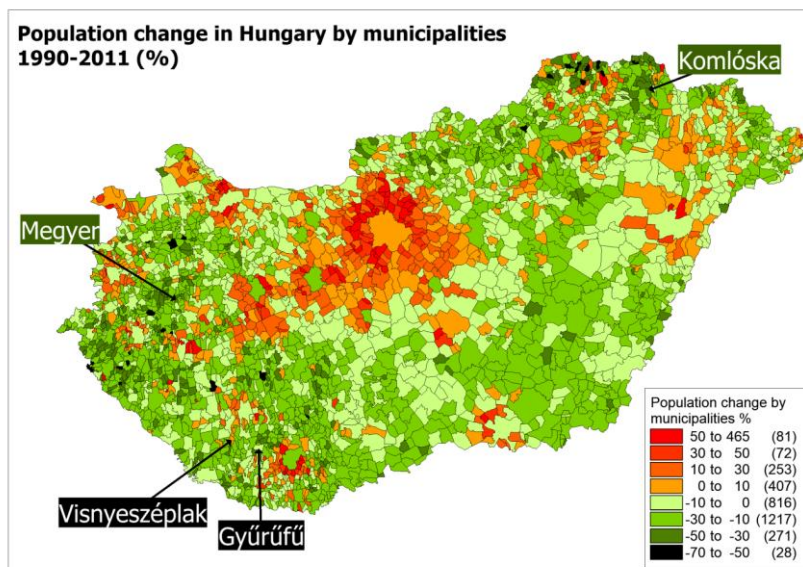
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capitals are in balance, multi-functionality is powerful, serving as a basis of strong community resilience (Wilson, G. 2010). Numerous researches have proven that social resilience can be described with several indicators, like the changes of institutional system, the economic structure and also the demographic changes. Depopulation therefore can draw the attention or directly warn to the importance of resilience. On one hand host societies can lose their identity, which weakens their resistance, on the other hand the depopulating communities can lose their social capital, their economy declines, their inner resources stay untapped, which results in a vulnerable resilience (Adger, N W. 2000).

In our study, we are looking for the answer, whether Hungarian rural tiny villages are able to fight external impacts. What kind of resilience strategy do they have? Which form of community resilience are they choosing in order to stop or even reverse the depopulation process? In which areas can they strengthen their “immune system” against depopulation? How much is it dependent on the size of the settlement, on the community or on the chosen intervention?

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Figure 2: Population change in Hungary by municipalities 1990-2011 (%)



Source: own edition (Hardi T.)

The demographic trends of Hungary are very unfavourable. Since 1981 the natural reproduction is negative (with a value of -4,08/1000 inhabitants), which means that the population increase of certain settlements only derives from the internal migration. Only Budapest and some settlements of suburban districts around bigger cities could produce an increase in the population between 1990 and 2011 (Figure 2). Depopulation is especially remarkable among villages with 500-1500 inhabitants. Because of their population loss, these settlements can easily fall into the category of tiny villages, i.e. settlements with less than 500 inhabitants.

The number of tiny villages increased from 941 to 1082 between 1990 and 2011, and altogether 280 thousand people live here across the country (Table 1). Depopulation is also strong among the settlements with a population between 500 - 3 000, and as a consequence 150 of these settlements slipped down into

the category of tiny villages since 1990. The question arises, whether the communities living in the growing number of tiny villages are able to resist different social, ecological challenges, whether they are able to treat their vulnerability, and how can they realize multi-functionality, as a tool for resilience.

Table 1: Settlement structure in Hungary

Category of population size	number of settlements (1990)	number of inhabitants (1990)	number of settlements (2011)	number of inhabitants (2011)
≥ 300000	1	1 934 831	1	1 589 231
300000 - 100000	8	1 177 218	7	1 002 789
100000 - 50000	12	777 201	11	720 903
50000 - 10000	116	2 245 593	122	2 334 865
10000 - 5000	135	934 950	136	947 402
5000 - 3000	204	765 873	206	780 124
3000 - 1500	577	1 223 761	550	1 158 751
1500 - 500	1141	1 035 098	1020	934 369
≤ 500	941	268 982	1082	283 649

Source: own edition, based on the data of Central Statistical Office

The transition in 1990 intensified the depopulation process of villages. Simultaneously with the land privatisation, the state farms and cooperatives were abolished, resulting in employment problems and arising unemployment in rural areas, which could not be solved by the slowly developing private farms. Furthermore, it also needs to be emphasized that the average education level of the village population was lower, with a higher rate of physical workers. Almost half of the unemployed only finished primary education or less – this rate affected the village population in a much higher share (Szörényiné Kukorelli 2006).

At the same time, despite these problems, bottom-up policy gained strength, since the municipality-system that came to existence after 1990 supported the empowerment. Municipalities created their own local development strategies, and implemented these by using both external sources and the available local endogenous resources. However, the human capital of rural areas was depleted, and besides the mayors and a few local actors there were no one, who could take over the handling of rapidly changing political, economic and social factors. Entrepreneurs, if they were present at the settlement, did not take actions beyond their own interest, which is understandable, since they were occupied with their own initial business life.

Apart from the activity of the rural population, the urban intellectual elite, which is choosing a rural settlement as a second home also has a strong effect on the local community. It is remarkable, that the civil society became vivid in those villages and rural areas, where the intellectual elite reappeared in the villages. They were who urged the formation of different advocacy organisations. In these settlements, more local civil organisations came into existence, which played an important role in shaping the community life and in implementing local developments. New functions (like rural tourism) and new services (like environment and landscape protection) emerged, associations linked to the local culture or nature were created. Settlement-associations (including several municipalities) were developed, with local capacity building as one of their main task. These settlement-associations created own development strategies, where the future developments were also listed on a municipality level. After the EU accession, LEADER groups came into existence based on the experiences of these settlement-associations. LEADER groups were also able to strengthen the place-based development and the bottom-up approach.

Accordingly, we can state that there were such processes that supported the autonomy, resistance and innovation-capacity at rural areas and villages. However, their success is predominantly isolated; their results mostly rely on the activity and creativity of the local mayor and a few local stakeholders.

The question is how could tiny villages facing with depopulation recover? According to the literature, settlements have to develop their resistance in many directions, while the community capital, the multi-functionality and the natural resource management together can support the process (Robinson, M. G – Carson, A. D. 2016). This basically means, that the joint application of three dimensions is essential in order to become resilient. As previously presented on Figure 1, the three dimensions are physical/environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimension. According to Adger, migration can endanger resilience, both for the sending as well as the receiving settlements, since they can lose their stability (Adger, N.W 200). In this case, we are looking at the sending tiny villages, where ensuring resource exploitation and the sustainability of the development is especially difficult. By examining the Hungarian depopulated settlements, we can state, that these communities considered all of the above dimensions, however they developed their strategies relying only on one factor, as a driver.

The examined settlements were classified into four groups according to the dominant driver they have been using, in order to face their vulnerability and to reverse the negative process of depopulation. One of the groups has seen the way out in the development of tourism, i.e. in the creation of a new economic function (case study 1). Another group has relied on strengthening the economic and institutional system (case study 2), while some others enhanced the ecological/environmental dimension by the utilization of renewable energy sources or the creation of eco-villages (case study 3). The Hungarian case studies present one concrete example of these groups.

As an impact of the chosen driver, new functions started to emerge at the given settlement, which led to social-economic diversity and to the strengthening of community capital. In one of the Hungarian case studies, by strengthening the economic-institutional dimension, the local municipality was able to generate financial stability, followed by the development of social capital and the community-based natural resource management. Therefore, the enhancement of ecological/environmental, the economic and the socio-cultural dimension also reinforced the self-organisation, increasing the community resilience.

Based on the experience of the case studies, the following and closing Table summarises the most important elements of innovative strategies that are necessary for the development of a community resilience strategy (Table 2). Among the Hungarian tiny villages, we can find communities, who faced with depopulation, and answered with different innovative survival strategies, thereby establishing the resilience against negative processes. To conclude, we can answer the question in the title: resilience exists. However, it will be the task of the future to make municipalities realise its importance, and start building resilience consciously.

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Table 2: Elements of resilience dimensions

<i>Physical/Ecological dimension</i>	<i>Economic dimension</i>	<i>Social-culture dimension</i>
good infrastructure or develop it	adaptive ability in the economy	ability to manage the social conflicts
rich biodiversity	adaptiveness to the new technologies	open community
ecological system	learning willingness of the employees	learning willingness and possibilities

preserved countryside	high quality educated management for innovative solutions,	for local people local community which knows well its own past, preserve and promote cultural heritage
ability to build the local sources in the local development	management keeps the sustainability in view	innovator, local or external „hero” who is open-minded, high quality educated, committed to changing
preservation of natural resources	strong and wide network self-preservation	strong civil organisations good connection among the civil organisation, local government and personally the mayor broad network at national and international levels

Source: authors

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A resilient community? The work in progress that is Cloughjordan, with an emphasis on its agri-food mosaic in general and CSA in particular. (Draft only NOT for Citation!)

Dr. Oliver Moore

This short exploratory paper is about the issues facing an intentional community in Ireland which is expressly trying to be resilient. First we introduce some basic facts about the community; then we briefly explore resilience as the community defines it. We then focus in on the agri-food mosaic in and around the intentional community, with particular emphasis on the community owned and operated farm. This we explore in more detail, using previous work by Moore (et al 2014) and the notion of reflexive resilience. Finally, key questions for future growth and development are outlined.

Background

Cloughjordan ecovillage is an intentional community in the Irish midlands. The idea for this ecovillage formed in a food co-op in the 1990s.

Ecovillage resident and politics professor Peadar Kirby [outlines](#) the development process : “By 2002, the village of Cloughjordan was selected as the site and a year-long community consultation began with residents. An Ecological Charter of basic principles for development of the ecovillage was drawn up and agreed by members and a master plan developed and submitted for planning permission. By 2005, a 67-acre site had been bought and, following the granting of outline planning permission, infrastructural work began in 2007. With its completion in 2008, the first houses were constructed in 2009 and the first residents moved in in December 2009.” It is also worth noting that there were no planning objections to the development.

Prior to the ecovillage, the town of Cloughjordan was a small Irish rural town in relative decline. The ecovillage has added population, profile and activity to the town, being as it is on the town's edge. This is however in the context of what has been, until recently, an economic recession which impacted both town and ecovillage.

The establishment and maintenance of a collectively owned 67 acre site, infrastructure, 55 housing units, heating systems, enterprise centre, allotments, non-residential areas including woodlands and a farm. Each of these elements both flourish and have challenges. The site is 1/3 occupied; infrastructure is more costly and technically difficult to run in this context, though the community manages to do so with internal skills. Solar panels are only now, in 2017, finally starting to work after instalment issues, while wood chop heat has worked since the project's inception. The enterprise centre functions with leading edge technology but not to capacity; some but not all allotment sites are taken up, which includes research gardens the subject of a busy youtube channel; woodlands have been planted but suffered partial ash dieback, while thousands of fruiting trees are growing all over the site; the community owned farm has about 70 family memberships, has supplied local seasonal food regularly since 2009, pays two farmers a living but not average industrial wage and is viable, albeit with challenges including low population base in the immediate region.

For this initiative to start building at the beginning of a global recession, one which impacted Ireland especially hard, means that on one level its establishment and survival is impressive. Building companies and banks were going bust, while this was in fact a thriving building site by national standards. Tenacity, sacrifice and commitment has been required to get to the level of socio-economic and cultural activity that happens – dozens of events are held and a few thousand people visit yearly. The Community farm – the subject of the longer paper – is one of the few CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) initiatives in Ireland and has shown exceptional “reflexive resilience” in its restructuring, fundraising and activities.

Nevertheless it is still to an extent underdeveloped and underpopulated – weak broadband in particular inhibits the kind of work that could thrive in this location. There are few opportunities for people aged 25 to 40 to work or buy into the project, due to a lack of co or social housing, though there are plans for both. That said, local schools have more pupils, local activities are more plentiful and popular, while local food production and events thrive, as seen in the recent construction and opening of an amphitheatre by the Irish president Michael D Higgins. Various new approaches to ownership around producing food, heating and decision-making are being trialled, developed and showcased. Neighbourly relations are deeper and more engaged - with all that entails - than other living arrangements allow for, by virtue of proximity, kindredness and the consequences of shared ownership of a range of resources not typically owned collectively – a farm, heating system, general infrastructure, and overall 67 acre site. Growth in numbers involved is slow but nonetheless continues, while, importantly interested parties also relocate to the region because of it. Regional and national level prioritisation of sustainable development would see high speed broadband fast tracked for strategic regional reasons, various other investments and supports, including assuring the rail line continues. Whether this happens or not remains to be seen.

Resilience

Resilience from a community point of view refers to the capacity of a community to overcome adversity and adapt positively to change. There are both internal and external shocks that can impact on a community, and Cloughjordan ecovillage is no different. As outlined above, global and national economic recession, with banks and property strongly implicated, has impacted on the ecovillage – but not so much as to cause its collapse. During the peak recession years, it was one of Ireland’s busiest building sites.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation manifest on the site with aspects such as flood swails, local food initiatives (to reduce food miles), energy efficient building, a self-managed renewable heating system; the [ecological footprint](#) (Anon 2014) of the ecovillage has been measured as 1.1 planets - though above the ideal number of one planet, this was considerably lower than the rest of Ireland, according to the research presented by Tipperary Energy Agency. “This compares to the 2.3 planets that would be required for the 79 Irish settlements surveyed or the 3.4 planets that would be required on the basis of the Living Planet Report’s measure of the Irish footprint.”

The topsoil taken off individual sites was not taken off the 67 acre site: instead this has been repurposed into a mound, which is being landscaped, with an amphitheatre now built into its side. This repurposing, turning a problem into a solution, is a good example of resilience.

The above is not in any way comprehensive, but merely introduced the idea of a resilient community: Kirby (2017) has focused on the ecovillage’s role in transitioning to a low carbon society and also on the ecological footprint of the location.

Below, we focus primarily on the resilience or otherwise of the agri-food dimension.

Agri Food mosaic in Cloughjordan

As an alternative to either high or low input agriculture, [Huxham et al \(2014\)](#) recommend a focus on “multifunctional mosaics”:

“a focus on maintaining ecosystem health through the management of terrestrial and aquatic environments as multifunctional mosaics. This approach envisages ecosystems managed to provide a range of services, with sites of intensive production supported by contiguous areas providing different services. This is compatible with modest average increases in productivity and with greatly enhanced resilience in the face of

natural and economic shocks. It recognises that ecosystems managed well can be both productive and resilient.”

By way of contextualising the community farm, it’s worth considering the following as some of the more significant and relevant-to-resilience agri-food dimensions to the ecovillage’s agri-food mosaic. It is worth remembering that there is much interconnectivity and synergy between many of these initiatives. Importantly, from the perspective of creating and sustaining resilience, there is enough within this mosaic for some residents to, for example, avoid leaving the ecovillage or Cloughjordan town, to do a supermarket shop in a bigger town.

On site in the ecovillage

A Community Supported Agriculture initiative

Food related community gatherings

Allotments

An OOOBY style grower who runs demonstration gardens and pay-what-you-want meals, with ingredients sourced primarily from his own growing spaces

Edible landscaping including native/adapted Irish apple tree walks

Bakery with bread delivery club and teaching initiatives

CSA-affiliated egg club

A wholesale wholefood buyers club with monthly deliveries

Backgarden growing

Community polytunnel

Community apiary (beehives)

Emerging from ecovillage and part of the broader agri-food mosaic

A windfall apple juicing initiative and now own business (Midnight orchard)

Local organic raw milk, butter and cream deliveries (formerly part of the CSA)

A co-op café (in Cloughjordan town, using ecovillage sourced and other ingredients)

Other relevencies

High tech fab lab, 3D printing, C&C machine, co-working space including NGO running permaculture trainings and EU-level environmental monitoring and permaculture initiatives.

A local craft butcher (with his own cattle) and abattoir

Cloughjordan House cookery school

Shops carrying some local produce

Questions/conundrums:

What’s missing from the ecology/mosaic?

How necessary would/could/should more meat production and consumption be?

Does everything perform to its optimal, in an integrated fashion, and if not why not?

Does the Cloughjordan agri-food mosaic represent co-opetition or internal displacement ?

How do low earnings (for producers) and high costs (for consumers) work together?

What level of extra investment and infrastructural support would help make this mosaic more viable – and how likely are they to materialise?

A case within a case Cloughjordan Community Farm

Cloughjordan Community farm (CCF) is a CSA which has been in operation since 2008/9. CSA – Community Supported Agriculture - is a specific type of producer-consumer distribution arrangement, where the consumer takes on both the risks and rewards of production, while the producer adjusts to the preference of the consumer on various agronomic practices, from crop choice to use of agri-industrial inputs and processes. (Saltmarsh, Meldrum, & Longhurst, 2011; Soil Association, 2010).

Ireland experienced an economic crash in 2008. Youth unemployment and emigration re-emerged from this point on, and are still issues despite an (unequal) recovery in motion since 2013. Since 2008, some people have had to a greater extent, more time to give, but little money to invest. This may in part explain why allotments, GIY and community gardens are so popular, whereas CSA – which requires cash investment up front and in an ongoing fashion – has not grown at anything like the same pace. There are, fewer than 10 CSAs in operation in Ireland.

These initiatives show that in recent decades some small, scattered aspects of how consumers related to agriculture and food have changed in Ireland, as elsewhere.

Though both the CSA and the ecovillage have separate legal identities, they are seen in the locality and indeed more widely as primarily being part of the same overall tendency. (Ecovillage residents who are not farm members do know the difference, but in general there is much overlap between the two in people's thinking). About 3/4 of CCF's memberships are by intentional community residents; the rest live in the town. Since 2009, part and, later, all of the CSA has been situated on the intentional communities' 67 acres.

The biodynamic farming movement has been central to the establishment of CSAs in Europe and the US (Saltmarsh et al. 2011). As some members and those affiliated with the intentional community had an interest in biodynamic farming, they were thus familiar with the concept of CSA. It is also the case that the intentional community has an interest in self-sufficiency – its motto is “building sustainable community” – so owning the means of production of food would be typical of its approach.

To establish the CSA, loan stock was generated from about 40 people in, affiliated to, or living in the small town because of the intentional community. From this loan stock, an 80,000 Euro loan from a German ethical bank was generated and people were repaid, though they remain as guarantors of the loan. CSA membership is open to all in the locale, whereas membership of the intentional community involves living on the ecovillage site, or having some intention of living on the site. The latter is usually defined by some sort of monetary commitment, either deposit, site, or ownership of a housing unit.

Initially the farm was situated a short distance outside of Cloughjordan on a 26 acre existing but underused farm. After five years the land owners of this farm took advantage of an opportunity to review the terms of a 10 year lease. A family member, who had been supplying the overall CSA, established a standalone business supplying milk and other dairy produce to people in the region. This split was quite acrimonious at times and long drawn out, as the CSA had invested much in this holding. Nevertheless, a significant number of farm members continue to get produce from both the CSA and this 'breakaway' business.

Costs have varied over the years, as have some of the terms. Member has cost between 10 and 16 per adult per week. This entitled members to 3 or more visits to the distribution point per week. This CSA has always been year round, not seasonal, and did not operate a box scheme system whereby members receive a set amount of food. Instead, produce is delivered to a distribution point, from which members took what they themselves felt was a fair share, based on their own needs – and the needs of others. There is no official limit on the amount people can take, though there is guidance.

There was a low income rate at one stage, which was initially 50% lower: this was tightened and eventually dropped altogether. Living wages are paid to two producers. There was also no lock on the door for some years – this too has been changed, in part because of other users of the building.

CCF and reflexive resilience

Moore et al. (2014), describes what is termed reflexive resilience - an institutional reflexivity by the CSA. 'Reflexive' refers here to being critically self-aware, trying to understand your own limitations and adapt; being ready willing and able to change, and then changing. 'Resilience' refers to being prepared for shocks and responding accordingly to said shocks if and when they occur. Taken together, the term 'reflexive resilience' describes the CSA's adaptive awareness.

The process through which this member owned and operated CSA critically self-assessed and restructured in the face of challenges, is a core part of this reflexive resilience. While CSAs specifically involve sharing risks and rewards, and while this is described as an acceptable uncertainty (Dubuisson-Quellier & Lamine 2008), when pushed to its limits, the actualised risk of not enough produce became in fact unacceptable for this CSA initiative in 2011.

The ability of the CSA to restructure following an EGM is what gave rise to the term reflexive resilience. Then, a new structure for organising the whole operation of the farm was introduced.

The CSA's structure in the first half of the research period involved one full time farm manager doing most of the work, in the areas of livestock, dairy, grains, vegetables, poultry, education and distribution. This farm manager interacted with the Board of Directors, while an advisory panel interacted with both. Members interacted with the farm manager and the board sporadically. This structure placed a lot of emphasis on the farm manager. Though they understood that there was mitigating factors, members were not happy with the level of productivity of the farm. This was especially expressed via a members survey and also at an EGM (extraordinary general meeting), which allowed for members to weight their concerns with the farm in a world café type format.

Following this, the contract of the previous farmer was not renewed. Because of the tight-knit nature of the community, this was nonetheless an awkward development for internal community relations. A new structure involved, instead of a farm manager, three part time co-ordinators were employed (i.e. farming and growing member-producers, or, simply – the farmers), each with an area of specialisation. A coordination team and advisory group were established and reinvigorated respectively, to aid the co-ordinators. The co-ordination team met weekly or fortnightly, and included board members and the core co-ordinators. This team worked in the areas of membership/distribution/internal communication; fundraising/education/research/events/external communication; volunteer support. This allowed the board of directors to focus on legal and financial issues, as is more typical of a board. More recently, a producer support team has been established. It reported to the Board on the day to day functioning of the farm and matters arising.

This above in brief was a reflexive resilience – an ability to self-assess, criticise and adapt to circumstance. It was an especially participatory way to do so, drawing on a wider range of skills and membership interests.

Since then, more shocks have occurred, including large scale thievery and very recently a barn fire which destroyed a large two story hay loft and barn. Each of these has been both an opportunity to come together and also a drain on the time, energy enthusiasm and resources of members.

So, what is the future of resilience on and in this farm?

- How does the farm prioritise following these shocks? What should be kept and what dropped?
- Is the farm in fact viable, following loans, splits, shocks? Is it too risky to keep investing in?
- Are the other elements of the agri-food mosaic displacing or complementing the farm? Two of these involve former farm producers, who may like to increase their own operations, and who may feel disgruntled by how the farm operates?
- More broadly, does the wider ecovillage and its unique set of demands on residents drain available resources from the farm - and visa versa?
- How is the balance (of power) between strong willed very idiosyncratic farmers and a community owned entity?

The five bigger broader questions:

- How engaged with locale should these sorts of settlements be? Where does the responsibility for engagement rest?
- Is it best to model individual resilient communities in a deep way, or to make rural areas more resilient in a shallow way?
- In a context of the real costs of agri-food production not being paid for in the agri-food sector, how do communities concerned with these issues (pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, rural depopulation and under-investment etc) operate? Is self-taxing the only option?
- How do rural areas without major population bases generate traction for their sustainability activities?
- What level of extra investment and infrastructural support would help make this mosaic more viable – and how likely are they to materialise?

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Case study 1: Megyer, the village to rent

Tourism as a resilience strategy

The little settlement of Megyer in Hungary was officially declared as the country's smallest remaining village. The population is very low, there are 21 houses, but only 5 of them were occupied by residents. Clearly, the village was under the threat of disappearing. However, in 2006, the life of the village changed, when a new (external) actor appeared, who left the urban life and decided to settle in Megyer. Soon after he was elected to mayor, and he wanted to make sure, that they will not end up at extinction. He started to think about ways how to save the village and how to make it resilient. The development way and the strategy was based on tourism, since the small village is surrounded by an undisturbed nature area. The first idea was to renovate the abandoned traditional guest houses within the village and rent it to overnight guests. Therefore the mayor started to apply for grants and subsidies, and soon after the renovation was completed by EU grants. The guesthouses opened; however, it only showed very slow results.



Traditional guesthouses in Megyer after the renovation (source: https://nepszava.hu/1085915_nagy-az-erdeklodes-a-berelheto-falu-megyer-irant)

Afterward, the small village had an innovative idea: instead of renting the guesthouses one by one, they will give a whole tourist package and rent out the “whole” village. This means, that the renters can get control over all the seven traditional guest houses, and moreover the mayor's office, the local stables and animals, the classroom, the canteen and the farmlands as well. Furthermore, renters can also become deputy mayors and rename the streets as they wish. The idea was published on several booking web interface, and soon it became very popular. Renting the whole village was a major success; it received a wide media attention (both national and international), and many inquiries arrived.

Today, the operation is managed by the local cooperative, which gives employment to 8 people (care-taker, office-manager, cleaners etc.). Currently, they have around 4.200 guest nights in a year, which can be considered as a high number. The village has new ideas as well, like holding weddings, birthday celebrations, corporate training events, costume parties, etc. However, what makes the village resilient is not only the revenue and guest nights. The initiative had a strong effect on the local community involvement, and on the

reinforcement of the social capital. It is important emphasize, that the renters only get the infrastructure, the services can be required from locals (breakfast, dinner, homemade products, Therefore, the few local residents increasingly got involved with the initiative of the mayor; they become open-minded and more inclusive. Furthermore, since the guest houses preserved traditional architectural character, they also pay attention to the conservation of the local cultural heritage.



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The village has several future plans, naturally all based on the guest houses and tourism. They are planning to establish another guest house, and provide more beds and capacity (for 60 guests). According to the mayor, the main aim is to give a stabile livelihood to the locals, thus saving the village from the extinction. Megyer is a perfect example for showing, how a single idea (tourism) is able to generate other developments and innovations (both economic, and social-cultural). The village did not consciously focus on the resilience building, however, their strategy and future development path clearly contains resilience elements.

Resources and further info:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/12/world/for-rent-a-hungarian-village-and-a-mayoral-title.html>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-31669630/hungarian-village-up-for-rent>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/hungary/11435045/Entire-Hungarian-village-put-up-for-rent-includes-bus-stop-cows-and-deputy-mayor-title.html>

<https://www.megyer-falu.hu/megjelenesek/> (in Hungarian)

Case study 2: Komlóska

Resilience strategy built on tax income

Komlóska is a small settlement in Hungary, with a population less than 300. It is located in an undeveloped region with depopulation trends, high unemployment and ageing problems. Since 1994 there was no business tax-income for the settlement, because there was not a single enterprise or business premises located within the village. In the development progress the role of the local mayor is significant, who became leader 24 years ago, as the youngest mayor across the country.

In the frame of the resilience building, the mayor wanted to achieve self-preservation, and he also wanted to keep the primary care institutions in order to prevent the intensifying depopulation. However, for this, the village needed income. The mayor had the idea, to invite enterprises to the village, and to offer them partial tax exemption. This means, that the enterprises do not pay business taxation (in Hungary the settlement is entitled to make a decision about it), however, they do pay all the other types of taxes. As a result, 200 enterprises chose to come to the village (at least with the seat), and more than 100 of them still operate here. Komlóska officially has freshwater and marine fleets, as well as a diamond-business. Naturally, most of the new settler enterprises are mainly from the transport sector, i.e. those businesses, which are not tied to a specific place. This resulted in almost 1000 reported trucks in the village, and as previously mentioned, the business only exempted on the business tax – not on the other types of taxes. Therefore, the newly coming business (although paid less in general) counted as a significant income for the village, for example through the weight tax for the company cars.

The settlement uses the income for further developments – the mayor did not forget about the self-preservation. The local government is buying the nearby lands, (so far it possesses 150 hectares of farming land), where more than 30 persons are employed in agriculture. Several local products are manufactured, like jam, goat's milk and cheese, syrup and fruit juices.

The main result of the development process is that outward migration has partly stopped, and a slow inward migration has started. Through manufacturing local products, the local community is also involved in the renewal, and the social capital is further enhanced by the strong cultural Rusyn traditions. The success of the village also acknowledged by different national and international prizes (like the European Village Renewal Award). As for the future, it is important to provide space for those businesses, who want to settle in the village. Therefore, infrastructure development is needed; furthermore, an eco-industrial park is also among the plans of the village.



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Resources and further info:

<https://mno.hu/hetvegimagazin/komloska-adoparadicsom-hajoflottaval-1335614>

<http://www.komloska.hu/utolsobol-elso/>

<http://www.komloska.hu/filmek-rolunk/>

Case study 3: From exodus to resilient eco-villages

Gyűrűfű and Visnyeséplak

Gyűrűfű and Visnyeséplak are two small villages in Hungary, with exceptional natural environment. However, because of infrastructural deficiencies, the settlements were hardly accessible. As a result, the population started to leave slowly, and the villages practically faced with extinction. Gyűrűfű only had a population until the end of 1970s, while the population of Visnyeséplak has declined from 600 to 30 by the beginning of 1990s.



Landscape around Visnyeséplak (source: www.elofalu.blog.hu)

The new turn in the life of the villages came, when young families discovered the outstanding natural environment and the potential of the undisturbed nature. People with “eco-vision” started to move in the villages and rebuild them. They needed to develop an existing village (and community) from a non-existent settlement, however it was a long and bureaucratic process (with building permissions and land developing). As for the governance, the villages do not have their own municipalities, they are formally attached to other settlements. Although they do not have administrative independence, they have good connection with the nearby municipalities.

Today, 8-10 families live in each of the villages. of the newcomers was to create a decentralized, autonomous, self-sufficient and resilient community. Not everyone is accepted within the community, in Gyűrűfű there is an “informal” procedure, while in Visnyeszeplak strong religious Christian traditions are followed. By selecting who want to live together, the community is able to strong bonds.



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The locals are following an old/new mentality. On one hand they are revitalizing the folk traditions, and as much as they can, they produce with their own hands. On the other hand, they are very consciously living a sustainable life, creating a symbiosis with nature – living an “eco” lifestyle. Families living here are striving for self-preservation (in food and in energy as well), and the ecological savings are very typical, they minimize the waste.

As for the results of the community building, it can be established, that families moving here have created a sample society, who are learning to live a new/old lifestyle. The critique of the village development is that the self-preservation is practically based on external workplaces and eco-tourists. However, what make these communities resilient are the people, who are living there and the strong community that they are building.

Resources and further info:

<http://www.visnyeszeplak.hu/>

<http://www.elofaluhalozat.hu/visnyeszeplak.php>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-t5k-ZA80Y>

<http://www.origo.hu/utazas/magyarorszag/20140930-ilyen-az-elet-egy-okofaluban.html>

Case Study 4: Cloughjordan ecovillage

a. Outline

Cloughjordan ecovillage is an intentional community in the Irish midlands. This community expressly tries to be resilient – this case study tentatively explores how resilient or otherwise the community may be, with a particular focus on food.

b. Introduction

The idea for this ecovillage formed in a food co-op in the 1990s. Site was purchased in 2005, and the first houses begin to be built in 2007. Currently the ecovillage is home to about 130 people in about 55 housing units. The focus of this case study is the period from 2010 to the present. Prior to the ecovillage, the town of Cloughjordan was a small Irish rural town in relative decline. The ecovillage has added population, profile and activity to the town, being as it is on the town's edge. This is however in the context of what has been, until recently, an economic recession which impacted both town and ecovillage. The communities' farm is the main stakeholder considered in this case study.

c. Activities

The establishment and maintenance of a collectively owned 67 acre site, infrastructure, 55 housing units, heating systems, enterprise centre, allotments, non-residential areas including woodlands and a farm. Each of these elements both flourish and have challenges. The site is 1/3 occupied; infrastructure is more costly and technically difficult to run in this context, though the community manages to do so with internal skills. Solar panels are only now, in 2017, finally starting to work after instalment issues, while wood chop heat has worked since the project's inception. The enterprise centre functions with leading edge technology but not to capacity; some but not all allotment sites are taken up, which includes research gardens the subject of a busy youtube channel; woodlands have been planted but suffered partial ash dieback, while thousands of fruiting trees are growing all over the site; the community owned farm has about 70 family memberships, has supplied local seasonal food regularly since 2009, pays two farmers a living but not average industrial wage and is viable, albeit with challenges including low population base in the immediate region.

d. Lessons learned

For this initiative to start building at the beginning of a global recession, one which impacted Ireland especially hard, means that on one level its establishment and survival is impressive. Building companies and banks were going bust, while this was in fact a thriving building site by national standards. Tenacity, sacrifice and commitment has been required to get to the level of socio-economic and cultural activity that happens – dozens of events are held and a few thousand people visit yearly. The Community farm – the subject of the longer paper – is one of the few CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) initiatives in Ireland and has shown exceptional "reflexive resilience" in its restructuring, fundraising and activities.

Nevertheless it is still to an extent underdeveloped and underpopulated – weak broadband in particular inhibits the kind of work that could thrive in this location. There are few opportunities for people aged 25 to 40 to work or buy into the project, due to a lack of co or social housing, though there are plans for both. That said, local schools have more pupils, local activities are more plentiful and popular, while local food production and events thrive, as seen in the recent construction and opening of an amphitheatre by the Irish president Michael D Higgins. Various new approaches to ownership around producing food, heating and decision-making are being trialled, developed and showcased. Neighbourly relations are deeper and more engaged - with all that entails - than other living arrangements allow for, by virtue of proximity, kindredness and the consequences of shared ownership of a range of resources not typically owned collectively – a farm, heating system, general infrastructure, and overall 67 acre site. Growth in numbers involved is slow but

nonetheless continues, while, importantly interested parties also relocate to the region because of it. Regional and national level prioritisation of sustainable development would see high speed broadband fast tracked for strategic regional reasons, various other investments and supports, including assuring the rail line continues. Whether this happens or not remains to be seen.

