

9. CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT

Towards a co-evolution of cultures

Initiatives towards endogenous development taken by local farmers and communities are often not supported by national policies and hampered by international regulations. Organisations working with endogenous development could join forces in order to create a more enabling environment for these local initiatives. Negative effects of globalisation can thus be counteracted by enhancing the sustainable use of local resources, by supporting local alternatives that reduce poverty and migration, and by stimulating the diversity of cultures. Options for enhancing endogenous development at a level beyond the rural communities, and the development organisations involved with them, are presented in this final chapter.

The realities of rural people in different cultures vary due to a whole range of reasons, which may include ecological problems, political instability and demographic variables. Increased urbanisation, de-population of rural areas, as well as brain-drain are phenomena that touch almost all societies, the extent to which may vary in each country and region. The policy contexts can also differ, with different impacts on development initiatives: policy determines the level of import levies and export subsidies, subsidies for inputs, the research and extension agenda, as well as the level of rural infrastructure. Moreover, the local culture and belief systems influence the practices, knowledge, concepts as well as scientific methods used. This has considerable implications for the development options within each of the contemporary cultures.

Diversity of worldviews and belief systems. The worldviews and belief systems of the cultures presented in this book have several commonalities, in spite of marked differences in locality and circumstances. The notion of ‘cosmos’ or universe is perceived in several cultures as an interwoven whole with a sacred nature. In other cultures the universe is considered a combination of units that can be understood separately, all considered to be matter that obey the laws of physics and biology. There are cultures that are based on the belief of a pantheon of Gods, spirits, ancestors and other spiritual beings, while in others the belief is centred on one God; others doubt or deny the existence of supreme beings altogether. According to the worldview of the different cultures, life after death may be considered not to exist, to exist in a heaven outside this world, to be an ancestral world, or as reincarnation in different life forms.

Similarly, human beings are seen in a variety of ways: as a being totally dependent on the spiritual and natural forces, as a steward or master of creation, or as a miniscule being in an enigmatic cosmos. Animals and plants are seen as pure biological organisms, as living beings with a soul and feelings, or as beings with a sacred dimension. The way people organise themselves also varies: individually, in families, in ethnic and social structures, or as political entities. Local leadership structures and decision making processes are based on individual choices, family or ethnic ties, as well as religion and culture. It is obvious that, depending on the characteristics of each worldview and belief system, the practices, social structures, values and options for development vary considerably.

The practices carried out by people are based on their values, knowledge, and belief system. People choose between a variety of options, and develop technologies most appropriate for their situation and culture, which meet their requirements and aspirations. Cultural diversity reflects the diversity of agricultural practices, as well as language, religion, foods and consumption patterns, social activities, mechanisms to achieve status and prestige, forms of incentives, sport, art, music, dance, architecture, and the design of tools and commodities.

Diversity of knowledge concepts and scientific methods. Similarly, knowledge concepts show a great diversity amongst cultures. Many traditional knowledge systems have a linear or spiral notion of time, a bi-polar notion of matter (hot-cold, yin-yang), and take into account a variety of powers related to timing of events, locations, specific personal powers, symbols, and sounds. In the scientific worldview developed in Europe in the 18th century, matter is studied within a more mechanistic and linear time concept, while in post-modern approaches more room is given to chance, chaos and diversity. Depending on the scientific concepts, the object and the subject studying it can be seen as separate entities or as an inseparable whole. Depending on this, the role of quantification, measurement, the role of the six senses, conscience, intuition and religious experiences may differ. The attention for that which is manifest and that which is not can differ, as well as the role of mathematics, linguistics, and intuition. The researcher may be appreciated for the capacity to measure and interpret data in scientific terms, or be judged for his or her freedom from prejudice and high morale.

All the factors mentioned above, and many more, determine the extent to which endogenous development can take place. The margins to manoeuvre thus varies, and the strategies to be followed too.

Creating an enabling environment

In this book we have described endogenous development from two different perspectives: the local activities of rural people in using their resources to reduce poverty, and the process of supporting these activities by NGOs and farmers organisations. In the previous chapter we concluded that a number of issues cannot be solved at the level of an individual farmer, community, or development organisation. Local initiatives may not result in effective changes if not enhanced by a supportive legal, economic and policy environment. Analysis and intervention at higher levels are required, new policies need to be developed. The deepening crisis with poverty, environmental degradation, and cultural alienation throughout the poor countries of the world requires a look beyond the modernisation paradigm of agriculture and food production. Some lessons may be learned from the European experiences (see box 9a).

Re-thinking the way forward in agriculture and food production is taking place throughout the world. The multifunctionality of the farm, including off-farm income, innovative forms of cost reduction and on-farm activities, diversity of agricultural production, organic farming, local marketing systems and nature management are common place in the strategies of most poor farming families. Yet, as mentioned several times in

Box 9a Some lessons learned in Europe

European agriculture has been struggling for more than a decade with an ever-deepening crisis. The many expressions of the crisis are perceived more and more as outcomes of the dominant model of agricultural modernisation. This is characterised by government policies directed at intensification, larger scale, monocropping, specialisation, increased inputs, external technology development, and dependency on market chains. Over the past years, the negative effects of these policies have become increasingly clear. Industrialised livestock farming, for example, puts enormous pressure on natural resources, food safety, animal genetic diversity and welfare. Farmers' incomes have declined and now largely depend on subsidies of the European Community Support programmes, while the costs of external inputs increase steadily due to expensive new technologies and numerous regulations.

A recent overview and analysis of the rural development processes throughout Europe [van der Ploeg et al., 2002] clearly indicates, however, that many new responses are being developed to overcome this situation. Europe is moving from agricultural modernisation towards rural development as the guiding principle for policy formulation, enterprise development, and the design of new institutional arrangements. Initiatives have been taken and are sustained by farming families to combat increasing costs and find new sources of income. For them, rural development represents a 'way out' of the limitations and lack of prospects intrinsic to the modernisation paradigm. The initiatives mentioned in the study include agri-tourism, environmental management on agricultural farms, diversification into energy crops that can provide 'bio-diesel', care giving to the handicapped people on farms, regional production and marketing of high quality foods, direct marketing mechanisms, ecological and organic farming, establishment of new types of co-operatives, and new forms of low-external-input farming. Support to these initiatives varies among the different European governments. Romano Prodi, current president of the European Commission, indicates the importance of supporting these efforts: *"The overall findings of the research stress that the maintenance of the heterogeneity and flexibility in Europe's agriculture requires a strengthening of rural development policies. The improvements of such policies should, on the one hand, build upon the impressive variety and heterogeneity that already exists and, on the other, reflect the richness of rural values and knowledge systems which together constitute the common roots of our European heritage. The result of such policies are well worth the effort."*

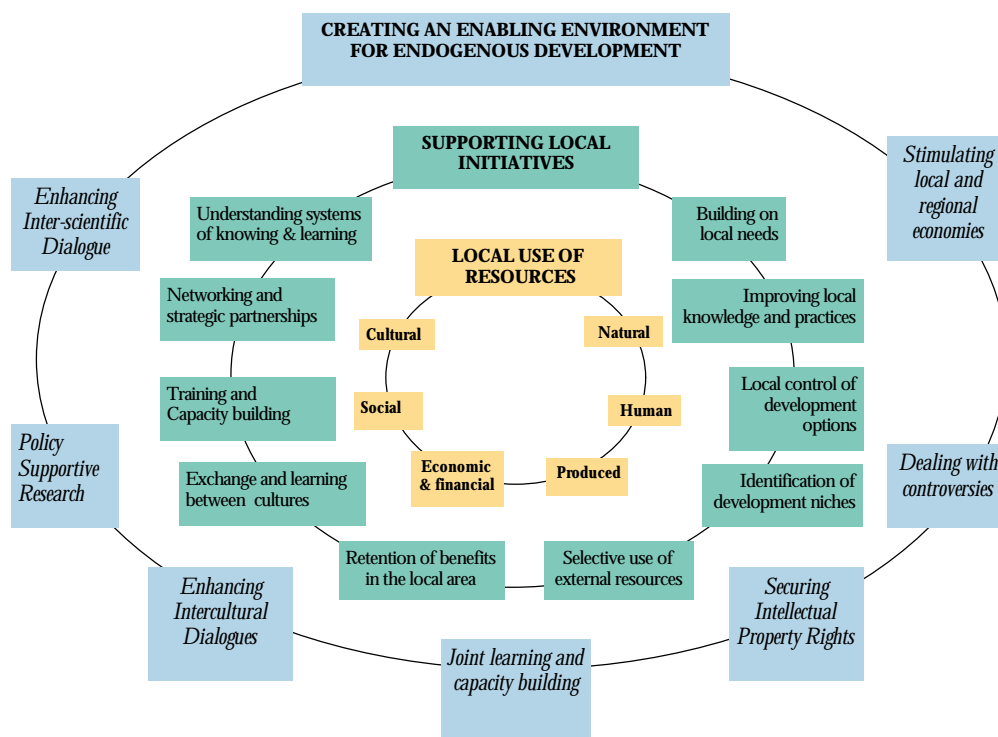
this book, the knowledge bases of these systems are depleting rapidly. International market mechanisms and policies of national governments often hamper the initiatives towards endogenous development.

Supporting local initiatives towards endogenous development can be stimulated by networks of development organisations, farmers' groups, consumer groups, groups of concerned citizens, and religious organisations, to name but a few. In the case of the Compas programme, the local communities, Compas partners, universities and regional networks, as well as other national and international agencies for sustainable development can join hands in developing operational approaches and effective programmes to support local initiatives.

Compas fieldwork with endogenous development has shown, however, that a number of elements have to be taken into account in this process. These elements, presented in the wider circle of box 9b are: stimulating local and regional economies, dealing with controversies, securing intellectual property rights, joint learning and capacity building,

enhancing inter-cultural dialogue, stimulating policy supportive research, and enhancing the co-evolution of sciences. These activities have to take place both at field level and at a wider level of negotiation, lobby, and dialogue.

Box 9b Supporting and enabling endogenous development



Stimulating local and regional economies. The individual farmer has limited possibilities to influence the conditions of local and national economies. Marketing, transport and storage facilities can be organised between several producers. NGOs can support groups of farmers and marketing organisations by making feasibility studies, elaborating business plans, or mobilising capital, as well as by training, lobbying and public relations. The opportunities for producing region-specific quality products, processing of food and fibres or village-based tourism can be explored. National networks of NGOs or farmer organisations can play a role in the identification of possible products, finding ways to produce them and by providing support in training, product development, infrastructure and marketing. Governmental bodies can support these efforts by creating a favourable environment through legislation, price mechanisms and research.

Access to international markets and securing better prices for agricultural produce and inputs is more difficult, given the restrictions placed by international trade relations. At this level, national networks of NGOs for endogenous development can look into the possibilities for linking with international trading opportunities, and addressing the structural inequity of access to the international market. They can be the voice of farmers in

the marginal areas and lobby for changes in the trade regulations.

Dealing with controversies. All cultures have aspects that can be looked upon as positive or negative. Some traditional cultures expect subservience of youth to elders, or of lower castes to higher castes. Culture can often be a culprit that keeps creative energies trapped by conformity and compliance. Children sometimes are told: “*don’t ask questions, you will find out later*”, and later on they may not find out. Modern practices often emphasise consumerism, leading to increased neglect of social cohesion and respect for nature.

Several philosophers from different continents have called for an assessment of the strong and weak points of each tradition through a process of internal reflection and debate. Hountondji [2000] for example, a philosopher from Benin, refers to specific African traditions and practices he considers unjust, and not sufficiently challenged from within. In order to get this process started, he argues, it is necessary to be mentally liberated from the view other cultures hold of one’s culture. This can allow the reflection on why certain practices have emerged and why they may or may no longer work today. Also a respectful and straight forward interaction with other cultures is helpful in this process. In other cultural traditions, such as in the western countries, a critical reflection on issues like the destruction of nature and biodiversity, increased social alienation, the negative effects of industrial agriculture, as well as the effects of international trade relations on the economies of the poorest countries can be stimulated.

Several controversies related to traditional cultures stem from the role and functioning of local leaders. Traditional functionaries often act as judges in legal problems, or guide spiritual and religious activities. In many countries the national governments have experienced difficulty in recognising and accepting these traditional leaders after colonial independence. These leaders may control traditional land use systems in a way incompatible with the government’s rules and regulations, while others have become instruments of central government. The traditional spiritual leaders may represent a belief system unacceptable to representatives of formal religions. Moreover, spiritual as well as other traditional leaders may display serious undemocratic (and gender-biased) attitudes. In such instances, a respectful dialogue with a diversity of social categories in the community is an important option.

In endogenous development, the gender issues need to be brought more to light by including a gender dimension in each of the components. Strategies are required for gender specific endogenous devel-



Three generations discuss the potentials and pitfalls of eco-tourism in southern China. A process of internal reflection and debate is needed within cultures to deal with possible controversies and to allow creative ideas to emerge.

opment, including an analysis of the difficulties in finding appropriate female field staff and methodologies to address the specific needs of rural women. Dealing with these issues poses an ongoing challenge within the process of endogenous development.

Another important controversy related to strengthening the cultural identity of traditional societies is the possibility of enhancing ethnocentrism and fundamentalism. This risk is higher when the movement for reviving traditional values and cultures are a response to collective frustration. Organisations involved in enhancing endogenous development should be aware of this risk in their work. Intercultural dialogues could be used to identify and discuss fundamentalist tendencies.

Securing intellectual property rights. Over the last two centuries, traditional knowledge and practices have been used without any acknowledgement or benefit sharing with the traditional communities from where they originated. Examples abound of pieces of traditional knowledge being 'modified' and afterwards a patent claimed on the modification as if it were novel and new. Though the Convention on Biodiversity has made recommendations to stop these unfair practices, the economic liberalisation and globalisation perspective of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) and its Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) practically forces poor countries to accept these practices. This has given rise to important debates. For example, the declaration of action of the UNESCO-ISCU World Conference on Science contains the following recommendation: *Intellectual property rights need to be appropriately protected on a global basis, and access to data and information is essential for undertaking scientific work and for translating the results of scientific research into tangible benefits for society. Measures should be taken to enhance those relationships between the protection of intellectual property rights and the dissemination of scientific knowledge that are mutually supportive. There is a need to consider the scope, extent and application of intellectual property rights in relation to the equitable production, distribution and use of knowledge. There is also a need to further develop appropriate national legal frameworks to accommodate the specific requirements of developing countries and traditional knowledge and its sources and products, to ensure their recognition and adequate protection on the basis of the informed consent of the customary or traditional owners of this knowledge.* The regional and national networks on endogenous development need to link up with existing national and international organisations that strive for protection of intellectual property rights. In the Compas network several local initiatives have been taken to protect intellectual property rights: the Village Biodiversity Registers (Green Foundation, India), and Peoples' Biodiversity Register (FRLHT, India). The fight against certain patents has achieved success in some cases in the past. For example, in July 2000, the European Patent Office in Munich rejected a patent claim by a US company for Neem oil, which has been known in India for its anti-fungal properties for centuries both in Ayurvedic medicine and agriculture.

Joint learning and capacity building. The way pupils and students throughout the world are taught in schools is quite diverse. Yet, many curricula are based on western worldviews. This is especially the case in universities and colleges, though often the education in secondary schools includes mathematics, physics, economy and religion based on a western worldview and value system. This was the reason for various Compas partner

organisations to focus part of their activities on young people from primary and secondary schools, as well as university students. AGRUCO in Bolivia is an interesting example of how university education can be enhanced by including the worldview and experiences of local communities.

Establishing a more inter-scientific education system implies systematic re-training and re-schooling of professionals in agriculture, health, education and research, who have been trained in a one-sided system. Examples of the re-training process of field staff engaged in endogenous development, as mentioned in this book, could stimulate this process. In the long-term, curricula for colleges, secondary and primary schools could be redesigned. The regional networks could take up the tasks of building curricula, writing handbooks and training trainers.

Enhancing intercultural dialogues. The intercultural dialogue that is part of the Compas programme suggests an engagement of the partners in the processes of joint learning with an open attitude towards a co-evolution of the diversity of cultures. The partners within Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe learn from each other, as well as from organisations outside the network. Differences can be seen as a way to explore possibilities for learning. In this process the relationships that have grown historically - and that implies professionals from the North having the most influence in international dialogues - need to be changed into a situation where all partners involved have the same rights and possibilities. The Compas Magazine and other publications can be used as a platform for this dialogue. Workshops could be organised around specific themes; policy dialogues could be organised between politicians, religious leaders and scientists.

Policy supportive research. The aspects mentioned above such as stimulating economic development at regional levels, dealing with controversies, securing intellectual property rights, and joint learning and capacity building require policy support. This includes policies of national and local governments and legislative bodies, of major economic stakeholders and social organisations, and of scientific and educational organisations. Motivating these organisations to change their policies in favour of endogenous development calls for data, based on practical research, that substantiates the potentials of this approach. In this process, each of the agencies involved can identify the key questions and formulate these into research questions.

The notion of co-evolution of cultures and sciences implies that specific solutions need to be developed for each specific situation. This requires systematic reflection, problem identification, fact-finding, and reflection on options as well as attitudes of all involved.

Good research can help in clarifying the reasoning behind endogenous development, which is essential in the dialogue between the actors involved and in getting the support of stakeholders in creating the room for change. This type of policy supportive research could be planned and implemented by networks of organisations. International and national organisations can play important roles, and the Compas network needs to build up strategic partnerships with many organisations, both nationally and internationally.

Enhancing inter-scientific dialogue. Science is considered to be knowledge that has been compiled in a systematic way. This implies the way it systematically observes, describes, explains, establishes claims on truth, expands and represents knowledge, and builds up theories to explain the relationship between cause and effect. According to the Study group on Science and Traditional Knowledge of the International Council for Science (2002), “*science has an in-built dynamic towards improvement of knowledge*”. The study group concludes that there is growing awareness about the extraordinary diversity of sciences. Different sciences are far more dissimilar to each other than previously thought, and there is no ‘unity of science’ nor a ‘unique scientific method’. What counts as good scientific practice in one science, may be outdated or even inappropriate in another.

Box 9c Declaration of the World Conference of Science

This conference, organised in Budapest in 1999 by UNESCO, in cooperation with the International Council for Science (ICSU), accepted a declaration in which western scientific knowledge, with its remarkable innovations that have been of great benefit, are recognised. But the declaration also stresses the challenge to use this knowledge in a responsible manner in addressing human needs and aspirations. The declaration observes that traditional and local knowledge systems, can make, and historically have made, a valuable contribution to science and technology. Its Science Agenda Framework for Action is based on the notion that there is a need to preserve, protect, research and promote this cultural heritage, and presents a number of guidelines for the relations between modern science and other systems of knowledge. Governments, for example, are called upon to formulate national policies that allow wider application of traditional forms of learning and knowledge, while ensuring that its commercialisation is properly rewarded. Governments should support the co-operation between holders of traditional knowledge and scientists in exploring the relationships between different knowledge systems, and in fostering linkages of mutual benefit.

We believe that an important way to address the differences between scientific traditions is to undertake joint research, and to discuss the outcome of such research in a critical but constructive way. If the idea of a diversity of sciences is accepted, this can be an asset rather than a setback. Through inter-scientific research and dialogue the problem definitions and perspectives on solutions can be exchanged. In this way synergy can be built whilst the contradictions based on different conceptual frameworks can be made clear, thus offering opportunities for mutual learning and innovative approaches. Assessment of modern and of traditional practices could then be done by each of the participating sciences. The dialogue would allow sciences to make constructive comments on the basic points of the different research methods, in an attempt to improve methods and theories. As a result of this process certain elements from one scientific tradition can be incorporated into another’s paradigm.

If the notion of a diversity of sciences is taken seriously, any knowledge that is considered a science from anywhere in the world can enter into the dialogue. The University Consortium for endogenous development, started by the Compas network in 2002, can play an important role in carrying out policy supporting research, making publications, and organising scientific conferences.

Towards co-evolution of cultures

Co-evolution is the process wherein a number of different systems exist and evolve simultaneously, based on their own dynamics. Each system evolves partly due to its own learning experiences and partly as a response to the interaction with other systems. The concept of co-evolution lies at the heart of endogenous development. The impressive diversity in cultures throughout the world, including values, technologies and development approaches, is now considered by many to hold important keys for counteracting the complex problems the world is facing today. A world in which a wide diversity of sciences and practices can co-exist and co-evolve has more potential for survival, than a world where one approach of development is expected to solve all problems. In endogenous development, therefore, the options and solutions are experimented with according to the existing diversity of ecological situations and cultures. Mutual support and intercultural dialogues are required to enhance the complementarity and synergy between these systems.

We have seen that intercultural contacts can lead to dominance, control and disappearance of cultures. But, we have also experienced that contacts established in a respectful way can lead to productive and positive learning about, from and with each other. They can result in increased local productivity, welfare and reduction of poverty. In this process, respect for differences in cultural values and concepts is a precondition for all involved. Respect does not imply the unconditional acceptance of all differences. Respect means the willingness to listen, openness to the possibility of learning, responsiveness to information, questions and suggestions, as well as the courage to criticise when necessary.



Respectful dialogues imply the willingness to listen, openness to learning, responsiveness to information, questions and suggestions as well as the courage to criticise when necessary.

We hope that through the historic analysis, the presentation of the approach as well as the practical experiences with endogenous development, we have been able to put forward a perspective for rural communities and development agencies in the forefront of reducing poverty and environmental degradation and in enhancing bio-cultural diversity.