



Photo: Hans Dijkstra

Regional diversity, individual farmstyles and endogenous development are hot issues in European agricultural policies. This article gives an historical overview of European development experiences. On the basis of regional and inter-farm comparisons arguments are given for endogenous development policy in Europe.

PRACTICES AND PERSPECTIVES IN EUROPE

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During the four last decades a seemingly irresistible process has swept the European countryside. Farming and green space have thoroughly been reshuffled and the modernisation process has penetrated even the most remote corners of the continent. Local specificity appears to have lost its relevance and global parameters such as the common market, the newest technologies and entrepreneurship have become guiding principles. The European Union has strongly supported the employment of generic new technologies in the interest of enhancing Common Agricultural Policy productivity. The negative aspects of the modernisation process can no longer be obscured. In highly intensive agricultural areas such as the Netherlands, there are tremendous ecological problems. Soil, water and air are heavily affected; natural values such as biodiversity and landscape are under attack and animal welfare and the quality of food are causing increasing concern. Although the overall outcome of the evaluation of modernisation still has to be made, there is an growing quest for alternatives.

Empirical evidence indicates that although the effect of modernisation in Europe has been one of globalisation, its real scope and impact has depended upon responses developed at the grassroots. The modernisation model characterised by intensification, scale enlargement, specialisation and integration into agribusiness chains, was as much internalised by some regions and some farmers as it was deconstructed and reshaped by others. Some groups have, in fact, actively taken distance from what appears to be a dominant blueprint. The current and impressive heterogeneity of European agriculture shows that agricultural development is a many sided and highly variable interaction

between the local and the global, and that diversity continues to be one of the main features of European agriculture. It is also becoming one of the keywords in the debates taking place on common agricultural policy. Any European perspective on rural development must be rooted in and developed from a recognition of such diversity in order to design the agriculture required by the people of Europe. Depending on ones point of view, diversity can be seen as a problematic remnant of the past or as a major challenge. In this article we will discuss the strategic elements involved in the latter.

The diversity of Europe's agriculture is due to differences in factors such as climate, soil, physical distance from centres of consumption as well as historically created land-use patterns. But above all this agriculture is a social construction: the way agricultural practice is organised depends heavily on the individuals and organisations involved in it. These actors decide on the strategies used, the ways practices are linked to markets and technological developments. They are the ones who determine the interaction between their farming activities and regional, national and international policies and interventions. These are the decisive elements in the complex process that makes agricultural practice what it is: a highly diversified whole.

Characteristics

Endogenous development has a number of characteristics. These include the local determination of development options; local control over the development process and the retention of the benefits of development within the local area. But, rather than constituting a model of development with clearly identified theoretical

roots, endogenous development can be more clearly characterised by contrasting it with the patterns frequently observed in exogenous development. First endogenous development is locally determined, whereas exogenous development is transplanted into particular locations and externally determined. Second, endogenous development tends to lead to higher levels of retained benefits within local economies whereas exogenous development tends to export the proceeds of development out of the region. Third, endogenous development respects local values whilst exogenous development tends to trample over them.

Finally, endogenous development is founded mainly, though not exclusively, on locally available resources. These include local ecology, labour force, knowledge and patterns for linking production to consumption. Endogenous development can revitalise and dynamise local resources, which might otherwise be ignored or dismissed as being of little value.

The effects of modernisation

The renewed interest in endogenous development and the attempt to explain this interest in theoretical terms may seem surprising. However, it can be explained by the effects agricultural modernisation has had in Europe since the mid-1950s.

The modernisation of agriculture in Europe is increasingly seen as originating from and driven by institutions external to the producers in the agricultural sector itself. This specific focus was consolidated by a concept of development that involved an essential rupture with existing practices in the countryside and the types of discourse. Agriculture was considered to be a stagnant sector. 'Getting agriculture moving' and 'transforming traditional agri-

culture' were amongst the telling slogans of the 1960s and reflect this specific and persistent view.

Those farmers who were better able to participate in the modernisation projects, were classified as modern and open to outside information and innovations. Their attitude was regarded as more progressive and oriented towards urban dynamism. These characteristics fitted in well with mainstream economics, which viewed agricultural development essentially as a process of adapting farming practices to global markets and technology.

Modernisation was (and still is) shaped by external interventions aimed at introducing new organisational models for farming, new linkages between farming, markets and market-agencies, new technologies and knowledge and new forms of socialisation and training. This has resulted in new models, which are used to define roles and identities of farmers and their families.

Meanwhile, the effort to create a policy to implement these interventions reinforced the discontinuity with existing practices, relationships and role definitions. Indeed, the application of such an integrated policy frequently resulted in a rupture with existing practices.

Second, some conditions, times and places proved more favourable to modernisation projects than others. Thus modernisation not only reproduced existing differences, but also increasingly generated further inequalities. In this way modernisation resulted in growth as well as underdevelopment and marginalisation. Consequently, the simple 'repetition' of the growth model typical for 'growth poles', or so-called 'centre economies', became, within less favoured areas, a less convincing policy proposal.

In the third place, it must be stressed that, since the practice of modernisation revolved around introducing exogenous elements into the farming sector, dependency became internalised into the structure and mechanisms of growth and development.

Finally, the emphasis on exogenous development produced a bias in our knowledge of nature and in our approach to the scope and mechanisms of agricultural development. Considerable knowledge now exists on how to design and implement projects for exogenous development. However, there is remarkable ignorance on how to conceptualise and analyse endogenous development patterns, their impact and potential. This is expressed by the widely shared belief that the endogenous development has little to offer when it comes to resolving actual problems. This historically produced ignorance manifests itself today as one of the main rural and agrarian problems worldwide.

Internal and external elements

Diversity in agriculture is a multidimensional phenomenon. One of the criteria we can use to analyse this diversity is autonomy. How much autonomy is present in relation to markets and the supply of technology. Of course development patterns cannot be defined as being exclusively founded on local resources, nor as only entailing external elements; they contain a specific balance of 'internal' and 'external' elements.

In endogenous development patterns there is a balance in which local resources, combined and developed in local styles of farming, figure as the starting point as well as the yardstick for the utility of the external elements. If external elements can be used to strengthen the vitality of local farming styles then they will be internalised. This entails a process of careful 'deconstruction' and 'recomposition' of the external technology, to guarantee the maximum fit with local conditions, perspectives and interests. If no fit can be created, then the external elements will remain outside elements.

One could argue that more often than not endogenous development is blocked not by global factors but by locality itself. There is no general scheme for endogenous development. It is only the careful and detailed exploration of farming styles and other local elements as embedded in particular frameworks of interaction with external factors that can render insights into the prospects for endogenous development.

Endogenous development in Italy

Notwithstanding the very high degree of centralisation that has taken place in Italy in recent years there is a widespread and self-propelling process of endogenous growth, especially in the province of Emilia Romagna. Small-scale and medium enterprises have emerged, most of them with clear domestic roots. The food industry is strongly linked to areas of primary agricultural production and mainly organised in co-operatives. Farmers have extended their skills and organisation in relation to food processing (Parmesan cheese), ceramic industry (tiles), textile industry, pig breeding, fruit growing and local tourism. All activities, with the exception of tourism, are based on traditional domestic activities. In spite of negative national policies, regional policy has been able to stimulate this process through self-improvement of local public administration, establishing a good network of services, inter-municipal planning mechanisms aimed at strengthening local initiatives, constant updating of planning instruments, delegating functions to provinces and mountain communities and application of European programs to local and regional conditions and perspectives.

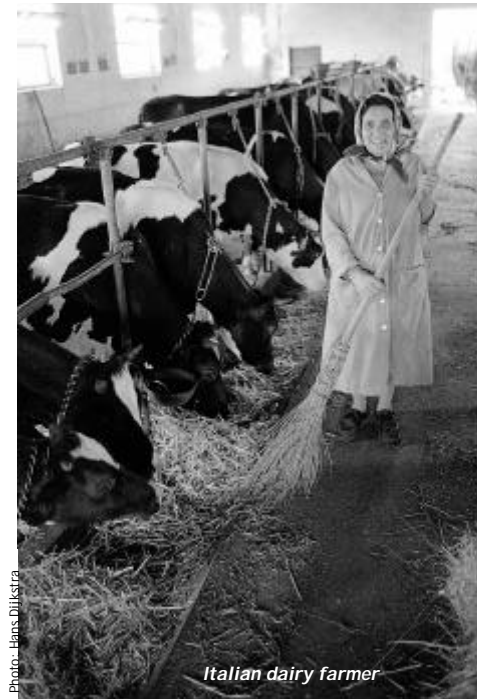


Photo: Hans Dijkstra

Italian dairy farmer

And in the Netherlands

When comparing Emilia Romagna with another major European dairy producing area - Friesland in the northern part of the Netherlands - striking differences emerge. Although both areas produce in the same market and supply the same quantity of milk, Emilia Romagna has an employment level of 24,000 compared to 7,000 in Friesland. Income levels are the same. Apparently Italian dairy farmers are able to use the local resources much more effectively than their Frisian colleagues. But even in modern Frisian development one can observe diversity in farm styles. Despite generic government policies and uniforming commercial activities, individual farmers have made different choices as to scale of farms, the degree of mechanisation, the care they give to their animals and the intensity with which labour, capital and land is used. These choices are the result of personal preferences, economic and ecological opportunities and stages in the life cycle.

We have to admit that the theoretical understanding of the dynamics of endogenous development and of the knowledge about alternatives for the modernisation model is insufficiently developed. We are therefore quite anxious to learn from the experiences of Compas. The role of cultures where spirituality plays an important role has hardly been understood as it has generally been considered a hindrance to modernisation. Efforts to build development on this very cultural diversity, taking indigenous concepts and values serious and building partnerships with indigenous leaders in the development process are innovative. We look forward to the results. We presume that Europe can learn from them.

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