Voices of Rural Youth

T. Dax I. Machold

Voices of Rural Youth

A Break with Traditional Patterns?

edited by T. Dax and I. Machold

Voices of Rural Youth. A Break with Traditional Patterns?

Policies and Young People in Rural Development (PAYPIRD)

edited by

Thomas Dax

Ingrid Machold

Bundesanstalt für Bergbauernfragen

Contents

Acknowledgements

List of partners

Arkleton Centre of Rural Development Research,
    University of Aberdeen, (Co-ordinator)
    Mark Shucksmith, Birgit Jentsch and John Burnett
    Aberdeen AB24 3 UF, Scotland
    E-mail: m.shucksmith@abdn.ac.uk

Bundesanstalt für Berbauernfragen, Austria
    Thomas Dax, Ingrid Machold and Christine Meisinger
    Möllwaldplatz 4, 1040 Wien, Austria
    E-mail: thomas.dax@babf.bmlf.gv.at

University of Oulu, Finland
    Toivo Muilu and Pirjo Onkalo
    Department of Geography, University of Oulu, Oulu, FIN-90571 Finland
    E-mail: toivo.muilu@oulu.fi

Fors Recherche Sociale, France
    Elizabeth Auclair and Didier Vanoni
    48, rue des Petites Ecuries, 75010 Paris, France
    E-mail: fors@fors-rs.com

Institut für Arbeitsmarktforschung und Jugendberufshilfe
    Oldenburg, Germany
    Gerhard Christe and Gerhard Dietz
    Haarenfeld 7, D-26121 Oldenburg, Germany
    E-mail: IAJ.Christe@t-online.de

University College Galway, Ireland
    Brian McGrath, John Canavan and Chris Curtin
    Dept of Political Science and Sociology, University College Galway
    Republic of Ireland
    E-mail: brian.w.mcgrath@nuigalway.ie

Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Portugal
    *José Portela, Chris Gerry, Patricia António, Carlos Marques
    and Vasco Rebelo*
    Departemento de Economia e Sociologia, Universidade de
    Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro
    5000 Vila Real, Portugal
    E-mail: jportela@cutad.pt

1. Introduction

Thomas Dax and Ingrid Machold

In recent years, as the debate on the differential impact of exclusionary processes on social groups has advanced, young people have been one of the categories specifically targeted. Policy makers' attention has focused on young people mainly due to increasing labour market problems, growing unemployment and the lengthening of the transition period between leaving school and finding suitable employment.

It is in this context that the youth problematic, i.e. the specific difficulties experienced by those passing through this distinct life phase, began to figure centrally in a number of national and international research projects and policy programmes, in particular in the Scandinavian countries via the Nordic Youth Research programme NYRI (Helve 2001a, Bynner et al., 1997), in the UK through the Young People in Transition programme (Jones 2002, Helve and Wallace 2000), by way of studies undertaken in Germany (e.g. Mansel and Brinkhoff (1998), as well as those focusing on Central and Eastern European countries (e.g. Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998). From 1990 onwards, national level comparative surveys began to be carried out in the EU countries (CEC 1991), opening the way for more thematically-specific European initiatives such as the Youth for Europe programme 1995-1999, the Youth Community Action Programme 2000-2006, and an evaluation of the measures contained in the COST programme (Bailleau 2000).

Numerous studies have particularly highlighted the changes in attitudes and values on the part of young people and have called for a methodological reassessment in youth studies, involving a more multi-disciplinary approach (Wyn and White 1997, Helve 2001b). In particular, it was felt that globalisation processes had very complex consequences for patterns of opportunity and risk characterising young people's absorption (or not) into the active labour force. From the perspective of more policy-oriented research, Chisholm (2001) identified the following four youth-related issues for priority analysis:

- changing *intergenerational relations*;
- multifaceted expressions of political and social *participation*;
- changing social constructions of *identity* (i.e. the shift towards hybridity) and of the *life-course* (the move towards recursivity); and
- the need to specify the genesis of processes of *social inclusion* and *social exclusion*, in particular with regard to the changing role of education.

However, only relatively few research projects adopted a spatially differentiated analysis of the situation of young people by focusing on the specific problem faced by youth in rural areas (Pavelka and Stefanov 1985, Böhnisch and Funk 1989, FAO 1998, Helve 1999, Pavis et al. 2000, Cartmel and Furlong 2000, Shucksmith 2000). Furthermore, most policies targeted at young people still neglect the extent to which personal experiences are shaped by territorial specificities, spatial processes and gender roles and, as a result, often appear blind to the fact that young people in rural areas encounter quite distinct problems (Dey and Jentsch 2000, Little 1999, Shortall 1999 and Verstad 1999). Furthermore, some commentators have argued that it is insufficient to see urban and rural areas as simply imposing distinct – yet implicitly homogenous – processes on their respective younger generations of social inclusion and exclusion on, and that research needs to be directed at the *diversity* of young people's experiences in both urban and rural areas, and how their involvement in both inclusionary *and* exclusionary processes evokes *mixed* feelings about their future prospects (Nairn et al. 2001).

Young people occupy a central role in rural communities and rural development and, in very real terms, constitute the future of rural areas. However, understanding the rural dimension in youth policy, as well as the youth dimension of rural development processes, has only recently gained prominence in policy discourse and implementation, primarily through the launching of both reinvigorated educational programmes and national employment strategies (including Territorial Employment Pacts, and Community Initiatives such as LEADER+). In 2001, the European Union published a Youth White Paper (EC 2002a), following a period of discussions regarding the future of young people and, as the debate over social exclusion issues widened, the idea of actively involving children and young people increasingly gained support. Most notably, this type of participation took the form of a Youth Convention, an EU-inspired assembly of young people from all over Europe that symbolised the specific policy importance policy-makers and politicians attach to the youth question (EC 2002b).

The present volume reports on some of the findings of an EU research project entitled "Policies and Young People in Rural Development"[1] (PAYPIRD for short), that specifically addressed how young people today experience rural development and how policy measures might be re-focused to respond more adequately to the threat of social exclusion to which young people (aged 16-25 years) in rural areas are increasingly exposed. In a further volume (Jentsch and Shucksmith 2002), the PAYPIRD research teams present the results of the thematic research each conducted in a rural area in their respective EU countries, and is based upon material presented in the project's *Final Report*. In contrast, the present volume of essays draws on the wealth of analysis provided by the empirical studies of each study area that provided the basis for each team's *National Report*. The latter were too lengthy for publication in their original form, and so particular features emanating from each team's analysis were selected for inclusion here with the aim of highlighting questions not only of local/ regional concern, but also their potential relevance for a better understanding and a more effective combating of rural youth exclusion in other European rural areas.

A few introductory comments are presented below in order to clarify key aspects of the analytical and conceptual framework used in the project.

The purpose of the project

The objective of the project "Policies and Young People in Rural development " (PAYPIRD) was to analyse the impact of policies on the pathways towards exclusion or integration that young people follow in different rural areas of Europe, and to identify any important variations between social groups (especially in terms of class and gender) and between rural areas, as regards the threat and impact of growing exclusion and the benefits accruing from greater integration.

The specific tasks of this research were as follows:

- to analyse through empirical case studies conducted in seven study areas (located in rural areas in Austria, Finland, France, Germany Ireland, Portugal, Scotland) the effects of policies and operational programmes at various levels on young people's integration into rural labour markets, and therefore on rural social cohesion;

---

1.   The research project was financed under the 4th Framework Programme (FAIR6 CT-98-4171).

- to explore how changes in labour markets, labour market policies and welfare regimes, at various levels, interact with changes in the nature and duration of youth transition processes, and to analyse major factors that may include or exclude young people from rural employment opportunities;
- to consider appropriate means and levels of policy implementation, and allow more thorough insights into the experiences and views of young people in rural areas.

The recognition that little information exists on young people's attitudes towards economic and social issues led to the adoption of a primarily qualitative approach, aimed at shedding light on youngsters' views. Essentially, this was achieved by allowing young people – in their own words – to divulge their experiences, to express their attitudes, and to elaborate on their aspirations and their assessment of their future prospects. Since it is young people themselves who have the most direct experience of the social, educational, labour market and related conditions that contribute to shaping their lives, their accounts constitute an extremely valuable contribution to the formulation of policies that are more relevant to the practical issues of regional, rural and local development.

The project was based mainly on empirical fieldwork in selected study areas that were deemed to reflect the diversity of rural conditions across the EU, thereby permitting a degree of comparative analysis of the case studies to be undertaken. The project was co-ordinated by Mark Shucksmith of the Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, Aberdeen (Scotland) who had previously conducted significant research work on social exclusion issues and rural development policy analysis. The varied professional background and experience of each partner enabled an international team to be formed that could deploy a wide range of both methodological and disciplinary approaches, and had distinct yet complementary sectoral and thematic interests (see list of partners).

In selecting the study areas, the intention was to include examples of each of the three standard rural problems identified in the typology proposed in the European Commission's document "The Future of Rural Society" (CEC 1988). This is not to say that the study areas are representative of each country or of each type; indeed, distinctly hybrid or intermediate categories of rural areas and problems emerged in the course of the study. Nevertheless, the study areas selected did allow the teams to address different rural contexts with regard to both regional development processes in general, and policy approaches towards young people, in particular.

The PAYPIRD study areas

The study areas of Angus (eastern Scotland) and Wesermarsch (northern Germany) corresponded most closely to the *integrated rural areas* mentioned in the typology adopted by the authors of "The Future of Rural Society". These are readily accessible rural areas, located in the Centre-North of the EU, facing pressures on land-use from competing interests, undergoing social and economic transformation and confronting significant environmental threats.

North-East Mayenne (west-central France) and Santa Marta de Penaguião (north-eastern Portugal) belong to the type described as *intermediate areas*. These are areas of rural decline, particularly characteristic of the more outlying Mediterranean parts of the EU, where the need for economic development and diversification is paramount.

Suomussalmi (north-eastern Finland), North West Connemara (western Ireland) and Murau (south-central Austria) are examples of different *peripheral areas*. This type of area is made up of marginal territories that are remote from the mainstream of national and Community life, typical of mountain areas and islands, where rural decline, depopulation and abandonment of the land are the rule and where there is a perceived need to maintain a minimum population to protect both the fragile environment and maintain socio-economic viability.

Study areas of PAYPIRD

Suomussalmi

Angus

NW Connemara

Wesermarsch

Lassey-les-Chateaux

Murau

Santa Marta de Penaguiao
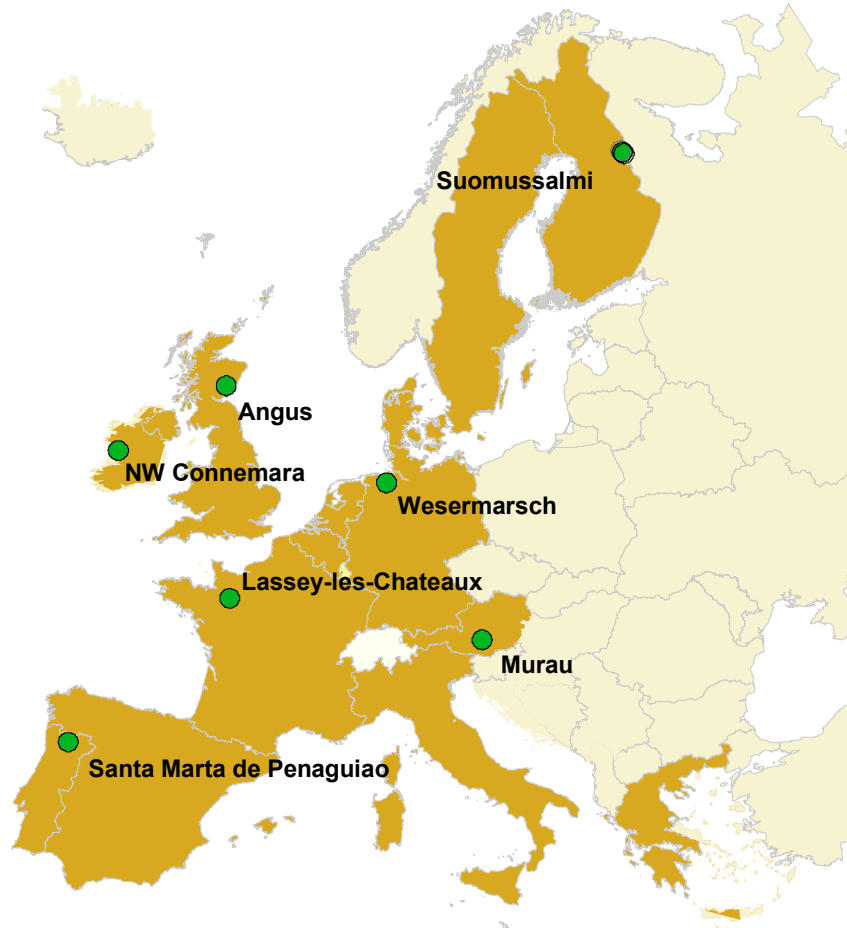
Source: BA f. Bergbauernfragen, Wien 2002

BUNDESANSTALT FÜR
BERGBAUERNFRAGEN

The research design

The common research design, developed and applied in all study areas, can be divided into three key stages. *Stage 1* consisted of an audit of policies affecting young people in rural areas, especially those policies pertaining to labour markets, and included a review of literature and other secondary sources on changing labour markets. Together, this material constituted a *Context Report* specific to each study area, and served as a basic document for the rest of the research.

Stage 2 consisted of the qualitative core of the research, which was primarily based on in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews with 30-40 young people between 16 and 25 years in each study area (including a short questionnaire). Additional focus group discussions of the same age group were carried out to provide additional insight into particular questions that each team thought would especially benefit from further data collection and reflection, as well as adding the extra dynamics associated with group discussion. Furthermore, the series of experts interviews, which have already been used as information source and interpretive element for the context report, was extended to complete information and understanding of rural youth problems and existing realisation of relevant policies and actions. Interviews and focus groups were carried out between November 1999 and May 2000.

These empirical studies of each study area have been collected in comprehensive *national reports* which are the main source of the articles in this book.

How to gain access to interviewees – an issue that was tightly interwoven with the objectives of the empirical work – was one of the most important aspects in the international seminars and country-based team meetings in which the interviewing process was prepared. As no random sample of young people could be drawn, a purposive approach to selection was adopted for all study areas. Its main intention was not to miss young people threatened by any of the various potentially exclusionary processes already identified. The common selection criteria reflected the need to have as equal a distribution as possible of interviewees among the following three key groups of young people:

- those in education;
- those in employment; and
- those unemployed or on training schemes targeting the unemployed.

In order to access young people in the study areas, several techniques were used along a continuum ranging from more direct processes (e.g. Portugal) based on approaches made to youngsters in public places and subsequent "snowballing" via contacts made with friends of those already interviewed, to more indirect- and institutionally-based approaches, in which individuals and/or agencies working with young people in the area provided introductions to potential interviewees (France). Certain practical constraints, along with the specific conditions in each study area, led to an overrepresentation of one particular group at the expense of another. For example, the number of youth unemployed in the samples range from three in the Scottish study area to 14 in the Finnish, which reflected to some extent their respective unemployment rates, but also the ease or difficulty encountered in gaining access to unemployed youth.

Given the intensive character of the study, the teams were less concerned with the relatively small number of young people contacted than with the variability of experiences and circumstances that detailed interviewing and discussion revealed. Yet it is worth noting some of the limitations of the sample. It is "biased" against the social categories that are numerically most present in the areas, and underestimates the views not only of commuting youngsters, but also those that currently working, studying or training outside the study area, those who had "voted with their feet" by leaving the region – perhaps definitively – and members of more marginalised groups of young people that were rather difficult to encounter and more resistant to being interviewed. With regard to several key variables (e.g. the period of transition from school to first employment, place and duration of the first employment and experience/duration of unemployment), the studies perhaps might have benefited from the inclusion in the sample of proportionately more youth effected by diverse problem situations. Also, studies based on interviews with youth contacted via key agencies and organisations undoubtedly included a greater number of those who were already benefiting to varying degrees from established forms of social provision. Those with no such institutional contacts – conceivably the most vulnerable – may well have been under-represented.

In *Stage 3,* each national team was responsible for developing a specific theme relating to the core issues of youth development in the rural area under scrutiny. Considerable efforts were made to ensure that each partner contributed data relating to each of the other teams' concerns. A framework was also developed to ensure that the seven themes would contribute comprehensively to different aspects of the project's overall research aims. The specific themes comprised either the analysis of different policy levels and their relevance to youth problems, or related to the regional particulari-

ties of how young people cope with rural life in general, and the transition from school to work, in particular. The themes developed by the national teams were as follows:

- How far can policies aiming to integrate young people into employment also tackle problems of social exclusion?
- What characteristics make rural areas attractive to young people and what are the implications of this for rural development?
- What is the role of young people in rural labour markets?
- What can be learnt from projects involving youth in local community development?
- What effects do rural development policies have on young people's integration into the social and economic life of rural areas?
- What is the role of social networks in helping youth to find employment?
- Is the interface between school and the labour market one of the major determinants of successful youth transition?

These resulting *Thematic Reports* generated findings that were drawn together and synthesised as the main basis for the *Final Report* to the European Commission (Burnett et al. 2001).

The organisation of the book

Given that the research project addressed a wide field of different yet inter-related topics, the selection of material made in the present volume aimed to capture experience from those regions where particular themes appear most relevant, and also to speculate over their more general relevance to rural areas and rural youth. Thus the idea for this book was to select particularly interesting and pertinent issues, whose wider discussion and dissemination may have a positive influence on future policy making. The interviews and group discussions conducted in order to prepare *Context Reports* and *National Reports* alike generated a wealth of material in which young people expressed – often with great candour – their views about rural life, their school and training experiences, the difficulties they had encountered in finding suitable employment, and the likelihood of their staying in the rural areas. The volume thus provides a survey of rural young people's problems and perspectives and discusses their difficulties in adapting their life situation to a rapidly changing local and external environment.

The case study chapters are structured in three main sections: a mini-profile of the study area, comprising (1) the geographical and economic background, and the educational and labour market situation, (2) a thematic selection of the findings, and (3) case-specific conclusions and broader policy implications.

Following this introductory chapter, **Chapter two** starts with an exploration of educational disadvantage of young people in the west of Ireland, a rural area experiencing uneven development. *Brian McGrath* and *John Canavan* describe the experiences and perspectives of young people who left school with few or no qualifications, some of whom opted to participate in the Youthreach programme for early school-leavers. The authors conclude with a discussion of what should be the most appropriate future policy response to this type of situation.

Chapter three examines educational experiences, and resulting career choices and decision making processes of rural youth in Angus, Scotland. *Birgit Jentsch* and *Mark Shucksmith* discuss the factors that most influence young people's decisions on whether to continue education or enter the labour market, as well as their perception of and experience with further and higher education.

Chapter four explores the situation of unemployed young people in Suomussalmi, Finland, a very marginal region with harsh physical conditions and a 1998 youth unemployment rate of over 40%. *Toivo Muilu* and *Pirjo Onkalo* describe how young people cope with being out of work (in many cases with only the prospect of short term work in the future) and their views on the pros and cons of training initiatives and programmes. A discussion of young interviewees' views on whether to stay in or leave a region that provides only few labour market opportunities concludes this chapter.

Chapter five evaluates the role and impact of policies and local structures that support the social and occupational integration of young people in Mayenne, France. *Elizabeth Auclair* and *Didier Vanoni* juxtapose their overview of the policy framework and corresponding organisations with the opinions of young people on these issues, stressing, in particular, the labour market problems they face, and the value of the services that local administrative structures offer to support young people in finding satisfactory employment.

Chapter six focuses on rural society in Murau, Austria and points to youth participation as a core issue influencing the area's local/regional attractiveness. *Ingrid Machold, Thomas Dax* and *Christine Meisinger* outline the contours and dynamic of the regional system and assess the opportunities for young people to participate, before exploring the extent to which young people feel attached to their region, their expectations regarding local insti-

tutions and development and their assessment of the performance of the local associations and organisational structures considered most relevant for young people.

Chapter seven focuses on factors that appear to widen the gap between young people's aspirations and their real-world employment outcomes. *José Portela* and *Chris Gerry* discuss the school-to-work transition by way of six seemingly contradictory statements, each paradox providing an insight both into the claims made for educational and employment policy by the "expert community", and the dreams and ambitions of young people who face the day-to-day realities of the living and trying to find employment in a rural community.

The concluding ***Chapter eight*** attempts to synthesise the major insights provided in the case studies discussing common features and differences between young people in rural areas of the European countries covered by the PAYPIRD project. The editors sketch out the background context to current concerns over young people's integration in rural development, assess the "solidity" of young people's attachment to their 'region of origin' and argue that there exists further considerable scope for debate on whether "territory matters" in shaping the form, content and dynamic of youth integration. Despite the similarities that appear to exist in the situations experienced by young people across the EU, polarisation among young people is undoubtedly increasing throughout the continent; it is argued that, faced with this scenario, the 'rural facets' of transition processes should not be underestimated, nor should we forget the importance of providing wider opportunities for youth to participate in policies and practices aimed at helping rural society to adjust to new challenges. The chapter goes on to examine current education and training policy and practice: while young people judge these to be a key concern, they are also conscious of the defects and poor performance that persist, and the extent to which higher education continues to receive disproportionate priority. The findings of the PAYPIRD project suggest that young people in rural areas are constantly comparing their own situations with the conditions that apply closer to the mainstream of national life, and are well aware that it is rural youth that have the more limited choices and confront the greatest barriers when trying to make key decisions about their future. In the light of this conclusion, the editors stress the crucial importance of raising the level of participation of young people, and of finding ways in which pathways to inclusion might be improved, widened and consolidated.

In conclusion, since we have sought in this research to do justice to the "voices" of young people, we feel it is important to stress the need for professionals, policymakers and academics to listen more carefully and sensitively to what young people have to say. It is also crucial that all

"stakeholders" in youth issues take a firm position on the importance of mainstream intergenerational equity in local and regional development. While undoubtedly this constitutes a tough challenge, we hope that the insights provided by the studies contained in this volume may influence future discussions and decisions on how the identification and recognition of "youth spirit" and its participatory channelling can indeed make a difference.

References

Bailleau, F. (2000), *Youth Employment/Unemployment*, COST 13A, Working Group 4, Annual Report, Paris.

Böhnisch, L. and Funk, H. (1989): Jugend im Abseits? Zur Lebenslage Jugendlicher im ländlichen Raum, Weinheim and Munich.

Burnett, J./ Jentsch, B./ Shucksmith, M. (eds., 2001): Policies and Young People in Rural Development, Final Report for the European Commission Research DG B.I.2, The Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, Aberdeen, Scotland.

Bynner, J., Chisholm, L. and Furlong, A. (eds., 1997), *Youth, Citizenship and Social Change in a European Context*, Ashgate, Aldershot (England).

Cartmel, F. and Furlong, A. (2000), Youth unemployment in rural areas, YPS, York (England).

Chisholm, L. (2001), "Youth in knowledge societies; challenges for research and policy", in: Helve, H. (ed.), *Making and Breaking Borders*, Proceedings of the 7th Nordic Youth Research Symposium (NYRIS), 7th-10th June 2000, Helsinki.

Commission of the European Communities - CEC (1991), Young Europeans in 1990, Eurobarometer 34.2, Brussels.

Commission of the European Communities - CEC (1988): The Future of Rural Society, COM(88)601 final/2, Brussels.

Dey, I. and Jentsch, B. (2000), '*Quality Jobs' and 'Real Choice' for Rural Youth: a Reassessment*, Arkleton Research Papers No. 6, University of Aberdeen (Scotland)

European Commission, DG Education and Culture (2002a), *A new impetus for European youth, White paper*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

European Commission, DG Education and Culture (2002b), *Europe and youth: a new impetus*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

European Commission, *Youth for Europe Programme* 1995-1999, Brussels.

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), (1998), *Increasing the involvement of young men and women in rural development in Europe*, FAO Regional Office for Europe, Technical Series 55, Rome.

Helve, H. (ed., 2001a), "Making and Breaking Borders", 7th Nordic Youth Research Symposium (NYRIS), 7-10 June 2000, Helsinki.

Helve, H. (2001b), "Reflexivity and Changes in Attitudes and Value Structures", in Helve, H. (ed.), *Making and Breaking Borders*, Proceedings of the 7th Nordic Youth Research Symposium (NYRIS), 7th-10th June 2000, Helsinki.

Helve, H. (ed., 1999), A Comparative Study of Living Conditions and Participation of Rural Young People in Changing Europe (RYPE), Report, Part 1, European Commission Directorate XXII, Helsinki.

Helve, H. and Wallace, C. (eds., 2000), *Youth, Citizenship and Empowerment*, Ashgate, Aldershot (England).

Jentsch, B. and Shucksmith, M. (eds., 2002), *Young People in Rural Areas of Europe*, Ashgate, Aldershot (England).

Jones, G. (2002), *The youth divide: Diverging paths to adulthood*, report on the Young People in Transition programme, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, YPS, York (England).

Little, J. (1999), "Gender, Community and Rural Regeneration", Paper presented at the conference on Gender and Rural Transformations in Europe: Past, Present and Future Prospects, 14th-17th October 1999, Wageningen (Holland).

Mansel, J. and Brinkhoff, K-P. (1998), *Armut im Jugendalter, Soziale Ungleichheit, Gettoisierung und die psychosozialen Folgen*, Juventa Verlag, Weinheim and Munich.

Nairn, K., McCormack, J. and Liepins, R. (2001), "Having a Place or Not? Young People's Experiences of Rural and Urban Environments", in: Helve, H. (ed.), *Making and Breaking Borders*, Proceedings of the 7th Nordic Youth Research Symposium (NYRIS), 7th-10th June 2000, Helsinki.

Nordic Youth Research programme - NYRI, initiated in 1987, current programme: The Nordic research programme for advanced youth studies, 1998-2003.

Official Journal of the European Communities (2000), Decision No 1031/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 April 2000 establishing the 'Youth' Community action programme, L117/1-10, Brussels, published on 18.5.2000.

Pavelka, F. and Stefanov, M. (1985), Rural Youth Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, Institute of Youth Studies and European Centre for Social Welfare Training and Research, Sofia (and Vienna).

Pavis, S., Platt, S. and Hubbard, G. (2000), Young people in rural Scotland:

Pathways to social inclusion and exclusion, YPS, York (England).

Shortall, S. (1999): "Political Restructuring in Northern Ireland, Implications for Equality Proofing CAP Reform Measures", Paper presented at the conference on Gender and Rural Transformations in Europe: Past, Present and Future Prospects, 14th-17th October, Wageningen (Holland).

Shucksmith, M. (2000): Exclusive Countryside: social inclusion and regeneration in rural Britain, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York (England).

Shucksmith, M., Burnett, J., and Jentsch, B. (1999), *Policies and Young People in Rural Development*, Interim Report for the European Commission, Research DG, The Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, Aberdeen (Scotland).

Verstad, B. (1999). "Rural Youth and Gender Equality", paper presented at the conference on *Gender and Rural Transformations in Europe: Past, Present and Future Prospects*, 14th-17th October 1999, Wageningen (Holland).

Wallace, C. and Kovatcheva, S. (1998), *Youth in Society, The Construction and Deconstruction of Youth in East and West Europe*, MacMillan Press, London.

Wyn, J. and White R. (1997), *Rethinking Youth*, Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks (USA) and New Delhi (India).

2.   Educational disadvantage and rural youth in the West of Ireland

Brian McGrath and John Canavan

Introduction

The critical role of education within the 'cycle of poverty' has been well documented in the Irish context (see Archer, 2001 for a recent account). It is generally assumed that one's capacity to do well on the economic front is premised upon one's educational credentials and also that those who achieve the worst outcomes in education tend to come from the least privileged backgrounds. That the processes are complex and deeply embedded in society is also a recurrent theme. This chapter explores one such complex issue, namely the experience of educational disadvantage in a rural region itself experiencing uneven development and what the most appropriate policy response to this should be. The chapter describes the experiences and perspectives of young people who left school with little or no qualifications, some of whom decided to pursue a programme for early school-leavers (Youthreach). On the basis of the case study we ask: what significance do these findings have for our understanding of young people excluded from educational opportunities in rural locations? and what does it tell us about the responses provided and needed at the level of public and social policy?

Before attending to these questions the chapter provides a profile of the region in the next section, which in turn is followed by a brief discussion of educational disadvantage and policy developments. The substantive section of the chapter is provided in the case study, which documents the views and concerns of young people with first-hand experience of educational

exclusion. In addition to our tentative conclusions the final section offers a discussion regarding what we consider are the critical issues to be addressed at a number of levels.

The Socio-Economic Context of North West Connemara

The area of North West Connemara reflects a region that was selected for inclusion in previous anti-poverty programmes, the most substantial being the European-funded 'Poverty 3' model action programme, from 1989 to 1994 (see Mernagh and Commins, 1997).[2] With a population of 8,722 persons the region occupies 780 square kilometres, although much of the land is mountainous and uninhabitable. A number of scattered settlements are dotted throughout the region, the largest being a town (Clifden) of 920 persons. A previous study by Byrne et al. (1991) revealed that the area experienced excessive levels of disadvantage and marginalisation, particularly regarding high incidences of poverty, poor service provision, high dependency ratios and poor employment options.

A number of indicators can be used that help capture the fundamental structural conditions and features of the region. Assessing the region's Economic Dependency Ratio, Age Dependency Percentage and Unemployment Rate[3] provides a picture of economic marginalisation and demographic imbalance when compared with Ireland as a whole. While these variables provide an overall picture of the region as significantly worse-off compared with the national level, further analysis of the data reveals particular forms of local economic restructuring. In the first instance, this is reflected in the significantly higher proportionate downturn in agricultural activity compared with the State between 1986 and 1996. Nevertheless, the numbers at

---

2. It is a region without fixed boundaries for statistical purposes. Clifden Rural District, as defined by the national statistics office, the Central Statistics Office (CSO), closely approximates the North West Connemara region. For this reason, the quantitative measures discussed is this section relate to Clifden Rural District. The most up-to-date data in this context refers to 1996 when the Census of Population was undertaken.

3. The definitions used for these indicators are as follows: Economic Dependency Ratio: Ratio of those 'inactive' (first job seekers, unemployed, students, home duties, unable to work, 'other', 0-14 age group) to those at work; Percentage Age Dependency: those in the 0-14 and 65+ age cohorts, expressed as a percentage of the 15 to 64 age cohort; Unemployment Rate: those out of work and first regular job, as a percentage of the labour force.

work in farming in 1996 constitute 17 per cent of the entire population at work in the area compared with a national level of 10 per cent. While agriculture has lessened in importance as an employment outlet there has been substantial growth in non-agricultural activity.[4] In the 1991 to 1996 period this growth occurred in commercial, building and professional services but principally in economic activity involving personal (hotels, restaurants, cafes, lodging and boarding houses) and recreational services. One of the more typical characteristics of the area is its extremely limited manufacturing base.

Young people between the age of 15 and 24 years[5] in the region make up 16 per cent (1,492 persons) of the entire population, with a slightly higher proportion of females to males (770 and 712 respectively). Closer inspection of the 1996 labour force characteristics of young people in this age cohort reveals several significant gender differences, particularly with regard to their labour force and education characteristics.[6] Some of these include:

(i) The proportion of males in- and out-of-employment is higher compared with both females in the area and the corresponding national averages;

(ii) The female population is considerably higher than the number of males in education.

The employment outlet most typical for young people[7] in the area is found in personal and recreational services; the proportion of males and females at work in this category being 25 and 43 per cent respectively.[8] The high

---

4. Between 1991 and 1996, for every decrease of 100 persons in agriculture in the area there was a gain of 640 persons in non-farm employment, giving a 'Replacement Rate' of 6.4. In the period 1986 to 1991 this rate was 0.8, which meant that non-agricultural employment growth could not match the level of agricultural decline.

5. This corresponds to the age categories which the CSO have devised for analysis: 0-14; 15-24; 25-34; 45-54; 55-64 and 65+. Therefore, the data here refers to the 15 to 24 year age cohort and not the 16 to 25 year age cohort at the centre of the research project.

6. Given the immense change in the Irish economy since 1996, the official statistics may not reflect as accurately as one would wish the changing employment routes and pathways of young people.

7. The nearest age cohort for which employment data is available from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) is the 15-34 age category and is indicative only of the age group at the centre of this discussion.

8. For males, work activities with the highest uptake apart from this source are: commerce (18%), agriculture (17%), building (14%) and manufacturing (14%). The major employment sources for the female workforce are: commerce (24%) and professional services (18%).

incidence of part-time employment is a distinguishing feature of the region, with 29 per cent of all females and 18 per cent of all males in the labour force indicating they were employed in jobs of this kind.

While females outnumber males in terms of educational *participation*, there are also notable differences between them in educational *attainment* levels, particularly as females outperform males in terms of the attainment level reached. For instance, many more females than males achieve third level education, while five times more males than females in the region were educated to primary standard only. In addition, males do not fare as well in their attainment levels when compared with males generally throughout the State.

In addition to education and employment, a third important aspect impacting on the lives of young people in the area is housing. While the construction of 'holiday homes' has served to distance many young people from independent securable living arrangements, in overall terms the emphasis in Irish housing policy on owner-occupation, the lack of controls and accountability in the private rental sector and the hitherto low level of support for social housing, suggests that it is not unreasonable to expect considerable access and affordability concerns among young people wishing to remain in the region.

Educational Disadvantage and Policy Developments

The Combat Poverty Agency (1998) provides the definition of educational disadvantage adopted in this chapter. This definition focuses both on those within the formal school system and those who have left mainstream education. In the case of the former, the authors consider disadvantage as deriving from the mismatch between school demands, approaches, ethos and so forth, and the student's own "knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours into which s(he) has been socialised", with the result that the capacity to gain equitable benefits from schooling among all students is limited. For the latter group they suggest that "educational disadvantage may be considered to be the condition of possessing minimal or no formal educational qualifications and/or being inadequately trained or without knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours associated with the demands of available employment, so that one's likelihood of securing stable employment is disproportionately limited as compared to one's peers by age" (Combat Poverty Agency, 1998, p. 10).

The thirty or so years since the introduction of free secondary school provision has witnessed immense change in education policy and provision in Ireland. Education proved to be critical in the recessionary years of the 1980s in retaining the many young people who would have, in previous times, gone on to skilled and unskilled manual jobs. Moreover, it has been identified as a key element in the policy mix that has led to the current economic boom.

In spite of these positive contributions, a critical feature of education in Ireland is the failure of a significant minority of young people to benefit from it. Recent figures show that 2,500 young people left school with no qualifications while 11,000 had junior cycle qualifications only. It is likely that in addition to these, significantly more young people performed poorly in their final senior cycle examinations. A further general weakness in education provision relates to literacy. Research shows that a significant minority of people have poor literacy functioning (Morgan, 1997; OECD, 2000).

Perhaps the most interesting research finding of recent years is that which highlights the widespread distribution of educational disadvantage. While most prior initiatives had an urban bias, the publication of research in 1995 highlighted the fact that the majority of educationally disadvantaged pupils lived in the rural areas of urban centres of less than 10,000 people. Since then, the State has put in place a range of preventive measures including reducing Pupil Teacher Ratios, building home/ school /community links and providing additional financial resources.

Youthreach Programme

For those for whom preventive programmes are too late, the main form of second chance education is Youthreach. The Youthreach programme was initiated in 1989 and currently operates through approximately 150 centres nationwide. It targets young people aged between 15 and 18 who have left mainstream education without qualifications. The programme has five overall objectives:

- Personal and Social Development and increased self-esteem;
- Second chance education and introductory level training;
- Promoting independence, personal autonomy and a pattern of life-long learning;
- Integration into further education and training opportunities and the labour market; and
- Social inclusion.

The core course elements through which these are to be achieved are: Personal and Social Development; Vocational Skills and Communication Skills. Normally, a trainee will participate on the programme for two years and an important aspect of the programme is a work placement with an employer. A further significant aspect of the provision is that participants receive a weekly training allowance. The establishment of a system of Certification through the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) has been important in offering a progression route for trainees. The NCVA now offers certification at four levels, with links to the PLC and Institutes of Technology sector.[9]A Youthreach intervention has operated in North West Connemara since 1989.

Case Study: Early School Leaving and the Youthreach Programme in North West Connemara

This case study is concerned with the *process* and *experience* of early school leaving among young people in the North West Connemara region. It also documents how a local policy intervention, known as Youthreach, has attempted to combat the exclusionary effects of educational disadvantage. The analysis is divided into three sections as follows: first, an overview is provided of the sample group's educational attainment levels; the second section proceeds with an account of young people's reasons for leaving and how their decisions were negotiated and influenced. It also recounts, in hindsight, their attitudes and feelings about leaving school early; third, section three outlines the reasons why young people chose to pursue the Youthreach Programme and highlights their perspectives regarding its value.

Profile of early school leaving

As mentioned earlier, forty-one young people were interviewed as part of the study, of whom 16 had successfully completed the Leaving Certificate. A relatively high number (20 respondents) had failed to complete their educa-

---

9.   NCVA now under the FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council) system. NCVA accreditation extends from Foundation Level, through Level One to Level Three. Courses at Level Two are delivered via the PLC sector. Holders of Level Two certification can progress to designated certificate and diploma course in the Institutes of Technology. Certification at level three is provided for new specialist courses e.g. International Teleservices and Greenkeeping.

tion to this level. Of those 20 young people who left school early, six dropped-out before they had attained the Junior Certificate while a further five respondents indicated that they had left on completion of these examinations. In relation to those who had begun the senior cycle with the intention of completing the Leaving Certificate, eight respondents decided to leave before obtaining this qualification, some of whom had undertaken a significant portion of the cycle.

In gender terms males constituted the higher proportion of those who left school without obtaining the highest level of qualification in second-level education. A breakdown of those who left without the Leaving Certificate reveals a gender imbalance of 13 males compared with seven females in this category.

Reasons für early school leaving

Several reasons were advanced by young people to explain their decision to opt out of the mainstream system, with some respondents expressing a combination of factors in the decision-making process. In some instances these factors emanated from influences they felt could not be easily managed or modified, such as the overall school environment or negative relations with peers and teachers.

It is possible to identify four common reasons why young people no longer felt connected to the mainstream school system: (i) negative teacher/pupil relations, (ii) loss of interest, usually through lack of support and attention, (iii) the view that school was irrelevant to future decisions and (iv) harassment by other pupils. Some identified a combination of such factors as impacting on their decision. For instance, some viewed their school experiences negatively because of their lack of interest, which was further exacerbated by negative relations with teachers or by not having sufficient supports in difficult times. It is worth noting that the interviews and focus group discussions with young people who performed well at school and were attending university at the time of fieldwork confirmed (from a different perspective) the types of experiences that early school leavers recounted.

Negative teacher/pupil relations

Negative relations between teachers and pupils had a particular bearing upon school experience and eventual decision of some young people to leave school early. While negative interaction with teachers varied in intensity among pupils, several felt it was teachers' attitude towards them that created difficulties at school. One young male, however, accepted that it was his own attitude that resulted in negative relations with teachers and

subsequently led to his decision to opt out of school. Although some were ambivalent and had mixed relations with teachers, others felt that teachers 'looked down' on the pupils and showed little interest in their welfare. This was expressed by a female as follows:

> They just weren't nice teachers ... A lot of the teachers aren't from around here, so they thought they were above us ... they thought they were doing us a favour by coming out in the morning and sitting there. A lot of them I just didn't get on with and I wasn't the only one. A lot of us didn't get on with all the teachers really, and even the local ones weren't the greatest. (Anne; Female; 17)

In one case a particularly poor relationship with a teacher caused a young male to leave school in the first year of the senior cycle. Having dropped out of school, following a serious argument with the teacher, he felt he could not continue his education in a hostile environment.

Loss of Interest

Some young people mentioned that loss of interest in school constituted one of the main factors for leaving early. In some instances school no longer posed a challenge for them, which, coupled with the lack of attention they received at school, was a significant reason for leaving. The introduction of 'transition year' was particularly problematic for one young female.[10] Having expressed how she had worked studiously for her Junior Certificate and had ambitions to become a teacher she described the 'transition year' as particularly unsettling. Two other early school leavers, who left school for different reasons, also mentioned this problem.

Boredom and feelings of depression were mentioned by another young female as her reason for wanting to opt out even though she was already in the final stages of her last year of senior cycle. Another young woman who suffered from a lifelong illness described how her interest waned in the first year of the senior cycle because of the long day associated with travelling to school and its negative impact on her quality of life.

---

10.   The 'transition year' is an optional year between the Junior Certificate and the senior cycle which leads to the Leaving Certificate examinations. 'Transition year' allows students to pursue work experience and activities that promote the interests of the student (leisure, crafts and so forth).

Harassment by pupils

Three young people indicated that bullying by other pupils was their principal reason for deciding to leave school. They described feelings of stress and isolation during this period and felt harassed by other pupils because of their appearance. A young male outlined his feelings as follows:

> Everyone used to bully me because of my weight … I know an awful lot of lads out there, and they weren't big like, but if they were tall or if they had big teeth or a funny face or a big nose or anything like that, you'd see a 'slagging'. So it was bad. (Michael; Male; 17)

Although out of school, a young female provided anecdotal evidence to suggest that young people continued to receive this harassment from other pupils:

> It still is going on in school, because I was talking to a parent the other day, a girl in second year this year and last year she got bullied a lot, the same kind of stuff. The parents spoke to the kids who were doing it, but it only made it ten times worse. (Joanne; Female; 20)

Irrelevance of school for future plans

For some young people, the decision to leave school early was influenced by their view of the Leaving Certificate as irrelevant to future career plans. One young male who was in the second year of his apprenticeship was quite decisive about his future plan to become a cabinet-maker and cited the irrelevance of the Leaving Certificate in achieving this. Despite having done well in the Junior Certificate and his parents' pleas to continue in school, he opted to leave and pursue his desired career.

A number of other young males who left school early considered that they had done relatively well in school but were unwilling to pursue the Leaving Certificate since it did not fit with their future career paths. Their plans involved undergoing more vocational oriented training, as expressed in the following statement:

> I was going to do the Leaving Cert but then I decided that for the likes of me unless I was going on to college the Leaving wasn't great. I thought if I had the City and Guilds it would be a lot handier to get into some sort of job. (Francis; Male; 20)

Decision-making process and influences

The decision to leave school early was described by young people as a difficult choice they had to face at that stage in their lives; a decision taken after many months of unhappiness and experiencing stress at school. In contrast to most young people who deliberated for a while about leaving school early, one young male decided to leave on impulse after a serious argument with a teacher. As mentioned earlier, some pupils felt that these negative experiences were conditioned by factors over which they had little control or influence, such as the school environment.

The nature of intervention taken by schools to prevent or consult young people about their decision to leave was varied, with some young people describing it as non-existent and others indicating they received some assistance from teachers. In the latter case, some young people were urged by their teachers not to leave while others were advised on the options available to them if they did make such a choice. However, intervention to prevent cases of bullying was ineffective. A number of young people suggested they were never consulted by any teachers about their decision to leave.

The role of parents in young people's decision-making was seen as important by some interviewees. Generally, they described parents as providing a supportive role when faced with the difficult decision of leaving school and facing an uncertain future. Sometimes young people had persisted for a period of time trying to convince their parents that their decision was the correct one. Examples of this include:

> Each time I was at home I'd say I'm not going back and each time my mother would convince me to go back and it just came to the stage that no conversation was going to turn me around. (Thomas; Male; 18)

> I wore my parents down about leaving. They listened to it for 4 or 5 years. When you get to that age it's kind of your own decision. (Mary; Female; 18)

Although some parents took more convincing than others, they usually went along with the young person's decision on the condition that they would actively seek alternatives to school. Advice was also sought from other members of the extended family such as grandparents and aunts, who were usually supportive of, albeit concerned about, the young person's decision.

While a number of interviewees who finished school were critical of the career guidance system, the same cannot be said about many of the early school leavers, most of whom did not have exposure to it since it typically occurs at the end of the school cycle. While some made no reference to

career guidance, a few were satisfied that the career guidance teacher offered them some advice or could have offered it had they stayed. Only two young people mentioned situations where a number of difficulties arose. A young woman complained that she was given inaccurate information about how to pursue a career as a chef since she later discovered that the Leaving Certificate was not a requirement, as the guidance counsellor had suggested. Another female felt that unless one had a clear idea about what career to pursue the career guidance advisor was irrelevant. She believed that young people should be given more information and advice on the increased opportunities and choices to be gained by remaining at school.

Hindsight reflections on leaving school

Having spent some time away from school several young people expressed strong feelings of regret about their decisions. This featured more prominently among young people who left school for reasons different to those who saw the Leaving Certificate as irrelevant to their career paths. Those who indicated their regrets at not having the Leaving Certificate believed they could be working in better quality jobs and have greater choices and opportunities available to them if they had completed their education. Some of their views include:

> I would like to have furthered my education. I only have a junior cert and that is not worth anything to you at the moment ... It would have opened up more jobs for me now. The work I would be going for would be more physical work; it wouldn't be computers or work like that. (Kieran; Male; 20)

> I am regretting it now ... that's probably one of the reasons why it's so hard for me to get a job. (Patricia; Female; 18)

Young people who left school because they felt the Leaving Certificate would not confer any advantages on their future prospects had no regrets and were quite satisfied with the decision they took:

> People ask me if I'm sorry I left school but no, I'm happy I left school. A lot of people say they regret it but I don't mind. Maybe I might in 20 years time but at the moment, no. (Richard; Male; 18)

An optimistic outlook was adopted by a female who had left school following the Junior Certificate, in which she felt that the experience of learning about other aspects of life was a worthwhile feature of leaving school early:

> I would like to have stayed but at the same time I have learned all kind of things about myself from leaving school and putting myself through hard times … Everything would have been nice and cushy. I think in one way I have learned a lot about life but I haven't learnt a lot about other things, which I have to go back and do now. But I'm young enough and I have plenty of time. (Sarah; Female; 22)

Youthreach experiences and perspectives

The most significant strategy for tackling educational disadvantage in North West Connemara is the Youthreach programme. This section outlines some aspects of participants' experiences and viewpoints, namely: (i) reasons for participating in the programme; (ii) the decision-making processes and influences in participating; and (iii) attitudes towards the programme's value.

Reasons for participation

The opportunity Youthreach provides in addressing young people's lack of sufficient qualifications was suggested as the principal motivating factor for participating on the programme. Participants mentioned how the programme provided them with the opportunity to acquire specific qualifications suited to their career choices, a curriculum which was geared towards their interests and a chance to undertake mainstream courses, such as the Leaving Certificate, in a less authoritarian environment than school.

Participants typically left school with little or no qualifications to support their transition into the labour market. The acquisition of new skills, work experience and accreditation were identified by trainees as important features to be gained from participation. One view was described as follows:

> It's kind of to do with the school thing, you might not have passed or failed or whatever. [It's] kind of helping you, you know, making it like you're not sitting down after the Leaving 'cause you couldn't be bothered so I thought I might as well do it. Get a certificate for it to show that I did something. (Anne; Female; 17)

The opportunity to pursue formally recognised apprenticeship training through the Youthreach channel was suggested by some young people as their principal motivating factor, while the availability of the Leaving Certificate Applied programme was the main attraction for others.[11]This pro-

---

11.   In recent years, a number of initiatives have been introduced within the design of the post-primary curriculum. One particular development has been the Leaving Certificate Applied programme which, at the time of fieldwork, was in its first year of operation at the centre and had five students enrolled.

gramme aims to serve students with a broader range of ability than the established Leaving Certificate programme. According to one young male, who left school because of bullying, the opportunity to undertake the Leaving Certificate Applied in a less intimidating environment than school was hugely welcomed.

In addition to providing the Leaving Certificate Applied programme, the Youthreach centre offers young people the chance to study subjects they may have failed in the Leaving Certificate examination. For some students, this is a very positive feature since it means they do not have the sizeable workload associated with studying an entire range of subjects, as required through the school system. This allows young people a second chance to enhance the standard of their qualifications in a less pressured capacity. A young female who left school with poor results in the Leaving Certificate decided to repeat two subjects through the support of the Youthreach centre. She suggested that if she could only achieve this through the formal school system then her decision to return to education would be different:

> If this wasn't here I'd just be lying around at home 'cause there's no way I'd go back to school and do the subjects … I failed my Leaving Cert - I failed three subjects but here I get to repeat two and kind of get back on track … This was the best option for me [because] if I went back to school I'd have to repeat five subjects. I didn't want to repeat three that I'd already passed. So here I was allowed to repeat two. (Youthreach Focus Group; Michelle; Female; 18)

A number of current and past trainees drew comparisons with the school curriculum to highlight the options Youthreach provided them. Some young people held strong feelings regarding the limitations that the school curriculum placed on their skills development. According to those who had greater interest in developing practical skills, such as woodwork, metalwork and computers, the programme offered better opportunities.

Decision-making processes and influences

During the focus group discussion with current participants of the programme young people identified the negative perceptions they held before joining. The programme was invariably viewed as catering only for those who couldn't make it through school successfully because of their own inabilities. The view of a male participant of the programme was that the general attitude of the community towards Youthreach was changing in a positive direction because of the awareness created by local young people's involvement in the programme. However, this aspect may only refer to the locality within which the programme operates.

A significant aspect of young people's involvement in the programme was the encouragement they received from friends who were already participating or had experience of it in the past. Several participants indicated that it was through these channels that they learned about the programme and gained a positive perspective regarding its prospects for them.

The influence of other key actors such as parents, siblings and teachers in young people's decision to take part in the programme was also highlighted in several cases. The transition to the programme was facilitated through their encouragement, advice and initiating contact with Youthreach personnel. This is particularly evident in the remarks of a young female studying for her Leaving Certificate a second time, who described how her mother felt she was too young to take on responsibilities of independent living and advised her to stay in the area to undertake a Youthreach course.

Value of the Youthreach Programme

There was general consensus among current and past participants of the programme that Youthreach, for several reasons, constituted a positive and beneficial experience for young people. More specifically, participants' perspectives of the programme's value focused on: (i) type of curriculum available, (ii) positive relations with tutors and trainees, (iii) the allowance provided, (iv) work experience and (v) guidance towards future options.

Curriculum

As mentioned earlier, several young people were attracted by the type of curriculum available through the programme. Comparisons were invariably made between the type of curriculum they had experienced at school and the nature of the courses and style of teaching encountered at the Youthreach centre. Greater emphasis on practical skills training and development was viewed as a significant advance on the school curriculum. The programme was viewed by a young female as important in contributing towards the development of young people's creative and social skills. These positive features were described as follows:

> I loved doing metalwork and woodwork. They were brilliant. You can't do it in [school] and I am not academically inclined. I am more into making stuff. Being creative. (Sarah; Female; 22)

Several young people highlighted the inadequacy of schools for developing their computer skills, principally because of limited access, expense and poor quality computers. Computer training forms a core part of the Youthreach programme and was viewed favourably by a number of participants in terms of the skills and choice it provided them. In addition, a significant strength identified by a former male trainee was the amount of time

devoted to subjects. Compared with the school curriculum and forty-minute-length classes, the programme offered more intensive training and individual attention.

In the view of a Leaving Certificate Applied student, the Youthreach environment created more confidence and mutual support among students. The small class setting and the individual attention this fostered could be considered as particularly supportive aspects of the learning environment:

> The best thing that I like about it is that everyone in the class, they're not afraid to speak up. If the teacher was kind of speeding ahead and if none of us understood, like there would be no one in the class that would stay quiet. Everyone would say "sorry, I don't understand". And the way that, if someone was stuck in the class, I'm saying Maths or Irish, like the person beside you would help you out no problem. So we all kind of pull together in the group. (Michael; Male; 17)

Finally, according to a young female with literacy problems, the approach of the Youthreach programme had a significant impact on her capacity to learn. She felt that the individual attention provided and the pace of learning were distinctly different from school and had a critical effect in tackling her learning difficulties:

> The approach is totally different ... I found it hard to learn certain things. I'm not great at reading or spelling. I've come on a lot though. When I was in school, I wasn't. In school, the teacher teaches the whole class. Here, they give you time for yourself and you can go at your own pace. (Rachel; Female; 19)

Relations with tutors and trainees

Of overriding importance to programme participants was the learning environment fostered in the approach and style of the teaching staff. Young people frequently described how they were treated with a level of respect they had never experienced at school. For many, participation on the programme was their first experience of having responsibility for their own education and development. According to them, this marked a significant departure from the authoritarian teaching approach they had encountered during their school years.

Members of Youthreach staff were praised by participants for the motivation and relaxed approach they brought to the learning process. In marked contrast to school, their communicative approach was viewed as enabling and helpful:

> They talk to you normal like. They're helping you. But over there
> [school] they look down on you. You're just a pupil. But it's very dif-
> ferent here [Youthreach], feel more relaxed and everything.
> (Youthreach Focus Group; Robert; Male; 19)

The responsibility young people experienced when participating on the pro-
gramme was viewed by some trainees as a significant move away from the
formal education system where students are compelled to obey rules. Some
felt that they were treated as responsible mature individuals with a degree
of choice as to how they participated in the learning process. Although par-
ticipants were encouraged at many levels throughout the programme they
were also expected to demonstrate their maturity by making an effort to
fully participate during the training period. This placed much of the
responsibility for learning on the attitude adopted by the trainees.

While the relations that became established with staff were viewed in posi-
tive terms by participants there was also a favourable view taken with
regard to the relations that developed between trainees. According to one
young female participant, positive social relations were seen as adding
enjoyment to the programme:

> I mean there are a few people now, I know them to see them from
> this place but I kind of didn't really know them properly. Ever since
> I started here now I go to know them better and have the 'craic'
> with them or whatever. (Anne; Female; 17)

One former participant felt that a positive aspect to emerge from the pro-
gramme was the initiation of lasting friendships with fellow trainees. He
identified the social outlets provided through his participation in the pro-
gramme and the contact that is still maintained with friends he had met
while undertaking the course.

Allowance

The provision of a weekly allowance[12] was viewed favourably by most train-
ees since it provided young people a greater level of independence than they
had previously experienced. Some young people expressed dissatisfaction
with their reliance on parents' income for support and felt that the allow-
ance freed them from this dependence.

During the Youthreach focus group discussion it was suggested by one par-
ticipant that the allowance provided an incentive for many to attend classes.
She suggested that the trainees were encouraged to be punctual and attend
every day since they would otherwise have a reduced payment each week.

Work experience

Trainees continue to receive their weekly allowance while undertaking the
work placement component of the programme.[13] However, while there is
no obligation on the part of employers to pay the trainees a wage during the
placement period some received payments in addition to the allowance. For
some young people, the work experience they gained was viewed as particu-
larly valuable in developing their skills and making contacts for employ-
ment. The placement was viewed by a participant as follows:

> It was the experience I wanted. There were others in the class
> saying "oh I got this and I got that", but it never bothered me. It
> was the experience I wanted ... it was important to me at the time
> because I wanted to do Childcare. (Breda; Female; 21)

However, one young male felt aggrieved that his work placement employer
took advantage of him and two other trainees by not paying them a wage for
the work they had undertaken as part of their experience. He expressed
strong dissatisfaction especially when making comparisons with other
trainees who were earning wages on their work placements.

---

12. Participants of the programme are paid a weekly allowance, which varies
    according to age and distance from the Youthreach centre. Trainees between
    the age of 15 and 16 years are paid a basic rate of £30 while those aged 17 and
    18 years are paid £37.50 and £73.50 respectively. In addition to this, trainees
    are paid a weekly meal allowance of £3 and a travel allowance, which, depen-
    ding on distance, varies from £3.60 to £25.60. Lone parents who participate in
    the course are also paid these rates in addition to the payments they receive
    from the One Parent Family Allowance.
13. This lasts four weeks in February and eight weeks during the summer months.

Guidance towards future options

According to several young people, a significant feature of the Youthreach programme was the link it provided in accessing other opportunities and possibilities. In this regard, it was seen as an important channel for encouraging and advising young people to pursue their interests and to avail of opportunities that might further enhance their job prospects. Matching the interests and skills of the trainees with courses or programmes that would improve their labour market integration was a critical feature identified. A number of young people mentioned the active interest the coordinator took in encouraging and assisting them to pursue programmes that would further develop their skills and credentials. This was expressed by a female participant:

> [Youthreach] got me into Dublin to do another course and I spent a year up there ... If you join Youthreach and you want to do anything she [the coordinator] can really pull strings and get you into it ... [The coordinator] has been putting me on to different courses. (Sarah; Female; 22)

Finally, the Youthreach programme was viewed by some young people as having a number of limitations, namely in terms of what could be realistically achieved and the age group it catered for. A female who had previously participated in the programme felt that it did not serve those over 18 years of age who were in need of further qualification, while a male trainee suggested that only a certain level of attainment and skills development could be achieved through participation on the programme.

Discussion and Conclusions

What is the significance of these findings for our understanding of young people excluded from educational opportunities in rural locations? and what does the case study tell us about the responses provided and needed at the level of public and social policy?

It is clearly evident that many of those interviewed as part of the research can be classified as educationally disadvantaged. Given the strong correlations between educational disadvantage and labour market participation, the findings here regarding low levels of educational attainment are of particular concern. Previous evidence suggests that those with no or poor educational qualifications are most likely to end up in unemployment (McCoy and Whelan, 1996[14]; NESF, 1997). In the current Irish economic context

where employment has reached unprecedented high levels, there is particular need to understand the importance of the findings in bolstering a dual labour market system, i.e. divided between a local labour market characterised by low incomes and poor prospects and a better paying, more distant national labour market attracting qualified and more highly educated workforce (Shucksmith, 2000). Although more work may be available in locations such as North West Connemara, the evidence suggests that the lower the educational qualification levels attained by young people, the lower the earnings received and the less likely they are for getting a 'better' job. In this situation, young people who are educationally disadvantaged continue to be trapped within low paying local labour markets where the quality of jobs and prospects for better employment are poor.

The capacity to influence educational participation operates at many levels. Of critical importance, first of all, is recognition and identification of educational disadvantage as a community concern; second, establishing a partnership approach to educational provision and development, incorporating schools, pupils, communities, parents, community development agencies, youth work organisations and statutory bodies. This approach provides considerable potential for resource provision as well as commitment to success through shared project ownership; and thirdly, having access to sufficient resources and finances which enable schools and communities to tackle educational difficulties. However, 'adding on' resources can not be separated from the need to engage in multidimensional action planning which places particular emphasis on such issues as how resources are utilised and how educational objectives can be implemented effectively.

As a response to early school leaving, the Youthreach programme constitutes a positive policy intervention in the area, creating an environment where significant results can be advanced. As a progression route for early school leavers, it has demonstrated considerable success on two fronts: (i) developing marketable job skills and (ii) promoting features of personal development that enable young people to participate more fully in society and thereby providing a stepping stone for enhanced social inclusion. With its emphasis on skills acquisition, work experience and a curriculum that serves a wide range of interest and ability, the programme adopts a person-centred, flexible and non-formal approach to the learning process. Such interventions are far more suited to many young people than the rigid and academic environment of school. In this regard, the enhanced range of programme provision at the Youthreach centre in recent years, such as the operation of the Leaving Certificate Applied, is to be welcomed. The learn-

---

14.   Cited in Combat Poverty Agency, 1998, p.21.

ing environment associated with the centre suggests that it is an appropriate means for delivering less mainstream educational courses, which are normally viewed as the responsibility of schools. In the future, where schools may take on board the provision of these programmes, much evidence of good practice can be adopted from the Youthreach approach, such as small class size, individual attention and positive teacher-pupil relations. However, it must also be recognised that the Youthreach allowance offers a significant incentive for young people 'at risk' of leaving the formal school system to do so for financial gain. With this in mind, the capacity of the formal education system to retain pupils in school through financial reward will prove a critical challenge for future policy-making.

However, such ameliorative policy measures cannot be viewed in isolation from the deeply embedded characteristics of uneven development found in the region. If educational policy measures were a success and generated greater levels of participation and attainment, what options are then available to those who seek to build on their life chances through meaningful employment? Making a real impact on the lives of young people not only means targeting educational disadvantage but supporting a local economy that can sustain a skilled, educated and confident workforce. As it currently exists, regions such as North West Connemara continue to suffer the worst aspects of rural economic restructuring. As a result, many rural areas are emptied of young people, who are attracted by the prospects of employment and opportunities elsewhere. As the findings suggest, for those who remain in the local labour market, much of the employment can be characterised as low-paid, seasonal and providing few prospects for the future. Since much of the employment takes place in the tourism sector where these features predominate and that traditional sectors, such as agricultural and fishing, are increasingly on the downturn, the opportunity for many young people to earn an attractive livelihood in these activities is hardly realistic.

Apart from improved educational policy, what else is needed? While many of the problems created by rural economic restructuring are far more transnational in origin, the role of the Irish state in exacerbating the negative consequences of structural change cannot be downplayed. It has been argued that state policy-makers in Ireland have traditionally adopted development policies that favour exogenous type operations, in which support for large economies of scale producers and businesses are dominant (Curtin et al., 1996).[15] In the context of areas such as North West Connemara, where tourism and aquaculture are important natural resources, the owner-

---

15. This position was argued by the Director of FORUM, the local development organisation in the area, during the policy actors' focus group.

ship and control of resources by large capital-intensive operations creates few employment opportunities for young people in sustainable terms. In this approach to development, invariably the needs of capital for profit take precedence over the quality of jobs provided to young people. In contrast, efforts to redress this form of development trajectory by supporting petty commodity production systems, whether individual, familial or co-operative activity, have been undertaken by development agencies such as FORUM. It is our argument that while these forms of production may not provide the local labour force with instantaneous economic rewards as 'conventional' employment outlets (e.g. manufacturing), they can offer better possibilities for rural youth to earn livelihoods in less exploitative and more enabling terms.

In North West Connemara, the capacity of young people to earn a reasonable living standard will, in the short to medium term, be dependent upon their ability to access a variety of income sources. While the overall economic base is significantly weak, young people can be encouraged, through institutional support, to develop a range of skills that meet local economic requirements. Support for initiatives that encourage multiple-income earning strategies, for instance through the combination of farming and aquaculture activity, should be widened and strengthened. For these types of resource developments to take place effectively, explicit state support on a long-term basis is clearly warranted. However, as Tovey (1996) reminds us, careful monitoring of policy supports needs to be undertaken to ensure that class and gender equality are adequately addressed. In addition, given the unique spatial and social processes of exclusion in the area, policy-makers must also ensure the availability of more flexible arrangements to young people in terms of combining state welfare payments with multiple-income earnings. While this is a complex issue, it is necessary to recognise how local specificity is not always explicitly catered for in nationally formulated policy.[16]

In meeting the challenges of uneven development, the capacity of young people to initiate micro-enterprise formations should be encouraged and supported from an early age. This mobilising of natural and human resources, in sustainable terms, is not only an economic issue but a cultural and educational one. In some parts of Ireland, school programmes in entrepreneurship have been initiated to allow young people explore how local resources may be harnessed in economic ways. In North West Connemara, there exists strong potential for young people to develop micro-enter-

---

16. However, we recognise that, in some instances, national policies can reflect local conditions, such as the exemption of island dwellers from the recent changes to the Community Employment Scheme.

prise initiatives given the strength and quality of local natural resource endowment. In addition, in remote rural areas where the state and market economy have demonstrably failed to deliver a sufficient level of services, identifying and initiating social economy developments which involve young people warrants serious consideration in local policy formulation. This form of economic activity is becoming increasingly recognised for its income-generating capacity, in addition to providing much needed services, in disadvantaged communities.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided an empirical account of one form of social exclusion in rural areas: educational disadvantage among young people. The case study also highlighted a positive policy response to a clearly visible feature of education disadvantage – early school leaving – through the Youthreach programme. That educational exclusion is far more entrenched in the social, economic and political configuration of the region's overall development has also occupied a core feature of the analysis. Without clear connections being made for young people's pathways, namely from positive educational attainment to a local labour market system that offers sustainable living conditions and livelihoods, then the long-term effect of improved educational standards may only serve to exacerbate the flow of young people away from their localities. As this case study has demonstrated, the need to adopt a long-term multidimensional vision for the region and the needs of its population should remain firmly fixed on the development agenda.

References

Archer, P. (2001), "Public Spending on Education, Inequality and Poverty", in S. Cantillon, C. Corrigan, P. Kirby, J. O'Flynn (eds.) *Rich and Poor, Perspectives on tackling inequality in Ireland*, Dublin: Oak Tree Press.

Byrne, A. et al. (1991), *North-West Connemara: A Baseline Study of Poverty*, Galway: FORUM.

Combat Poverty Agency (1998), *Educational Disadvantage and Early School-Leaving*, Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency

Curtin, C., Haase, T. and Tovey, H. (eds.), *Poverty in Rural Ireland: A Political Economy Perspective*, Dublin: Oak Tree Press.

Mernagh, M. and Commins P. (1997), *In From the Margins*. Dublin: Research and Development Unit, SICCDA.

Morgan, M., Hickey, B., and Kelleghan, T. (OECD) (1997), *International Adult Literacy Study: Results for Ireland*, Dublin: Government Publications Office.

National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) (1997), *Early School Leavers and Youth Unemployment*, Dublin: Stationery Office.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2000), *Literacy in the Information Age: Final Report of the International Adult Literacy Survey, 2000,* Paris: OECD

Shucksmith, M. (2000), Exclusive countryside? Social inclusion and regeneration in rural areas, York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Tovey, H. (1996), "Natural Resource Development and Rural Poverty" in Curtin, C., Haase, T. and Tovey, H. (eds.), *Poverty in Rural Ireland: A Political Economy Perspective*, Dublin: Oak Tree Press.

3.   Education and individualisation among young people in Angus, Scotland[17]

Birgit Jentsch and Mark Shucksmith

Introduction

The world into which children and young people grow is changing in many ways, as a result of globalisation and other processes of restructuring. In rural areas of Scotland there is a structural decline in employment in agriculture and other traditional land-based industries, while new jobs are arising in the service sector. Many of the old certainties are ebbing away and some writers (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991) have argued that we are now entering into a much more uncertain phase of 'late modernity', during which we live increasingly in a 'risk society', dependent less on traditional institutions such as the family and church but instead on labour markets and the welfare state, which "compel the self-organisation" of individual biographies (Beck 2000,166). Our ability to survive and prosper in this world will be more precarious because of the pace of change and the dependency on such impersonal systems and institutions, and these risks will not be evenly distributed through society but will be inversely associated with social class (Beck 1992,35). However, Furlong and Cartmel (1997) have alerted us to the apparent paradox that while social structures such as class continue to shape young people's life-chances, these structures tend to become increasingly obscure as collectivist traditions weaken and individualist values intensify. "Blind to the existence of powerful chains of interdependency,

young people frequently attempt to resolve collective problems through individual action and hold themselves responsible for their inevitable failure" (Furlong and Cartmel 1997,114). Thus, social exclusion is "collectively individualised" (Beck 2000,167). This is an important part of the context for our study of young people in rural Angus.

Most obviously, young people have to take decisions about their education, including subject choice and at what stage to leave formal education, in the context of an increasing demand for credentials when traditional ties and support are lacking. "The traditional links between the family, school and work seem to have weakened as young people embark on journeys into adulthood which involve a wide variety of routes, many of which appear to have uncertain outcomes. ... Because there are a much greater range of pathways to choose from, young people may develop the impression that their own route is unique and that the risks they face are to be overcome as individuals rather than as members of collectivity." (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997, 7) Despite this impression, their experiences are still shaped to a significant extent by class, gender (as explained by Beck), and 'race'.

One manifestation of this is the emergence of non-linear transitions from school to work. Chisholm et al (1990,7) reviewed evidence that "the youth phase no longer consists of a standard sequencing of life events which mark transition stages to adulthood. Young people can no longer count on a secure labour market slot, they do not necessarily want to establish a 'conventional' family, and the ages at which the various transitions are accomplished vary widely." Coles (1995) notes the emergence of *extended transitions* from school to work for some young people, and of *fractured transitions*, which may lead to unemployment, dislocation and homelessness, for others. Moreover, "change in the economic order, the dismantling of Fordist social structures, the extension of education and the associated demands for credentials mean that in late modernity individuals are increasingly held accountable for their own fates" (Furlong and Cartmel 1997,8), however much these continue to be structured according to social class, race and gender. A concomitant of this is that "as the time taken to reach adult status extends in all European countries, the provision of resources and support to assist young people in making the transition become increasingly important. [...] As economic achievement has become the main determinant of integration into adult society, educational and occupational institutions have gained a dominant position among the social organisations which shape the process of transition." (Evans & Heinz, 1993, 145)

This chapter examines educational experiences, and resulting career choices and decision making processes of rural youth in Angus, Scotland. The chapter begins by providing the context in which the study took place,

Angus County, outlining the geographical location and key characteristics of this study area. Following this, the findings of our empirical research are summarised. The study was based on in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 30 young people from Angus, and also included one focus group with professionals working with or for young people in Angus. The presentation of findings begins with an account of young people's school experiences and of the role of family and social class. What factors most influenced their decisions on whether to continue education or enter the labour market? The chapter also explores the role of careers advice in helping young people to identify suitable options. This is followed by an examination of those interviewees who opted for further and higher education, and of young people's reflections on their own and other people's employment history and prospects. The chapter closes with some concluding comments.

Setting the scene: Angus

Angus lies on the east coast of Scotland, between the Highlands and Lowlands, with the the city of Dundee adjoining to the south. Despite the decline of agriculture and fishing, Angus is still regarded very much as a 'rural' county of Scotland. (Williams *et al*, 1995) The population of Angus is less dispersed than some other parts of rural Scotland, such as the Highlands. Indeed, the vast majority of the population of Angus can access a major centre within one hour's drive, if they have access to a car. Even for scattered communities in Angus, Dundee is less than two hours drive away. This compares favourably with much of rural Scotland, where around a third of the population are beyond 1 hour's drive of a major centre.

Traditionally, the main forms of empoyment in Angus centred on the primary industries of fishing and agriculture. Both of these have been subject to a long process of decline, especially over the last ten to fifteen years. In 1991 the percentage of the working population employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing was under 6%, a smaller figure than the average for rural Scotland as a whole (Census of Population, 1991). Other industries in Angus, are manufacturing, textiles and engineering. One recent development in Angus has been the growth of the tourist sector. Unemployment is slightly below the Scottish average, although seasonal unemployment rates are higher during the summer. Young people are more likely to be unemployed: in the year 2000, 24.5% of all males under 24 years old were unemployed, which compared with 31.5% of all females in the same age group.

Secondary schools are mainly in the principal towns, with pupils provided with free transport to school if their journey is over 2 miles. The local Further Education College is in one of the coastal towns, Arbroath, and the nearest universities are in Dundee and Aberdeen. More people in Angus commute to work compared with the average figure for rural Scotland reflecting the proximity of Dundee and the greater availability of work in the region, though not necessarily in Angus district. Bearing those characteristics of Angus in mind, let us now turn to the experiences of young people in this County, who are trying to identify, review and define employment and career options for themselves.

Young people in Angus: experiences of school education

Shucksmith (2000), in summarising the results of a number of studies of young people in rural areas, notes that young people from rural areas tend to become integrated into one of two quite separate labour markets – the national (distant, well-paid, with career opportunities) and the local (poorly paid, insecure, unrewarding and with fewer prospects). Education, and of course social class, are the elements which allow some young people to access national job opportunities, in the same way as those from urban areas. But for those whose educational credentials trap them within local labour markets, further education and training are much less available than for their counterparts in towns, and their life-chances are reduced.

The importance of education, and especially of school qualifications, for accessing employment is apparent. An OECD report shows that "the level of education is a factor influencing participation rates in the labour force and the quality of economic activity… The higher the level of education, the higher labour force participation is." (OECD, 1995, 32). It is clear that 'good' educational qualifications can confer advantages in training, apprenticeship and the labour market, and that premature school leaving can be associated with disadvantages in all these areas.

The large majority of the pupils interviewed in Angus gave a positive, and sometimes enthusiastic account of their educational experiences at the local secondary school, created by teachers who awarded pupils respect and a significant measure of responsibility. However, opinions about the role of the school were far less consensual when it came to the consideration of those crucial steps in the educational system, which would determine the occupational future of the pupils. It is, of course, the transitional nature of

such steps, which tends to imply significant levels of uncertainty and 'risks'. Interestingly, issues which arose here were especially linked with continuing education, whether this meant staying on at school, or proceeding to higher education, such as at University level.

Several times, interviewees emphasised that there seemed to be a perhaps unacknowledged assumption by school staff that the 'best way' to proceed in life was to continue along the education path, and, ideally, to gain access to University courses. The problem, which especially one interviewee identified with this approach, was that it discounted other possibilities, such as apprenticeships. He himself had dropped out of University after not having enjoyed his course, was unemployed at the time of the interview, and believed that he had been encouraged to follow the wrong track. Although on the whole, he had described his school experience in positive ways, he still gave a critical assessment of the teachers when asked whether it was assumed by anybody that he would go to University.

> "Aye, I think so. Especially, it was assumed by quite a lot of people at the school, the staff there, they kind of instilled the fact that a lot of pupils, well students, that *in order to succeed*, you have to go to University, they really wanted you to go to University. I am not sure it's a good idea with a lot of them [i.e. the pupils]. … I think some of them just haven't got the right abilities to go and do it. … I think they would rather just go out there and work for a living and try and work their way up the ladder rather than spend four years at University doing something they don't really like." (male, 21 years, unemployed)

Another interviewee, who had left school after fourth year, perceived teachers' attitudes in similar ways. However, he voiced criticism on the basis of his view that teachers had been selective in the pupils they had encouraged to do well. The young person made particular reference to one teacher who was giving more help to those who had planned to stay on, because the teacher knew they had to get better marks to realise their ambitions. This described state of affairs was recognised and evaluated similarly by a College student and a school pupil in his final school year. The latter was trying hard to achieve the qualifications to get to University, although his results in the previous year did not seem to be very promising. His teachers had advised him to lower his expectations and to aim for College admission. He commented as follows.

> "It's like they [i.e. the teachers] spot which pupil is going to do well and instead of like helping the pupils that need the attention most and the encouragement the most they concentrate all their attention on pupils who they think are going to do well." (male, 17 years, school pupil)

He added that he thought part of the reason for that behaviour might be published 'league tables' of school performance which he perceived as pressuring teachers into getting the best pupils to stay on, an observation also expressed by another school pupil interviewee. Other interviewees commented on similar observations. According to them, at some stage in their secondary education, the guidance teachers split up pupils into those who were (or perhaps should be?) going to University, and those who were not (or perhaps should not?). Yet, such streaming was not always regarded as a problem. One person, who went on to University thought that there had been a divide, but judged the situation quite favourably.

> "It wasn't too bad a problem. I mean that wouldn't deter people from progressing, you know. I think that, you know, they didn't have low expectations of anybody, you know, they took you as you were, you know, build upon that, the strengths that you had and sort of lessened the weaknesses that you had so probably the mark of, you know, good quality teaching staff." (female, 23 years, PhD student)

In fact, the same person attributed her confidence in accessing University to one teacher's encouragement. Furthermore, another interviewee found that teachers' 'advice' to pupils whether to go on or leave school was 'realistic'.

Independent of what the evaluation of teachers' role was, in general, it appears that teachers had been perceived as advocating 'higher education' as a worthwhile goal, perhaps regarding a University degree as extending employment choices. In fact, the equation between educational qualifications and power/control was made several times by the interviewees.

The role of parents and social class

Parents' influence on young people's decision whether or not to pursue a University course often seemed to take a subtle form, either through gradual socialisation (see Bourdieu 1973) or through the provision of potent role-models, as in the following two cases.

> "I always knew I would go on and do my highers, go on to University, that was always just in my head. It wasn't really a decision I had to make, it was always going to happen. I suppose that was my mum or my dad or whatever, and they were maybe behind the scenes pushing me in that way, and I didn't realise that at the time." (male, 24 years, University degree, father in professional employment)

> "But I always kind of thought, my dad went to University, and I've always kind of assumed that as a goal." (male, 17 years, school pupil, parents in professional employment)

It is clear, from these and other interviews, that parents' educational and occupational background defined interviewees' choices to a significant degree. Of the five interviewees who mentioned the influence of their parents on their decision to go to university, all of them had at least one parent working in a professional job and/or at least one parent with a University degree. In fact, two of the interviewees whose parents had University degrees commented that the parents assumed their children would go to University as well. Interestingly, one parent with a University degree did point to other possibilities for his son, thinking that he would prefer more practical work. Still, the advantage of a middle-class background for further education and 'good jobs' has been well documented (Scottish Young People's Survey; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997: 20-21; 34-35, Jamieson 2000). Families' differential class-specific economic, social and cultural capitals ensure unequal access to resources and social networks by their children (Bourdieu 1973). Moreover, depending on their backgrounds, parents will be more or less able to inform their offspring of educational and occupational opportunities, and explain the relative advantages of each option that presents itself (Jamieson, 2000: 207-208). In their research on young people's migration and social class in the Scottish Borders, Jamieson (2000) found that middle-class children tended to leave in order to pursue 'good jobs' outwith their local rural area. In our study in Angus, unusually, only a small minority of those interviewed (4) made leaving their home community a priority.

There were also cases reported where middle-class parents' ambitions for their children led to conflict. For example, one interviewee mentioned the situation of a friend whose father is a physical education teacher.

> "He was always quite sort of pushing her down an academic career rather than well, she's in London now, and an unemployed actress, but you know, [he is] sort of always saying to her well, this is what you should be doing instead of going on the stage." (female, 23 years, University student)

Furthermore, in relation to middle-class children, it has been observed in the Scottish Borders that a minority stayed on in their communities in cases where their "middle-class family histories may have offered alternative means of gaining occupational advantage to migration for higher education and subsequent entry into a national or international labour market." (Jamieson, 2000: 208) In our research, this kind of issue tended to be raised in the context of farming. One young man with a farming background had completed his University degree in Animal Science, and his plan was to follow the footsteps of his father and to work in agriculture. He commented how his parents had supported him ("I'm very lucky that way. Mum and dad

said your choices are your choices, and we'll be behind you all the way.") However, the interviewee seemed to realise that this 'support' had not been put to the test in any serious way. "It just so happened that my choice happens to be agriculture, and my dad knows about that sort of thing, so I can sound off. If it was something like the history of art, you know, but I do know that both my parents would stand behind me all the way." (male, 21 years) The young man also gave an account of a school friend whose father and grandfather had owned a farm. He described that the parents in this case had strong expectations that their son would take over the business.

> "And the son took one look at the economics of it, took one look at the fact that his father's got hands like shovels that are always dirty and crusted with dirt and that, you know. I've got a brain in my head, I want to go and do classics, and that's what he's gone and done. But it's caused upset in the family. … A lot of farmers really slog their guts out so that's there's something there for when they go. Their kids have something." (male, 21 years, University student)

The phenomenon of farmers assuming that their children will take over the family farm was similarly observed by the daughter of a farmer. In other words, in addition to parents' 'social class' making a difference to young people's aspirations and choices, the young people also recognised the factor of 'family farms' and the question of 'take-over' as a contributing factor to youth's education and employment choices, which sometimes could have led to conflicts.

Conflicts may also arise in families where parents are without a background in higher education. In the Scottish Borders research, children who had done exceptionally well at school were shown to invest much effort in order to persuade their families that higher education was the right choice for them (Jamieson, 2000: 208-209). In our sample, there were cases where the decision to go to University had been delayed, and certainly not been planned from early on. For instance, a 23 year-old interviewee whose father worked in a manual job and whose mother was a part-time shop assistant did not refer to any ambitions her parents had for her. She had started a University degree only recently after having been employed in a number of causal jobs. Children whose parents have no connections with University life may be discouraged from pursuing higher education altogether, as one interviewee had commented. The financial position of parents, which is often related with social class, can make the promise of a delayed reward from education an unappealing option:

"You can see a lot of parents, you know, [who are saying] what are
you doing, why are you doing this, you're just wasting your time and
they are needing a wage coming into the house as well." (male, 23
years, employed in bank).

On the other hand, many young people felt strongly that their parents had
been very supportive during different phases of their transition. Many had
gratefully received financial help, the loan of a car, and general moral sup-
port, and most felt that they could return to their parents' home if their
plans did not work out. These aspects were generally seen as outweighing
any negative pressures.

Young people's perception of further and higher education

An interviewee who planned to go into agriculture after his University
degree expressed his concern about the future of agriculture, referring to
threats posed by "the rules from foreign lands and urbanites" and the fact
that "agriculture just now is in crisis." However, he saw solutions to the
problem: "There have to be people coming into the industry with fresh ideas
and fresh initiatives, with new enthusiasm. And with those people, the
industry can go on, there will always be an agriculture industry of sorts
where there is green pasture. And I want to be there when it happens."
(male, 21 years, father manager of farm) His strategy seemed to be educa-
tion, and he had chosen his University on the basis that it "is fairly well
known for [having] good, solid courses leading to good, solid jobs. … Agri-
culture is a world-wide market, and what they're teaching me here at the
University will stand me in good stead, no matter what." (male, 21 years,
University student, father manager of farm)

A University graduate described the relationship between school education
and 'bargaining power'. She mentioned that according to her experience,
"teachers were positively encouraging [pupils] to stay on to fifth year and at
least get one higher and get the grades. And at least it was something, *it was
bargaining power for later on in life.*" (female, 23 years) Similarly, three
University students and one school pupil assessed the virtues of University
education:

"You are furthering yourself, you're trying to better yourself, you're
trying to get up that ladder because if you've got a trade or a
degree, *the world is your oyster.*" (male, 21 years, University stu-
dent)

"You are choosing your own path and you are moulding your own kind
of future, I suppose, in a way." (female, 23 years, PhD student)

> "It's [i.e. University is] all about sort of making you into a self-starter". (male, 24 years, employed as a professional, University degree)

> "I just thought if I want to get a good career, I've got to go to University, and that's what I always thought." (male, 17 years, school pupil)

In addition, there were more cautious speculations, which also made the link between education and employment opportunities:

> "I wanted to get myself some sort of education, and maybe I won't get a job at the end of it, but I've got something which will help." (female, 20 years, College student)

> "I do want to go [to University] because I think that's the only way you are going to get a job." (female, 17 years, school pupil)

Hardly any interviewee disputed the essence of these comments, but to some significant extent, the importance of education for the labour market was recognised by all of them.

Careers and Guidance

A striking feature regarding pupils' or students' decisions over what to do after school or a course in further/higher education was their uncertainty. This could be experienced especially by those who were doing well at school, had relatively ambitious aspirations, and perceived opportunities to be available, although they had found little information as to what precise form those may take. The confusion, which resulted for the youngsters, seems inevitable. The combination of perceived available opportunities (in nearby cities) and relatively high educational levels applied especially to the Scottish interviewees. In some cases, when faced with the question of 'what to do next', the dilemma was solved with the decision to stay on at school for longer, thereby being able to follow "just the same routine". (male, 21 years, unemployed) A similar rationale could also have applied to two young people who went on University courses, trying "to buy time", one of whom commented as follows.

> "Whatever I was going to do [after school], you know, was kind of vague. What do you want to do? Do you want to be a teacher or do you want to be a fireman or a firewoman? You know, all this kind of stuff and you go 'I don't know, oh, well, go to University then, and you can think about it for a few years.'" (female, 22, University student)

Two University graduates described their lack of a clearly defined career plan even after graduation. While this situation may be similar in urban contexts, there seems to be a rural dimension. By definition, young people in rural areas are less exposed to the wide range of opportunities which are available to them, which contrasts with the situation which many of their urban counterparts experience. In a focus group, it was mentioned how rural youth do not have many 'role models' to follow. The issue of 'information' thus seemed to be particularly pertinent to them. Hence, on the one hand, the new possibilities, which have arisen may give the appearance of a new freedom of choice and unprecedented numerous options of creating one's pathway. At the same time, these options can appear obscure, difficult to fully understand, and confusing, so that help at this juncture in life is urgently required. This situation contrasts with the traditional cultural practice with low or medium degrees of mobility on the part of the child (Büchner et al., 1995, 54). In the past, children would have tended to follow in the footsteps of their parents as a matter of course. In the modern world, however, the range of choices necessitates sound careers advice.

In their assessment of the formal career advice they had received, most interviewees believed that it could have been more useful, the greatest condemnation being that the career advisor "didn't care". Seven young people observed that the emphasis was on presenting one's career choice and being supported on that basis. One interviewee formulated it more broadly, arguing that "they [the teachers] have helped [those] who wanted to be helped really, and like people that didn't want this sort of [help], they didn't know what to do with them really." (female, 20, College student) Nonetheless, two interviewees expressed the view that advice from Careers Officers and Guidance Teachers had proved helpful for the few young people who had some reasonably well defined plan of where to go, even if they then pursued a different route. A school pupil who already knew the broad subject area (computer science) she wanted to take at University found the career interview useful. "They take an interest in you and they are like, well, if you want to do that then you'll have to take these subjects, if you want to do that, you'll have to take these subjects." (female, 17, school pupil) Other interviewees who had required specific knowledge on a particular educational or career route from careers advice generally shared this experience.

By contrast, those young people who were uncertain about their future felt pressurised into proposing some kind of career for themselves. As one interviewee recalled, the only reason for naming a career was sometimes just to please the career advisers themselves.

> "Well, I think you were to tell the teacher when you were at school.
> With 'I don't know what I want to do' they would not be happy.
> You've got to have a reason why you're there and you can't be there

just because you want to get fundamental qualifications. It's got to be really something so that's why most people just say something." (male, 21 years, unemployed)

In the focus group interview, staff working in the area of career advice emphasised their belief that many youths lack a sense of direction. This, they said, made it very difficult for them to offer career advice. However, especially in a rural context where young people can only observe a limited range of careers possibilities, it appears that a merely reactive approach, which involves waiting for the young people to make up their minds and advising them on that basis, is insufficient. Even where young people had clear ideas what path to pursue, they could find the advice they received insufficient. "I said I want to do law. Oh super! And that was it. Any advice? Oh no, that's super!" (female, 23, law graduate)

It was also suggested that the individual personalities of career advisors can make a difference.

"...but we had this career advisor, oh, he's some boy! I can't remember, like, I'd just go in and say, oh I quite fancy doing this. So he'd give me things to read even though I had no, like, thoughts about doing that." (female, 23 years, University student)

"I only remember having like on career's interview and the woman that we had, I mean, I couldn't take my eyes off her because she seemed so kind of timid and mouse like, you know. And I kind of was trying to urge her on to be a bit more self-confident, you know, so I was really kind of, I didn't really want to ask her many questions." (female, 22 years, University student)

The only positive account of the Careers Office may also have been related to the personal characteristics of the staff member. This respondent mentioned a Careers Officer who had helped him to locate a job when -just before the age of 16- he had been rejected by colleges and schools after his mother had moved with him to the city. The Careers Officer proved helpful again when, during phases of unemployment, she directed him towards a training course, and assisted in his search for local employment later.

The criticisms by the young people of careers advice comes at a time when the government has followed employers' demands for a radical overhaul of university careers department (Kelly, 2000:3). It appears that the findings of a survey looking at employers' views of the careers services operating at several Universities also applies to careers services elsewhere. "The survey found many careers services were seen as bureaucratic, ill-informed and old-fashioned, and some advisers did not prepare students for the world of work." (Kelly, 2000:3).

As to the quality of vocational and employment guidance outwith the school, the verdict was no more positive. Several interviewees felt they were failed when career advice had comprised little else but the provision of information on the basis of career proposals which the young people had to make themselves. In other words, the re-active nature of the career advice received was deplored. Interviewees also commented on a lack of information on *local* training and job opportunities. As in the other study areas, young people in Angus sought more individual guidance which would take account of their personal circumstances and interests and provide them with detailed information on relevant training courses.

Experiences at College and University

The role of education and higher education in structuring young people's trajectories is evident from previous studies in the UK (Shucksmith 2000). This is not independent of social class, of course, with middle class children most likely to do well at school, and the children of middle-class incomers most likely to attend higher education. Pavis et al. (2000) found that variation in educational attainment and professional qualification emerged from their study as "the single most consequential factor in understanding the childhood to adulthood transitional processes" and in determining life chances. Educational experiences were found to influence the types of employment that young people sought, whether they looked for work in the national or local labour market, the timing of first leaving the parental home, and their feelings about their local community and rural life. At the same time, young people who wished to pursue higher education had had to leave home in order to do so, unlike in Angus.

Of those study participants who had attended or were studying at College at the time of the interview, most seemed to have had positive experiences. Almost all had gone to local colleges, either Further Education in Arbroath or Higher Education in Dundee or Aberdeen. This choice seemed to have been mainly defined by the wish to stay close to family and friends. Three interviewees who had dropped out of their courses had done so primarily because they had not enjoyed the course, or found it too demanding, or both. The seven young people from our study who had gone to College at a relatively young age felt that they had benefited from the more 'adult' atmosphere which seemed to pervade the college. Despite the recognised maturer atmosphere, one interviewee who worked as a part-time lecturer felt that many of the students were lacking in confidence, and a culture of 'laddism' was said to inhibit male students from openly demonstrating a willingness to learn. This situation was confirmed by three other male interviewees, who argued that certain peer pressures inhibited a more diligent

approach to studying. Despite the general satisfaction with their college experiences, the point was also made that there had been a lack of information with regard to future job possibilities or possible careers following from their courses. Help from somebody pointing students into the 'right direction' was requested.

Past, present and prospective University students chose their particular university and course based on a number of criteria. Six interviewees placed great importance on the University being within commutable distance – thus making Dundee their choice. The reasoning was rooted in the familiarity and the security associated with remaining at home, and the financial savings that could be made. One interviewee regretted not pursuing his interests in the university in Edinburgh, which he felt, with hindsight, might have been a better choice for academic as well as social reasons.

Others had studied or were proposing to study away from the area. For two interviewees, the negative associations with a particular city were sufficient to make them look further afield. The other eight youths made their decision on the basis of the merits of the course and the standing of the University. This choice on the basis of academic criteria could have been reinforced by other factors, such as the perceived attractiveness of a city. Moreover, an interviewee when asked why he chose Edinburgh first of all mentioned the course and then said: "Erm, my father went there and it's always a city I had liked. And I needed to get away. If I'd gone to Dundee, I would have been home here at week-ends and never had any life at all there." It was clear that many of the interviewees felt a degree of trepidation about their choices, not least because of a lack of information about the practicalities of studying away from home, the choice of courses, and the new environment.

Two interviewees described the experience of University education as quite intimidating. It brought with it the change from "being a big fish in a wee pond in Kirriemuir" to becoming one of many others with similar achievements. Both of these study participants endured difficult times adjusting, one of them completing their chosen course despite some poor results in the process, while the other person changed courses. Three other interviewees dropped out of their University course without completing it, apparently having experienced difficulties in adjusting to the new environment as well as to the demands of the courses. Perhaps paradoxically, given the easier transition often associated with commuting to University from the family home, two of those who dropped out had opted to study at a nearby University. Whilst both were assured that they would find work and succeed without the need of a University degree, at the time of the interviews only one of them had actually secured employment, and this was primarily due to a connection established during a school placement.

In other words, while further and especially higher education were strongly associated with better employment opportunities, once the choice of College or University education was made, the decision making process became more heterogeneous. Those interviewees opting for the 'local' College or University tended to give little consideration to the particular institution or course which would have been most suitable for the interests and aspirations of the interviewee. By contrast, those young people who decided to study further away from home often prioritised factors they associated with future employment prospects, notably the reputation of courses and of the Universities.

Accessing the labour market

For many young people, a period of unemployment has become a normal part of the transition from school to work, with youth unemployment rates in most European countries about twice as high as for adults. Although many of the problems associated with unemployment faced by urban youth also apply to those living in rural areas, Cartmel and Furlong (2000) indicate that rural youth face an additional set of barriers which are linked to their spatial isolation and to the narrow range of opportunities which are available. "For rural youth, some of the most effective bridges into the labour market (such as education and training) may be limited or inaccessible and opportunities to fulfil aspirations may be restricted." Other issues highlighted in previous research are poor public transport, expensive housing, strong personal networks and poor quality jobs (Shucksmith 2000).

While many interviewees in rural Angus seem to have grown up with an ethos which promoted further and higher education, failure to access jobs without such qualifications still came as a surprise. For those who had succeeded in getting a University degree, unemployment was quite unexpected. Looking back to the point in his life when he was laid off after a six month training period, a young University drop-out stated:

> "I really wasn't too bothered to leave it at all. I thought I would get something better, but I didn't till six months later. … I just thought I could walk into something else" (male, 21 years, unemployed)

It may have been through his experience of unemployment that this interviewee had now become rather pessimistic (or perhaps realistic) about the jobs advertised in newspapers, and his chance to be able to access these.

> "I wouldn't be suitable because I don't have the experience. I don't have any real qualifications in reporting other than the fact that I am pretty sure I could do it and you can't say that to an employer.

> No one's going to employ you purely on the basis of that. So yeah, they are pretty unattainable."

However, he also added:

> "I think you've got to kind of aim towards something even if people say it's one of these goals that it's going to be hard to achieve, I think you've got to go for it."

Similarly, a person with a University degree expressed his surprise when he did not manage to go straight into a job after his degree.

> "I didn't think it ever crossed my mind that having got a degree, I wouldn't then go into employment. There was sort of a period of three or four months after the University before I got the job where you were getting sort of first interviews, and then not going further. Or just getting rejected and you were wondering why and trying to maybe change your CV round a bit to put different points forward for different industry things. … I can see how [some people] who do, I don't know, like history with archaeology, something or other, you know, I can see how they could maybe get into difficulties where it's not relevant to industry. But there was certainly a lot of job adverts…I didn't think I would be without a job for any length of time." (male, 24 years, in professional employment)

Fewer problems seemed to exist with accessing casual and seasonal jobs. Here informal networks, and less frequently specialised farming papers or local newspaper adverts could prove crucial. This is in tune with research findings from other studies on youth in Britain, which indicate that access to jobs in rural areas is often secured through informal networks (Rugg & Jones, 1999, 14-15; Pavis et al., 2000, 13; Cartmel and Furlong, 2000). For lower quality jobs, educational qualifications were of less relevance as individual's reputation and connections were of prime importance. This situation seemed to apply to a significant extent also to those who were looking for long-term employment in manual jobs in the local area. Cartmel and Furlong (2000) note a danger here, though. While education and training are often regarded as important routes out of unemployment (especially long-term unemployment), these routes tend not to be so important or available in rural areas, partly due to the easy alternative of seasonal and casual employment. Unfortunately, the lack of incentive to embark on education or training routes may leave rural youth in a permanent cycle of intermittent short-term jobs interspersed with spells of unemployment. In neither rural nor urban areas did training schemes tend to lead to full-time jobs.

Interestingly, no mention was made of education when young people in Angus were considering possible causes of unemployment. Rather, respondents questioned whether those who are unemployed are genuinely seeking work and really desire to be in employment. This view was presented in a context where the young people identified plenty of local job opportunities.

> "There are a lot of opportunities. There's a lot of joiners and manufacturers round here. A lot of my friends are plumbers, electricians, whatever. There's a lot of tradesmen around in this area." (male, 24 years, working on a family farm).

Moreover, the suspicion was raised several times that many unemployed people try to abuse the welfare system. Two unemployed young men themselves pointed to laziness and lack of effort as constituting obstacles for the unemployed to gaining employment. Only four interviewees also recognised structural problems related to the geographical area, referring to a lack of job opportunities, lack of encouragement and a mismatch between available jobs and skills. This is consistent with the individualisation thesis, but might also suggest that some young people had not appreciated the value of credentials.

The studies summarised by Shucksmith (2000) also highlighted the interplay between transport, employment and housing. Young people in rural areas, earning low wages, must have a car to get to work, but this together with the shortage of affordable housing leaves them unable to afford to live independently. There is also an initial problem of needing a job in order to afford a car, which they need to secure a job, and help might well be given at this crucial stage in the youth transition. These issues are crucial to young people's labour market integration and opportunities.

Concluding comments

This chapter has reviewed the experiences of young people in one area of rural Scotland in their attempts to make the leap from education to employment. What barriers, opportunities and means of support do they encounter, and how do they interpret and deal with them?

Unlike many of the other study areas in Europe, young people in Angus tended to have found their primary and secondary schooling enjoyable and worthwhile. Aspects which they appreciated in particular, and mentioned repeatedly, included the positive atmosphere at school, created by teachers who showed pupils respect and a significant measure of responsibility. Some teachers were remembered as inspirational and a broadening hori-

zons. For example, one postgraduate student described how she had encountered "a teacher who believed in me and gave me so many opportunities and felt that I could progress to university to study English. I mean, without her support, I probably wouldn't have considered doing it." (female, 23). Many also emphasised the importance of good relations amongst pupils which had helped to turn the school into a "happy, fun place" (...). Most expressed a belief that good educational qualifications would allow them better opportunities in the labour market, and these were therefore seen as worthwhile.

Not everyone was so fortunate, however. It is worth noting that pupils experienced the same provisions and teachers sometimes quite differently – highlighting the fact that their perceived and actual needs, wishes and expectations are different. For some, the rigidity of formal education structures seems to have been a source of disadvantage. Schools found it difficult to accommodate cases where personal, unexpected events prevented young people from successfully completing their school qualifications. Young people were expected to "fit in" to a system, rather than a flexible system fitting around these individuals' changing needs. Such a flexible approach, providing greater freedom to respond to individual needs in creative ways, would have provided these interviewees with far better opportunities and prospects than the difficult dead-end situations in which they often found themselves as a result of unexpected events or just a non-standard, non-linear transition. 'The challenge is to develop policies which are based on the different realities of young people's lives, rather than on a fictional mainstream.' (Wyn and White, 1997, 110)

More flexibility in educational systems, to meet diverse individual needs, will also be beneficial for those who want to come back to education to acquire more qualifications at a later stage in their lives. Several interviewees talked about their regrets at having left school early: some expressed an intention to go back into further education, if only the 'right circumstances' permitted. Prerequisites regarded as essential here included access to transport, provision of childcare, family support, post-job timetable plus acceptable commuting time, and a course design suited to their personal interests. It was widely accepted that further education would have positive effects on job performance and pay in current or future employment.

Once young people left school, opportunities were again differentially structured according to social class and familial ties, especially in young people's decisions on educational choices. Those whose parents were professionals and/or university graduates were not only more likely to choose university education for themselves, but they were also more confident in their choice than others. Their pathways to university seemed to be

'straighter' than those of working-class children who often took 'detours', such as low-skilled jobs, before accessing a university course. This fits into a wider picture of inequalities in university access, which suggests that "despite the far reaching changes which have occurred, class differentials in access to higher education have been maintained." (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997, 24). At the same time, examples were provided of cases where unacknowledged assumptions by school staff or middle class parents that 'University education was best' could distract a young person from the pursuit of genuinely desired job aspirations, which would not require higher education.

A few of those who entered universities or further education institutions subsequently dropped out, perhaps because they had prioritised courses close to home over those more suited to their aspirations and interests. Undoubtedly, such experiences of 'failure' in the early stages of a young person's post-school life can have devastating effects on their confidence and motivation to try other avenues. It seems imperative to put support structures in place, which can address unnecessary drop-outs by helping students' orientation before, and during their time at College or University. Help should also be in place to clarify the options following a degree, as some young graduates were still unsure about the next steps to take.

This case study has thus highlighted some of the uncertainties young people face when trying to define their own individual pathways to adulthood and through life, often in the context of extended and fractured transitions, and to this extent it accords with the individualisation thesis. The range of possibilities open to individuals means young people are constantly forced to engage with the likely consequences of their actions on a subjective level. Our research reveals a wide diversity of attempts by young people to manage and cope with these uncertainties, drawing on social networks, civil society, the state and markets. Indeed it should be emphasised that this management of risk and welfare is a task not only for young people themselves (as agents) but also for those people and institutions which constitute the structures of opportunities (Coles 1995) within which young people must act. Our research has revealed a discrepancy between young people's wish to be able to count on the assistance and support of institutions during their period of transition and the inability of those institutions to meet young people's needs. Young people may seek independence but they also want dependability around them.

The issue of guidance was highlighted in particular by respondents in Angus, and should be underlined in this conclusion. This is especially important in the context of increasing individualisation. As Coles (1995,55-6) observes, "There is clearly a continued need for impartial guidance and advice on a myriad of complex career choices now facing young people. If a

young person leaves school in the *mistaken* belief that a training programme will lead to work, or conversely, if they stay on and take a course of education in some *mistaken* belief that this will lead to a secure job, then, where they act on *mistaken* beliefs, they suffer welfare harm as a result… The rights to *impartial* knowledge, education, guidance and advice about the implications of different and competing career choices is, therefore, one element which is essential to the welfare of young people." The experiences of the young people interviewed in this study suggest that current provision of guidance is deficient in many respects and that this is a crucial issue for policy.

In conclusion, the case of Angus confirms in some respects but contrasts in others the experiences of the other study areas. The process of 'individualisation' clearly has different relevance in different contexts, influenced not least by cultural factors. It impacts on people's lives in complex ways, the quality of which is difficult to assess other than subjectively. This is associated also with the non-linear complexity of individualised youth transitions, especially amongst the least advantaged young people. Changes of plans, ideas and aspirations are especially likely to occur during the 'transition' from education to employment, and it is for this reason that increased flexibility is required on the part of education and training providers to adjust to individuals' diverse and changing needs. There is a clear message for policies and delivery mechanisms to reflect and address social differentiation: simplistic, off-the-peg approaches tailored only to standard biographies will address very few young people, and instead policies are required which can address their increasingly diverse circumstances and pathways. Flexibility to suit each person's circumstances will be essential.

References

Beck U (1992), *Risk society: towards a new modernity*, Sage, London.

Beck U (2000) Living your own life in a runaway world: individualisation, globalisation and politics, in Hutton W and Giddens A (eds) *On The Edge: Living with Global Capitalism*, Jonathan Cape, London

Bourdieu P (1973) Cultural reproduction and social reproduction, in R Brown (ed) *Knowledge, Education and Social Change*, Tavistock, London.

Büchner P, du Bois Reymond M, Krüger K-H (1995), "Growing Up in Three European Regions", in: Chisholm L., Büchner P., du Bois Reymond M., Krüger K.-H., *Growing Up in Europe. Contemporary Horizons in Childhood and Youth Studies*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, New York.

Cartmel F and Furlong A (2000) *Youth Unemployment in Rural Areas*, York

Publishing Services, York.

Chisholm L, Brown P, Buchner P and Kruger H (1990) Childhood and Youth Studies in the UK and West Germany: an introduction, in Chisholm L, Buchner P, Kruger H and Brown P (eds) *Childhood, Youth and Social Change: A Comparative Perspective*, Falmer, London.

Coles B (1995) *Youth and Social Policy: youth citizenship and young careers*, UCL Press, London.

Evans K, Behrens M and Kaluza J (1999), "Risky Voyages: navigating changes in the organisation of work and education in Eastern Germany", in: *Comparative Education*, Volume 35, No 2, pp. 131-150.

Furlong A and Cartmel F (1997), *Young people and social change: individualisation and risk in later modernity*, Open University Press, Buckingham.

Giddens A (1991*) Modernity and Self-identity : Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Gougeon T (2000), "Orienting New Professionals to Small Isolated Communities", paper presented at the 'Rural Communities and Identities in the Global Millennium' Conference, May 1-5, Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada.

Jamison L (2000), "Migration, Place and class: youth in a rural area", in *The Sociological Review*, Vol.48, No.2, pp.203-223

Jones G (1997), 'The Policy Context' in: Henderson & Jones G (1997), *Rural Scotland Today. Policy Briefing. Young People in Rural Communities*, Rural Forum Scotland, Part 2.

Kelly J (2000), "Careers advice for graduates faces overhaul" in *Financial Times*, 11/12 June 2000. p. 3.

OECD (1995), Education at a glance. OECD indicators, Paris: OECD.

Pavis S, Platt S and Hubbard G (2000) *Social Exclusion and Insertion of Young People in Rural Areas*, York Publishing Services, York.

Rugg J and Jones A (1999) *Getting a Job, Finding a Home : Rural Youth Transitions*, Policy Press.

Shucksmith M, Chapman P, Clark G with Black S and Conway E (1996), *Rural Scotland Today: The Best of Both Worlds?* Avebury, Aldershot.

Shucksmith M (2000) *Exclusive Countryside? Social inclusion and regeneration in rural areas*. JRF.

Williams N, Edmond H, Gemmell A and Shucksmith M. (1996), *Scottish Rural Life Update: a revised socio-economic profile of rural Scotland*, University of Aberdeen.

4. Rural young people and unemployment: the case of Suomussalmi, Finland

Toivo Muilu and Pirjo Onkalo

Suomussalmi - a remote and marginal European region

The conditions prevailing in the Finnish countryside differ in many respects from the situation in the more southerly member countries of the EU. Finland, the EU's northernmost country covers also the most northern areas in the world where agriculture is practised to any significant extent, and the municipality of Suomussalmi (11,003 inhabitants at the end of 2000) lies on the extreme edge of this most peripheral agricultural zone on the union's northern margin and on its only immediate boundary with Russia. Suomussalmi is far away from Finland's major population centres: Finland's capital, Helsinki, lies750 km to the south. Also, the distances from the centre of the municipality of Suomussalmi to the more remote settlements can be as much as 80 km and it is therefore not surprising that about 60% of all young people in the district in 1997 lived in the town, though many of them had grown up in the outlying areas.

The harsh physical conditions, long distances and sparse population density (averaging only 2,1 inhabitants/km²) were the criteria on the basis of which a new class of "Objective 6 regions" was defined for the eastern and northern parts of Sweden and Finland, when these countries joined the EU in 1995, and these same factors should be borne in mind when comparing the rural areas of Finland with those of any other part of the EU. The definitions of rural areas and the attitudes adopted towards them in places further south do not necessarily apply under the distinct and extreme conditions experienced in such zones.

The economic structure of Suomussalmi is largely dependent on the public sector (including activities not directly financed by taxes), with public services accounting for almost 39% of all jobs at the end of 1996. In general terms, the significance of agriculture is rapidly declining in marginal areas in Finland, and this is also true of Suomussalmi, where the number of farms has decreased from 230 in 1995 (when Finland joined the EU) to only 164 in 2000. This process has been evolving since the 1960s and so it is difficult to separate out any effects that may have been caused by the adoption of the Common Agricultural Policy in Finland, although the trend towards larger and more viable farms in northern and eastern parts of the country has been clearly stimulated by external market forces. Though agriculture and forestry still accounts for as much as 16% of the employed population in Suomussalmi, the mean age of farmers nowadays is 47 years, and practically no young farmers are left in the municipality (SVT Agriculture and Forestry 1996:4; 1999:1).

The problems of young people living in rural areas are of crucial importance when considering the future of regions like Suomussalmi because, unless their active labour input and their potential contribution to reversing the current demographic decline can be harnessed, there will be no chance of these areas staying inhabited for much longer. In her research into the willingness of young people in the rural parts of Finland to participate in the development of their own areas, Paunikallio (1997:5) states that "in the development of the countryside, young people have remained in the background, and have received little attention in research and development projects. However, they are extremely important to the future of the countryside, and in order to be able to pay more attention to them and their needs in this respect, it is of great importance to obtain information about the young people who are living there." (See also Paunikallio 2000)

The most severe problem in the study area is the high level of unemployment. The province of Kainuu (where Suomussalmi is situated) has suffered from serious unemployment for a long time, and the situation seems to be deteriorating relative to other parts of Finland. The province's unemployment rate in April 2000, according to Ministry of Labour statistics, was almost 21%, as opposed to a little over 12% for the whole country. Since municipality-level unemployment in Suomussalmi was around 30% at the time of the interviews (conducted in the autumn of 1999), and had almost reached 28% by April 2001, there had actually been no improvement during the period covered by this research (Kainuun TE-keskus, työvoimaosasto 2001).

Young people are in an even worse employment position, since, regardless of their relatively high level of education, in 1998 the youth unemployment rate in Suomussalmi was almost 42% (corresponding to 160 persons), and

as many as 41% of the young people interviewed in Suomussalmi were unemployed at the time of the survey. The figures for early 2001 seem to suggest that there has been no reduction in youth unemployment in the study area: in January 2001 there were 149 unemployed persons aged under 25 and by April the number had risen to 159 (Kainuun TE-keskus, työvoimaosasto 2001). Given the key role of the younger generation in ensuring local socio-economic viability, and the fact that these figures were the highest of the European study areas covered by this research, it seems entirely justifiable to focus this chapter on the perceptions and opinions of young people who live in very marginal and remote rural communities regarding the poor local labour market conditions they face, and how they view the future prospects of the region.

Unemployment and young people: opinions and proposals

Experiences of unemployment

As Viitanen (1999:1) points out, the position of young people in the labour market is more complex and more variable than that of the adult population, as their lives are subject to variations brought about by education, work, child care and military service etc. that cannot adequately be described in terms of the unemployment rate alone. The experiences of young people in Suomussalmi regarding the transition from education to work were also highly variable, consisting at the individual level largely of an alternation between short stretches of employment and periods of unemployment or education/training. This emerges very clearly from the "life-histories" of the respondents that were drawn up on the basis of the 34 qualitative interviews undertaken. For example, a young father, after several spells of unemployment of up to a year's duration, and at the time of the interview participating in the Youth Workshop scheme, referred both to the tedium of unemployment, and the sympathy and understanding that the unemployed experienced from family and community:

> Being unemployed in Suomussalmi must be much the same as being unemployed anywhere else. Hanging about at home. Eight hours more time on your hands, what else? The time passes well enough in summer and autumn, but in the winter it's a matter of reading the papers five times a day. I haven't felt there's been any pressure because of being out of work. Everybody understood, anyway, that there wasn't any work to be had. There's no point in piling on the

pressure. Being unemployed is enough of a pressure in itself.
(Manne, male, 23)

In one of the focus group discussions, it was said that women can find
stand-in jobs and even short-term employment relatively easily in the ser-
vice sector if they show some initiative, but they are disinclined to accept
such short-term work because of the danger of losing their union's unem-
ployment benefit and getting bogged down in a vast amount of paperwork.
This is an obvious weakness of the system, as it cannot be to anyone's
advantage for passive unemployment to be more profitable than actually
working. A further factor affecting those with families is the problem of
finding day care for the children. As one young woman suggested:

> There should be plenty of short-term jobs with the local council,
> almost all the time, in fact. They always need a replacement for
> someone. It's so difficult with a small child, though, to be always
> looking for somewhere to leave him if they suddenly phone in the
> morning and ask me to go in. And the other annoying thing with the
> short spells of work is that they reduce the union benefit that I
> get. Once I did eight hours of work and was left with only 8,4 euros
> at the end of it. It doesn't encourage you one bit. And then there
> are all the forms to fill in. (focus group of unemployed youth)

The professionals interviewed in the research (local officials dealing with
young people's issues) were of the opinion that the persistence of serious
unemployment in Suomussalmi is now beginning to further exacerbate the
problems that it has been creating. In their interviews, young people
seemed much less prepared than the professionals to talk about the way
their problems were accumulating, or the way in which one difficulty was
liable to lead to another:

> Well, in Suomussalmi, there are families with three generations of
> unemployed. And then if it turns out that there are bad experiences
> at school, that the children do badly there and that there's no
> encouragement at home to study any further, they begin to drop out
> while they're still at school, and before long they're knocking on the
> door of the social services. It's a sort of lack of vision (General
> agreement). And, in a way, there's a tendency for them to give up
> before they've even got started. (Again, general agreement). Before
> long, drink or drugs may get mixed up with it as well, which is very
> common. Then they can't concentrate on studying. And many of them
> come from broken homes. When unemployment goes back genera-
> tions, it's impossible to see any prospects for the future. There's
> nothing to make studying and going to work seem worthwhile. It
> quite clear that it's that sort of group that is emerging now. (focus
> group of professionals)

When the focus group for the unemployed talked about what work meant for young people today, the opinions that emerged tended to emphasise the change in the definition of employment and the differences between the generations.

> I'm sure that many young people think that short spells of work are just as much employment as a regular job is. You go to work for a few hours and then go home and do your housework. That's work, just like nine to five. It's only from middle age onwards that a job tends to be a matter of more or less regular working. (focus group of unemployed)

The same group of unemployed expressed its opinions regarding the declining importance of agriculture in Suomussalmi and the role of the structural change taking place in rural areas as it affects the employment situation as a whole:

> Jobs are disappearing from agriculture. I was born on a farm and used to look after the cattle, but now it doesn't pay, as the income falls every year. I would have thought seriously about taking over the farm, but not even one twice its size would be enough nowadays. And it's the same thing with forestry. Everything has been mechanised so much. I don't know of anybody who would take over a farm. The number of farms has dropped to half what it was less than ten years ago. Soon it won't be worth the dairies coming to collect the few litres of milk that we produce here, because of the long distances. (focus group of unemployed)

When the focus group of professionals working with young people were asked for their opinions on why the young people of Suomussalmi are mostly unemployed, the views of those representing the public authorities tended to stress more general factors such as the decline in the role of the public sector (central and local government) in maintaining levels of employment on account of the cuts in expenditure made during the recession period. The local council is still the biggest employer in Suomussalmi, but its tight budget means that there are no new posts for young people, in spite of the fact that the average age of Council employees is almost 50, and labour demand in the social services in general and in the care of the elderly in particular is expected to increase rapidly in the near future. The professionals also found reasons for youth unemployment in the remote location of the district and the effects of national employment policies on peripheral areas.

> There has been no change in the rate of unemployment here. Unemployment has decreased considerably in the densely inhabited parts of Southern Finland, but here there has been no move in the desired direction. The change should have taken place within this space of

time if it's to take place at all. And then there's the question of
financing employment creation. As the national employment situation
gradually improves, funding tends to be cut back, but the effect is
felt longer and most harshly in places like this, particularly by those
in the younger age groups and people with families as a whole. (focus
group of professionals)

When the young people in the sample were asked what kind of work they
hoped to obtain, a half of them replied that they hoped that their future job
would be in Suomussalmi and only three said that they would prefer it to be
elsewhere. Ten of the respondents used the word "permanent" or "continu-
ous" in connection with their desired job, and a total of seven explicitly
mentioned their hope for a permanent position in Suomussalmi. The
response given by Paavo – unemployed with four years of study at voca-
tional school in vehicle mechanics and soil improvement – was typical:

I would like a continuous, certain job. Then I could plan what I want
to do with my life. There would be some certainty in how I live. It
would have to be a sensible job, though, one that I would want to do,
even if it didn't match my qualifications. I feel right now that the
job would have to be here in Suomussalmi, but that seems rather
unlikely. I'm not really very optimistic about getting one, even in the
future. (Paavo, male, 22)

Most of the unemployed young people were of the opinion that any kind of
work would be suitable, and that it did not have to be in the field in which
they were qualified. Markkola (1998:43-45) similarly places emphasis on
diversity in her investigation into forms of work and activity in rural areas
that do not yield a direct monetary income and which are not officially clas-
sified under the heading of work, e.g. voluntary work or helping neighbours.
On the other hand, Paunikallio (1997:32) reported that the majority of rural
young people interviewed in her study were unaware of the new forms of
work and self-employment although, in general, they showed some interest
in them. This issue was not addressed directly in the Suomussalmi study,
but it seems that the situation there is the same, i.e. young people are
involved only in the "traditional" forms of employment offered by the local
Labour Office or employers. For example, only one of the 34 interviewees
was contemplating starting their own small firm. While some young people
were involved in third sector organisations such as 4-H or sports clubs,
these activities were regarded more as hobbies rather than employment
opportunities, even when they provided some small additional income.

Training and other measures for preventing young people's unemployment

Experiences in training

A considerable amount of research has been carried out into the transition stage between school and working life, as this has been shown in Finland, as elsewhere, to entail the greatest risks of alienation for young people (see Helve ed. 1998; Nyyssölä & Pajala 1999). As pointed out by Nyyssölä & Pajala (1999:144-145), a genuine choice between work, unemployment or further education is open only to those who can afford financially to rely on unemployment benefits alone, or who can even manage entirely without such support, or else are in possession of sufficient social and cultural capital that they can live in total disregard of conventional social norms without feeling that they are outcasts in any way. Put rather crudely, society at large prefers to attach an image of "otherness" to untrained young people, a negative reference group with which the majority are expected to favourably compare their own situation.

Training is taken in this context to refer to paid working practice or apprenticeship schemes. Most of the young people interviewed in Suomussalmi had had some form of training of the above kinds. A half of those without training experience were either unemployed or had just finished school at the time. Males were a little older and had a few years more schooling than the females. It would thus seem that this group similarly had not succumbed to the dangers of alienation and were still making plans for their future. For many, in fact, practical work placements would seem to have been the only viable alternative to unemployment, and a number of them said that they had chosen this option in preference to being unemployed, even though there was not much difference in the payment received. Results from the Youth Barometer surveys suggest that this attitude is common among young people in Finland (Nyyssölä & Pajala 1999:84).

Many of the young people were interested in the apprenticeship scheme but only two interviewees actually had experience of it. The difficulty would seem to lie in obtaining apprenticeship places; i.e. a demand for the scheme exists that it seems impossible to meet. One of the boys, currently on a 7-month apprenticeship, admitted that he had obtained it by "knowing the right person":

> I got the place because the employer phoned me. He's a friend of my father's. That was a bit of an advantage. (Juho, male, 21)

Practically all the young people agreed on the usefulness of practical work placements. With only two exceptions, they felt that they had gained something from it, particularly that they had learned something new, that they had had some experience of being at work and that they were now able to apply what they had learned previously. On the other hand, a half of those who had been engaged in the scheme complained about the low pay, and none were of the opinion that they had been properly compensated for their work. A girl who had had three practical work placements lasting a total of 12 months was satisfied with the results:

> It was good experience... It gave me working experience and an employment certificate at the end of it. I was able to be with other people and show that I wanted to do something definite, even though I got little more from it than the joy of working. The pay you get is very low. I'd have got the same amount if I'd stayed at home. (Piia, female, 22)

In some cases, it appeared that the companies employing these young people had really been asking too much of them. It was felt that firms were inclined to use trainees as unpaid labour, i.e. to substitute for workers that they could no longer afford to employ or whom they preferred not to employ for some reason. An unemployed interviewee, who had been on a practical work placement for 3 months, had difficulty hiding his frustration:

> Perhaps you can't really get as much out of the scheme as you should. A trainee is different from an actual worker. In most firms the trainee is just given a broom and told to get sweeping unless he speaks up for himself. I told them I wasn't having it. There must be something else I could do. I'd done enough clearing up at school. But not everyone dares to speak out, though. (Jorma, male, 21)

The focus group of unemployed young people also had some sharp criticisms of the away in which trainees were exploited:

> I think that all the jobs created via these employment schemes – especially practical work placement jobs – should be abolished or, at least firms should be stopped from participating all the time. There are some that take one trainee after another. They should really be taking on an extra employee, but why should they pay wages when they can get someone for free? Employers pay next to nothing. (Focus group of unemployed)

But there were some that saw another side to the problem:

> At any rate, maybe these job-creation or trainee places spread the available funds among more people. It's not always the same person

> who gets the money…. And it's a way out for all the people who get a chance to work in that way. (Focus group of unemployed)

Many young people hankered after an apprenticeship because it would be better paid. One young male, on a 7-month apprenticeship, criticised the programme because of the excessive working hours, low pay and dubious relevance of the teaching:

> It's very useful, of course it i. But the teaching doesn't really have anything to do with the work. Although I've told them at the school what kind of work I'm doing, they don't seem to understand. You have to go away for a week of theory each month, and then you just get a study grant. The wages are pretty poor in any case, 942 euros a month gross, but luckily they're thinking of increasing it because of the amount of overtime we do. It's hard work, too, and the days can stretch to 16 hours if there are a lot of orders. (Juho, male, 21)

Most of those who had gone for a period of working practice had done so without any preconceived expectations, and it was perhaps for this reason that very few were actually disappointed, in spite of the critical comments above. Three had been upset that there had been little variety in the work that they had to do, whereas two girls had been pleasantly surprised that they had been allowed to work as sales assistants rather than cleaners. In conclusion, young people do clearly see the advantages of training compared to passive unemployment measures, but they would nevertheless like to be treated more like employees with proper rights and salaries, rather than "jacks – (and jills) – of-all-trades", or cheap labour to be exploited.

The Youth Workshop - a good example of local training initiatives

The Youth Workshop is a good example of a project intended to promote local initiative and the development of employment opportunities, and one that has some definite results to show for it. The first Youth Workshops in Finland were founded in the mid-1980s, mainly to provide work for young people between 17-25 years of age who were unemployed, had no formal qualifications and were in danger of social exclusion. Some of the finance for the workshops began to come via the European Structural Fund after 1995. By the first half of 2000 there were some 350 such workshops functioning in 177 out of the total of about 450 local government districts in Finland. One evaluation of these workshops (Laakso 2000) maintains that although they have received excellent feedback from the young people themselves, more than half of the participants were expecting to return to being unemployed once their workshop period came to an end. The basic

model has nevertheless proved to be a useful solution to the problem of young people wandering aimlessly n the no-man's-land between school and work.

The Suomussalmi Youth Workshop has been in action since September 1987. The scheme provides job opportunities for 6 months to 10-15 young people already with vocational education, and training opportunities for 1-3 months for those without qualifications. The aims of the Workshop are to provide young people with:

- work experience,
- and opportunity to become accustomed to the rules of working life,
- help in becoming independent and building their own life,
- the clarification of vocational options, preferences and potential,
- guidance regarding appropriate vocational education, and
- an opportunity to develop social/professional interaction skills.

In the Workshop, the young people make products from wood, metals and textiles and repair and/or upholster old pieces of furniture. For each Workshop vacancy announced, the Labour Office will send several young people for interview, but only one will be selected. During the interview it is made clear to the applicant that he/she must prepare a personal vocational/educational plan to be carried out after the Workshop period is completed. For those who have already completed vocational secondary education, the plan will at least require attendance on a specific vocational training course and, for those without vocational education, an application to a vocational school.

During the Workshop period there are at least two feedback sessions involving the young worker, their supervisor and the Workshop director. Themes for discussion include the worker's own strengths and weaknesses, adaptability to the working community, motivation level, work orientation, cooperation skills, etc. During the final discussion the young people's personal employment counsellor from the local Labour Office (responsible for turning the plan into reality), will also be present. Teaching of some practical skills is also provided during the Workshop period, as are lectures on current affairs of interest to employees, such as health and safety at work, trade union questions and how to make an application for vocational schooling during the joint (national) period for applications.

The Suomussalmi Youth Workshop appears to have been successful in these respects. The young people who had participated were mostly satisfied with the experience, and with the remuneration compared to the usual unemployment benefits, though some boys regarded the pay as low. The leader of the Workshop indicated in the focus group discussion that she regarded its

achievements as promising, and emphasised that it was only very recently that they had reached a situation where real employment paths were beginning to open up for young people from the workshop, i.e. the testimonials received from there were instrumental in securing them a job, although admittedly not very often in Suomussalmi.

Policy opinions

It is obvious that there is no single overall solution for improving employment among young people in Suomussalmi or elsewhere in the more remote rural areas of Finland, and it could even be claimed that if such a solution existed, someone would have discovered it by now. The EU and national programmes set out from very general starting points, and their transfer to the local authority level is a top-down administrative process, in the course of which even good intentions can easily become confused and result in nothing more than a further bureaucratic complication superimposed on the already difficult and complex situation that young people face.

Symptomatic of this situation was the fact that, when young people were asked for suggestions to improve the employment situation, the general reply was embarrassment. Rather than propose changes, the interviewees listed their complaints – which were mainly concerned with current employment measures and the local labour market. Nevertheless, some broad aspects of practical work placements were addressed. For example, a girl, now out of work, who had already had three practical work placements, lasting a total of 12 months, suggested that the system needed to be made more flexible and eligibility extended:

> The practical placement system could be improved. I thought I could get onto it again in a couple of years, but I've already done the 10 months that they allow. It doesn't seem to matter how unemployed I am. I think they should be able to write off the earlier months after a while. That would be something, at least. (Piia, female, 22)

Another girl, receiving holiday pay at the time of interview, had spent 15 months on practical placement experience, and felt that the main problem was a lack of communication between firms and trainees:

> I wish they would treat us more like workers, and teach us different jobs. Sometimes, they seem to think that they don't have to tell the trainees anything at all. There should be some kind of discussion at

the end of the placement, so that both sides could give feedback.
(Tuija, female, 23)

A young unemployed male with 3 months' of practical placement experience, felt he had received little or no training at all:

It should be possible to find a more consistent way of arranging
practical placements. They talk about working practice, but if the
foreman knew his job, they wouldn't let us near the place. There's no
instruction, they make you do overtime and force all kinds of rub-
bishy work on you. The trainees are always expected to produce
results, even when that's impossible. (Jorma, male, 21)

When asked for suggestions as to what could be done, the answers of the members of the professionals' focus group were scarcely more inventive than those of their target group; typically, they too brought up existing problems and identified the factors that limited the effectiveness of employment-creation measures, rather than making any concrete proposals. In their opinion, the present form of cooperation between those working with young people in Suomussalmi, with its unofficial networks and *ad hoc* activities, functioned well and there was no need to start any more joint organisations. On the contrary, it was felt that if the cooperation were to be made more official, this would enhance "top-down" direction and impede any further empowerment of local organisations.

In my experience, at least, if some sort of need appears from above
for a plan to be produced, we think it over, and plan it all afresh, and
think again and then put something down on paper. But who is going
to put it into practice? That's the thing. They won't necessarily find
anyone. And so, before long, we are all back where we started. And
so we just go on as before. (focus group of professionals)

The perspective adopted by the professionals was almost exclusively that of the public sector and the employment measures open to it, which is understandable, since practically all the people involved in the discussion were local or central government officials. The most interesting contributions, apart from discussions of the Youth Workshop, centred on the apprenticeship system that is included in many official programmes. While young people showed substantial interest in apprenticeships, the professionals felt their enthusiasm was unrealistic, and that there were not enough companies in the area ready to commit themselves to an apprenticeship scheme for several years at a time:

A firm has to commit itself for 2-3 years if the apprentice is going
to get a basic qualification out of it. Few companies are capable of
doing that. There are some, it's true. But another thing that I've run

into in my work is that many young people have a very rosy idea of what an apprenticeship entails. They think it's a great joy and blessing for anyone who can't face sitting in a classroom and that it's an easy way out and a sure way of qualifying for a trade. But it's nothing of the sort. You have to do an 8-hour day at work and then read for exams, or spend 2-3 days a week travelling to somewhere in Kajaani, Kuopio or even Oulu, wherever the theoretical teaching can be found for particular subjects. In the end it calls for twice the effort (...). There's a great difference of opinion over how easy it is and how much commitment it calls for from both sides. (focus group of professionals).

Young people and the future of Suomussalmi

To stay or to leave?

In addition to the interview questions that related directly to the school-to-work transition, a number of contextual and background questions were posed. Perhaps the most interesting concerned young people's plans to remain in the district or move away. Recent studies in Finland suggest that the general tendency among rural young people is towards leaving the countryside, since – according to Paunikallio (1997:116) – only two-fifths of rural young people would prefer to live in the countryside, and Finnäs and Norrgård (2000:73) similarly noted that two-thirds of rural young people would like to live in more urban-like surroundings once they reached adulthood. This suggests that the stay-or-leave problem is crucial to the future of rural areas.

In Suomussalmi, however, it seems that moving away was by no means the preferred alternative, although the eventual decision would depend on how the employment situation evolves in the coming years. From this it can be concluded that the young people who want to remain in the area form a key group in the population of Suomussalmi and constitute a pool of available labour for companies wishing to move/expand there; consequently, public funds would be well spent on programmes designed to exploit this potential. The distribution of replies, as presented in Table 1, provides clear evidence that the key issue for the future of the area involves tackling the "primitive" state of the labour market, as almost half of those interviewed stated that they would remain in the area if they could find work. On the other hand, almost a third said that they would probably or definitely remain in the area, regardless of the employment situation, and only a couple of respondents definitely intended to move away.

Plans to stay in the area.

	N°	%
Definitely yes	5	15
Probably yes	6	17
Probably not	5	15
Definitely not	2	6
Depending on jobs available	16	47
TOTAL	34	100

Is there any difference between the sexes regarding the issue of whether to stay or go? This is rather a complex question since, according to the closed questionnaire responses, there was no significant difference between the sexes in this respect. However, in the qualitative interviews, young women expressed some opinions regarding out-migration:

> The boys stay, and the girls leave, except for those who start a family early. (Focus group of professionals)

> It would seem that the girls find it easier to leave... Many of them have a boyfriend tucked away somewhere and, once upper secondary school is finished, the whole lot troop off somewhere else, away from here. Perhaps just one or two will stay to work in their parents' business, or something like that (...) They have their work there and don't need to go off studying to get a job. (Focus group of employed)

Other studies also give somewhat different results. Paunikallio (1997:119-121), for example, refers to the situation in the 1980s when there was a noticeable difference between girls and boys in rural areas in Finland: girls left and boys stayed. According to the same author, however, the situation was almost in balance by the end of 1990s. Finnäs and Norrgård (2000:74) found that rural girls (75%) were still more eager than boys (64%) to live in urban surroundings. The conclusion could be that staying or leaving is determined more by personal interests and one's life-situation rather than by gender itself.

Not surprisingly, those respondents who were considering leaving Suomussalmi were more optimistic about their chances of finding the work they wanted than were the others. There were 19 altogether who mentioned moving away in one form or another, and it is interesting that such references were correlated to some extent with previous place of residence and gender, in that those who had moved to the main settlement from the outly-

ing villages, were not thinking of moving away, but rather preferred to stay in Suomussalmi even if the employment situation remained unstable. Neither would girls who had moved to the district from elsewhere consider moving away, because their boyfriends were in Suomussalmi.

Nevertheless, there was considerable agreement among the young people (particularly those that participated in the focus group) that there was nothing wrong with going to live somewhere else for a time, provided it were possible to come back later. Notwithstanding the attractiveness of this option, they were worried about the extent of out-migration, as they regarded the consequences undermined the district's whole future. As one participant in the unemployed focus group argued:

> If the age structure, as they call it, gets to the point where there are only old people here, how drastic will be the cutbacks in local services? When there are no wage-earners any longer, only pensioners, there will be no purchasing power left in the district. (focus group of unemployed)

Geographical aspects: does the remoteness matter?

One might have expected that the long distances that have to be travelled within the area would have been mentioned as a significant factor affecting work prospects for the young people. However, this was not the case, for as many as two thirds of the respondents were of the opinion that these made no difference to youth unemployment. This may be partly due to the fact that the remote location of Suomussalmi means that it is still to some extent a traditional rural community, at least in the sense that young people still attached great importance to their families. It is always possible to ask one's parents for advice and support when things are difficult, and this does much to help most young people to cope with the problems they have to face, without becoming alienated or socially excluded.

Inevitably – and, apparently, willingly – young people move from the outlying areas to the administrative centre to study or work, as there are few opportunities for employment in the more remote villages.

> When one tours the villages the older people always say that there should be work there for the young people, and then finally, when we make a survey of the situation we realise that there are virtually no young people in the whole village. Not a single young person has turned down the offer of a job on the grounds that it is here in the centre and not in their home village. (focus group of professionals)

As pointed out by a young woman on combined support at the time of interview:

> There isn't really any work to be had in the outlying villages. At best, if there are a lot of old people living there who need someone to clean for them and so on, there'll be that kind of work thing, but nobody's very keen on doing it. (Laila, female, 25)

In the focus group for professionals involved in youth work there was an interesting discussion on the good practical skills and high levels of initiative to be found among the young people from the more remote areas. This was one of the few observations clearly linked to the district's settlement pattern and the long distances between the centre and the outlying villages:

> It's obvious that if you live in Hossa (in northern Suomussalmi, close to the Russian border) or somewhere that's 100 km or so from here, there are wonderful opportunities for hunting and fishing. I know a couple of fellows who are not registered as looking for work, even though they've been at home since they finished secondary school. They don't necessarily register with us; they just enjoy living there and do whatever needs to be done at home – chopping wood, working in the forest and enjoying nature, these are riches they appreciate. And the problems there are by no means of the same scale as here. They are quite able boys (…) and when people like that come (…) to the Workshop (…) they know what they're doing [because] (…) they've got used to doing things at home. But many of the boys from the main centre, you even have to teach them to shovel snow. It's quite funny. (focus group of professionals)

One feature that came to the fore in many of the individual interviews and in the focus group for the unemployed was the extent to which the young people appreciated the quality of life and regarded being unemployed in Suomussalmi as preferable to dealing with unemployment in a town. It seemed that many of them were unwilling to accept a job of fixed duration in a town and would be prepared to move to such a place only if the work was certain and available on normal terms. As noted above, most of the young people interviewed were closely attached to the district; in this sense they constitute a key group for its future viability and, consequently, deserve appropriate attention from the authorities.

> What is there anywhere else that you can't find here? The situation would be much the same there, so why move? Most of my friends and support networks are here. If I went somewhere else, I wouldn't know anybody and I would have to begin everything from scratch. And the outcome of it all would be that I'd still be unemployed. It would be a different matter if I found interesting work that I was qualified for, if I got a proper job and could plan my life a bit further ahead (focus group of unemployed).

The professionals also drew attention to the great desire for work that the young people were still able to show. The people of Kainuu have a reputation for being diligent, conscientious workers, these attributes having been "forced" on them by the severity of the physical conditions in the region, and the people who worked in youth circles believed that the same active tradition lived on in the present younger generation. Very few had been known to refuse work that was offered them by the Labour Office, however unpleasant it might have been, but the professionals likewise criticised the meagre grants paid during work experience placements.

Population decline in Suomussalmi is among the fastest in Finnish municipalities and it would be dishonest to predict any positive change in the foreseeable future in this trend. Young people are at the core of this process, since they are the population group most likely to leave. However, there still exist some less pessimistic signs in the municipality. The total population (approx. 11,000 inhabitants) is still much higher than in many other municipalities in the marginal regions of Finland, where there may be as few as 2,000 residents. This means that there still exists potential labour for the development of industries, into which Suomussalmi has also put a lot of effort in the last few years. Finally, there are still many young people who would like to stay and raise a family in Suomussalmi – if only they are given the opportunity to do so. At least the majority of the young people interviewed had by no means lost their confidence in the future, and these positive attitudes provide a good basis for the success of policy efforts in the future.

Conclusions

The real transition problem between school and employment in Suomussalmi, as in many rural areas in Finland, lies at the stage of finding a permanent job. Young people's possibilities for finding work are reduced considerably by their desire to stay in the area. A third of the respondents maintained that they would prefer to remain in Suomussalmi even if it meant being unemployed, some of them placing more value on the quality of life than on obtaining a permanent job, while others were constrained by their spouse's situation in life, or were simply inclined to be more passive in their outlook, were unaware of the full range of possibilities, or had been unsuccessful in applying for work. On the other hand, the desire to stay in Suomussalmi is indicative of the importance attached by these young people to their love for their home area and their motivation to work for its

benefit. It is also clear that they value honest work. Anyone from outside contemplating setting up a business in the area would do well to bear these highly positive aspects in mind.

Although unemployment is so common among both the young people of Suomussalmi and their parents that they do not regard it as anything exceptional, half of those who were unemployed at the time of the interview were finding it difficult, had time on their hands, felt frustrated and had been lulled into passivity. A few of them found it depressing and complained of the shortage of money, and there were some who said that they found it particularly difficult in the winter time because of the lack of other things to do. In the professionals' opinion, the long duration of serious unemployment in Suomussalmi is now compounding the problem, but this situation did not especially worry the young people themselves. It is possible, of course, that the interviewees were simply more reticent than the professionals with regard to their often mounting problems related to the transition from school to satisfactory employment.

A multiplicity of actors are engaged in assessing the employment problems and training needs of young people, and in the planning of solutions, ranging from those in the EU responsible for political decisions, down to the local officials who have to deal face-to-face with the young people themselves, and the myriad levels, actors and institutions are without doubt reflected in the measures aimed at improving the situation of rural young people. In this study, it was clear that, on the one hand, the young people interviewed in Suomussalmi have a good level of awareness regarding their rights to unemployment benefits and training measures; however, on the other hand, they were neither well-informed or particularly interested with respect to which organisation (EU, national or local) was in charge of those measures and policies. This is not surprising since, very understandably, the priority for most of the young people is to improve their own personal life situation and to clearly identify the range of possible pathways they may have in front of them, rather than understanding the administrative arrangements that lay behind the proposed solutions to youth employment problems in general.

The task of maintaining viable settlements – both in the more remote rural areas and in their main population centres – not only calls for political will but also the appropriate support measures. Nevertheless, irrespective of the plans and policies that may be conceived, the ultimate responsibility for the future of in such areas and their younger generation of residents lies with those young people themselves. Contrary to what is generally thought, there are many young people in Finland (in general) and in Suomussalmi (in particular) who want to continue living in the areas where they were born and grew up, as long as this option remains feasible. In the case of Suomus-

salmi, this desire and the confidence of young people in the future, can be summed up in the words of one young employed woman interviewed in the course of this research:

> Research projects like this are a good thing, which is more than can be said for some of the opinion polls on the presidential election! Today, people seem to have the idea that life is bad in Northern Finland. The Prime Minister has said that people don't want to live in the North any more. You can tell him from me that I, for one, enjoy living here! (Elina, female, 22)

References

Finnäs, Fjalar & Sonja Norrgård (2000). *Finnish rural young people. In: Helve, Helena (ed. 2000): Rural young people in changing Europe. Comparative study of living conditions and participation of rural young people in Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy and Sweden*, pp. 54-87. Hakapaino Oy, Helsinki.

Helve, Helena (ed. 1998). *Unification and marginalisation of young people.* Youth Research 2000 Programme. The Finnish Youth Research Society. 256 p. Helsinki.

Kainuun TE-keskus, työvoimaosasto (Employment and Economic Development Centre for Kainuu, Labour Market Department) (2001). *Työllisyys ja työttömyys Kainuussa, huhtikuu 2001* (Employment and unemployment in the region of Kainuu, April 2001). 8 p. Kajaani.

Laakso, Kirsti (2000). "Nuorten pajat ja pajojen nuoret - nuorten työpajatoiminta arvioinnin kohteena" (English summary: Evaluation of the effectivity of Youth Workshops). *Finnish Labour Review* 1/2000, 45-52. Ministry of Labour, Helsinki.

Markkola, Susanna (1998). *Taidosta toimeentuloa - maaseudun uudet työllistämismahdollisuudet.* Helsingin yliopisto, maaseudun tutkimus- ja koulutuskeskus, Raportteja ja artikkeleita 54. 52 p. Seinäjoki.

Nyyssölä, Kari & Sasu Pajala (1999). *Nuorten työura. koulutuksesta työelämään siirtyminen ja huono-osaisuus.*163 p. Gaudeamus, Helsinki.

Paunikallio, Merja (1997). *Kuka jää maaseudulle? Maaseudun nuorten näkemyksiä maaseudusta asuin-, työ- ja elinympäristönä* (English summary: Who will remain in the countryside? Rural young people's views of the countryside as an environment in which to live, work and reside). Helsingin yliopisto, maaseudun tutkimus- ja koulutuskeskus, serie B:17. 136 p. Seinäjoki.

Paunikallio, Merja (2000). *Maaseudun voimavara - nuorten halu osallistua kotikuntansa kehittämiseen* (English abstract: Rural resources - young

people want to be involved in the development of their home municipalities). Helsingin yliopisto, maaseudun tutkimus- ja koulutuskeskus, sarja B:19. 121 p. Seinäjoki.

SVT (Official Statistics of Finland) Agriculture and Forestry 1996:4. *Farm Register* 1995. 171 p. Information Centre of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

SVT Agriculture and Forestry 1999:1. *Farm Register 1997*. 171 p. Information Centre of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Viitanen, Reijo (1999). *Nuorisotyöttömyys ja nuorten syrjäytymisen riskit*. Nuorisoasiain neuvottelukunta - NUORA.

5.   Policies and local structures supporting the social & occupational integration of young people in Mayenne, France

Elizabeth Auclair and Didier Vanoni

This chapter presents some of the results of part of the French component of the PaYPiRD research project, the overall aim of which was to present the opinions and perceptions of young people in rural areas concerning their passage from school to first employment in particular, and more broadly on their general conditions of life, with a view to assessing the impact and efficacy of national government and EU policies in easing that transition. These reflections are divided into two parts: first a contextual study based on data analysis and interviews with key actors; secondly, an analysis of the opinions of young people based on a number of qualitative individual and group interviews. Thus Section I provides an overview of the local context and the principal economic trends in recent years, and section II the policies and local structures that have been set up in Mayenne with a view to promoting social and occupational integration of young people. Section III and IV present the opinions of young people concerning these issues, first on the labour market problems they face, and subsequently on the services that local administrative structures offer in order to help them take the first steps in the transition to more stable and satisfactory employment.

The local context: demographic and economic trends

A profile of the area: rural, disadvantaged, and with declining traditional agriculture and significant out-migration.

The specific area studied by the French team is located in the north-eastern part of the Mayenne Département, Pays de Loire Region, in the western part of France. Mayenne, which is one of the most rural and least devel-

oped *départements* of this region, has 285 000 inhabitants, with a popula-
tion density of 54 persons per km². The two closest towns of any
importance – Mayenne (15 000 inhabitants) and Alençon (45 000 inhabit-
ants) are both situated 25 kms away. It has experienced a continuous demo-
graphic decline over recent decades, mostly due to out-migration of
residents in the economically active age groups, leaving behind a much
more aged population in the locality. The study area has an arguably "clas-
sic" dairy farming landscape, somewhat hilly, with extensive forests, and
subject to a rather harsh climate. For many years agriculture was the main
economic activity with the majority raising livestock for mile and/or meat,
on small, unmodernised farms. Agriculture's share of employment has
decreased continuously and today only 20% of the active labour force work
in the sector. Local industries and handcraft activities, employing a further
20% and 12% respectively, offer a large part of the remaining employment
opportunities, with public and private services, mainly concentrated in the
villages, offering only a relatively small number of jobs. Most of the popula-
tion and the economic activities are to be found in three small towns: Vil-
laines la Juhel (with 6 800 inhabitants), Lassay les Chateaux (2 500), and
Pré en Pail (2 100).

The supply of education and training: some ambiguities of the French system.

In the study area, there seems to be a divergence between the type of occu-
pational/vocational studies towards which young people are oriented, and
the needs of the local economy. Thus, many young people follow vocational
studies that, theoretically, will lead to jobs in the tertiary sector, while the
real needs of the area are still mainly in the manual or technical occupations
and in handcraft activities. For instance, the building sector seems to suffer
from labour shortages and, according to some local actors, foreign workers
may soon have to be recruited.

Several reasons can explain this imbalance between supply and demand. In
France, while in recent years an energetic policy has been pursued to
increase the number of young people continuing in secondary level school-
ing, and obtaining the final *baccalauréat* qualification, a correspondingly
clear strategy for the development of manual and technical occupations has
not existed. This contradiction has generated a negative effect by discredit-
ing virtually all studies that do not lead to the *"bac"* – now considered the
"basic minimum level" to attain. Young people who appear unable to benefit
from remaining in the general secondary streams, are oriented towards
manual and technical education: consequently, students entering these
schemes of study tend to carry the stigma of academic failure. Indeed, to

some extent, this has also led to a devaluation of the *bac* itself: new streams have been created, with a view to ensuring that 80% of each age cohort reach *baccalauréat* level. The result has been that, while these recent programmes undoubtedly lead to a *baccalauréat* certificate, the qualification level is much lower than in the "general" streams.

With a *bac* certificate, anyone in France can register at university, without any limitation on the number of students accepted in the various disciplines, whereas there are restrictions imposed on other tertiary educational programmes, such as the two distinct two-year technical courses[18], or in the *Grandes Ecoles*[19]. A further negative effect of the drive to increase the number of young people leaving school with the *baccalauréat* certificate, is that many enter university without any real career project, while those with the highest capacities, strongest motivations and clearest aims gain entry into the *Grandes Écoles*. Some young people register at university without having a sufficiently high level of qualification, and then rapidly face serious academic difficulties. Though different measures have been undertaken to improve the system, high failure and drop out rates persist in the first year of university and, while it should be stressed that such difficulties are not specific to rural young people, they nevertheless appear more pronounced and have more crucial consequences for students from rural areas.

In 1993, the organisation of the training system was transferred from the central state to the regions, in order to adapt the supply of training more closely to local needs. In our study area, the training system is currently coordinated by the Pays de Loire Region, in line with national policy guidelines, and is directly undertaken by several local training establishments, and by local development structures, such as the Centre de Resources located in Villaines la Juhel. However, the efficiency of the training system greatly depends on the specifics of the economic context and the social situation that local populations face. There exist two main possibilities of vocational training:

- Firstly, a young person may obtain a contract, and be employed while undertaking vocational training. With an "apprenticeship contract", (s)he can take various State acknowledged vocational qualifcations, whereas with a "qualification contract", (s)he can

---

18. Namely the BTS *(brevet de technicien suprieur)* and the DUT *(diplome universitaire de technologie)*.

19. Parallel to the university system, there exists in France a number of *Grandes coles* (for example, tertiary schools of business, agronomy, veterinary and engineering), offering a very limited number of places open only to those who have pursued a two year preparatory course, and successfully passed a specific entrance examination.

obtain any type of qualification (with or without a final certificate). However, in neither case is the employer under any obligation to keep the trainee at the end of the contract. While some criticism has also been levelled at the uneven quality of some of these training courses, the main complaint has been that, while some employers appear to be able to generate endless opportunities for fixed-term practical work placements (either in the form of apprenticeships, or not), they rarely, if ever, create long term jobs.

- Secondly, there are young people currently without work contracts, but who want to enter a vocational training course. Different types of courses are proposed, according to the qualification level and the needs of the trainee and, while most involve several periods of unpaid practical experience, if the trainee has previously worked, (s)he may be eligible for certain unemployment allowances. This kind of training not only aims to integrate young people into employment, but often has a "social" dimension, too: housing, childcare, transport or health problems can be tackled during the courses, and the trainees also have the opportunity to escape from their isolation, and have contact with other people who share the same difficulties.

Trends in the local economy: disequilibrium in the job market

The north east part of Mayenne is generally considered a remote and fragile rural region, characterised in recent decades by a declining economy. Since the region became eligible for financial assistance from the European Commission[20], there have been some positive changes, but the depth and seriousness of its weaknesses will continue to make it eligible for EU support for the foreseeable future (e.g. "objective 2" for the 2000-2006 period). The agricultural sector, even though still predominant, is facing substantial difficulties, and few of the young people interviewed expressed the wish to remain in the area as farmers, apart from a few from farming families. The private and public services sector is also rapidly decreasing, which reduces job opportunities, especially for young women. However, there are several relatively large factories that offer numerous low-skill or semi-skilled jobs.

On analysing the survey data, the first impression gained is that there is no unemployment problem in the area. However, the reality of the labour market is far more complex: local factories actually do offer a relatively large

---

20.   Through the Leader 1 programme for a development project in the northeast part of Mayenne, and via EU structural funds mainly channelled into projects in agriculture and for training initiatives.

number of jobs, which correspond to the expectations of at least a part of the population, even though most of the supply consists of one-off temporary or intermittent jobs. Nevertheless, the area badly lacks skilled jobs, a situation that leads most of the more highly qualified young people to leave the region. Many factories engage people with qualification levels that are higher than that required for the job, which means that people with the lowest qualification levels are often "crowded out" of the labour market and excluded from the type of work for which they would be the "natural" candidates.

In aggregate, quantitative terms, the existence of these factories can be seen as a positive for the local economy, but from the more specific career viewpoint of the area's younger generation, the situation is more ambiguous. This particular context – in which there is little demand either for those with the least or with the highest qualifications – strongly influences the extent to which young people as a whole are successfully integrated into the local labour market.

The complexity of the administrative and institutional setting

In France, the specific administrative setting makes local development policies quite complex: it functions rather like Russian dolls, with a great number of smaller organisations "nested" inside larger ones which, in turn, are under the aegis of other, larger, ones. The fact that France's 36 000 municipalities together make up one third of the all municipalities in the 15 EU countries explains why so many measures have been taken to promote cooperation between local communities and to create new structures which group several communities. Thus a major issue for the Government over the last few years has been to convince local politicians to form "local cooperation committees" with a view to defining territorially based projects and to implement common development programmes. In spite of various difficulties (often rooted in inter-municipality economic competition, differences in partners' political complexions, and so on), many municipalities, especially in the rural areas, have created such committees, even if they have typically been motivated mainly by collective self-interest (since municipalities receive more State support if they group together).

So, for more than 30 years, there have been several initiatives in terms of local cooperation, in the north east part of Mayenne. Several local committees (or SIVOMs[21]), each made up of a number of municipalities, were created in the 1960s, with the initial aim of developing common projects, or to

---

21.   SIVOM is the acronym for *syndicat intercommunal vocation multiple.*

share public services and physical and social infrastructure (relating to transport, water supply, waste disposal, etc.). More recently, new legislation has encouraged municipalities to widen the scope of their collaboration by fixing common local taxes. The resulting new types of local committee *(communautés de communes")*, have been able to take on board more "strategic" issues, such as economic development, the environment, social housing provision, social cohesion, occupational training and employment creation.

For more than twenty years, larger-scale local development structures have also existed. In 1978, a structure was defined in the north east part of Mayenne, covering a territory called the "Pays du Haut Maine", which at first included four SIVOM's (Lassay les Chateaux, Couptrain, le Horps and Villaines la Juhel), with the aim of setting up common projects and thereby to benefit from national and regional financial help. Several years later, a fifth SIVOM joined, the structure adopted its present name ("Pays du Haut Maine et Pail") and currently covers 40 municipalities. Furthermore, the 1999 Regional Planning Act[22] encourages municipalities to increase the scale of these common, integrated local development structures: recently, and only after much controversy, a further and even more all-embracing structure was created, the "Pays de Haute Mayenne", covering one third of all the *départements* of the region and their combined population of 90 000 inhabitants.

Current policies and structures

Mayenne's long history of local development policies

Over the last twenty years, the Pays de Loire region has implemented specific local development policies, by signing development contracts with different structures, and in particular with the "Pays du Haut Maine et Pail". Three successive contracts were signed with the region, which enabled local communities of the area to identify gaps and in essential public and social infrastructures and services, and propose appropriate means of closing them. Progressively, a real strategy of local development was implemented, with the definition of broader projects, and the involvement of three professional partners. Several programmes have been set up: a housing pro-

---

22. Known either by its acronym LOADDT *(Loi d'orientation pour l'aménagement et le développement durable du territoire)* , or the Loi Voynet, after its principal proponent.

gramme to increase the supply of rented accommodation (ORAH[23]), a modernisation and development programme for commerce and handcrafts (ORAC[24]), and several agricultural programmes for farm modernisation and new farmer business start-ups (OGAF[25]). All these initiatives can be considered as having contributed to helping young people to find employment in the area.

Not only has this location been the focus for local and regional development projects, but also for European programmes: for example, in the early 1990s, under the auspices of the LEADER 1 programme, a *Centre de Resources* was created at Villaines la Juhel, along with the development of a training programme specifically adapted to the needs and requirements of local firms. This institutional initiative differed fundamentally from the more traditional pre-existing training and social integration organisations, such as the PAIO, or the *Mission Locale*[26] – the idea being to create one central entity that would represent all the different stakeholders involved in employment, vocational training, social cohesion and economic development, thereby facilitating cooperation and interaction between partners.

When the LEADER 2 programme began, further projects were defined on a wider territorial scale, that permitted a degree of integration between local development initiatives in the Pays du Haut Maine et Pail and those in the northwest part of the *Département*. Since this whole area was classified as an "objective 5b" region, it was eligible for FEDER, FEOGA and FSE funding, and also benefited from the ADAPT programme for training initiatives. A project to be funded by the LEADER + programme, several of whose key measures should directly target young people, social cohesion and labour market integration, is now under discussion with the various local stakeholders of the recently constituted "Pays de Haute Mayenne" structure.

To date, local development intervention have tended to focus on (A) economic development, (B) agricultural modernisation and environmental issues, (C) housing, and (D) tourism and culture, some of which specifically relate to and are reflected in young people's living conditions and opportunity structures.

---

23. In French, *opration rgionale d'amélioration de l'habitat.*
24. opration de restauration de l'artisanat et du commerce
25. opration groupe d'aménagement foncier
26. The PAIO *(Permanence d'accueil, d'information et d'orientation)* and the *Mission Locale* are local institutions, organised as a structured network by the Government, and which exist in all the main towns of France. They particularly target young people aged 16 to 25, providing advice and support on all questions concerning not only training and employment issues but also housing, health and social problems.

(A) Training and economic development: the principal components of this dimension of local development have included: the creation of a *Centre de Resources* at Villaines la Juhel; the development of relations with local employers to examine the needs in terms of human resources development and training supply for their existing employees; increasing the supply of training activities; various measures to help craftsmen conform with official standards, and to increase the use of information technology by building firms; the creation of business parks at Lassay les Chateaux, Villaines la Juhel and Javron; the construction of temporary premises for new businesses in several villages; and the provision of customised monitoring of business start-ups.

(B) Agriculture and the environment[27]: here, the main initiatives have included the following: the diagnosis of the area's agricultural potentialities and future; various measures to help young people establish themselves as farmers (e.g. initial purchase of farm equipment and machines); measures to help farms adapt to national and/or European environmental standards; protection of the rural landscape and realisation of its potential; measures concerning selective waste collection, sewage disposal and water supply infrastructures; assessment studies to identify zones that constitute noteworthy natural, environmental and/or ecological resources (related to the ZNIEFF national program [28]).

(C) Housing and the built environment: with regard to housing, the main measure has been the creation, within the framework of general social housing provision, of a housing supply specifically for apprentices, in which several young people share a furnished apartment with a common kitchen. Since 1994, 17 such dwellings have been built or renovated in the area, and are now managed directly by the municipalities in question. The municipalities support part of the cost of the rent. In addition, the improvement and renovation of the facades of the village houses has also been organised and funded.

(D) Tourism and Culture: in this regard, the following elements should be emphasised: a promotional/educational video film on the region has been shot; a Cider Museum (promotion of local apple and cider production) has been created; hiking paths and associated tourist activities (including the Pre en Pail tourist trail) have been established; the visual amenity of village centres has been improved (e.g. Lassay les Chateau); hotels and rural

---

27.   The actions took place under the PDR, or *plan de développement rural,* the French framework for applying the EU's objective 5b measures. A PDR contract has been signed between the European Commission and the Pays du Haut Maine et Pail.

28.   ZNIEFF : zone naturelle d'intérêt écologique, faunistique et floristique

accommodation have been funded to increase the local supply; a cultural and leisure centre (with activities such as dance classes) has been created; and a programme of cultural events (including improved theatrical facilities/performances established.

The Centre de Resources of Villaines la Juhel

Organisation

This structure, set up under the LEADER 1 programme, was created after 2 years of discussions and consultation with various local stakeholders. At the time, the two main objectives were (a) to create a establishment dedicated to employment and training *(Maison d'Emploi et Formation)*, closely *related* to local needs, and adopting a bottom-up approach; and (b) to create a *Centre de Resources*, corresponding to the specific LEADER concept, with some innovative initiatives in terms of training and support to local firms.

The aim was to have a local structure that operates as a link between the different actors involved in business and training. The first difficulty was therefore to convince prospective stakeholders that the *Centre de Resources* was not just another structure, operating in competition with the others, but a new tool to "federate" the existing local initiatives and promote the externalities and synergies that such a "cluster" implies. The *Centre de Resources* addresses the whole population and not only the young, though young people constitute an large and important part of those who visit or whose problems are taken up by the structure.

As the initiative came from the "Communauté de Communes" de Villaines la Juhel (which comprising 11 municipalities), the structure is considered a public asset and amenity provided to the inhabitants of the various municipalities concerned. In fact, the services offered by the *Centre de Resources* have a much broader scope, with people from further afield also being able to benefit from the support provided. The *Centre de Resources* is mainly financed by the Communauté de Communes of Villaines la Juhel, but it also receives support from other partners such as the Pays de Loire Region and the European Commission.

Principal activities

The main activities undertaken by the *Centre de Resources* fall under the following four headings: (A) provision of training and employment information, (B) provision of training programmes, (C) assistance to the unemployed, and (D) economic development initiatives.

(A) Information related to training and employment: establishment of a documentation room, and a notice board with offers of employment provided directly by the employers; collaboration with the ANPE[29] for the posting of vacancies from their data base, plus the presence of one of its counsellors several days a week; and collaboration with the PAIO – Mayenne through which one of its officials would provide career/training guidance for 16- 25 year olds several times a week at the *Centre de Resources.*

(B) Organisation/provision of training programmes: cooperation with the local firms and employers, whereby *Centre de Resources* staff visit regularly the local firms in order to identify their needs, in terms of training for existing employees or qualification required of future employees; cooperation with the training establishments through which the *Centre de Resources* works in collaboration with different training organisations in order to widen the supply of training that is adapted both to the needs of the local population in general and of employees, in particular. Several types of training courses are provided on the premises of the *Centre de Resources* by different training organisations, each of which pays for the use of the facilities. Training provided by the *Centre de Resources* includes: continuing vocational training; basic skills training (maths, French, biology, accounting); information technology/computer use; foreign languages; course related to employment/social integration; specific "certification" courses; finally, tailor-made training workshops[30] are offered to the population according to their expressed needs.

(C) Assistance to the unemployed: a job seeker's club was created in 1997 as part of a wider national programme instigated by the National Job Centre. This is a new service the aim of which is to offer individual and collective support to the unemployed, and to help them define a career or occupational project, develop letter- and CV-writing skills.

(D) Economic development initiatives: despite the complexity of the political situation, and the institutional arrangements, the *Centre de Resources* tries to work with the other local development organisations and especially the services of the "Pays du Haut Maine et Pail", to promote the local economic development. The aim is to attract new firms and employers into the area, the "Pays" being in charge of economic development, and the *Centre de Resources* the training aspects. A business start-up club has been created (as part of a national network of 150 such groups) in which young people create a virtual firm and simulate its development; the aim is both to expose

---

29.   the acronym for France's network of Job Centres, *l'Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi.*

30.   APPs, or *ateliers pdagogiques personnaliss*

young people to the real demands of running their own business, and to identify and design the type of training that would best suit their requirements.

Opinions of young people on the labour market and on their professional integration difficulties

The scale of the local employment opportunities

The amount of the local employment available was mentioned as one of the primary reasons for young people to remain in the region. Some suggested that the local labour market provides more scope than elsewhere, and that therefore there is no point in leaving.

> "There is plenty of work here. You just need to register at a temporary job agency." (Frank, male, 24 years old)

However, the local job market favours young males much more than females, compounding the difficulties of women who want to build a career. Several young female interviewees mentioned this type of situation, explaining that they could not envisage moving away, as their husband or partner had a job in the area. This was particularly true for Eleonore whose boyfriend is a farmer:

> "I'm currently training as a secretary, and work at the Alençon hospital. I enjoy it very much, but I'd rather work for a municipality or a small firm (...) I'll start writing letters in February and see what comes up: but I'm not really mobile, because my boyfriend lives in Javron, where he's a farmer. We'll probably stay together, and maybe he'll need me to help him with the accounting, but in any case I won't work with him all the time. I'll see (...) While I can see myself staying here and having a family, I want a job – a stable situation." (Eleonore, female, 23 years old)

The predominance of temporary factory jobs

The study area is characterised by a low level of unemployment, which can be explained by at least two main factors: the local availability of factory work, and extensive out-migration. While there are 4 or 5 relatively large factories that provide a significant number of unskilled jobs in the locality, a large part of the population of working age – in particular, the most highly qualified – has already left the region in search of better employment prospects.

Many of the larger local factories offer unskilled jobs, most of which are temporary. Local business and institutional actors stressed that the development of temporary jobs has greatly increased over the last 2 or 3 years. Thus it is quite easy for young people to find holiday work while still students, and more permanent employment when they leave school if they have some kind of qualification. A number of respondents explained that there were few problems in being offered such work, either via a temporary job agency, or on the recommendation of parents or other family members already working in the firms in question.

> "In general, young people always manage to find work here, as long as they're a bit resourceful. I know 2 people who work in factories: it's clear that they don't like the job, but they're doing it just to earn some money. I don't know anyone who's having a hard time, being unemployed. You don't need to leave the region to find a job." (Adrienne, female, 19 years old)

However, the plentiful supply of low skill, often temporary jobs also has negative effects. Some young people may be more reluctant to pursue their studies, because they know that they can find a job easily; some may even be tempted to interrupt their studies, in order to begin earning. One young woman explained the impact of local job opportunities on her own employment pathway in the following terms:

> "I know I should never have taken this job. Once you start, it's very hard to stop, because you're earning money. Before, I was dynamic, full of ambition. Since I've been at the factory, I've kind of fallen asleep. You need lots of courage to change, and be willing to take a risk. It's a hard step to take." (Marie, female, 20 years old)

Another problem with temporary jobs is that they maintain young people in a situation of great precariousness, with few opportunities for career development. Local institutional actors seemed worried about these changes in the labour market; moreover, they explained that the media propagate a very ambiguous image of Mayenne: employers are encouraged to believe that the region has a substantial supply of docile and compliant labour that is relatively undemanding in terms of wages. Counsellors and trainers try to warn young people of the precarious nature of these jobs, and to persuade them to study in fields where more qualified and more "secure" jobs already exist, or are likely to emerge in the future.

A large proportion of the young people contacted had experience of working in these factories, at some point or another in their employment pathway; indeed, some were working there at the time of interview. Many admitted that it was an easy way to earn some money, though the work itself was usually of minimal interest. However some had managed to find a skilled post

in the factory sector, and seemed quite happy with the work. They described the pleasant working conditions, the friendly relations that existed among employees, and the good atmosphere that existed in the firm. A 23 year-old woman who has settled in the region with her boyfriend and bought a house, was pleased to have found an interesting skilled job, after a succession of varied and unsatisfactory experiences:

> "The job centre contacted me. It was to substitute for someone on maternity leave. They needed somebody for a bilingual commercial job. I worked 6 weeks, and now I have a permanent contract. I work with clients, and it matches what I wanted to do. You have to think, and the pay is fair. My boss is the same age as me, so it's mainly young people working there, and there's a good atmosphere. If you need help, there's always someone." (Catherine, female, 23 years old)

There a difference of perception appears to exist with regard to the local labour market: local actors focus on the negative aspects of factory jobs, while young people have a more positive view of local employment conditions and opportunities. It seems that these young people, who have grown up during the years of high unemployment, have lower expectations and can be satisfied with any kind of job whatsoever, whereas local institutional actors consider the breadth, quality and stability of the local job supply to be inadequate.

A lack of scope and choice in the local job market?

Reflecting, to some extent, the concerns of local institutional actors, a number of respondents did suggest that the lack of choice constituted the main employment problem: due to the economic trends to which the region has been subjected in recent years, the local economic structure and labour market remains dominated by agriculture and by low-skilled factory jobs.

> "Young people with no qualifications, and who come from farming families or whose parents are unskilled workers, may be able to find temporary jobs in some of the local factories, as long as they have access to some sort of transport of their own. But they'll never to do anything other than production line jobs. Those with vocational qualifications in agriculture may be able to find something, too. In Mayenne, most of the income comes from agriculture, and there are even some young farmers who settle here. But for highly qualified people like me, it's not even worth trying – there's no point in deluding yourself. If you're not a farmer, or a factory worker, or a service worker, you haven't got a chance". (Stephanie, female, 25 years old)

Moreover, the relatively small number of jobs in private services and commerce in the area was also mentioned as an obstacle to a successful transition to satisfactory employment.

> "I enjoyed working in the bakery. I wanted to do another practical job placement so I could do the CAP[31]   , but it didn't happen. I wrote loads of letters in September, but I only had 3 answers. One said he could only take me at weekends, so I wasn't interested. I'm waiting to hear about another – standing in for someone on maternity leave – but it's by no means a certainty."
> (Isabelle, female, 21 years old)

Several young people who mentioned that the lack of skilled jobs led many either to leave the region, or to accept a job below their qualifications, suggested that it is a more a question of luck to find a job in line with one's expectations.

> "We were lucky. But I know lots of people who work in factories even though they've got some kind of vocational qualification. They have to accept what there is, because there aren't enough skilled jobs. Just take a look in any of the factories: they're full of over-qualified people." (Catherine, female, 23 years old)

Some respondents pointed to the lack of practical experience among the more highly qualified as an obstacle to finding appropriate employment. One young woman who had studied biology for 4 years explained the problems she had faced when she began to look for work locally.

> "I wrote plenty of letters but I always got rejections. I applied for posts that more or less matched my profile, and that were available locally, i.e. State funded jobs in the environmental sector. I think the reasons I was turned down was that I was overqualified, didn't have enough training, and had no practical experience in the sector."
> (Stephanie, female, 25 years old)

Finally, many interviewees expressed a general feeling of dissatisfaction with the local labour market, noting that young people felt under pressure to accept jobs they did not really want, mainly due to the fear of unemployment.

> "All my friends work. I don't know anyone who's unemployed. But there are big problems here. Many people have taken the first job they were offered, and now they're not satisfied at all. Out of 20 of my friends, a large majority wants to change and are looking for

---

31. The *Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle*, or skilled workers qualification.

something else. I think it's the same everywhere: it's because of the unemployment problem." (Pierre, male, 22 years old)

Intersectoral wage differentials

There are quite diverse opinions concerning the wages offered in different types of jobs: some young people complained that the wages were low while others seemed quite satisfied. In the local factories, the wages are usually considered to be more or less satisfactory, while in other sectors (such as private services, commerce or restaurants), the pay seems to be lower.

> "I work in a pizzeria. My work has changed in the last 6 months: I still do the washing up but I also make pizzas now. It's OIK, I enjoy it. I think I'll stay there for 2 or 3 years, and then I'll see. It's quite hard work, you work long hours and you're only paid the SMIC[32]. It bothers me that I'm not better paid." (Claire, female, 24 years old).

Some interviewees expressed a certain realism concerning wages, and considered that pay more or less corresponds to the type of work on offer, especially in the case of some factory jobs. Nevertheless, opinions varied according to the age, family situation and housing conditions of those interviewed. Those living with parents often had, quite naturally, a different opinion from the others.

> "Mine is a production job. It's not what I want to do at all, but it's well paid, for what I do. I don't think I'll stay here: I still live with my parents, so I can save some money for later, when I can maybe do something different." (Marie, female, 20 years old)

One young woman explained that what she earned was less important than whether or not the job was interesting:

> "I don't want more money. What I want is to do something more interesting. I think that even if you need the money, it is a secondary issue" (Claire, female, 24 years old)

Long hours, shift work and child-care

Many young people complained about the difficult working conditions and long hours associated, in particular, with factory employment, but also affecting other situations, such as those working in the hotel and restaurant sector, as well as young people studying full-time, or participating in full-time work placement or similar programmes:

---

32.   The minimum wage for industry and commerce.

> "I did the washing up in a restaurant. But I quit. It was really too hard: there were pans everywhere, and so I had to work flat out all the time. Sometimes I'd only get to bed at 4 or 5 in the morning and then I'd have to get up again at 8. That, I wasn't prepared to take, so I resigned." (Nathalie, female, 24 years old)

The demands of shift work in factories that operate on a 3 x 8-hour shift basis, complicate family life, particularly for young women with children, especially if they have to start work early in the morning or do not finish until late at night.

> "The working hours were too difficult, I was always tired and got totally fed up. The work itself was boring too: you didn't need to think. It was complicated as far as my daughter was concerned, as well. She knew I wouldn't arrive until late and so she wouldn't go to sleep until I came home. Also, I simply couldn't find a child minder who'd accept those working hours." (Karine, female, 25 years old)

Young people who have moved to the area, or whose parents have moved away, face particular difficulties if they accept factory work:

> "Childcare is a problem when you don't have any family around. There are no neighbourhood networks. Maybe if I was living in an apartment in Pré en Pail, it would be OK, but I live in the countryside. If a job meant starting at five in the morning, I wouldn't be able to take it. I'd probably have to find part time work." (Françoise, female, 25 years old)

Several women explained that it that they drew support from their mother, mother-in-law or other members of the family, to ensure that childcare was provided However, when the children grow up and go to school, other problems emerge, as one young woman indicated:

> "At the beginning it was my mum who took care of my child. She took her with her wherever she went. In the meantime I started going out with a new boyfriend, and then it was his mother who looked after my daughter. Now she's at school. She goes by taxi paid by the Département. I take her to the taxi and then I go to go off to study. In the afternoon, it's the child minder who fetches her. She was hard to find: there are not many of them, and there's a big demand." (Catherine, female, 23 years old)

The general feeling of uncertainty and insecurity

Another problem that was often mentioned by interviewees concerns their feeling of uncertainty about their future and their career. Many had little or no idea of what kind of occupation or profession they really would like to have.

> "Ever since I was 15, I'd wanted to be a nurse, but that didn't work out. Before, I knew exactly what I wanted to be: a nurse – nothing else. Now I'm rather lost and hesitant. I'll have to do some research to find out what other kind of training I could do." (Marie, female, 20 years old)

This situation is directly related to the fact that many interviewees had plans that did not work out. These failures were characterised in various terms by the respondents: they were either the result of bad guidance, a wrong choice, a lack of information on what occupations might be open, a mismatch between expectations and local labour market conditions, or simply a lack of realism.

> "I wanted to work with dogs, I studied for that and got a specific qualification. But I didn't find a job: it seems there are no career openings. I looked all over France. I was really determined but it was all in vain. Now I work here in a factory. I want to change, but I don't know what to do." (Anne, female, 24 years old)

Difficulty in deciding what career path to pursue is sometimes due to the contradiction between the desire to find an interesting job, and the wish to stay in the area.

> "I tried to find a training course that I would enjoy. We may know what we'd like to do, but all that's available here are dead-end jobs. I'd like to sell flowers, if that were possible, but that type of work is hard to find. Here, it's not very likely to happen. Now I'm married and have a child, I can't move too far." (Françoise, female, 25 years old)

Several young people did stress the difficulty of leaving the area: the presence of the family, of friends, and the attachment to their home region make the decision to leave all the harder.

> "I have some very good friends here – strong relationships. But I try not to get too attached to them, otherwise it will be even more difficult to leave." (Marie, female, 20 years old)

Opinions and perceptions of young people on the services offered by the local structures

Training experiences: the uneven quality of supply

Several of the respondents who had entered vocational training soon after the end of their compulsory schooling, explained that it was difficult to find an employer for the practical part of the training required for certification.

> "I wanted to train to be a veterinarian assistant, but I had to find an employer, and it was very hard to find a vet. I tried all sorts of things: I even went to the very south of the Dpartement. I used some of my contacts but they didn't need anyone for the next 10 years. It's was a complete dead end." (Claire, female, 24 years old)

Some respondents suggested that many firms employ young people on practical work experience contracts, without respecting the rules or at least with little consideration for the trainees. The overlapping and interrelated problems of uneven quality of the training, low wages, and high trainee turnover were prominent among the complaints young people made.

> "I had a qualification contract with a small department store. I did two training courses: the first was really bad, but the second was good. In the first, there were no real classes, and everybody passed the examination. It was joke. During the second course, we studied maths and accountancy, had to hand in work every week, and there was a real point to it. Some firms really abuse these contracts: even if you work 50 hours, they just pay you the minimum. In some shops, they fire the trainee after a year, and then recruit another one on the same basis." (Colombe, female, 22 years old)

Several interviewees, after dropping out of university, or finishing general studies, had sought more practical vocational training. Some used the various services offered by the *Centre de Resources* to help define their career project before undertaking a training course. One young woman who studied four years at university explained how she began training again, after an unsuccessful job search.

> "I looked everywhere for a job, except for Paris and Lyons, which I'd ruled out from at the very start. I was getting really fed up, and began to rethink some of my basic assumptions. I said to myself: I'll go back to school and do some vocational training, something really practical that will get me a job quickly, and that fits in with my career aims. (...) For a long time I'd thought of starting my own business. That's why I trained in horticulture production. I found this school, at Saint Brieuc: I got the address here at the Centre de Resources." (Stephanie, female, 25 years old)

Very few of the interviewees began vocational training after an initial experience of employment. One problem seems be that there is a lack of information both on the training available and on the corresponding job opportunities. Many interviewees suggested that, while they would be prepared to participate in training, they did not really know what field would be appropriate. Furthermore, those currently working expressed a certain fear of the future and were reluctant to quit unsatisfactory jobs to enter training, because they did not know what opportunities might present themselves afterwards.

> "I'm working in a factory now. It's OK, it's varied, and helps to pass the time. At least you're busy. But in the long run, I'd like to see if I can find something else. If I do, I'd be glad, but there's no guarantee. If I only knew exactly what I wanted, I'd be able to find a training centre. They're everywhere. One thing I do like is working with flowers; but then again, it's not so easy to find a place. I've tried to find some training that I'd like, but I didn't really know where to go. And, if it's something you like, you can be sure there'll be nothing available." (Anne, female, 24 years old)

It should be emphasised that some of our interviewees have experienced a series of failures, and are quite uncertain about their capacities, let alone their real desires. Many young people in this situation are first directed to the *Centre de Resources*, where they can receive counselling and/or undergo training aimed specifically at more successful employment integration. By way of example, a young woman interviewee who had undertaken an individual guidance course define to her career project more clearly, articulated the following fears and concerns:

> "After my experience in the old people's home, I felt a failure, and that hurt me. I tried to find something else, but nothing came up. Now I'm thinking more of the services sector. When I was young, I dreamed of being a hairdresser. But I'll never manage it now. I'm too old – 25 – so it's too late. I never dared tell this to the trainers. I'm afraid to be disappointed again. I'm afraid of not being able to do it. You have to take examinations, but maybe I should take the plunge." (Françoise, female, 25 years old)

The multiplicity of local structures responsible for social and occupational integration

Young people feel that, most of the time, the National Job Centre is not of much help to them; this is not so surprising, because adults constitute its priority public. In contrast, other structures such as the PAIO, which specifically targets the 16-25 age group, as well as the *Centre de Resources*, were described as being very useful.

Nevertheless, the two structures do work together. PAIO counsellors first provide basic information to young job seekers, who then can be referred, if necessary, to the *Centre de Resources*. Interviewees stressed the efficient way in which these two structures collaborated, as well as the patience and receptive attitude of counsellors and trainers alike.

> "The counsellor puts you at ease and helps you. It's a comfort to know that someone is taking care of you." (Pierrick, male, 20 years old)

Moreover, young people greatly appreciated both the quantity and the quality of the information offered on the different professions and job opportunities at the *Centre de Resources*. Some explained that access to computers and to the internet, provided by the *Centre*, allowed them both to search for jobs and to write letters of application.

> "It's great. We all know this place. It offers lots of different things: information on job vacancies, and so on. The staff is welcoming, and the people from the National Job Centre come once a week. And here it's easy and convenient to do training courses on basic skills." (David, male, 19 years old)

Most of the interviewees who had been unemployed for long periods, had very positive opinions about the *Centre*, and of the specialist guidance courses people in their circumstances had been able to follow.

> "I had been unemployed for 4 or 5 months and, as I didn't have the CAP, it was hard to find anything. I went to see several bakeries but there was nothing available. So I followed a preparation course for 3 or 4 months. There were also job seekers' courses on how to write a letter or to do a CV. We also did some basic skills – French and maths. It was interesting and it's very useful when you don't have to manage on your own." (Colombe, female, 22 years old)

The quality of the services offered by the Centre de Resources

The *Centre de Resources* does not offer certified occupation training as such, but a wide variety of integration courses, according to the situation and needs of its users: short term training courses which focus on basic and fundamental skills, such as French, Maths, or computer skills, as well as different types of courses for employment integration and occupational preparation. The *Centre* aims to assist those in most difficulty to define a career project, and help others who just need support in getting back into the labour market. A large number of respondents have used these services:

> "I dropped out of university and looked for a job. I worked in a factory for a year and a half, but then I decided to take my career in

> hands, and train again. First I did a skills assessment course, then some vocational preparation with the ANPE to define my career project, along with some practical placements, too. That's when I discovered the secretarial and management world. I had a practical placement for a month and a half in an accountancy office. I knew then that this type of work was for me. So I looked for a training course. I had to learn the methods from first principles, even though I had the bac. So now I'm doing a secretarial course for adults, and preparing myself to do the vocational exam." (Eleonore, female, 23 years old)

Several interviewees suggested that one of the advantages of the orientation and integration courses provided by the *Centre* has to do with the periods of practical placement in firms, which are very helpful in defining individual career project.

> "I'd worked several times in factories, but it was always short term. Then I worked for a year in an old people's home, but I stopped for a year because I had to have 3 operations. After, I did a training course at the Centre de Resources – an APPERC[33] that lasted 5 months. We were 15 days in the training centre and then 3 weeks on practical placement. I went to an interior decorator's, to a bakery in Villaines, and to an insurance agency. The course was great: we talked about our practical experiences, how they had gone, and so on. I learnt a lot. It made us better prepared for employment." (Isabelle, female, 21 years old)

Some of the better-informed young people seemed to combine all the options offered by the *Centre*. Each time they finished a contract, or found themselves unemployed for one reason or another, they would go to the *Centre de Resources* and find the most relevant service or training, according to their situation.

> "It's the social worker who told me to get in touch with the Centre de Resources. They offered me a fundamental skills course in French for 2 or 3 months. (...) We could choose our own timetable and then had to work on our own. After that I stayed at home for a while before starting a computer course here, lasting about 6 weeks. I thought that if I spoke English, improved my French and got to know a bit about computers, I might have more chance of finding something interesting." (Catherine, female, 23 years old)

---

33.   APPERC (Atelier Permanent de Prparation l'Emploi et de Recherche de Contrats) : vocational preparation course.

A number of respondents also mentioned the advantage of being able to discuss and swap experiences and ideas with other people confronting similar situations. One young woman described the positive support she had received from other young people, while she was looking for a job.

> "I knew the Centre de Resources, so I thought that, instead of staying on my own at home, trying to find something without knowing exactly where to look, there were people there who could help me. I also wanted to meet people in the same kind of situation as me, because a big part of the problem of the countryside is isolation. So if you are basically a very sociable person, used to being surrounded by people, it's very difficult to find yourself in a situation of unemployment and isolation." (Stephanie, female, 25 years old)

Conclusion

It is interesting to compare, on the one hand, the objective elements which characterise the economic and social situation of Mayenne, and, on the other hand, the opinions of the young people living there. If some comments clearly illustrate the employment difficulties that many young people face, a number of other remarks stress the very strong attachment many young people have for their home region, however difficult living there may be.

The opinions and perceptions of the interviewees can be partly explained by the general context of rural areas in France. Indeed, since 1975, all the censuses show an economic and demographic renewal of rural areas. However, this phenomenon does not affect the whole country to the same extent, and some areas are still marked by out-migration and therefore by a secular decline, such as in Mayenne. If urban spread and rural suburbanisation is one of the major reasons for the renewal of the countryside, it has to be remembered that it is primarily those rural areas close to the more dynamic cities that are becoming attractive for urbanites who would prefer to settle in a more natural and peaceful environment while retaining their job in town. Given the common view, regularly highlighted by the media, that the rural areas are becoming ever more popular and that the demographic trends of the past may well be on the way to being reversed, people can now say without embarrassment they love living in the countryside, a view that, 30 years ago, was much less likely to be voiced, or heard.

Even if the local job market in Mayenne does not appear very favourable for young people who face many problems in finding skilled jobs or training courses, and who must often accept difficult working conditions, there does

seem to exist a strong attachment to the area. Moreover, the various local development policies and measures that have been undertaken in recent years have led to the creation of several very efficient local structures that generally do have a positive impact in preventing the social and labour market exclusion of rural young people.

Nevertheless, in the months immediately following the interview process, this area has experienced several shifts in its economic context, such as the closing down or relocation to other regions of several large firms, which has radically affected labour market conditions. The successful integration of young people into satisfactory employment is now markedly more difficult than during our interviews, with an even stronger decrease in the availability of skilled jobs. For their part, local institutions and organisations have responded by stepping up their efforts to promote labour market and social integration; currently new projects are being defined as part of the LEADER+ programme, and will be implemented under the auspices of yet another local development structure, the Pays de Haute Mayenne.

References

Auclair.E ; Durand.F : « Les conditions d'accès au premier emploi des jeunes en milieu rural », in *Recherche Sociale*, n°130, 1994

Auclair.E, Benjamin.R, Mengin.J : « Devenir de l'espace rural français », in *Recherche Sociale* n°115, 1992

Dossier : « Des dispositifs d'accueil des jeunes », in *Recherche Sociale*, n°150, 1999

Dossier : « Formation professionnelle et insertion », in *Recherche Sociale*, n°149, 1999

Dossier : « La dynamique des territoires », n°254, 1998

Dossier : « Le monde rural en mouvement », in *Territoires* hors série n°398 bis, mai 1999

Dossier : « Le rural en mouvement », in *Sciences de la société*, n°45, 1998

E.Auclair, D.Vanoni : « Le logement et l'insertion en milieu rural des exclus de la ville », in *Recherche Sociale*, n° 145, 1998

Galland.O, Lambert.Y : *Les jeunes ruraux*, FNSP-CNRS-INRA, Paris, 1990

Gavignaud Fontaine.G : *La révolution rurale dans la France contemporaine*, L'harmattan, Paris, 1996

Hervieu.B, Viard.J : *Au bonheur des campagnes*, Editions de l'AUBE, 1996

Mathieu.N : *L'emploi rural, une vitalité cachée*, L'Harmattan, 1995

Rose.J : *Les jeunes face à l'emploi*, Ed Desclée de Brower, 1998

Sauvage.P : « Insertion des jeunes et modernisation », *Economica*, 1998

Schmitt.B : *Les campagnes et leurs villes*, INRA-INSEE, Paris, 1998

Vanoni. D : «Le logement des personnes défavorisées», in *Recherche Sociale*, n° 156, 2000

6.   Youth participation in rural society in Murau, Austria

Ingrid Machold, Thomas Dax, Christine Meisinger

Introduction

Concern over the limited opportunities for employment that the rural economy offers young people, and the implications for rural socio-economic and cultural viability, has turned the attention of policy analysts to this key social group and to the particular processes of social exclusion from which it may suffer under these specific regional conditions.

Taking a bottom-up perspective, this chapter focuses on the views of young people regarding their participation in local and regional public life. The findings of our research suggest that how young people access opportunities to participate in local public life influences to a great extent their attitudes and the personal well being they derive from living and working in the region. It also has an impact on their decisions to stay or leave. Participation has therefore to be understood not merely in the strict, limited sense of formal civic involvement in local/regional life, but also by investing the concept with a more general meaning that encompasses different aspects of local society, such as participation in associations, the opportunities to take part in decision-making processes that are both youth-relevant (such as provision of meeting-points and other leisure time facilities) and of broader scope (relating to local development issues as a whole). The chapter starts with a presentation of the policy background, particularly with regard to educational and labour market provision for young people, and highlights the situation in the Austrian study area in particular. It continues with an investigation of the regional social system and the opportunities for young people to participate, exploring the extent to which young people feel

attached to their region, their expectations regarding local institutions and local development, as well as their evaluation of the performance of local associations and organisational structures most relevant for young people.

Policy background

This section provides a short overview of the location and the economic profile of the Austrian study area and its regional policy background, particularly with regard to its educational and labour market conditions for young people.

The study area

The empirical study was carried out in a peripheral mountain region of Austria, more precisely Murau, in Styria. This region is particularly characterised by its remoteness and low population density and a weak performance in terms of virtually all economic indicators. In relation to other comparable regions, the situation seems to have deteriorated over the last few decades. Until the beginning of the 1990s, the high birth rate compensated for the persistent out-migration flow, but demographic projections suggest that the percentage of young people in the population will decrease considerably from 16.4% in 1991 to 10.6% by 2021.

Murau is isolated from the main road system and barely connected to the train network, which has had a restrictive effect on the development of local industry and enterprise. The lack of a regional dynamic is manifested in a rather slower-than-average shift of emphasis from primary (and secondary) sector(s) to service activities. Murau is thus one of the few Austrian regions where agriculture still occupies a considerable share of the active labour force (20% in 1991); on the other hand, tourism is still of much less importance than would be expected in a mountain region such as this.

Education and labour market conditions for young people

With regard to the educational and labour market conditions, Murau can be characterised as an area of rather restricted opportunities for young people. Considering that the 1998 unemployment rate was only 7,7%, the employment situation cannot be considered as suffering from obvious and urgent problems, though there are some significant developments that are worth a closer look.

In the 1970s, Austria made considerable efforts to increase the educational level of the rural areas through a significant and rapid extension of school infrastructure. In many respects, this policy achieved its aim by closing the gap between urban and rural educational levels. Latterly, however, the participation of young people aged 15 – 24 in education has not continued to expand at the same rate and even stagnated during the 1980s. In Murau, only about 20% of young men and 28% of young women are in education, which is comparatively modest by developed country standards.

There are two types of high schools in the district of Murau which lead to the qualification certificate that enables young people to enter university: the Professional High School for domestic science (study of subjects concerned with household skills) and the General High School, both of which are located in the capital of the district. Other types of schools are located in contiguous regions and in the neighbouring province of Carinthia (such as the *gymnasiums*, technical high schools, and commercial high schools). This rather limited regional supply of schooling is determinant in the structure of educational opportunities faced by the young people interviewed in the study. During compulsory schooling, for example, there is no question of attending any school other than the local one; for the latter stages of secondary education, interviewees' choice is wider, yet still determined by what the region has to offer, with the physical proximity of the facilities playing a decisive role in the final choice.

In addition to the determining role played by the relatively limited regional supply of school facilities, young people's participation in education and vocational training is characterised to a large degree by gender specific patterns and attitudes. Men tend to decide on dual vocational training (apprenticeships), while women aim at formal higher education. Only a third of young women manage to find an apprenticeship place in the study area, while about 60% of young men undertake apprenticeships, thereby gaining an advantage in successfully integrating themselves into the local labour market.

Gender specific patterns can also be detected both in the professions that young people select after their apprenticeship and in the gender distribution by type of post filled (i.e. what the local labour market offers). About 53% of male apprentices are concentrated in 10 professions, whereas 78% of female apprentices account for the 10 most often-selected professions. Moreover, women tend to occupy a narrower range of relatively similar occupational categories, mainly restricted to service activities. The division between barely overlapping "male" and "female" craft spheres has been perpetuated for a long time and there still exists very little change in gender patterns. Although there are complaints about the shortage of apprenticeship places in general, the situation for young women seem to be even

worse. In traditional female professions training places are rare, while in traditionally "male professions", female aspirants get no access, even if they show a high level of motivation and interest.

The characteristics of the labour market are rather inimical to young people, a fact that goes hand in hand with the prevalence of low paid jobs in the region. Besides jobs in agriculture, forestry, crafts and some employment in the service sector and tourism, demand, especially for young people with higher education, is low. The high (and still increasing) number of commuters in the region also helps to explain the rather tight local labour market. Increasingly, young people have to take up jobs in locations so distant that daily commuting is not feasible. By 1991 the share of non-daily commuters in Murau's active labour force had reached about 30% and for young people aged between 16 and 25, it was significantly higher at almost 39% and it is likely that over the past decade, the need to commute long distances has increased. Clearly, the intense pressure on young people to commute to jobs outside the study area has a detrimental impact on the job prospects and quality of life of young people in the wider region, by further intensifying what is already a highly competitive situation.

Participation in public life

From the outset, a key assumption of the study was that young people's aspirations and decisions are an outcome of both economic *and* social factors. However, in the empirical work, an attempt was made to elucidate elements of the social dimension that often tend to be overlooked when addressing the question of exclusion. Hence, one of the central issues of the study was the investigation of the participation of rural young people in all areas of community life. Taking this wide-ranging approach, tendencies towards integration or exclusion cannot be assessed merely on the basis of criteria related to the "political" dimension, but only by extending the analysis to additional different spheres of experience in both public (and private) life (Shucksmith 2000). The recognition that involvement in public activities is heavily influenced by social factors that are, in turn, shaped to a considerable extent by the influences of family and social networks, had an impact on the analysis: the researchers therefore tried to look also at the role of particular types of general societal forces, but also at specific features and attitudes of groups of young people.

Young people's perception of the region

One of the most outstanding findings of the research was that the interviewees demonstrate considerable fondness for their region, despite its economic weaknesses and remote location. Young people associate the opportunity to continuously experience a "pristine" natural environment and landscape, through sporting and other recreational activities, as conducive to good health. They are conscious of living in a very special environment and most are proud of it, even those who may be planning to leave the region.

> "I love living in the countryside. I appreciate the pure nature and the opportunities for all sorts of sports. All my hobbies are related to these things: I ski, swim, hunt, and go biking. Here you can do everything. If there's a chance to stay in this region, then I'll live here forever." (Herbert, 25 years, male)

Another dominant impression is the widespread feeling of warmth and security and the high degree of confidence provided by the fact that, in this type of rural context, *"everyone knows everybody"*. This viewpoint is so common that it could be deemed a "cultural" trait, the corollary of which is the often-expressed dislike of the anonymity encountered in cities.

On the one hand, young people view very positively the intensity, continuity and reliability of social contacts within a community: without making a special effort, contacts can be maintained with a wide range of friends and acquaintances whose paths cross regularly in the street, in shops and offices and in pubs. While young people living in the smaller villages referred particularly to this as an important positive element, the same sentiments often "travel" with young people when they move away temporarily: for example, one young woman from Murau, studying in a neighbouring city at the time of interview, remarked that it was much easier to meet new people and cultivate contacts in a village than in a town. Besides appreciating the security of living in a familiar environment, young people showed satisfaction with the functioning of family ties and networks based on friendship: in particular, young mothers valued the advantage of having their family around to help them in daily life (childcare, for example) but also in emergencies, when emotional support was needed.

However, from the younger generation's standpoint, this positive image of small communities has another less attractive aspect: young people may well come to feel restricted and hindered by the strict forms of social control that the older generation in general may exercise. Thus one side of the coin consists of the fact that "everyone knows everybody", while the other is that "everyone knows *everything about* everybody". Some young people relate that everything that they do is noticed and discussed by the village commu-

nity, and that this often leads to the unpleasant feeling of being watched and controlled. In particular, such a critical assessment has been experienced by a group of young people that has now become to some extent "external" to the region, having moved to Vienna. Their views shed light on the situation of those young people who dislike the closeness of traditional rural society. As they are no longer exposed to the permanent scrutiny of the local community, they are able to formulate their views and criticisms more openly. An unemployed young mother, asked to comment on the advantages of her home region and her views about perhaps moving to the city, referred to both sides of the experience of such close community relations:

> "The most positive side is the small town. Yes. A little bit of warmth and security. More security than in a city, let's say, if you have a child. With a child it's easier in a small town (…). [City life?] Yes, definitely. It's the way most people live nowadays. Each year I spend a few weeks in Munich (Germany) (…). Even if you only look at education, there are more chances for children. I'd like it anyway, it's much more anonymous than these small towns (like Murau), they're terrible." (Elisa, 24 years, female, one child)

(Non) Institutional structures of youth involvement

Though cultural opportunities, and in particular modern youth culture, are scarce and hardly developed in the region, most youngsters interviewed are satisfied with the possibilities for leisure activities, with the exception of experiencing a lack of places, such as youth centres, where young people can meet outside the immediate authority of adults and without consumerist pressures. Young people's overall positive assessment of their leisure opportunities tended to give the greatest emphasis to involvement in sports groups and conventional cultural events.

When asked to define "local community activities" everyone immediately points to the existing local associations and different local groups, such as the music association, voluntary fire brigade, the rural youth movement, the catholic youth movement, different sports clubs, and so on. Local community activities concentrate heavily on traditional tasks and activities that barely differ from one organisation to the other. Typically, such associations have a strong internal hierarchy, in which adults – and mainly male adults – take the decisions and the younger members undertake the activities and adopt the functions accordingly. Young people – whose participation in such associations is strongly induced by the socialisation process characteristic of small towns and villages – accept this type of structure as given, and join them on terms that have been handed down from previous generations. These young people are mostly from what might be called well-integrated

families, so it comes as no surprise that their involvement in such local activities is not seen explicitly as "participation", but simply as part of everyday life in their rural area.

The rather personal and particularistic nature of access, and the gradual development of their objectives and rules over time, means that those who, for some reason or another, find themselves at a greater "distance" from such organisations and institutions, have greater difficulty integrating themselves. Young people who have not been "initiated" into the existing organisations by their parents, to some extent may regard themselves (and indeed be regarded) as "outsiders" and have to overcome both existing members' and their own psychological barriers if they are to enter the groups and feel accepted.

Indeed, associations are so significant in integrating young people into local community structures and traditions (Böhnisch and Funk 1989: 210), that local leaders and opinion-makers have a vested interest in reaching out to young people in order to tie them to the existing traditional structures and to secure continuity in the life of the community. Among these organisations, the "rural youth movement", in particular, plays a key role in perpetuating local ways of life. It is therefore not surprising that almost every expression of culture still seems to be deeply rooted in local tradition and the sense of "belonging". Numerous young people of the conservative "rural youth movement", among others, apparently still cling to such cultural patterns and are neither touched, let alone attracted, by modern, world-wide trends.

> "Traditional activities such as folk dancing and "Schuhplattln"[34] are just good fun, that's all. They're the sort of thing we can do by ourselves in the rural youth group. Just as long as I can have fun and be together with my friends, I'm happy." (Franz, 22 years, male)

Long ago, the formerly popular "Catholic Rural Youth" groups of the past all but disappeared. Where they still function, the movement is accepted by the rural community and by a limited proportion of young people as just another rural youth organisation. Young, highly committed local organisers are now trying to re-establish some local groups themselves, yet it seems that they have to face the difficulty of grouping together enough young people and opposing secularisation trends in society by which ever greater sections of (even rural) society have lost interest in, or altogether reject, religious activities.

---

34. Traditional dance of men who clap the rhythm with their shoes.

There are a number of other quite specific obstacles to higher levels of participation in youth organisations. One the one hand, there appears to be a very limited range of different organisations and, on the other, a lack of dedicated places for youth groups to meet. Young people don't feel in the least encouraged to take the initiative to organise themselves. Among adults, it is likely that there is considerable mistrust of any type of youth group that does not fit into the traditional pattern or form of organisations. Again, among those young people who had already left the study area, references were made to the "monumental" problems with the local bureaucracy and political elite if young people propose any sort of "unconventional" youth group or event (e.g. rock concert, youth disco). Furthermore, finding a meeting place for regular youth events is no easy matter: in some communities, youth associations have to pay to use a public room (such as the school gymnasium) for their weekly meetings. Despite the demand for such facilities among those not interested in the traditional forms of youth associations, differentiating (i.e. youth-only) institutions and specific meeting points for young people, with limited constraints and social control, are practically unavailable in Murau. Respondents had a fairly clear idea of the type of facilities that were missing:

> "Somewhere to meet, where you don't have to buy anything or feel obliged to drink. Not that I'd object to alcohol being available, but under supervision. [Maybe] a sort of youth centre, but with no one saying 'Behave yourselves. Be quiet. Don't play loud music' all the time." (Elisabeth, 18 years, female)

There seems to be a positive correlation between higher employment integration (including attending higher school levels) and involvement in local youth organisations. The feeling that there is no appropriate youth group available in their area and there is widespread perplexity among young people – particularly the unemployed – about how to overcome this problem. At any rate, it is widely thought that further efforts to increase youth participation are more or less pointless, since most will either have to leave or start to commute due to the demands of education, training or employment. This prospect dampens the already low level of public commitment to the promotion of self-organised activities, perpetuates "organisational lethargy" and encourages the growth of more individualist consumerist attitudes.

Leisure time activities and facilities

Outside the context of more formally-organised associations, young people tend to socialise in small informal groups, practising sports together or visiting pubs, local inns and/or discos or going shopping. In recent years, their entertainment has adopted a more consumerist character. This trend has

been influenced and accentuated by the fact that there is no attractive meeting point or youth centre in the region where young people have a space where they can gather without the obligation to consume.

While institutionalised groups are more likely to be established at the community level, drawing on local participants, more individualised leisure time activities are more likely to be distributed over the region and beyond. Due to the restricted local supply of – what they feel to be appropriate – facilities, young people inevitably try to extend their area of action. Mobility and, therefore, the acquisition of a private car is of key importance in accessing more opportunities to pursue both leisure and vocational/educational activities. People living in a peripheral location are dependent on the use of a car for most activities. The resulting effect for those young people without access to a car is that they feel excluded from many of the activities and opportunities that may be going on elsewhere.

Given these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that, in contrast to the generally higher level of satisfaction, both high school students and, in particular, unemployed young people, neither of whom have much money, are far from content with local opportunities for leisure activities and state bluntly that there is not much to do in the region:

> "What do I do in my free time? Well, I have to admit, I often get blind drunk. There's not much else on offer and, if there is, most of the time, it seems to me that it's just too expensive, like using a fitness centre, a tennis court or something like that". (Michael, 20 years, male)

Young people's influence in local decision-making

The general feeling expressed by young people regarding their degree of participation reflects an ambiguous and perturbing situation. Those who are hardly involved at all in local civic activities are aware and ashamed of their inactivity and yet do not consider that their active engagement would really make a difference. Those who are integrated into youth organisations, and particularly those with organisational responsibilities in such groups, argue that they are "let down" both by inactive group members and by all those "outside" who do not participate at all. This expression of disappointment, which can be found in almost all interviews, on the one hand curbs the current level of involvement in all respects, and on the other hand, has severe negative implications for the overall "official" view of the region and for any evaluations that may be made of the regional quality of life.

The low level of commitment to community work found among many interviewees has to be seen in combination with their assessment that institutionally-organised activities, in general, and their involvement, in

particular, have a limited or low impact. Young people think – often justifi-
ably – that adults demonstrate severe prejudice towards them and, conse-
quently, their own experiences of early disappointment and frustration in
different type of community initiatives provide a ready argument against
any greater or future involvement:

> "Well, I think that young people feel adults <u>are</u> prejudiced (…) The
> basic attitude of many adults is 'Well, what do kids want anyway?
> Just to change everything! And that's no use, is it?" (Maria, 18
> years, female)

In many interviews, local institutional actors were referred to as stubborn,
old-fashioned and with no understanding of or interest in the problems of
young people.

> "It's the municipality that decides everything that goes on. There
> are some really pigheaded men in the municipality, especially some
> of the older ones. I think that's the problem: they are just old-fash-
> ioned. In fact, they're not very interested in the problems of young
> people. They say, "We're alright. But youngsters should behave".
> That's how they are." (Konstantin, 18 years, male)

Young people also experience very little tolerance on the part of adults
towards new ideas and experiments. In the local community, there seems to
be no acceptance that young people can benefit from "trial and error", and
the fear of sanctions tends to suppress almost every community-based ini-
tiative that departs from the norm, because nobody wants to take responsi-
bility and be blamed for it, if something goes wrong. The deficiencies of the
youth organisations are so evident, that many young people now come to
see themselves as being primarily to blame. This "internalisation" of the
problem can be detected in their explanations of why the situation cannot
be improved: *"Young people aren't interested in very much"* is a commonly
expressed diagnosis of low levels of youth participation. One young man
described the general attitude towards new ideas in his home town as fol-
lows:

> "Murau is very much a traditional town. Everything is very quiet,
> everything carries on as usual, and nothing unusual is likely to be
> introduced. Nobody wants change. All the inhabitants are against it;
> they don't want anything new. They like things the way they are."
> (Konstantin, 18 years, male)

On this basis, it is no wonder that interest and involvement in political par-
ties is also weak. In general, young people have the feeling that they are nei-
ther represented nor considered as a relevant target group by the Municipal
Councils. The low acceptance rate of proposals and views brought forward

by young people deepens their conviction that the position they occupy is one of "probation", as opposed to one in which the type of ideas they put forward might be seriously considered and perhaps even implemented. Even those actively involved in the rural youth movement admit that young people have little influence over the very issues that most affect them. They are reduced to concentrating on finding an opportunity to talk to a key adult e.g. the mayor of a municipality or a member of the Municipal Council) with a view to putting forward their position regarding youth-relevant issues. Influence is therefore measured by the capacity to arrange a personal contact with a key person. As one young man put it:

> "I've got a good line direct to the mayor. When I present an idea, he'll listen." (Christian, 21 years, male)

Though many associations have some sort of political affiliation – explicit or otherwise – such as the rural youth movement, some local youth leaders are very reluctant to participate actively in a political party. First of all, with regard to key issues, they fear being associated with a particular political opinion that they may not necessarily share. Furthermore, they will eschew friendship with those in political positions, and avoid getting involved in any conflicts or animosity that could categorise them as being a "fellow traveller" of one or another political current. Young people take it as given that membership of a political party can create lots of difficulties regarding the establishment of successful cooperation within local and regional structures, organisations and institutions.

On the other hand, one young male interviewee had "constructively engaged" the Municipal Council, trying to break through the ignorance of most of the Council members regarding youth questions and their prejudices concerning youth participation, with the immediate objective of stimulating a discussion of what youth participation in civic life and decision-making *could* mean, and the longer term idea of founding a youth party.

> "We are thinking about founding a youth party. I don't know if we will succeed, but at least we will talk to the political parties about the issues, and demand that they finally take young people seriously. If they don't react positively, our threat is to found a youth party that will act against – rather than in collaboration with – the conventional parties in the municipality." (Herbert, 25 years, male)

Reflections on the development of community life in Murau

When speaking about community life, young people very often tended to describe the current situation of public affairs in their parishes and municipalities. Across the interviews, there is a recurrent theme of the lack of co-

operative spirit within the communities of the region. This negative assessment has persisted over a long period of time, continues to be expressed, and appears in its most critical form among those who have come to the region from outside:

> "When I came to work in the region about 25 years ago, I realised immediately that the most prominent problem was the lack of cooperation in all fields (…) The main outcome of EU accession and the EU programme of structural funds has been the need [for organisations and institutions] to come together and for the first time discuss issues relating to the future of the region". (Expert focus group)

Lack of cooperation is also experienced at the micro-level i.e. among the constellation of local associations and local branches of government and public institutions; in one of the focus groups, young people gave the example of the fact that different tourism boards exist for small neighbouring villages in the very same valley. Obviously, from the standpoint of geographical proximity and the similarity/complementarity of resources, there is every justification for such locations to develop a common strategy for tourism development. And yet, to date, no common institutional framework – in the form of a shared Tourist Board – has been established. Personal differences and local short-term interests continue to prevail over a co-operative approach.

There is a tendency to assess the future of the region purely on the basis of its overall economic performance and, consequently, the prospects are far from encouraging. If the various experts and stakeholders agree on one thing, it is that increasing the level of professionalism in tourism will boost regional development; however, most young people reject jobs in this sector or are only willing to take up jobs in tourism for short periods. Moreover, the tourism sector is not exempt from the generally low level of wages in Murau, a situation that encourages young people to look for similar jobs in other regions where better wages are offered, and led many interviewees to the conclusion that the (economic) situation for young people was not improving.

> "It looks like (…) the economic situation is getting worse all the time and there is nothing that can be done about it. There would have to be a tremendous change for growth to take off again. But I'm afraid I have no idea what sort of change might be required." (Elisa, 24 years, female, one child)

Indeed, many people have to commute continuously to jobs outside the region and young people, in particular, are increasingly obliged to leave permanently. Consequently, for those who remain, the situation deterio-

rates even more, because population falls to barely viable levels and regional "critical mass" (to justify increases in services, infrastructure, investment, etc.) is further undermined. Some perceive the region as a community that is too closed and suffering from persistent economic *and* social difficulties and constraints; unable to foresee any (positive) change in the near future, they often take the extreme position that there is *"no development in the region at all"*. In this respect, it is important to stress again that the development process addressed here cannot be limited to the economic, but has to encompass social development as well.

> "How will things develop? Only a few people have employment here. Most have to commute to their places of work. And, though lots of people are building houses here, the sad fact is that Murau is going to be a 'weekend region', with most people here only on Saturdays and Sundays." (Herbert, 25 years, male)

Moreover, the future expectations of the unemployed and young people on training schemes are substantially gloomier than most, and there is substantial accumulated resentment over the unfavourable situation in which they find themselves. The exceptionally high suicide rate in the study area provides a stark and tragic reminder of the frustration and depression to which some people are driven: the suicide rate in Western Upper Styria (of which Murau forms a part) exceeds that of Finland, which has the highest national rate in the EU (Santigli 2000).

It is therefore essential to increase motivation, create a more open dialogue and focus action on how to shift not merely perceptions, but the real concrete situations that underpin them: in other words, how to change Murau from a remote, less-favoured area, where patriarchal structures persist, and change is often seen as a threat, to one that would be a more rewarding and attractive place for young people to stay and make their lives.

To some extent, things have started to change, and ideas are being expressed more openly, not least of all by more and more young people. Asked about the likelihood of change, one interviewee put it like this:

> "Well, you <u>can</u> try, but most things just get blocked. That's what it's like. They [the authorities] are so pigheaded, they just go their own way, never looking right or left. But it <u>is</u> getting better now. We have a new mayor now and a lot of new things are being tried. But previously it really <u>was</u> like that". (Marianne, 17 years, female)

Pathways to inclusion

According to the results of the Murau study, young people's participation in civic affairs is at a very low level and the influence they can bring to bear on decision making processes is very limited indeed. The traditional hierarchical forms of participation as well as the tight, exclusive nexus of regional actors that monopolises decision-making determine the nature, profile and dynamic of local social integration and, indeed, disintegration. In the context of Murau, personal choices appear even more limited than might be inferred from current labour market relations, and existing patterns of personal, social and cultural interaction. Some young people have felt these constraints to such an extent that they have already decided to leave the region, to pursue their educational and employment plans outside the region, predominantly elsewhere in Austria.

When invited to reflect on their local patterns of life and employment opportunities and envisage their prospects for the future, the young interviewees in Murau tended to point to the advantages of their home region, and their attachment to it, as the most decisive factors. Though these elements seem to be neglected by most policies, in the minds of young people, there is no doubt that they take precedence over the weak economic performance and the sense of physical remoteness. With regard to these limitations, young people develop a sort of pragmatism: on the one hand they focus on the positive sides of rural life (clean environment, the close community, peace and quiet, etc.) and, on the other, they adjust and adapt their behaviour and the choices they make, in line with the real constraints that the region's current situation imposes on them. Thus, it can be concluded that young people tend not to express wishes that are unrealistic or unrealisable.

With regard to participation, there is a marked correlation between social class, gender roles, employment status, and physical location, etc., and the extent of community involvement. This means that there exists a small group of young people that, while firmly integrated into local networks, is nevertheless striving for a kind of "leadership" role. These are probably young people (most of them men) from already well integrated families, from a predominantly agricultural background, where family members may have, or have had, a political function in the municipality. Compared to these well-integrated young people, there are a majority that feel that adults, and the institutions they dominate, neither accept young people's activities nor attach sufficient importance to their views. According to the interview sample, this group is primarily made up of unemployed young

persons, those in training/retraining schemes and other categories (such as single mothers) whose situation may be regarded as "exceptions" to the rule.

With regard to the formulation of policies of greater relevance to the key issues of rural youth integration, it is important to give greater emphasis to those forms of participation that reflect the needs and aims of the excluded – and potentially excluded – among young people. This would imply a widening of the networks of established organisations and the provision of greater opportunities to excluded individuals. However, young people across all study areas felt unhappy with the institutional frameworks provided for youth "participation". Horelli (2001), whose meta-analytical research on the participation of children and young people in neighbourhood improvement schemes came to a similar conclusion:

> "The gatekeepers of urban and rural planning are the municipalities (local authorities and decision makers) who are so far reluctant to expand their top-down, expert-based mode of functioning into collaborative planning and governance, which could also include young people."

Participation is a fundamental issue when rethinking democratic processes, the development of which would imply extending and defending the rights of all groups in society to being adequately informed, accepted as "partners" and empowered to make their contribution to shaping the future. Young people would bring a specific dimension to this debate and would have to acquire a specific role in the process. It is important to note that young people have to be regarded not just as a target group because they will, inevitably, play a future role in the region, but should be seen as people capable of contributing to contemporary community development. Young people are interested in active community involvement, but need support and incentive structures in all areas of participation. While it is correct to give policy priority to the educational and employment dimensions of promoting young people's social inclusion, is it important not to be reductionist: policy makers who focused on the education and employment to the exclusion of all else, seriously oversimplify the multidimensional nature of youth participation and integration processes in society in general, and rural society, in particular.

But changes are possible only step by step and require a lot of willingness and tolerance by all of those concerned. The interviews of young people in Murau still show the common impression that, on the one hand, issues of regional and EU-structural funds programmes applied in the region are hardly acknowledged as having any influence on their opinion, and on the other hand hat the impact of young people on local and regional pro-

grammes is rather low. Barriers in communication and understanding between young people and the respective adults in a community could be reduced through a mediator, e.g. a youth representative who could be the contact for young people giving them the possibility to introduce and discuss their needs and ideas while thinking of appropriate forms of implementation. Ideally, this mediator should be a person in whom both young people and officials of the Municipal Council can have the highest confidence.

While the conclusions drawn from the interviewees' comments reflect the situation up to and including the interview period (winter 1999/2000), the perceptions and actions of young people tend to be particularly susceptible and responsive to new situations and trends. Thus we can see recently rising concern over the exclusion experienced by specific groups of young people, and the corresponding regional and provincial initiatives to address the situation of young people. More specifically, from May 2000 to June 2001, Austria's largest project for youth initiatives was carried out in Styria (nex:it 2000); out of more than 500 small-scale projects submitted for financial and organisational support, 152 projects were selected. Indeed, one initiative aimed at tackling drug abuse in Murau, thereby explicitly addressing one of the burning issues of social exclusion affecting young people. It therefore seems that a limited number of actors in the region have gained sufficient support to initiate these and other similar initiatives that may well contribute to a change in local and extra-local attitudes towards the future of the region.

Finally, if the results of the Murau interviews are looked at against the background of some of the key references on young people's participation in rural areas (for example, FAO 1999, Lowe *et al.* 1999, Johnson *et al.* 1998), the following broad conclusions emerge:

- Young people in rural areas experience limited options and future prospects; the constraints they feel apply both to the economic and social spheres. Since multiple barriers affect different groups of young people in rural areas, their emerging special needs may be cumulative, become mutually reinforcing, and set in motion a vicious downward spiral that ultimately leads to unambiguous social exclusion.

- A democratic society calls for an integrative view of all its constituent groups. Young people should not merely be targeted because of the future role they may play in the region, but should be seen as people capable of contributing to community development today.

- It is essential to promote participation in local/rural development on a "twin track" basis, with both adult and younger segments of

the population genuinely involved (either in their own and/or in separate initiatives), since participation can only develop in a social context that is open to dialogue and bridge-building between the two groups. Common strategies for the region i.e. those that are attractive to all the main social categories and age groups, should enhance programme outcomes and help to forge regional identity.

- The building of a co-operative and integrated regional framework is also an important challenge, because one-off and "singular" activities tend to achieve isolated effects that are not sufficient to ensure territorial development.

- Community development that satisfies men and women of all ages requires catalysts, i.e. facilitators working with all the people concerned. In this regard, efforts should be made to enlarge the role of professional youth workers trained in interpersonal skills, advocacy and community development.

- The basic requirements for promoting greater and wider youth participation must include, in addition to the provision of technical assistance, capacity building inputs for young people, to enable them to better articulate their needs, make more effective plans and assert their rights.

- When analysing young people's problems in rural areas, in general terms, it is economic integration that tends to be the leading issue. However, the social dimension and the inter-relationship between local culture and young people's participation must not be overlooked. Since initiatives relating to the promotion of children's and young people's participation have direct and substantial implications for the participatory roles of adults, recent experiences in this sphere should be extended.

Clearly, rural development programmes could become increasingly meaningful if in future they were to incorporate in their development strategies an explicit participatory dimension targeting young people. The recent discourse on social development and participation could be usefully employed, along with appropriate adaptation to specific regional contexts (Dax and Machold 2001) as a means of conceptualising development options for young people. Given that some of the most pressing problems of rural areas are to be addressed by the LEADER+ Community Initiative, an opportunity exists to develop highly innovative and experimental projects that could be used for more youth-specific purposes and constitute an important asset for young people. If such projects could be developed, this may have a much wider impact on the overall development of rural society.

References

Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research (2001), *Policies and Young People in Rural Development* (PAYPIRD), Final Report for the European Commission, Aberdeen.

Böhnisch, L. and H. Funk (1989), *Jugend im Abseits? Zur Lebenslage Jugendlicher im ländlichen Raum,* Weinheim and Munich, 285 pp.

Dax, T. and I. Machold (2001), "Assessment of rural development programmes to enhance youth integration", paper presented to the 41st Congress of the European Regional Science Association (ERSA), Zagreb, Croatia, 29th August – 1st September 2001.

Dax, T., Machold, I. and C. Meisinger (2000), *Policies and Young People in Rural Development* (PAYPIRD), National Report, Study Area Murau, Austria, Bundesanstalt für Bergbauernfragen, Vienna.

Dax, T., Oedl-Wieser, T. and G. Wiesinger (1999), *Policies and Young People in Rural Development*, Interim-Report for the European Commission Research, DG B.I.2, chapter 4, "Young people in Murau, Austria", Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, Aberdeen, pp.131-154.

Der Spiegel (2000), "Frühe Übung", Nr. 45, http://www.spiegel.de

Der Standard (2000), "Jugend arbeitet in Gemeinde mit, Graz übernimmt deutsches Partizipations- und Ausbildungsmodell", 14th November, Vienna, p.14

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations) (1998), *Increasing the involvement of young men and women in rural development in Europe,* FAO Regional Office for Europe, Technical Series 55, Rome, 95 pp.

Horelli, L. (2001), "Young People's Participation in Local Development: Lip Service or Serious Business?" in Helve, H. and Wallace, C. (eds.), *Youth, Citizenship and Empowerment*, Burlington, pp. 57-71

Johnson, V., Ivan-Smith, E., Gordon, G., Pridmore, P. and Scott, P. (eds.) (1998), *Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process*, London, Intermediate Technology Publications, 336 pp.

Lowe, P., Ray, C., Ward, N., Wood, D. and R. Woodward (1999), *Participation in Rural Development*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 100 pp.

Nex:it (2000), "Jugendzukunftsfonds Steiermark", www.nexit.at

Santigli, Elisabeth (2000), "Gesundheitsbericht 2000 für die Steiermark", in *Auftrag des Gesundheitslandesrates*,

Scheer, G. (1998), "Vom alten zum neuen Regionalismus", in: *RAUM*, Nr. 31, Wien, pp. 20-23.

Shropshire, J., and S. Middleton (1999), *Small expectations. Learning to be poor?* York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 44 pp.

Shucksmith, M. (2000), Exclusive countryside? Social inclusion and regeneration in rural areas, York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 63 pp.

Strauss, A. and J. Corbin (1990), *Basics of Qualitative Research. Grounded Theory, Procedures and Techniques*, London, SAGE-Publications, 268 pp.

7. Dreams, pragmatism and employment outcomes among Portuguese rural youth: 6 paradoxes[35]

José Portela and Chris Gerry

Introduction

This chapter presents some of the results of the Portuguese case study that forms part of the European project to which this volume is devoted. The young people whose school-to-work transition is analysed below live in the county of Santa Marta de Penaguião (SMP[36]), in the district of Vila Real (Northern Portugal). The primarily qualitative nature of our research was justified, in part, by the lack of previous studies with a similar, specific focus, which, in turn, reflects the more general absence of research on rural youth in Portugal[37].

---

35.   Special thanks are due to our co-researchers Carlos Marques, Patricia António and Vasco Rebelo who participated (along with our research assistants Sónia Abreu and Paula Queiróz) in the data collection and provided valuable comments on preliminary versions of this chapter. Ana Cláudia Pinto and Paula Queiróz undertook the transcriptions of the recorded interviews. The usual disclaimers apply.

36.   We will use the initials SMP, or the abbreviation "Santa Marta" to refer to Santa Marta de Penaguião. In the Portuguese administrative hierarchy, the *distrito*, *concelho* and *freguesia*, (district, county and parish) respectively, constitute the highest, intermediate and lowest levels.

37.   In 1998, a study of Portuguese youth, attitudes and opportunity structures was prepared by Cabral & Pais for the Portuguese Institute for Youth. However, the research has little specific to say about rural youth. For studies with more explicit relevance to rural youth, see Wall (1998), Pais (2001) and Wall *et al* (2001).

Although we will not review here all the theoretical questions that underpin the six PAYPIRD case studies, it is worth alluding to two points of general relevance. First of all, numerous underlying concepts – all potentially problematic – are used: youth, social exclusion and inclusion, labour markets, social networks, policy formulation and rural development. Secondly, we assume that social phenomena are complex, multidimensional, and dynamic, and these traits demand that particular attention be paid to the various grounded contexts in which both close and distant social relations take place.

The interview stage of the research had three distinct phases: first six adult key informants were interviewed individually, then 46 young people were interviewed and filled in a questionnaire and, finally, three focus group discussions were undertaken[38]. Two of the latter involved only youngsters (respectively, 4 and 7 in number) and 7 adult "institutional actors" attended a third. A total of 52 individual interviews were carried out in order to explore empirically how rural youth from SMP interact with their family, school and labour market. The aim of the focus groups was to establish a more integrated approach to the labour market inclusion and/or exclusion of local youngsters.

Interviewees were identified via the "direct approach" on a random basis (at work, in cafés, in the street, or at home) and the "snowball" process. The team was concerned to include people with diverse social features and experiences. A sample of young people from 7 of SMP's 10 parishes was interviewed. Five of these parishes are situated in classic vineyard/valley locations and two are characteristically highland. All those involved allowed the interview to be audio taped. The interviews took place in an atmosphere that was conducive to spontaneity, openness and, the team felt, reliable answers on the part of the young people concerned.

Some questions caused interviewees to hesitate and others even elicited silence, though without interfering unduly with the natural flow of the interviews. Youngsters were subsequently asked about the questions that had been raised, and many commented that, on some issues, they had been forced to think systematically and formulate views for the first time, on issues they, in fact, saw as important[39]. As might be expected, questions on the future raised more silence, independent of the issue (education, jobs, housing plans, etc). Youngsters' ideas about their future, or that of their

---

38.   Among the 46 young people (24 females, 22 males) we interviewed, teenagers (16-19), those in their early twenties (20-22) and mid-twenties (23-25) numbered 11, 15 and 20, respectively. At the time of the fieldwork, our sample included 10 youngsters classified as unemployed; 29 as employed (mainly in services); 5 in full-time education and 2 (males) on training schemes.

locality, seemed very closely linked to their present experiences: everyone finds it difficult to predict what may happen next, but it is virtually impossible for young people for most of whom the labour market provides neither stability nor security.

In concluding these brief notes on methodology, it is worth underlining that a "triple translation" process was involved in arriving at an English version of our analysis. First, the process of transcription inevitably "systematised" conversations that, in their raw state, while bearing primarily on the specificities of the school-to-work transition, were inevitably often circuitous, repetitive and permeated with the rural version of contemporary Portuguese youth slang[40]. Secondly, the resultant interview content was further "translated" as researchers sought to find concepts that reflected the principal trends and tendencies they were encountering. Thirdly, significant parts of the written material (e.g. key quotes) ultimately had to be expressed in English.

Santa Marta de Penaguião: an overview of the research location

In order to put our case study in its proper context, an extremely brief overview of the research site is needed. SMP is situated in the western part of the Douro region, whose name derives from the Iberian river that bisects it. SMP has an estimated 1998 population of 9,840 inhabitants, living in small families in which, despite – or perhaps because of – their often-limited resources, support mechanisms continue to function. In 1991, the average family size in Northern Portugal and the Douro was respectively 3,4 and 3,1 (CCRN 2000). Young people rarely live alone, choosing to remain at home for a number of reasons: job scarcity, low incomes, high house prices, the persistence of a mutual aid between parents and offspring, and the culturally-rooted idea that youngsters (especially girls) only move out when they marry.

---

39. João, a teenager interviewed in the study, was quite explicit: "You asked questions that made me think. I hadn't participated in an interview before. As it turned out, I enjoyed it, and I hope I was of help".

40. In this respect, it is worth recalling that one interviewee in his twenties did not see himself as a "youngster", nor did all of the youngsters necessarily perceive themselves as "rural".

The population of SMP increased almost uninterruptedly at a little over one percent per annum from early in the 20th century, peaking at 14,597 in 1940, since when demographic decline has been continuous. The highest annual rate of population decrease (−1.4%) occurred between the last two Censuses, when the county's population also reached an all-time recorded minimum[41]. Long-term out-migration both to the coastal cities and abroad explains a significant part of this trend that may, in turn, have a significant and perverse impact on local youngsters' attitudes towards school and job opportunities.

Despite its physical proximity to neighbouring urban centres, SMP seems remote[42]and most families have a poor standard of living. According to the latest available figures on the county-level Purchasing Power Index (INE, 1995), the average national, Northern Region, Douro and SMP indices were of 100, 83, 51 and 36, respectively, placing SMP among the 20 poorest of Portugal's 305 counties[43]. SMP is dominated by the farm sector, and like most of the counties of the Douro, is part of the Demarcated Wine Region that produces the world-famous Porto fortified wine: 85% of the county's agricultural land consists of long-established vineyards, planted on narrow terraces, typically on very steep terrain. Thus, it is not surprising that SMP's wine co-operative is both the "major local employer" and one of the largest enterprises of the district[44]. Small scale entrepreneurs recruit labour for

---

41. This decline is largely explained by persistent emigration both to other European countries and to Lisbon and Porto, and the more recent phenomenon of "double ageing" (death rates exceeding birth rates).

42. Though the main towns are relatively close to SMP (Vila Real 15km, Régua 15km, Lamego 20km, Porto 120km), the sense of remoteness is probably due to the hilly topography, small communities, winding access roads, and a poor public transport system that worsens as one approaches the most peripheral villages.

43. SMP is also one of the Northern counties where, despite local government expenditure on public housing being extremely low (4% of budget), overcrowded housing is most common (9% to 12% of families in 1991). Nearly ¾ of all the students enrolled in compulsory education in SMP receive state grants, with ? receiving the maximum rate of support. Nearly 6% of resident families (approx. 500 persons) are covered by the Guaranteed Minimum Income. Other social transfers, along with meagre state pensions help to stave off absolute poverty, though, due to the low levels of social security contributions made by farm wage labourers and smallholders, average pensions are 20% lower than in Northern region as a whole. In 1997, almost 27% of the resident population were pensioners, significantly higher than that of the northern region.

44. The Co-operative, whose official name is *Caves Santa Marta*, is made up of 3 wineries, has almost 2400 members and 84 permanent employees. It employs about the same number of temporary workers during the annual grape harvest. (Turnover 1999: 16_ million.)

work in construction, the vineyards and the felling of pine trees and there are also myriad shops, cafés and other small enterprises that employ a limited number of people, typically family members. SMP thus differs markedly from the Douro sub-region of which it forms a part, where overall services tend to dominate, and even more from the average of Northern Portugal, the coastal western half of which has Portugal's largest concentration and diversity of industry. Compared with the national picture, local politics tends to be much more person-centred and/or territory-based than ideologically-based: political duality is the norm, however, with support being most heavily concentrated in the largest parties[45]. Relatively few stable employment opportunities are provided by the local labour market, and there exists a deeply rooted idea that personal, family or political influence (commonly referred to as cunha[46]) is a key factor in getting a job.

Paradox 1: Vineyards, vineyards everywhere … but no-one wants to work there

The first of the six paradoxes that emerged from our research in Santa Marta de Penaguião is that, while the vineyard is the predominant feature of the local economy, young people do not perceive it as an attractive sector to enter – either as a grower or as a worker. Rui, aged 15, was no less emphatic than the many other interviewees, both male and female, who also pointed this out:

> You'll maybe do a few days' work in the vineyards to earn some pocket money, or to save up for something you really want, like a motorbike, but nowadays no one wants to do this type of work. There's no future for anyone in the vineyards.

Indeed, only one out of the 46 young people interviewed talked positively about viticulture and, even though he had opted for the more vocational agricultural stream at secondary school, Eça was now a junior administrator in the Local Council. When pressed, he also expressed some reservations:

---

45. The Socialist Party (PS) has been in power in SMP for more than a decade.

46. The word *cunha* literally means a wedge in Portuguese, and is used to describe "influence" "clout", "pull", the ability to "pull strings", having "friends in high places", or benefiting from "jobs for the boys", either in a narrowly nepotistic, friendship-based or a broader clientelistic manner. It thus refers to a whole range of discriminatory mechanisms for preferentially allocating people to posts or privileges. The term is used both to signify the relationship, as well as the 'price' of the favour.

> I like the vineyard a lot. I spend time there at the weekend; but if it's raining or it's too hot I don't go. Maybe if it were my whole life, it wouldn't be so attractive. (Eça, male, 23)

Sometimes youth get involved as an obligation to their parents: two respondents had recently taken the Young Farmers training course, but one gave up after a month, and the other, after completing the course, pursued the career he had always wanted – working as a lumberjack. He had only attended the course as a favour: otherwise, his father's viticulture project would not have been accepted, a handsome subsidy would have been lost, his brother would have been at a loose end in terms of employment, and the opportunity to develop the family vineyard would have been missed.

When defining what would constitute a better future for themselves, almost all the young people to whom we spoke, as well as their friends and relatives, completely excluded the vineyards and wineries that dominate both the physical landscape and the local economy[47]. Their views are well-informed, since those whose families have small vineyards often help to harvest the grapes, and some earn some welcome cash by working in Santa Marta's Wine Co-operative during the summer vacation. Not only is the Co-operative one of the main local employers of adults but, due to its reputation for good wines, it also somehow symbolises Santa Marta de Penaguião; yet many share the view expressed by Luzia (female, 25):

> Santa Marta is literally a hole! We are surrounded by vines. Santa Marta is just vineyards, vineyards and more vineyards. And there are hardly any other employment opportunities here, and those that do become available are somehow already taken.

There are several reasons for the mismatch between supply and demand. Most youngsters have no interest in a career in the vineyards: while recognising it as a possible source of "work" – albeit arduous, unpleasant, unchanging, irregular, under-paid[48] and without any career prospects – it is not considered "real" let alone "good" employment. The irregular nature of farm work, the low wages and workers' inability to pay social security contributions help to explain why Rita, casual wage labourer who works regularly on the same *quintas* (large estates producing grapes for Port), considers herself as being long-term unemployed, and why she has been registered for several years at the Job Centre as actively seeking work. The

---

47. Five interviewees felt that the armed services would be a good job option, five others saw shop work as a promising career, and four were attracted to a career in childcare.

48. Farm work is low paid, with monthly wages approximating the national minimum wage, or 297_/month at the time of the interviews.

rigours of farm labour in the Douro are still very real, as the steep and stony slopes, rough paths, and backbreaking work in all types of weather eloquently attest. Moreover, despite their general familiarity with vineyards, the few young people who might be interested have little systematic technical knowledge of how to cultivate and manage them properly.

Both real and perceived hardship can be reinforced by local culture: on the one hand, men are not expected to perform lighter tasks such as grape-picking; on the other, parents cite the drudgery and dead-end nature of vineyard work so as to motivate youngsters to greater efforts at school. Construction work is also hard but enjoys better working conditions compared to farm labour: many tasks are performed under cover, the hours are more fixed, there is work regularly throughout the year, and some sort of career progression – i.e. from a bricklayer's apprentice to a skilled tradesman, or even a foreman or construction entrepreneur – may be possible. The community's collective memory stresses the past difficulties of finding even miserably paid work, in which vineyard labourers often received just a bowl of soup and a sardine on a slice of bread, and maybe a few coins. As one of our key informants remarked:

> Work was terrible, just awful. Most people really only saw the vineyard over a fish head.

Of course, the old times are long gone: today, material possessions that were unimaginable just a few years ago are the general rule: the farm worker drives to the vineyard in his own (albeit second-hand) car, chats to friends on a mobile phone, and owns his own house. Social relationships have changed profoundly, as another key informant noted

> Today, hiring labourers for the vineyards isn't as easy as it used to be. Landowners now have to give them the proper respect they deserve – otherwise, they risk having no workers at all.

But, despite both the changes SMP has undergone over the last three decades, and the current performance and potential of the wine business, most youngsters do their best to avoid agriculture. Though parents still invoke the spectre of vineyard work to chasten their children, few mothers could conceive of their daughters being obliged to suffer such punishment. Inês, the daughter of a well-off construction contractor, recalled having felt "ashamed" of working in the family vineyards when she was teenager. In contrast, when Ana (female, 24), an "outsider" who married into a family locally considered wealthy, enthusiastically suggested farm work as a solution to her unemployment, her husband forbade it, saying that such an idea was an affront to the family name. Also, the small size of many farms often makes viticulture an unattractive business. Informants who were likely to

inherit a vineyard plot were far from unanimous about what they would do with it: some thought they might sell their share to other heirs and/or interested parties, while other felt they might like to continue farming as a part-time activity. Paulo, a 17 year-old male student whose ambition was to join the police force or enter nursing had thought of selling any land he might inherit and investing the money in shares. For him, the stock market – even with all its risks – offered a much quicker way of turning a quick profit than wine production. Even the three male interviewees who had received training in farming at secondary vocational level had their doubts. Girls were also unenthusiastic about inheriting vineyard plots. Lúcia (female, 20), for example, said:

> My mother inherited a vineyard, but I don't want to take it on myself. Absolutely not. I've already started dropping hints to my parents about this, so they don't assume that I will.

Understandably, young people are not attracted to an economic activity that most people undervalue or disparage. If being a smallholder confers low social prestige, then agricultural wage work is associated with the lowest of the low; indeed, if they can, smallholders and farm labourers push their sons into off-farm occupations. The school curriculum largely ignores rural activities, and the impression given by TV is that farming is little more than a quaint, anachronistic tourist attraction. Youngsters' views and actions concerning their future in the Douro Valley contrast sharply with those of well-off adults, who stress the natural beauty and wine- and tourism-based economic potential of the region. Though many young people said they intended to stay in SMP if at all possible, few if any believed that vineyards would provide them with the means to do so.

Paradox 2: Parents think education is the key to success but many youngsters leave school early

A second paradox raised by our research in SMP is that while adults value education highly both for its own sake and the advantages its wider availability has conferred on the younger generation, Portuguese schools suffer from comparatively high failure, repetition and drop-out rates, with many youngsters giving up even before they complete compulsory education. The situation in SMP is no exception: nearly 30% of the interviewees who had already left school, did so without completing the last level of education for which they had been registered and only around 10% of the relatively few pupils who completed the 9th year, entered the 10th-12th grade pre-university cycle[49]. In contrast to the conventional view that few rural parents are concerned about their children's schooling or, even worse, force them into

employment as quickly as possible[50], parents generally encourage their to children to study for as long as they can, and often have higher academic expectations for their children and greater faith in the advantages of education than the teenagers themselves. Most of SMP's youngsters were keen to leave school as early as possible, and did not necessarily see dropping out as a major mistake: they were well aware that many of their unlettered relatives are paid more as semi-skilled emigrants in France than the best educated people were receiving in SMP. Though they usually faced stiff opposition from their parents, even those with economic difficulties, by resorting to systematic truancy and/or leaving school as soon as they legally ceased to be minors, youngsters nearly always succeeded in having their own way.

High drop out rates cannot simply be explained by the "fatigue" and increasing sense of futility that many interviewees felt. Others had left school primarily because of some family or personal trauma, such as a parent's death or chronic illness, or an unwanted pregnancy. Such situations put pressure on the households budget of poorer and/or larger families, and may induce children to leave school prematurely rather than constituting what they perceive to a financial burden[51]. Obviously, the less satisfied young people are with their own education, and with education in general, the greater is their motivation either to reduce the effort they put into study, or to drop out altogether. More than half of our interviewees expressed some form of dissatisfaction with the studies they had pursued and/or the school they had attended.

> I never liked school. I left school when I was 11 or 12. I started the 4th grade but I didn't want to stay on. At first, I thought of trying to finish the year, but started to have problems with the teachers and from then on, I lost interest. I wanted to start work, but I wasn't old enough, so I just stayed at home. (Guida, female, 16)

> I didn't finish 7th grade. I didn't want to study any longer. Honestly, I hated it. And if I had to choose again, I'd do exactly the same. (Elsa, female, 24)

In the latter stages of their secondary education, several young interviewees had dropped out because continuing would have necessitated a moving to a new school and/or imply living with relatives in a neighbour-

---

49.   Secondary school records, SMP, 1980-2000.
50.   Only two interviewees could be included in this category.
51.   Government grants to help families unable to meet the costs of schooling their
       children only apply to the period of compulsory education. Students in the 10th
       – 12th grades, whether preparing for university entry or not, are ineligible.

ing town during the week[52]. Such changes not only involve a new and more challenging curriculum, but also require making new friends and adapting to an unfamiliar, more anonymous and competitive school environment. If the stream available to the youngster is only a second choice, the danger of dropping out resurfaces:

> I didn't like my new school. It had nothing to offer me. I'd always done sports, and there I was stuck in the biology lab all the time, which didn't appeal to me at all. (Inês, female, 23)

Several interviewees mentioned that they had made a poor choice of specialist, either as a result peer influence, or due to the lack of information and educational counselling, and some felt that staff were too often unaware of the key "turning points" in their pupils' lives: Inês was particularly critical of such attitudes and behaviour:

> Teachers should monitor students more, even though there are so many of us. My previous sports teachers gave psychological counselling, but most of the [other, new] teachers don't bother about this sort of thing. Before, if I didn't seem my normal self, my teachers would notice and try to talk to me about it, as friends, but nowadays the majority don't seem to care whether you're happy or sad.

Other youngsters mentioned poor teaching skills, the excessive number of courses and teaching hours, inadequate evaluation, and boring curricula as factors contributing to their poor motivation. Mário's teacher "talked over the students' heads", while Luisa, who had persistently repeated 9th grade but not dropped out, complained that she spent over 30 hours a week just staring at the teacher:

> We never had practical classes where things were explained in detail. With so much time available to do so much, we seemed to do almost nothing at all. (Luisa, female, 18)

---

52. When, at age 10-11, children complete their 4 years' schooling of primary schooling, those from the outlying villages have to commute to SMP to complete the 9th grade of compulsory education (at age 15-16). While the Portuguese education system requires students pursuing the non-compulsory 10th – 12th grades of schooling to specialise, not all the curriculum "streams" are always available in all schools. Thus, it may be that one stream may be offered in Lamego, but neither in Vila Real nor in Régua. Often, students from SMP who wish to complete 12th grade and/or attend university, particularly those from low income families, face a "take it or leave it" situation, and will tend to opt for Vila Real and particularly Régua (both within commuting distance) even if their desired specialist area of study is not available there.

Luisa's case is symptomatic of the failure of the present school system to meet young people's needs: she wanted to be a hairdresser, but her schooling has contributed nothing to making this dream come true, and everything to undermining her motivation for further study. Through a family friend, she learned that she could complete her compulsory education via a 3-year vocational (hairdressing) course organised by the Job Centre, but was not accepted: she believes her lack of *cunha* was to blame.

Many respondents felt courses were far too theoretical, and ill-equipped to provide the skills needed for employment – criticisms that two key informants also accepted as valid.

> Teaching is still very theoretical and more and more the youngsters want practical work. (teacher, SMP secondary school)

> At some point, students for whom academic subjects no longer are relevant should be able to opt for courses that bear some relationship to the sort of lives they are going to lead. Years ago there used to be Industrial Schools and Commercial Schools that provided a more vocational approach. (priest, SMP)

Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that students' talents and ambitions go undetected, and that truancy increases: hanging out with friends, away from adult control, becomes a more attractive option than listening to teachers. Though low student motivation may lead to academic failure, the reverse is also true: a single experience of exam failure is enough to make even an above-average student drop out. In SMP, failure rates were too high and repeated years too frequent to be explained by "learning difficulties" alone. Understandably, those who are "kept down" several times feel uncomfortable in a class of increasingly younger pupils, are demoralised by the apparent gap between their own capabilities and the demands school places on them, and they soon become convinced that school has nothing to offer them, that they are "treading water", and are "too old" for school. As much as anything, the following comments may be more a reflection of how an inadequate system labels "under-performers", than of the self-image of those it fails:

> I wasn't clever. I didn't have what it takes to study (Sandra, female, 16); Not everyone is capable of studying (Vitória, female, 21); I came to the conclusion that I should leave [at the end of the 9th grade], as I didn't have the ability to go any further. I am also very lazy. (Elisa, female, 19)

The educational system seems unable to capitalise on the typically close-knit atmosphere and relatively small class sizes in small town schools[53]. As one teacher with school management responsibilities explained:

> If someone fails the year they repeat **the same** courses. The school offers **more of the same**, and the pupil maybe fails again. After several years of **the same menu**, saturation point is reached (…) Those who fail persistently are gradually turned off school. Some schools have had difficulty coming to terms with the practical changes required of them, so they've just provided **more of the same**, albeit in a disguised form. (…)
>
> Not only is school unable to meet the needs of young people, but what is offered is often diametrically opposed to their concerns and ambitions. (Teacher and school administrator, SMP; our emphasis)

In general, we found a yawning gap between the often not unreasonable initial career aspirations of youngsters, and the typically more modest nature of their current employment. Though a few youngsters had no clear ambitions regarding future employment, a great number had very clear ideas of what they wanted to do, and some were even doing "reconnaissance work". Just a few showed signs of already realising their earlier "dream occupations", while others, perhaps also as a result of "downward revision", nurtured ambitions closely related to their current employment[54]. Often it is at school that youngsters first come face to face with the harsh realities of life, and where some begin the downward revision of their initial dreams. At the top of their subjective "ladder" of ambitions, we find their unattainable childhood fantasies, with subsequent dreams lower down, current wishes and perhaps-attainable options lower still, and today's occupation at the bottom. Yet pragmatism is widespread: most young people find this adjustment perfectly normal: they have to adapt to the difficulties they confront, and overcome them, even if this means putting off or even abandoning their initial dream:

---

53.   Teachers on the SMP School Committee referred to the family atmosphere of the school: there is a relatively high level of parental participation in school meetings, and teachers know their students well and should, in principle, be more conscious of some of the problems they face (changing family circumstances, economic crises at home, learning difficulties, peer influence). Staff often act *in loco parentis* to children of emigrant parents. When students move on they often keep in contact with their former teachers.

54.   Dulce, who works on the counter at a photographer's shop, wanted to become a photographer herself and Carlos, an accounts clerk, was thinking of setting up his own accountancy firm. Elsa, who works as a receptionist in a dental clinic, wanted – somewhat improbably, it would seem – to be a dentist. She still had a long and difficult path before her: 11 more years of study, and she currently has only 6th grade, and had not enjoyed her 7th grade studies at all.

> You say to yourself, "Well, I'm no good at maths, so that type of job is out of the question". And you just have to adapt and look at other options. (Lauro, male, 20)

Our interviews suggested that parental influence over their children's temporary and/or permanent occupational choices can be direct, more subtle, and subject to shifts over time – reinforcing or withdrawing commitment to an established career ambition, an interim occupation, or an as-yet untried employment path. The cases of two young women employed as counter assistants in family-owned shops, while distinct, reveal the importance of parental influence:

> When we had to choose whether to specialise or leave school, I thought of taking Art and Design, but my mother wouldn't let me. She said it was too "airy fairy". I was discouraged, but I wasn't staying on if it meant taking courses I didn't like. At that time, teachers didn't explain what jobs were possible if you left school at the end of the 6th grade, and what the course options were if you stayed on. We just trooped in, registered, and so really big decisions were made on the spot. (...) As time went by, though, I got used to the idea of working in the shop. (Lúcia, female, 20)

> My father knew perfectly well that my childhood dream had always been to work behind the counter, so he had a lot of fun setting up the shop with me in mind. (Teresa, female, 23)

The process of pragmatically accommodating oneself to an unfolding situation, via successive downward revisions of one's initial dream, is neither straightforward nor definitive, nor exempt from other influences. Youth have very clear ideas about what job opportunities are locally available, and many are willing to contemplate leaving to work elsewhere; on the whole, their adoption of a pragmatic approach is not wholly inimical to maintaining personal integrity and identity. For example, Inês (female, 23) wanted to study to be a sports teacher but still had to finish the 12th grade. Even though she is working at present, she has mentally mapped the various ways in which her dream might yet be reconciled with the circumstances she currently faces.

> I know now it was a mistake to leave school when I did. I'm still studying – doing it bit by bit. But I wasn't going to sit around while my parents supported me full-time. As I've put off my [university sports] course, I'll just have to take a different tack for the time being. So I've started working for myself. It isn't what I want, and I know I won't get anywhere doing it. You're less productive if you don't like what you're doing.

So Inês has been studying, giving aerobics classes, and looking into opening a sportswear shop in SMP. Her dream has neither evaporated, nor been revised downwards, but is just on "stand-by".

Thus for schools to have a positive influence on the local employability of youngsters, they have to be able to detect children's personal abilities and skills and identify their dreams and ambitions regarding future careers, and this will require that the teaching staff as a whole be consciously involved. This will not happen unless schools, in active partnership with parents, local political institutions, businesses and community organisations, turn themselves into "learning organisations" in a much wider sense of the term. Notwithstanding the hard work and creative thinking that will be required to create an educational system more in line with the needs of rural youth, and more conducive to the sustainable development of the countryside, it should not be beyond the skills of policymakers, teachers, parents and young people themselves, to "square the circle" between the high value society rightly attributes to formal education and the much lower value that the present generation of students quite rationally and legitimately places on it. Should they fail to do so, youngsters will continue to look beyond SMP – and many other rural localities like it – for something better.

Paradox 3: While "going back to school" may increase employability, few are keen to do so

The third paradox influencing the school-to-work transition in SMP is, in fact, a logical extension of the second, and is manifested in the extent to which, despite the ostensible benefits that more education and/or training would confer, most youngsters resist the idea of either completing their schooling, or enrolling in adult or continuing education programmes designed to facilitate their incorporation into the active labour force. The low educational achievement and high dropout rates that currently characterise rural youth seriously undermine policy measures, either to raise the quality of human resources via initial training and lifelong/continuing education, or to mitigate inter-regional asymmetries by making non-metropolitan localities more attractive both to their current inhabitants and to incomers. While technological progress, globalisation and the advent of the "new economy" have reinforced these imperatives, in the rural areas much remains to be done if policies outcomes are to match the technocratic optimism of contemporary political discourse.

More than two third of interviewees, ranging from the least educated (premature school leavers included) to those with 12th grade, saw a short term return to study as either unlikely or out of the question, stressing one or several of the following obstacles: lack of personal motivation (fatigue, lazi-

ness, or antipathy); lack of personal ability (having already reached the limit of their academic capabilities); peer pressure; the relative attractions of their current life style; and the risk that costs would exceed the employability impact of additional schooling. There were subtle distinctions in the reservations youngsters expressed with regard to a possible return to education:

> I'm not thinking of resuming my studies in the near future. If I could be sure it would get me a better job, I might, you know. (...) But it wouldn't be worth it just to stay a vineyard worker, would it? (Rita, 9th grade, female, farm worker, 20)

> I don't know if I'd be able to open my books again. I was never much good at school. I don't need more qualifications at present, so I don't know how I'd feel about it. I'm not greedy, but my current wage is hardly fair, and everyone likes to earn good money. It might make sense, you know. (Eça, 12th grade, male, Local Council administrative worker, 23)

Nevertheless, almost a third of those interviewed had a more positive – albeit variable – attitude to resuming education. For some it implied a relatively short-term investment of time and resources, with a view to gaining either the (supposedly compulsory) 9th or the (terminal) 12th grade leaving certificate, in order to be eligible for training opportunities, state-sponsored temporary employment, or a more permanent job. However, many qualified their responses by saying that a final decision would depend on one or more of the following key pre-requisites: the availability of transport or child care provision; continuation/resumption of family support, timetabling of classes outside working hours, a course design suited to their personal needs/interests, and some assurance of the positive effects of further schooling on current or future rewards. A social worker with professional experience of rural poverty was also sceptical about the outcome of encouraging the educationally excluded to complete their studies:

> Whenever I try to encourage people to register for the social inclusion programme, right from the start those who barely have 4th grade – namely, the older children of families on the guaranteed minimum income, and young couples under 25 – they say they can't or won't do evening classes. Perhaps, for many, it's because school has already failed them once.

However, while access to employment is increasingly difficult, both in the countryside and in any of the cities to which rural youth might migrate, there was little evidence of widespread disillusionment or despair among those we interviewed. Practically none would change major decisions they had made in the past[55], yet nearly three-quarters expressed some regret

over decisions they had made with regard to school: two would have opted for different streams, five would have studied harder, and some felt they may have gone further, had they followed some sort of vocational education. Reading between the lines of these responses, it seems that – despite their often justifiable dissatisfaction with the school system and their resistance to returning to education – many have come to feel that their job prospects would have been enhanced, had they gained better marks and not failed the year as often.

Thus, despite adults' formal and informal discourse concerning the high value of education, not only does school seem ill-prepared to either identify or respond to the career aspirations of their students, in many cases, the ethos of conventional schooling causes youngsters to reject any further contact with educational programmes of *any* sort. To remedy this situation, post-school technical and "life-skills" programmes need to be made more attractive and relevant to potential beneficiaries. Rather than merely providing an educational "second bite at the cherry", policy needs to provide a distinct and customised "tree of knowledge" for those whom conventional schooling has failed.

Moreover, instead of being used primarily as the *quid pro quo* for receipt of social security benefits, adult education and training programmes aimed at social "(re)insertion" need to more seriously address the problem of providing skills that are both relevant to the "client" and appropriate to local development needs and potential. This would also imply a radical change in adult educators' and trainers' attitudes, and innovative thinking on the part of local educational, extension and training organisations, whose mission, motives, priorities and performance are all too often driven more by concerns for their own institutional and/or entrepreneurial survival and expansion, than by a commitment to the imperatives of sustainable local economic and social development.

Paradox 4: In the school-to-work transition, youngsters benefit more from family and local networks than from the market or from policies

The fourth paradox concerns the stark contrast between the density and diversity of local support mechanisms that exist to smooth the transition to adulthood and employment, and the paucity of state intervention and the limitations of the job market. In short, the role of both formal economic

---

55. Two would have tried harder to preserve personal relationships that had failed, and another regretted not having had the courage to break with his family to follow a career in professional football when he had the chance.

mechanisms, and the institutional facilities and services that underpin policy are of little significance compared to the continuous and concrete action of parents, kin, and other social networks. According to our interviewees, the family is still the main source of assistance for young people; their comments on family support were strongly positive, emphatic and practically unanimous, with only 3 out of 46 interviewees in any way qualifying their responses. Three quotes suffice to illustrate this point:

> Without my parents' help, I can't imagine what my life would've been like (Elsa, female, 24); I've had the best support anyone could have asked for (Sá, female, 18); Parental support? Yes, that's one thing I can always rely on. (Rute, female, 24)

Family ties in the rural areas remain relatively strong, and are deployed in numerous familiar ways to help youngsters, ranging from general advice to substantial material support. Of course, rural youth reciprocate either simultaneously and/or subsequently: as soon as they start working regularly, many youngsters contribute a part of their earnings to the family budget, even after they establish a separate household; contributions made by working sons and daughters to the social and medical expenses incurred by aged or infirm parents and/or grandparents should not be underestimated[56]. Firstly, the importance of board and lodging provided to youngsters by their parents or relatives cannot be underestimated: it may continue even after they are married, and be complemented by child care, so as to allow a young mother to study, benefit from work experience programmes, seek employment, or work. This was precisely Ana's experience:

> I don't get paid for the work I do in my father-in-law's shop, because I have lunch and dinner with him and his wife. We all do, me my husband and my two kids. We practically live there, so I am not going to ask for wages. My mother-in-law and father-in-law tell me not to worry about finding work, because I need to take care of the kids. But it's a drag not to have money for my own things. (Ana, female, 24)

---

56.   While far from being among the Douro counties most affected by the relative growth of its aged population, the situation in SMP is nevertheless markedly more severe than many neighbouring counties. Furthermore, and notwithstanding relatively low per capita incomes particularly in the rural areas, private expenditure on health needs in Portugal is among the highest in Europe.

Despite the fact that, due to their own often more limited education, few parents can provide much in the way of academic help to their children[57] and regardless of their often diametrically-opposed views on the value of education, adolescents naturally look mainly to close relatives for opinions on a wide range of questions relating to the school to employment pathway. Parents may advise on decisions, plans and projects – staying on at school, buying a car, setting up a business – but "supply" and "demand" may not necessarily be in "equilibrium": while Inês is constantly advised by her father, she would like more input from her mother; Luisa, on the other hand, actively seeks her mother's counsel. Sometimes youngsters are reluctant to seek and take advice, and in others, it may simply not be available: for instance, in small matters such as acquiring a driving license and more key issues such as changing jobs, Dulce complained that her mother

> never gave her opinion on anything. I had to decide by myself. Everything I've done until now I've had to think through alone. It worried me a lot. Sometimes I felt really lost. (Dulce, female, 24)

Regardless of the professional and ideological biases they reveal, it is worth quoting the views of the local priest and a nurse from the Health Centre, concerning the relatively few "dysfunctional families" to be found in SMP. Both key informants felt that parental inability both to communicate with their children, and to provide them with the psychological and moral support they required was, in fact, a fairly general local trait:

> The problems here are more to do with people's attitudes and behaviour than with their lack of resources (…) Often their drinking stops them from being able to manage the assets they have.

> Some family problems are simply caused by what we might call human poverty. There are people that have not got the capacity to manage their lives properly, or to take responsibility for their decisions. Then they marry someone in most respects the same as themselves, and all their marital difficulties and problems of bringing up their kids, stem from this.

Nevertheless, besides advising on youngster's future plans, most parents provide support and solidarity, particularly in time of crisis, e.g. premature pregnancy, academic failure, unemployment or trouble with the police. With regard to youngsters' search for employment, toleration abounds: in only three cases did respondents feel under "family pressure" to make

---

57.   Moreover, in cases where parents emigrate and children stay with grandparents or other relatives, the home environment may be materially and psychologically even less conducive to study.

greater efforts in this regard. Parents and/or relatives who have their own firms, farms or shops often provide temporary employment for their younger relatives, either as a "stop-gap measure" until something better comes along, or on a more permanent basis. While a few interviewees referred to this practice ruefully or even resentfully, because their own parents did not have their own businesses (Marília), those benefiting (e.g. Dulce, currently a counter assistant in a photography shop), gratefully recognised the usefulness of this "stepping stone" to more stable employment.

> The small firms established here tend to just employ a secretary and the job is certain to be for some relative or other. That's cunha for you. (Marília, female, 21)

> So far, my relatives have been practically the only source of information for the jobs that I've had. In my first job I worked for my cousin. My current boss is another cousin of mine. His wife had a baby and I worked as her baby-sitter. They realised that I was at home doing nothing so they asked me. Once you're out of the house and in circulation, you start building up contacts, and then the offers of work come pouring in. (Dulce, female, 24)

Even if no money changes hands, the social and psychological gains of this family-provided employment are undeniable: on the one hand, it both reduces the boredom of being unemployed and enhances the sense of self-worth and usefulness; on the other hand, practical skills may be acquired. For nearly a year after having completed military service, and before getting a job as an administrative worker for the Local Council, Eça drove for his father and one of his uncles, transporting farm labourers to and from work, and delivering pastries each day from his uncle's shop. Another uncle also offered him work selling marketing/publicity items (calendars, pens, etc.) on commission to local companies.

> I never felt like I was unemployed. I had always something to do. In the morning I helped my uncle. If I wanted to earn some extra cash, I'd fill my bag with publicity stuff and start knocking on doors. I also had to drive farm workers to wherever they were needed. I suppose the only drawback was that I didn't have a regular job. (Eça, male, 23)

Youngsters able to put together this type of "portfolio" of opportunities not only earned money, but also developed specific skills, personal confidence and work discipline. Parents kept their eyes open in their own work places for casual or more permanent jobs for their children: Alberto was able to pick up work from time to time because his father was a supervisor in the SMP Wine Co-operative; Sebastião's mother knows the local pharmacist well and was able to negotiate a 6-month work contract for her son, while

he was waiting to do military service. Some parents have been able to direct their youngsters towards training opportunities: many of these are state-sponsored and pay expenses or even a small salary. Parents are also pre-pared to pay for training, especially computer courses, if necessary. In addi-tion to board and lodging, travel expenses, pocket money, and subsidising training costs, parents often provide substantial financial help directly or indirectly to their offspring: Fidel's father acted as a guarantor for the pur-chase of a van, Ana's parents-in-law sold her for a nominal sum the land she needed to build a house, Lúcia's parents bought her an apartment, and two other youngsters, still in school, already knew their parents were willing to contribute to the start-up costs of their car repair and hairdressing busi-nesses, respectively. Other parents may involve themselves more directly in their children's plans by establishing businesses for them, working in part-nership with them, or expanding their own firms to accommodate them.

Parents, close kin, friends, neighbours and acquaintances are also instru-mental in youth finding more permanent employment in the wider commu-nity. Their greater knowledge of and/or access to multiple sources of information puts them in a key mediating position between first time job seekers and the world of work. The jobs held by our interviewees at the time of the research had been found with the help of information mostly from friends; indeed participants in one focus group discussion agreed that "information flows faster when it's between friends". Neighbours and acquaintances were also important, as were parents and close kin. In only one instance was current employment found "unassisted": Graça looked in the yellow pages for clothes shops in the locality and phoned around, trying to find someone who needed a seamstress.

Often parents and kin are prepared to go much further than just providing information to their young relatives: they may try to exert influence through a third party or lobby key decision-makers directly. Both interviewees and key informants alike corroborated the widespread use of *cunha*. As the local priest commented:

> As a general rule, parents approach local employers, either directly or through friends — the Local Council, Wine Co-operative ... there's not a lot more around here — and they make promises, implore, and even make use of friends in politics.

The immediate family, the wider kinship group, and close friends undoubt-edly constitute the primary and most reliable structures and sources of sup-port for rural youth today. Social networks, particularly those based on the family, are seen to work – which, in many instances, is more than can be said for either the market or policy – and may be crucial in times such of unemployment or illness. Kinship cushions youngsters and adults alike

against "market failures" and the inefficiency, inaction or inappropriateness of state intervention. Attitudes and concrete practices have inculcated the notion that the family is a safety net, as Mário's case eloquently documents:

> Mário was born in Porto to where his father had moved in the mid 1970's. His father had married a girl from Porto, and worked in a factory until 1987, when the firm went bankrupt. Mário's parents were offered help both by his wife's brothers in Porto and his own relatives back in SMP. The family eventually opted to return to SMP, where Mário's father became a partner in a building firm owned by one of his brothers-in-law, and where Mário's brother still works today. Mário's father later joined a similar firm in SMP run by his cousin. Mário himself wants to get married and return to Porto and is thinking of asking his uncles there if they would employ him and his fiancée. Thus not only did the family soften the blow caused by his father's unemployment but, almost 15 years later, his own plans for a better life revolve around those very same relations of solidarity. (compiled from interviews with Mário, male, 16, single.

Thus it is family and friends, through the provision of extensive, reliable, long term and substantial support of various types, that contribute most to smoothing the school-to-work transition of the younger generation, and to some degree are able to compensate for the failures of schooling, public policy and the market.

Paradox 5: Youth participate widely in community life but the community is largely ignorant of their needs and aspirations

The penultimate paradox that emerged from our work in SMP is constituted by young people's efforts to include themselves in the community's social, cultural and political life compared to the extent of their exclusion from consultation and decision-making in these spheres. Youth is a time for experimentation, and many young people in SMP, as elsewhere, are often simultaneously active in various groups and events, some of which are apparently permanent (such as major political parties, football supporters' associations, Church organisations and local festivals), or be much more ephemeral in nature (such as protest movements or certain aspects of "youth culture"). It is also part of the transition from adolescence to adulthood that youngsters' alter their preferences, with past interests waning, new enthusiasms being acquired, and changing circumstances imposing a shift in priorities. Few interviewees, however, seemed to be completely excluded or exclude themselves from community activity[58]: indeed, the vast majority has had or still maintains links to one or more local organisations and/or initiatives. Relatively few withdraw (albeit temporarily) and when they do, it is for predictable reasons, such as the early assumption of family

responsibilities – marriage and the arrival of children, or looking after ageing or infirm parents. Youngsters are forced to grow up quickly and expected to be more responsible if they marry and start a family in their late teens, and this often precludes involvement in both community-level socio-cultural and political events:

> Youngsters in SMP don't persevere with politics because many of them get married and have kids, like I did, which ties you down very early. So you don't have time to participate because of children, home and work. You have to give up something. It's impossible to do it all. (Elsa, 24, mother of three)

Adults active in the Church encourage youngsters to help at the parish level in organising and running Scout groups, church choirs, catechism classes[59], and activities devoted to community action, spiritual meditation, or raising social awareness. While such activities are typically "managed" by adults, a few youngsters may develop organisational skills as a result of the roles attributed to them. What little could be discerned on youth involvement in decision-making suggested that there was a high degree of dependence on adult leadership and that prevailing organisational forms somewhat inhibited the translation of young people's own ideas into concrete action and sustainable outcomes. Village festivals have a combined cultural and religious nature and youth typically act as *mordomos*, i.e. both symbolically and in practice they organise the event under the guidance of the local priest. Fund-raising is a priority, but they are also involved to some extent in decision-making. At Carnival time, they have the responsibility of organising the traditional events in which the general public is given the opportunity to poke fun at those whose social status usually exempts them from such treatment. Other types of local organisations, such as the voluntary fire brigade, hunting and fishing clubs, village folk dancing troupes and musical bands, theatre groups, cultural associations and sports clubs are all very popular, particularly in the main villages, though to a lesser extent in the town of SMP itself. Sports such as athletics, volleyball and cycling bring young people together, though football is by far the most popular: we found players of 4 separate soccer clubs among our respondents, as well as one who coached the local children's team. It is clear that these organisations constitute the principle means by which youth are drawn into in local com-

---

58. Among the currently "uninvolved", we met one interviewee who is mourning his mother's death, three relative newcomers to SMP, two with very time-consuming jobs, and one with a baby to take care of.

59. At least 5 of our informants were former scouts, and 3 were responsible for catechism classes.

munity life. However, there was surprisingly little evidence of youth involvement in any regional, rural, local or community development association[60].

Youth participation in conventional politics is relatively high, far exceeding the *a priori* expectations of the researchers, and constitutes another important means by which young people are socialised into community life. However, few of the respondents were members of political parties, and some had very little knowledge about local party organisations; indeed, they felt somewhat alienated from party agendas, priorities and activities. Interviewees were often rather reticent and, when pressed, tended to reflect widely-held stereotypes concerning politics and politicians:

> Politics doesn't interest me. (Marília, female, 21); I don't like political parties (Artur, male, 21); Politics just produces conflict and this puts people off. (Fidel, 23); Politicians are good liars but their promises aren't worth anything. (Olga, female, 20); They promise everything at election time, but they never keep their word. (Elsa, female, 24)

Nevertheless, about a quarter admitted being, or having been more or less formally linked to the local youth branches of the three major national political parties: the PS (Socialist Party), PSD (Social Democratic Party) and the PCP (Portuguese Communist Party)[61] and three mentioned friends that were party members. Four interviewees could be considered activists, regularly participating in meetings of the parties' youth branch, and even intervening in the public sessions of the local municipal assembly. Three have been very involved in local cultural events sponsored by one or other of the main parties, namely a heavy-metal rock concert and a beauty contest. Furthermore, SMP's annual "week of culture", along with events such as national congresses held in the major cities, provide opportunities to affirm one's party loyalty. Rosa (20, female), one of the political activists to whom we spoke, had this to say:

> I enjoy being involved in the party's youth wing. I like politics: I like the "rough and tumble" that it involves. There are lots of things wrong – in my village, for example – that upset me, and I want to fight against them. That's what led me to get involved in politics.

---

60. In Portugal, the proliferation of "modern" development associations is essentially a post EU-accession phenomenon. However, the "density" of folklore, sports and leisure- groups in SMP can be attributed mainly to the long-term commitment and enthusiasm of one local teacher.

61. In the March 2002 elections, the Socialist party, in power since 1995 but without an absolute majority, was narrowly defeated by the Social Democrats.

Political differences are undoubtedly a pervasive factor in local social life and potentially divisive for youngsters: the tendency for certain cafés and other meeting places to be patronised primarily by people from a common party background means that wider social interaction between youngsters may only occur when they meet on "neutral territory" outside Santa Marta (e.g. at clubs and discos in Vila Real, for example). Two young party members even claimed that some youngsters had been excluded from the local Scout Troop, ostensibly because they came from families with political affiliations different to those of the scout leaders.

A second facet of the "paradox of participation" is that youngsters' substantial involvement in politics is not matched by the limited influence they exert locally. Most respondents (party and non-party members alike) felt youth involvement to be restricted to the high points of the electoral cycle. The local priest was in agreement:

> There is a great deal of disenchantment among youngsters regarding politics. You hardly see them except at election time, when they're mobilised for all sorts of purposes.

Clearly, party leaderships feel some ambiguity about what kind and degree of involvement is appropriate for youth. At election time, they constitute the party's "foot soldiers": they stick up posters, swell the ranks of marches, carry banners, and make up the numbers at rallies throughout the region. So, in addition to their votes, the material and symbolic contribution of young people to party fortunes cannot be underestimated. As a young farm labourer, a member of the local "opposition" party, put it:

> Young people make a difference, mainly due to their energy. Youth means power, and party leaders feel well supported by all these youngsters. (Castro, male, 25)

Nevertheless, while we may define "providing support" as involvement, it falls far short of real participation since, during the rest of the electoral cycle, youth have great difficulty in finding a receptive "ear" in which to express their concerns – a first step in young people's civic and political self-affirmation. Indeed, one of the main complaints was that those in power do not even bother to inquire about the needs and ideas of young people: they assume they know, or worse still, don't care. On the rare occasions that youth succeed in getting a hearing, they are patronised, and their ideas tend not to be taken seriously or even dismissed as irrelevant, though experiences are not identical in all parties. As the following quotes illustrate, the common adult misconception that youth lack both initiative and good judgement, and the consequent weakness of inter-generational political relationships, reinforce mutual mistrust. Áo de corpo de texto36

> If we're politically active, the adults just say: "What on earth are
> these kids talking about? Don't they understand anything at all?"
> That's how they think. But we do know something. We may have less
> understanding of politics than they do, but we can learn. It's the
> adults who are convinced that we don't understand anything. (Luisa,
> female, 18)

> Maybe adults <u>do</u> hold the young back. You know the sort of thing
> they say: "Shut up and grow up. You're still too young to understand
> anything. (Lauro, male, 20)

> Some proposals from the youth wing of the party were accepted on
> paper, but a lot of them were never implemented. The older party
> members want to be the only decision-makers, and following the
> ideas of the young people wouldn't look good. (Telmo, male, 19)

Since many informants agreed that greater and more effective youth
involvement in community life is desirable, it is important to identify the
reasons for such widespread dissatisfaction with politics, and to raise public
awareness that meaningful participation in politics constitutes an essential
part of everyone's rights as citizens. Telmo, who left one of the political par-
ties, disillusioned with its top-down decision-making, suggested that
greater youth participation can be justified on at least two grounds: (1) that
the experience of each generation is quite distinct and therefore adults are
wrong to simply judge contemporary youth on the basis of their own past,
and (2) that, contrary to adult misconceptions, youngsters are potentially a
key source of valid and innovative ideas. Though young candidates – usu-
ally men – may stand for local party positions or be included among the
candidates in Council elections, they tend to be kept "at the bottom of the
list", from where it is not only difficult to secure a seat, but also to influence
the local leadership.

> Those involved in politics try to encourage us to get involved, for
> instance to stand as candidates for the Local Council. However, I
> don't think our opinions are given any value. Our names are there
> just to fill the list up. It's the older politicians that have the final
> word. They are the big names, at the head of the list. They take the
> decisions. They are the 'doers'. (Dulce, female, 24)

No wonder even the most committed sometimes feel they are pedalling hard
just to stay in the same place. Despite the illusion of upward progress,
young people's apprenticeship in conventional politics is so long, and the
criteria for "graduation" (based on years of service and a good record) are so
demanding, that some young activists may even become socialised into the
prevailing adult orthodoxy regarding the limits and potential of youth
involvement in politics. While part of the dualism inherent in young peo-

ple's attitudes and behaviour, where political commitment and apathy co-exist, may be explained by their perceptions of the process as a whole – which may not, in fact, differ significantly from those of adults – it is also substantially conditioned by the nature of local politics. Political power at the local level, particularly in Portugal's rural areas, is practised and perceived much more as personal privilege than as public service, and is more redolent of individual property, than a collective and shared instrument.

Most interviewees were surprised to be asked about the extent to which young people are involved in decision-making, and they typically answered in particularistic terms: "Here, of course, the mayor is boss". For even the smallest local initiative, the key determinant of success or failure consists of the mayor's views, priorities and wishes, as well as the issues on which he is willing to act and the interests he is prepared to support. While the ability of the mayor and his staff to "deliver" is often overestimated, their efforts in support of individuals, stakeholders and particular communities are nevertheless under close and constant scrutiny. Indeed, people commonly ask the mayor, town councillors, or parish council chairmen for favours, particularly with regard to employment.

> In SMP many things operate through "cunhas". People expect this. I think the highly politicised atmosphere in SMP is because it's such a small, closed community. People naturally depend on the Local Council because they feel that it should provide locals with employment – and I suppose to some extent that they're right. But sometimes it's just like beggars asking for alms. (nurse, female, key informant)

In rural Portugal, politics tends to be more deeply rooted in territory than ideology and this gap is reflected in the discourses of young people, who typically make few references to common causes or socio-political values. Sharing an ideology may be of little practical use, while being well connected with members of the local and regional political class undoubtedly confers advantages. Furthermore, everyone expects a local politician to bring "development" to the community or locality from which (s)he comes. Thus territorial imperatives of rural politics reinforce the "short-termism" inherent in politics in general: on election, a mayor has a mandate to undertake actions that are material, visible and of immediate impact, such as the provision of road improvements, a sports complex, or an upgraded medical centre, rather than progress that is long-term yet less-tangible.

Our interviews also suggested that youth tend to see the exercise of power as secretive rather than transparent, with little evidence of either debate or dialogue. People take it for granted that issues of supposedly public interest will be handled exclusively within the formal political institutions; where only limited political opposition exists, this may mean that discussion only

takes place within the ruling party. It is also clear that local political power tends to be built upon social networks. Some informants recognised the influence that both family and peers exert over one's political options and connections. One girl claimed she joined in events organised by one party just to have fun with her friends; other interviewees spoke of their political involvement as being an integral part of family life:

> My father is in politics. He's chairman of the parish council. Personally I don't much like politics: it's a rather dirty business. Politicians do a lot of deals under the table and behind people's backs. I've been involved since I was a child. First I tagged along with my father on political campaigns, then I was pressurised into be in charge of the youth branch and that's all there was to it. (Eça, 23, party youth leader)

Since local politics meshes with families and with social networks and is also perceived as a personally- and territorial-related activity, it seems logical to conclude that it may function as a driving force for both social "inclusion" and "exclusion". Those who have close ties with the mayor, with members of the ruling party, with local leaders, or with those who are integrated in key social networks, will be "in"; the rest are simply "left out".

It comes as a surprise, therefore, that so many youngsters persevere in politics as long as they do, given the apparent mismatch between the high political costs (involvement and work) and the low returns (little attention to and poor acceptance of young people's ideas and priorities). Why do they allow politicians to "use" them? Should we not expect more youth to rebel, become disinterested and/or drop out? In fact, when youth and politicians come into contact, their behaviour is in some ways comparable: each "uses" the other. However, in order to compare the net benefits that accrue to each side, we need to ensure that we examine this asymmetrical transaction in a way that accurately reflects not only the more familiar adult motivations, but also the less well-researched youth standpoint. Youth may not always "play the long game" as much as adults assume: they "drop into" politics, attracted by the excitement and fun it involves, and "drop out" again because of its frustrations. Those that come to share adults' idea that political contacts are a key component in a well-planned "career strategy", keep a low political profile, conform, and tolerate the "poor cost-benefit ratio" for a time, in the hope that things improve and that the investment "pays off" and patience may be rewarded with a job.

Paradox 6: Though the future looks far from promising, young people would prefer to stay

The final paradox suggested by our analysis centres on the fact that, in spite of being pessimistic over the future of their county and sceptical with regard to the local impact of government policy, most young people in SMP were willing to stay[62]. While recognising that changes had taken place, particularly in the provision of physical and social infrastructure and the built environment, many complained that the pace of improvement had been extremely slow, and that the general tendency was for stagnation. Though a few interviewees appeared unconcerned about the future of SMP, most tended to compare what they saw as the main developments achieved to date with their own aspirations and priorities: consciously or subconsciously, their assessment of "local prospects" and of their own and friends' school and work experience pathways so far, both provide the context in which they speculate about their own economic prospects in the years to come.

Youngsters' intuitive views on trends and trajectories of local development raise some key questions. To what extent are they in a position to judge Santa Marta's future prospects, and contribute in a more informed and effective way to envisioning a strategy for its future as well as their own? How much information do they have on the contribution made by public policy to the situation in which SMP finds itself? In fact, many interviewees exhibited a sort of "institutional blindness", being largely able to identify the policies, programmes or projects from which they had benefited via work placements or training[63]during the school-to-work transition. Their limited grasp of the institutional context in which they are enmeshed is understandable for two main reasons, neither of which have much to do with the ignorance or indifference so often attributed to young people:

- given the complexity of today's institutional networks – consisting of both administrative and financial links between EU directorates, national government departments and public institutions, non-profit organisations "subcontracted" at the national/regional level, and local "service providers" of all sorts – it is hardly surprising that

---

62. It is worth stressing that making such prognoses is a difficult exercise for anyone. SMP's youngsters are no exception. In the interviews, some simply did not reply to questions regarding the locality's future, others did so only reluctantly, and the reminder answered in terms of the development achieved to date, and very few tried to envisage what SMP would or could be in the future.

63. e.g. PAIJVA and UNIVA (associated with various programmes for "inserting" young people into "active life" or employment, as it is should more accurately be described), INFORJOVEM (which provides computing courses for young people) and the JVS (young volunteers for solidarity).

beneficiaries tend to recall only the organisations' designations (some with great difficulty), or their locations, and maybe the names of a local public official with whom they had some contact;

- not only do the prejudices of local politicians impose constraints on young people's understanding of and participation in local develop-ment, but the clientelistic practices and "brokerage" role of the politico-bureaucratic elite also inhibit the development of local democracy by promoting a quite specific form of info-exclusion that makes the Local Council appear responsible for all progress that occurs, yet virtually unaccountable for any of its failures.

For most youth, policies and programmes are little more than "UFOs" – many believe in their existence, but few come into direct contact with them, since relations with the "aliens" is almost always through a set of local inter-mediaries. Better-informed interviewees were both sceptical of the effec-tiveness of public policy and critical of the general quality of public service provision:

> I wanted to set up a sportswear shop. After looking into what sup-port the [self-employment promotion] programme could offer me, I came to the conclusion that the whole thing was just a charade. (Inês, female, 23, employed)

> I applied for support [from the self-employment promotion pro-gramme], but it's all a big pretence, really. The project was approved almost four years ago, but we still haven't received the money. We got a letter, saying there was a document we hadn't provided, and then, after we provided it, they said something else was missing. I'm not sure if the civil servants just don't know the procedures or sim-ply can't explain them well enough. We had to go to Porto every week or so, and eventually the project seemed to be approved. At the last meeting, after two hours, they said something else was wrong with the application. (Lúcia, female, 20, employed)

> I inherited a small restaurant and planned to expand the business in two phases into a hotel. The first phase of the project took two years to be approved, and now I may have resubmit it because the new EU financial support scheme is much more favourable than the old one. (Miguel, male, 24, self-employed)

Yet neither the lack of a given policy, nor defects in policy implementation are always to blame for the obstacles youngsters meet in their employment pathways: often problems are caused by the inappropriateness of policy to the local context. This is certainly the case with housing policy. On the sur-face, there appears to be no housing problem for SMP youth, since the fam-ily typically assumes the responsibility of providing accommodation as long

as it is required. While the majority of youth obviously would like to have a house of their own, the issue only arises in concrete terms later in life, after finding a permanent job and/or getting married. The mere existence of policies to assist young people in obtaining their own rented or bought accommodation, such as rent subsidies and reduced interest rates on mortgages for young people, is not enough reason for them to leave the home before they marry or find employment; indeed, only a few interviewees mentioned that they had benefited from state housing assistance. In spite of its rural character, housing costs in SMP have been inflated somewhat as a result of property speculation in the nearby Vila Real housing market over the last 5 years or so; though houses remain slightly cheaper, they are often beyond the means of young SMP residents who have just begun to work: with the average monthly income of 300_ – 599_ earned by the majority of the young people interviewed, it is impossible to buy a modest house or apartment even with state subsidised mortgages. In the case of rented accommodation, state assistance is available up to 80% of the monthly rent. Even this latter, apparently more attractive, option poses some difficulties, since in SMP no formal market for renting housing exists. Thus in spite of the general merit of existing housing policies for youth, ultimately they have little relevance to the situation of young people in rural localities like SMP.

If taking up an employment opportunity elsewhere implies high housing costs, costly transport and low pay, then it makes sense to stay in SMP. Securing a (low paid) job and having (limited) economic independence from the parents is not always reason enough to leave home. Where aged or infirm parents are involved, the lack of local social services or limits to family solidarity reinforce the decision to stay, as Luzia's case shows:

> I applied successfully for the job of administrative assistant at a school in Guimarães [a city about 85 km from SMP]. But nearly all of the salary would have gone on rent, transport, and so on. So 'independence' would've meant ending up with little or no money of my own. Then my mother had a stroke and that made me rethink the whole issue. Anyway, I preferred to stay at home and take care of my mother. (Luzia, 25, single)

Thus the local and extralocal availability of jobs, the supply of affordable housing, the intensity of attachment to SMP and the existence of local social support systems (be they institutional or based on solidarity networks) emerge as the key inter-linked factors that influence patterns of job search and decisions to ultimately stay in the area or leave. It is interesting to note, however, that only 9 interviewees seemed especially "attached" to SMP, in the sense that it limited the opportunities they might pursue or accept, whereas 19 stated that their preference for staying in SMP would not prevent them taking a job elsewhere.

Nevertheless, in spite of the prevailing conditions just referred to, almost two-thirds of the interviewees said they would probably or definitely continue to live in SMP, and less than one in ten seemed firmly committed to leaving. Only one of the married interviewees had any reservations, and around half of those who are still single thought they would probably stay on, the availability of jobs both locally and elsewhere being the determining factor. Furthermore, a strong correlation between low income and intention to stay would suggest that the strength of local "social capital" (in the form of networks of solidarity and influence), the relatively low levels of "human capital" (in terms of education and skill levels) and the paucity of easily-mobilised monetary resources, means that only youth from better-off families can seriously contemplate moving away.

Despite the many factors that affect a young person's decision to leave or stay, those we interviewed felt that, in general, it was preferable to find employment in the area. While this is probably due, in part, to the strong, supportive family relationships that endure in rural areas such as SMP, it does not mean young people will stay on indefinitely and at any cost. They may be willing to make temporary sacrifices, or delay decisions, due to the relations of reciprocal solidarity they have with their parents, but they remain very conscious of the implications that changes in either their employment prospects, parental responsibilities or marital status will have on their longer term plans. In brief, for most young people of SMP, the bottom line is the very much the same. To stay or not to stay? That is the question.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

A chasm separates youth and adult views regarding the value of education and its contribution to employability: while adults stress the high potential returns to education, schools suffer from dramatic failure, repetition and drop-out rates too high to be explained solely by students' learning difficulties. Teachers and career advisors too frequently miss the fact that the "downward revision" of young people's often modest ambitions begins at school and, despite parents' stiff opposition, many students become frustrated, lose motivation and drop out. Based on their experiences at school, few youngsters seem willing to complete or extend their studies via adult education courses, particularly when there are few guarantees that the benefits will exceed the costs.

Though their own level of participation is high, young people in SMP feel that the adults who dominate and manage cultural and political life are, at best, ignorant or, at worst, scornful of their views, needs and aspirations. Political and policy discourse related to public facilities and services for youngsters often have limited local relevance; youngsters know from their own experience that the consistent and reliable material help and moral support afforded by parents, kin and other social networks is what counts. Notwithstanding the constant references to the quality of Port wine ("the best on the earth"), the uniqueness and development potential Douro Valley ("first demarcated region in the world", "UNESCO World Heritage" , "the promise of rural-, river- and wine-based tourism), and despite the fact that grapes and wine dominate the landscape and local economy, young people are convinced there is no future for them in the vineyards.

The commitment of youngsters to actually stay in an area that they felt had only limited prospects, in fact constitutes a major asset for SMP. Indeed, local politicians and institutions should not only acknowledge this fact, but should be made to feel accountable for giving it greater priority in their plans and decision-making. Nevertheless, sustaining youngsters' willingness to stay – particularly by promoting more and better quality employment – is a task that will challenge the very best of local councils and business communities. Furthermore, national and regional policymakers must take into account that local culture makes a difference: customs, common beliefs and values, and the solidarity provided by social networks are key factors in the social inclusion and exclusion processes that affect rural youth, and have extensive and profound quantitative and qualitative implications specifically for the demand and supply of "local" jobs[64] and for welfare outcomes in general. This is best illustrated by the notions about work in general, and a "good" job, in particular, shared by many local people, and articulated through our interviewees' narratives: ideally, they wish neither work, nor self-employment[65], but rather aspire to public salaried employment, which is associated with security, better working conditions and a "fair" salary[66]. Getting a secure job is seen as "the most important thing in life", mainly because of the "multiplier effect" it generates: a decent job is

---

64.   It is worth recalling a number of cultural factors that exert considerable influence over the behaviour of youngsters as they begin to seek work: the "working age", at which one should leave school and become economically active, is more a (locally) socially-constructed concept than a merely legal one; secondly, the low status and value attached to working in the vineyards; and, finally, the deeply-ingrained belief in the power of *cunha*.

the key to accessing many other opportunities. Yet, in SMP, as elsewhere, with fewer and fewer public sector jobs available, the future looks bleak for those seeking such employment.

Regardless of the kind of job that young people may define as "good", the school system appears to be unable to adequately identify and respond to students' personal knowledge, developing academic and social skills, occupational dreams and concrete employment aspirations. In SMP, as elsewhere, some of the links in the chain between school and work are either broken or missing[67]. What school offers matches neither local social conditions nor market needs: training opportunities are usually disconnected from the content of formal schooling and adult education, as well as from the aspirations of potential employees and the needs of possible employers. In brief, the world of youngsters' dreams, the world of school and the world of work seem not to belong to the same universe. In order to consolidate the youngsters' willingness to stay in SMP, these gaps have to be narrowed, and disruptive forces reversed. This is a difficult, though not impossible, task.

The local development process that will make staying in SMP more attractive to youth may depend on yet another key asset. While youth seem to acknowledge that social structures exert more influence than personal agency, they nevertheless share a number of positive attitudes: pragmatism and a preparedness to adapt, a gradualist, step-by-step approach to the res-

---

65. Work is essentially defined as wage-work, characterised by hard, unpleasant, irregular labour, mainly in vineyards or in the construction sector. Both the start and the end of a ''work'' relationship may be informal and abrupt. Relatively low pay and lack of career prospects are also associated with this notion. As yet, and despite the emphasis given to it in political and policy discourse, entrepreneurial-style (rather than liberal professional) self-employment continues to have relatively little appeal to contemporary rural youth. Risk averse attitudes (perfectly rational in rural circumstances), and a limited ability to finance self-employment (attributable, in part, to evolving banking practices and priorities), may lie at the heart of this "prejudice".

66. Security throughout the working life as well as the expected value of retirement pensions (as compared to other jobs) are features of public jobs that are much appreciated, and they are seen as outweighing a low salary and other disadvantages. Actually, this view is an old, common one. Although both the social environment and market conditions that youngsters are facing today are obviously different from their parents', their reasons for viewing the State as a patron are equally strong. Indeed, insecurity of employment and inability of becoming contributors to the social welfare services (and, consequently, eligible as beneficiaries), are constitutive elements of many current jobs, which the youth are aware of.

67. The links of the chain include one's innate potential, acquired education and formal training, apprenticeship and work placement opportunities, and, finally, employment experience.

olution of problems, a conscious monitoring of available opportunities, and an openness to a wide range of options. The number of youngsters determined to "do something" with their lives seems high: resignation and straightforward "accommodation" to the current situation is rare, and there are signs that, despite their experiences at school, some sort of education may still be seen as a path worth pursuing further. Yet, under the present circumstances, making adult education and professional training respond to the needs of rural youth will be highly demanding both in policy and operational terms: successful adult education, for example, will require tailor-made programmes[68] and will depend crucially on generating a higher level of motivation among participants and a much greater attention to quality, and a greater sense of "service" among providers.

There is no doubt that most young people, often helped by parents, do their level best to avoid farming. However, we believe that viticulture, the wine business and tourism-related commerce and services constitute the most likely corner-stones of SMP's future development[69]. However, it is no simple task to realise the employment potential of this type of local development. The perceived social value of viticulture needs to be increased, and this may be partially achieved via radical improvements in working conditions, through professional training in the sector, the generation of more off-farm employment, the status of self-employment promoted, and the effectiveness of growers' organisations more vigorously developed. However, for this to happen, all the communities and institutions of the Douro, need to collectively rethink both their attitudes and actions: while familiar, in practice the key ingredients required to transform the self-image of the Douro are often ignored by most citizens and power-holders. Abstract local pride

---

68. At least, the following conditions concerning the participants' profiles would be required: detailed knowledge about school/family life history; real (rather than certification-based) audit and recognition of past and current experience, abilities and knowledge; and, last but not least, the clear identification of both the personal dreams and professional aspirations of potential students/trainees. From the educational supply side, minimal conditions would include: a broad and innovative menu of subjects that are problem-oriented and satisfy local development needs (e.g. language courses to improve the quality of tourism services); life- and work-oriented programmes and methods; appropriate material conditions.

69. .It is certainly true that, on the one hand, wine production is bound to seasonal activities and that mechanisation reduces the demand for labour, but, on the other hand, the youngsters' views are simplistic. There is some room for manoeuvre, (a) if one looks at the experience of comparable areas in Italy, France and Spain; and (b) if one takes into account the potential for diversification (via the development of multiple tourism services) inherent in the production of Port and high quality table wines.

in the fame, prestige and quality of Port wine and the beauty of the country-side will have little effect unless the key role of grapes and wine in realising the potential for local development is recognised and made concrete. Rather than continuing to weigh heavily in the collective memory of most people, viticulture has to become central to their collective commitment to the future.

More likely than not, the satisfaction of the above-mentioned conditions will depend on changing the way existing policies are implemented, rather than formulating completely new ones. This will mean, for example, increased dissemination of public information, improved quality and proximity of youth-related public services, and a pro-active attitude by all local institutions (e.g. schools, parishes councils, firms, political parties, and the Local Council) capable of establishing real dialogue, mutual respect and effective collaboration both with local youth and among local partners. All these prerequisites may help to deliver better academic performance at school, more appropriate and accessible training, apprenticeship opportunities, work placements and, ultimately, create more jobs for the young people of SMP. For the quantity and quality of employment to be improved, and the county's overall development promoted, these policy-related proposals must not be seen in a short-term perspective, nor as something separate. The ad-hoc and often disconnected policy measures of the past and present have had little or no positive impact on some of the key problems of rural development and, perversely, have sometimes fostered rather than mitigated the socio-economic exclusion of youth. Clearly, the essential means for greater success are to be found in the long run, integrated articulation of socio-economic policies in support of local development.

References

Commission for the Co-ordination of the Northern Region (CCRN), Data Base, July, 2000, (www-ccr-n.pt) based on data from INE, Statistical treatment by CCRN/DRPD.

Commission for the Co-ordination of the Northern Region (CCRN), Data Base, July, 2000, www.ccr-n.pt based on data from the Ministry of Education (GETAP and GEP), statistical treatment by CCRN/DRPD.

M. V. Cabral and J. M. Pais (eds.) *Jovens Portugueses de Hoje — Resultados de um inquérito de 1997*, Celta, Oeiras, Portugal, 423 pp.

J. M. Pais (2001) *Ganchos, Tachos e Biscastes — Jovens, Trabalho e Futuro*, Ambar, Porto, Portugal, 437p.

Wall, Karin, Sofia Aboim, Vanessa Cunha and Pedro Vasconcelos (2001), "Families and informal support networks in Portugal: the reproduction of inequality", in *Journal of European Social Policy,* Vol. 11, Nº 3, August, pp. 213-234.

Wall, Karin (1998), *Famílias no campo. Passado e presente em duas freguesias do Baixo Minho,* Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon.

8. 'Youth Spirit' – the ingredient that makes all the difference?

Thomas Dax, Ingrid Machold and Chris Gerry

Introduction

Children and young people grow into a world that is changing in many ways and at an accelerating pace, due to technological advances and the process of globalisation.

> "Yet, while social structures such as class and gender continue to shape young people's life-chances, these structures become increasingly obscure as collectivist traditions weaken and individualist values intensify. Thus social exclusion is 'collectively individualised', with young people tending to blame themselves for any perceived failures" (Burnett et al. 2001, p.xv).

The Final Report of the PAYPIRD project begins its conclusions with these observations on the effect of ongoing social changes on young people. In recognising the pervasiveness of the driving forces and changes affecting young people's employment pathways and wider opportunities, we draw the conclusion that social inclusion is a multi-dimensional issue that cannot be adequately assessed simply by analysing labour market aspects alone. This holds particularly true for the threat of social exclusion faced by young people, the objective conditions and subjective views of whom cannot be understood by "rationally" analysing different patterns of behaviour and identifying what appear to be a clear set of influencing components. The diversity of personal development processes underscores the complex influence of background, context and conjuncture on young people's strategic decisions and their resulting life pathways, not least of all their growing rejection of conventional life styles and their aspirations for alternative perspectives, solutions and adaptation strategies. The multiple determinants,

key features and rapidly changing contours of the transition from school to employment are widely reflected in the growing research focus on children and young people and their changing role in society (Jones 2002).

It also became clear in the course of the research project that, while a range of EU and national level employment-related policies have been designed for young people, these tend to neglect the rural dimension. At the same time, where policies and programmes target rural development problems, young people are often ignored.

Although participation has been an issue within the evolving consensus on integrated programmes for rural development in the EU, only limited efforts have been made to ensure all local actors are actively involved. It is only in recent years that the importance of addressing social and regional cohesion has been fully recognised, as the prospects for marginalised areas have become increasingly gloomy and as fully-effective labour market policies have remained elusive. In the political debate in countries such as the UK (e.g. Shucksmith 2000), Ireland and Scandinavia, the issue of social exclusion has gained particular priority and raised awareness over the distributional effects of sector-specific policies. While the need to adjust social welfare systems in line with patterns of social exclusion quickly became apparent, policymakers have been much slower to take on board the implications of such processes for territorial development.

Similarly, policymakers have seemed content to define rural development programmes as "bottom-up" if a limited empowerment of local activists could be achieved. However, in some cases, this led to situations in which local actors in whom greater power had been invested were seen as "local elites".

Recent research on rural development has also increasingly focused on questions of marginality – whether of groups or individuals, or both – with young people readily identifiable as particularly susceptible to marginalisation and exclusion. Of particular relevance to current rural development and youth research agendas and, in particular, to questions of youth participation, is the warning sounded by Cloke and Little (1997, p. 281) over the care that should be taken

> "to ensure that the notion of marginalisation does not simply become a convenient 'excuse' by which to justify narrow description, as researchers flit from one 'neglected group' to another".

Some authors have particularly emphasised the need to analyse with greater rigour the inter-relationships and interests that link local actors (Lowe et al. 1999); more in-depth analyses of the degree of involvement of specific social groups in the Structural Funds programmes may reveal that the inte-

gration of more marginalised groups remained rather limited (e.g. Dax and Hebertshuber 2002). This failure was largely due to the fact that both the institutional framework and intralocal and local-extralocal power relations often represent only parts of the rural social system. In recent years, the systems approach has received widespread recognition as a valuable tool for uncovering precisely these types of problems and, as such, has become part of mainstream regional development policy (Scheer 1998); the same approach could also be useful, not only in revealing shortcomings in the initial conception of rural and local development programmes, but also in providing evidence to support calls for more transparent systems in which inter-relations between key actors and potential conflicts of interest are made more explicit. The need for a clearer understanding of the social processes, the driving factors behind them, and the system-dependent implications have been taken up in the rural development sphere in the design of the LEADER Community Initiative: the notion that the youth sector should be given specific recognition in rural programmes has become part of the official requirements set out in the guidelines for the 2000-2006 LEADER+ programme (Commission of the European Communities 2000, para 14.2).

The extent to which this aspect is already integrated into rural development practice is addressed in the Final Report of the PAYPIRD research project (Dax et al. 2002). Although there are just a few positive examples that can be cited in this respect, it has to be acknowledged that at least the *debate* over youth integration in such programmes and increased civic participation among young people has been reinforced at local, regional and also EU-levels. The most significant event at the European level was the drafting and adoption of the *White paper on Youth Policy* in 2001 by the European Commission (EC 2001). This initiative attempts to involve young people more in decisions that actually concern them and seeks to promote active citizenship among young people. The document recognised that young people are not looking for "purely symbolic forms of participation" (EC 2001, p. 35) but, on the contrary, an holistic view of participation is required that places it at the very heart of youth policy. While the need for strategies to mainstream intergenerational equality has been emphasised in recent discussions on young people's participation in local development, from the few scattered examples of attempts to put these aspirations into practice, it appears that little has really altered and that policymakers still pay only lip service to the idea that young people should actually *participate* (Horelli 2000). Indeed, young people feel that their concerns are rarely addressed and that "active citizenship" will become something more than just political discourse only when circumstances make it possible to actually see the concrete results of their personal commitment.

> "It is by taking part in the life of schools, neighbourhoods, local districts or associations that young people can acquire the experience and the confidence they need to go a step further, either now or later, in public life – including at the European level. It is by throwing themselves into social activities which are open to all, without any form of discrimination, that young people can make their contribution to a more solidarity-conscious society and live citizenship to the full" (EC 2001, p. 7).

Recognition of the need for rigorous, detailed and critical analyses of strategies against social exclusion lay at the core of the PAYPIRD project's objectives. A second concern related to the key dimension of territoriality – often even more neglected in debates on youth issues –which, in our particular case, places the focus squarely on *rural* areas**.** The fact that "youth problems" have been at their most visible in urban contexts has made it difficult to identify or estimate the full scope and diversity of the issues involved and this has meant that often the rural manifestations of the problem remain poorly specified, hidden or even totally ignored. Moreover, due to the difficulties of undertaking youth-specific studies in rural areas, regionally-differentiated data on changes in youth lifestyles and values barely exist, making the comparative analysis of different regions or types of regions almost impossible.

The attempt made in the PAYPIRD project to better understand contemporary rural youth problems centred primarily on the viewpoints of young people themselves. Putting young people's experiences at the centre of the analysis required the research teams to develop a carefully conceptualised qualitative approach that, in ethical terms, could ensure patient and respectful questioning in meticulously conducted individual interviews, and the subsequent accurate use of the information obtained. The wealth of information synthesised in the National Reports directly point to a major common issue for contemporary rural youth in the EU – namely, the increasingly differentiated situations and experiences they confront, the diverse values they adopt, and the diverging pathways to adulthood they follow. The teams' recognition of the importance of these tendencies ensured that potential individualisation trends among youth were placed high on the project's research agenda.

The synthesis provided in this concluding chapter aims, therefore, to highlight the common findings which emerge from all the partners' analyses and to make it clear that in all of them diverging paths to adulthood are to be found. The chapter also seeks to emphasise that young people tend to express their fears, concerns, plans and aspirations, obligations and preferences in a refreshing, open way – rather in contrast to the discourse of many adult politicians, policymakers and professionals and those involved

in "managing" youth affairs. While young people in all the rural areas studied tended to voice concern over the same major issues, the differences we encountered suggested substantial diversity in young people's life situations. While, in general, interviewees freely discussed the difficulties they encountered, it became clear that there was no room for complacency in the analysis of rural social exclusion: our research probably only scratched the surface of the complex processes involved, since it was often the least and less-integrated young people whom we had most difficulty contacting, or who could not be persuaded to give an interview.

Key messages from young people

Our analysis revealed that the different aspects of young people's life experiences are extremely strongly interrelated and that, consequently, neither the transition from youth to adulthood, nor from school to employment can be understood as a linear process. Indeed, the notion of a multi-dimensional transition pathway has been explored increasingly in recent youth research: for example, the Australian youth researchers Wyn and White underlined that if we seek a comprehensive analysis of the social problems young people face, "transition" cannot be reduced to the familiar, formal pathway to adulthood through completion of formal education and subsequent integration into employment (1997, pp. 74 ff.). Not only are researchers missing the point if they reduce transition to employment pathways, but also if they see youth integration as something that involves only young people: indeed, the importance of the regional context, intra- and inter family relations, social class factors, gender issues and the marginalisation processes to which young people and adults are subjected, cannot be stressed enough.

Bearing this in mind, we propose to look at the major emerging trends to which reference was made in the interviews and which the teams interpreted against the backdrop of the specific situation and corresponding institutional framework found in the study areas. By way of this perspective, we will not only try to provide an overview of general themes that will facilitate a more detailed understanding of the common features of young people's strategies in different rural areas, but we will also look at the differences between particular groups and types of young people. While the authors of each case study have adopted distinct thematic and theoretical focuses in presenting the views of the young people they interviewed, the

comparative analysis we attempt to make in the present chapter addresses all the major issues raised in the National Reports which we feel are pertinent to rural areas in general.

While in the past, the term "youth" defined a very specific age bracket, today chronological age has become a relative factor in youth transition processes, and the need for a clear-cut definition of 'youth' is no longer so important. For a number of reasons relating to the extension of secondary and higher education and the conjunctural proliferation of training and work-experience initiatives to combat unemployment, throughout Europe the age-bracket normally associated with youth has gradually been widened. However, this overall trend masks significant differences between different social groups of young people. Indeed, polarisation between young people is increasing in many respects and this has even led the synthesising author of the UK youth research programme to point to the growing internal differentiation among young people, or the widening *"youth divide"* (Jones 2002) between:

- those of differing social class backgrounds, particularly those brought up in contexts of family disadvantage (not exclusively material), and those who have experienced a more privileged upbringing: through the intergenerational transmission of beliefs about family life, education and work, parents and other adult family members still have a significant impact on whether young people will face social advantage in their adult lives; indeed, because personal development is not just shaped by formal education, a host of positive and sustained incentives are required to overcome the effects of early family disadvantage;

- those young people who stay longer in education, and those who leave immediately after finishing compulsory schooling (or drop out before), risking insecure jobs, low pay and repeated (periods of) unemployment;

- school students with better, and those with poorer, prospects for educational success: those judged unlikely to perform well increasingly experience financial disincentives and/or become financially dependent on their parents should they wish to continue schooling/training; both the means necessary to fund and the positive attitude towards such investment is unequally distributed among parents;

- the majority of young people who are increasingly deferring parenthood and the minority who start families in their teens;

- males and females: particularly in rural areas, the increasing educational achievement of young women appears to be generating far fewer dividends in terms of work and pay than had been expected.

(1) Rural areas – a place to live or to leave?

One of the key aims of the qualitative interviews was to find out about young people's "world views" as a whole, their "dreams" and the sources of their disillusionments, as well as their more specific thoughts and attitudes regarding their own lives. With accelerated change of youth culture, mostly addressed by trends first visible in urban areas, it seemed of particular importance to be alert to young people's observations and attitudes regarding their everyday life. Moreover, as the speed and visibility of change and response is greater in the urban than in the rural areas, it was important to assess to what extent these distinct contexts produced different types of problems, responses, aspirations and perspectives among young people and how wide was the disparity between the urban and rural experiences of social exclusion and inclusion.

The conditions encountered in the countryside are far from being uniform across Europe. As the selection of study areas in different types of rural areas suggests, local and regional responses are heavily influenced by the specificities of the context. This holds particularly true for the young people's assessment of such serious issues as whether to "stay or leave" the region where they grew up. The fact that myriad factors, not limited to economic or quantifiable variables, contribute to such key decisions regarding a young person's future, underlines the need for researchers and policymakers to more seriously take into account the influence that a region's recent and current economic performance has over people's assessment of the future quality of life they are likely to enjoy there. From this perspective, the long-lasting and widespread unemployment experienced in particular by young people in the Finnish study area, combined with the specific difficulties of local economies situated in relatively remote and marginal regions of Europe (such as the study areas in Ireland, Austria and Portugal) will impact negatively both on the *objective* local opportunity structure and on young people's *subjective* assessment of their future prospects there.

What has been shown through the personal interview is that attitudes shaped by traditional views are still more important than in urban contexts and even prevail in some local areas. In general, the assessments presented are drawn from the small community young people live in and reflect both strong attachment to and dependence on the existing social networks. The Austrian study area, where young people seem comparably deeply rooted in tradition and local culture, shows how the strength of a locality's legacy of traditional values may substantially influence the way in which young people see and understand the opportunities for and threats to their region. Though this may reflect the current situation in which few "foreign" influences have so far penetrated the region, it may equally imply that major

changes in the social structure and identity of the region are yet to come. The recent emergence of trends that have tended to undermine traditional activities and viewpoints in the area in which the study area is situated, underlines the likelihood that, as interaction with other regions, actors and influences intensifies, local changes are also inevitable. It seems, therefore, that its peripheral situation does not just constitute an economic handicap but also has an impact on the locality's social and cultural situation and the population's assessment of future life chances both there and in the wider region.

Although, to a great extent young people voiced traditional values during the interviews, it was clear that they were experiencing an inner struggle between rejection and adoption of more modern ways of life. There seems little doubt that, for example, in the sphere of computer and telecommunications technology, both the demands of work and the increasing supply and marketing of the modern amenities of life are increasingly shaping key aspects of young people's lives. However, in other more private and social spheres of life, many young people in the area do not accept the demise of tradition willingly or enthusiastically. Nevertheless, the break with area-specific, deeply-entrenched patterns of social behaviour and interaction expressed itself particularly through individualisation tendencies that can be discerned among young people all over Europe. Importantly, however, the PAYPIRD research found that such individualisation amongst young people is highly *uneven*. In many of the rural communities studied, it was found that, to varying degrees, traditional social commitments and risk-sharing solidarity arrangements persist. For example,

- finding employment by recourse to social networks (ranging from information-sharing, through exchanges of favours, to fairly explicit nepotism) remains particularly visible and influential in some rural areas;
- where local labour markets remain highly segmented, young women are often forced to remain in traditional "women's work", and even the better-qualified find their opportunities constrained by definitions of "women's work";
- the same limited development of the local labour market to some degree conditions young men to follow traditional male pathways into farming, forestry or agricultural/vineyard wage work, especially in rural areas with little alternative employment. Nevertheless, they increasingly try to widen their personal experiences and look for alternative sources of education and income that may provide greater financial independence and better prospects.

Thus the regional and social context impacts directly on the young people's value systems and their assessment of the community and region as a place where they wish to live in the future. The chapters on the Finnish and the Portuguese study areas elaborate further on this issue. The tension felt by many young people in rural areas is clearly expressed in the paradox that "though the future looks far from promising, young people would prefer to stay" (chapter 7, p. 149). Ambiguity regarding future prospects has to be seen in the context of the transition process from school to work, in which strategies, plans, assessments and decisions are being continuously reformulated. While the issue of whether to stay or go remains central to the concerns of many sections of the rural community – an increasing proportion of young people seem to come only hesitantly to their personal decision and this indecision is fed by a multitude of local and non-local factors.

Today, when aiming at a more broadly-based approach of rural development, policy needs to focus on two distinct migration trends: "classic" out-migration and the rather more recent phenomenon of "counter-urbanisation" which has brought newcomers to certain rural areas and highlighted the importance of assessing and promoting their capacity to contribute to the sustaining of the rural economy and the provision of key local services. The prevalence and potential of rural "in-comers" is highly uneven, and to a considerable extent reflects the strategic role played by key localities in the changes that the region as a whole is undergoing. Thus it also reflects the extent to which a region manages to increase its attractiveness and organise and harness its 'rural amenities'. Only a few localities will be able to base their local development strategy on attracting incomers, since its success depends crucially on the dynamics (induced or otherwise) of the region's role and position relative to others or, in other words, what its territorial inter-linkages are and how they are developed. Moreover, even in the more dynamic and outward-looking centres of rural development, substantial inward migration is likely to challenge the relatively slow pace of life and comfortable conventions that characterise many rural communities and regions (Dey and Jentsch 2000, p.23f.).

(2) More than just education

Education is widely accepted as being the fundamental prerequisite for improving the future opportunities open to young people. Furthermore, there is a general consensus in European society about the decisive value of higher education, in particular, and the need to encourage youth to stay longer in education and training. Accordingly, while there has been a massive increase in the numbers of young people continuing in education beyond the period of compulsory schooling, substantial differences in

urban-rural and inter-regional educational levels still persist. While our study broadly substantiates these trends, the results suggest that the differences found in the education and training approaches applied in each study area owe far more to national variations in education and vocational training policies, priorities and systems, than to distinctions between the local conditions – a conclusion that further underscores the importance of taking regional specificities into account both when designing and implementing policies.

While continuing education is central to the theme of the chapter on the Scottish study area, which focuses on the educational experiences, decision-making processes and resulting career choices of rural youth, it is not clear that this issue is seen in as unambiguously favourable a light in other areas. As suggested above, the phenomenon of social exclusion often involves a pronounced polarisation between the majority who benefit from education and the minority whom the system clearly fails. It may be the case that young people from poorer families "miss out", either because they do not share the prevailing belief that education will be worthwhile, or because they cannot afford to study any longer. Over the last two decades, the shift from the state provision of largely 'free access' education to student cost-sharing, has had a much more negative impact on levels of educational choice, participation and outcome for young people from poorer, rather than economically secure, backgrounds (see also Jones 2002).

Evidence of this type of *educational disadvantage* was found in all the study areas. However, concern over the significant minority of young people who fail to benefit from upper secondary and higher education is most pronounced in the Irish and Portuguese reports, in which either premature school leaving or generally low educational involvement is identified as a major and persistent problem. While most past analyses of and initiatives on educational failure have had an urban bias, recent research in Ireland has highlighted the fact that the majority of educationally disadvantaged pupils live in the rural areas near small urban centres with populations of 10,000 or less (chapter 2, p. 19). As a result of this conclusion, a range of preventive measures and a specific programme – *Youthreach* – aimed at providing young people with a "second chance" in education and training, has been put in place.

The Portuguese case report suggests that a learning environment has still to be created that can counteract this sort of educational exclusion; indeed, the national educational system appears to be a source of demotivation for far too many students. In particular, young people in rural areas often have to face up to the harsh realities of life at a very early stage, at which point some begin to downwardly revise their initial dreams and ambitions (chapter 7, p. 129) – albeit in a very pragmatic way – making the adjustments

they see as necessary for entry into adult society. A lack of understanding of this revision process on the part of adults – be they parents, teachers or policy-makers – has disproportionately negative effects on the achievement of successful school-to-work transitions among young people for whom social inclusion is already particularly difficult for economic and/or family reasons.

Thus another important finding regarding the role of education in securing a satisfactory transition from school to employment is that much more than educational improvements and reform are required. In the first place, many young people are unwilling to pursue their studies further, when there is no longer a clear connection with improved future employment opportunities and a successful career path. Furthermore, the mismatch between higher education aspirations and local/regional job opportunities inevitably pushes many young people into looking for alternatives further afield or accepting alternative employment at home that corresponds neither to their aspirations nor their qualifications.

The uneven quality of education and training supply adds weight to the reservations young people have about the usefulness of continuing in education (chapter 5, S. 96); it also underlines the need for improved, more appropriate and better-targeted guidance on educational choices, particularly with regard to the degree of "fit" between what is available and what the labour market will require in the future. The marked degree of uncertainty young people felt with regard to what to do once they had left school (chapter 3, p. 47) left them confused, placing a tremendous burden on them at an early stage in their lives that was barely – if at all – alleviated by the support provided by official guidance systems.

The interviews in various study areas suggested that a rather different interpretation could be placed on the relatively low levels of entry into higher education encountered. Given that many rural youth are less convinced by the much-publicised benefits of continuing their schooling, it is crucial that improvements be made to local and regional structures so as to enhance the visibility and plausibility of the longer term benefits that education may bring. This is not a question of marketing, but of delivering more satisfactory pathways from education/training to sustainable employment for greater numbers of young people. While this may be practicable for the average and above-average students with supportive home environments, it may be particularly difficult for specific groups of young people threatened by multiple exclusionary processes. There exists a wide range of factors impacting on the "educational ethos" and on the general belief in the value of education, that have quite distinct effects according to generation, gender, and socio-economic class. For example, female students still have major difficulties in tight local labour markets, even if they have pursued

higher education; the children of families living in the most isolated and disadvantaged zones may find it equally difficult to benefit from market, policy or clientelist influence. Changes to education and training in support of local development therefore have to be discussed with a view to transforming employment structures and regional development dynamics. While institutions specifically created to support social and occupational integration (chapter 5, p. 99) may have an important role to play in this process, particularly in rural areas, they will need to develop "customised" approaches reflecting the obstacles that specific groups confront.

(3) Limited local choice

In analysing the transcribed interviews, the research teams were made even more keenly aware of the interplay between young people's personal perspectives, aspirations and strategies, and the opportunities provided and shaped by various contextual factors. As has been pointed out already, in different types of rural areas, young people are often torn between a positive attachment to their home, family and local culture, a negative evaluation of the current and future prospects of the locality, a curiosity about the "outside world" and a recognition that they may need to adapt to changes imposed by forces beyond local control. At its simplest, the choice facing interviewees was clear: if their personal preferences and ambitions proved incompatible with limited local educational and/or job opportunities, then they would either have to leave permanently, or commute regularly outside the region.

However, there was a much larger variety of nuances between the "staying or leaving" rationale than may have been apparent at first sight. The limited choices open to young rural people, and the influences of different factors on the school to work transitions they experience, are best examined with reference to a number of distinct spheres of opportunity – relating not only to young people's economic life, but also their personal, social and community interactions. Principle among these spheres are those of employment, education/training, housing, physical accessibility, community participation, culture and leisure.

Local employment opportunities. Interviewees referred to the weakness of the rural economy as a fundamental problem that had direct effects on the range of jobs, training facilities and career prospects available to them. These limited local opportunities tended to be judged against what was known about economic performance and the labour market both in other regions and at the national level. The heightened problems many rural youngsters face in trying to enter the labour market is due to the fact that they often have no or few, skills to offer, or that their training is inap-

propriate. In many regions (e.g. Finland) this has led to long term youth unemployment that has persisted in rural areas, even in periods of economic recovery. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that, in the local labour market, most of the jobs on offer are temporary, as exemplified in the French study area.

Restricted supply of education and training. Many young people realise very early that educational opportunities are very limited and sometimes of poor quality in the region. Difficulties are compounded by the dependence on access to some form of transport in order to reach distant schools and vocational training facilities, as well as the need to rely on family support and financing if education and training is to be prolonged.

Local housing market restrictions. There is much more limited scope in the rural housing market and young people's range of choice and aspirations tend to develop accordingly. The range of housing alternatives for young people is deeply culturally influenced. As in other rural areas, in the Austrian study area, the ideal of single ownership houses prevails and building one's own house – typically with the help of friends, extended family and neighbours – still constitutes an important part of a family's social prestige. In other study areas, housing problems were also in evidence yet tended to be addressed more directly (as in the UK). However, the "stretching" of the school-to-work transition, combined with the financial constraints on providing young people with independent housing at accessible costs, have further entrenched a problem that is still largely ignored both in public debate and policy discourse.

Difficult accessibility of remote areas. Difficult access and disproportionate problems of personal mobility are evident in virtually all rural areas, in particular those that remain poorly integrated into regional and national life. As demand for greater integration into regional, national and European markets grows, rural society is forced to confront a series of problems. The disenchantment with their locality already felt by some young people is deepened by the feeling that they are not as well-connected to the "global" reference points as urban youth, and makes increased personal mobility a particular priority. Clearly, the range of choice available to young people can only be enlarged and their perspectives on rural life kept positive, if meaningful and appropriate answers can be provided on this issue.

Participation in community life. Young people openly deplore the fact that so few dedicated facilities exist where they can meet and interact. As they get older, however, this sense of isolation and discrimination weakens, as many are forced to migrate. Those that stay see community life as heavily dominated by local *adult* elites for whom youth issues are barely relevant. For this reason, young people's integration into and use of estab-

lished social networks remains important not only in finding employment, but also in constructing a basis for their wider participation in community and public affairs. However, it was clear that their high degree of dependence on traditional institutions also constituted an important barrier to building greater confidence and participation among young people.

The specificities of leisure, sports and 'countryside' activities. Despite its limitations, young people often project an image of rural life as being close to the ideal, talking about the countryside almost as if being there were a deliberate choice on their part, and justifying their strategy by contrasting the advantages they enjoy with the negative aspects of urban lifestyles. While such evaluations may vary in type and intensity from place to place and even from season to season, this strong attachment to country life is rooted in an enjoyment of outdoor sporting activities and an appreciation of "unspoilt" nature.

Lack of cultural activities and meeting points. Young people in rural areas tend to view activities based on the natural environment very positively; however, the limitations of available cultural activities and the lack of specific places for young people to meet were emphasised. Given the low rural population density, proposals to fill this type of lacuna are still likely to fall on deaf ears: decision-makers for whom youth issues have low or no priority, and who may still be unaware of the longer-term effects of such facilities on a locality's capacity to retain population, would simply reject them as lacking sufficient scale and not being cost-effective.

(4) Pathways to inclusion

Since the project's main objective was to explore young people's pathways to inclusion in rural areas, a central point of analysis was to gain an understanding of youth development processes and the shaping of youth strategies. By extending the concept of exclusion beyond that of unemployment, attention was focussed on the analysis of young people's experiences in the context of wider social processes. In this we tended to follow the argument that

> "growing up is a process of forging particular types of interdependencies – in relation to other people and in relation to institutions. Conventional youth studies all too often frame the process of growing up in terms of a movement from 'dependency' to 'independence'. This not only ignores the actual experience of major sections of the youth population (…), but also presents a vision of humanity which is singularly insular insofar as it denies the ways in which people actually interrelate and rely upon each other (…); by focusing on interdependence, the emphasis shifts to the responsibilities of society for ensuring the conditions of well-being of young people, and their

> active inclusion in the mainstream of social, economic and political
> life." (Wyn and White 1997, pp. 149 f.)

By stressing interdependence, the above statement is not rejecting the currently active role of young people in rural areas and the individualisation tendencies to which they are subject, but rather reiterates the need for a multi-dimensional approach and an understanding of the youth issue as being just one of several emerging issues in the overall social development process. Indeed, young people seem to feel that one of the important tasks in youth development and youth studies is to avoid over-simplification and paternalistic treatment. Taking their problems seriously requires strategies that are comprehensive and yet which take account of the various forms of both interdependency and differentiation that characterise young people. Though exclusion is experienced by individuals as well as by groups, the framework for constructing improved pathways to inclusion must take account of a wider set of factors when dealing with social processes that impact on the polarisation of young people. We cannot say, on the one hand, that the rural world is complex because differentiated cultural, economic and social processes are to be found in distinct regions and localities, and then, on the other hand, adopt the attitude that, from a policy perspective, there is one best way towards "inclusion".

Although there is increased political concern over youth problems, including their limited career options and the continued out-migration of young people from rural areas, political instruments to deal with the issue remain weakly developed. In addition, the divergent needs of different groups of young people are generally ignored and, if addressed at all, have traditionally been restricted to education policy and has only recently been integrated into employment measures. This policy failure is particularly strongly felt in rural areas, whose problems have long been overshadowed by the seemingly more acute (or, at least, quantitatively more challenging) youth problems of depressed urban areas.

In all of the project's study areas, researchers encountered certain difficulties in addressing issues of participation and establishing a fruitful dialogue with young people that would reveal their feelings and attitudes regarding their involvement in local community and political activities. Whereas we found evidence that young people make substantial efforts to "include themselves in the community's social, cultural and political life", we were forced to admit that most of them also expressed their concerns about "the extent of their exclusion from consultation and decision-making in these spheres" (chapter 7, p. 142). However, it has to be remembered that the young people interviewed were not exclusively those threatened by exclusion. On the contrary, a comprehensive study of exclusion was only

thought possible if young people from all social groups were included in the sample. Directly approaching interviewees from more excluded categories of young people ran the risk of further socially stigmatising them; clearly, in order to focus solely on the plight of those who fall victim to exclusionary processes would require more long-term study, the collection of other types of empirical data and different interviewing arrangements.

As a result, those young people most seriously effected by exclusionary processes could only be accessed in specific cases. Even those tend to underline their inclusionary capabilities and links to local society and peer groups, which gave the impression that few interviewees felt they were completely excluded or had excluded themselves from the community. However, what little the interviews reveal on the integration of this group of young people, would suggest that they experience a particularly high degree of dependence on adult leadership and that the existing local institutions and rules somewhat inhibit the translation of young people's own ideas into concrete action that can have sustainable impact both on their future involvement and on their environment.

Most case studies presented in this book reflect extensively on how to raise the level of young people's participation and discuss policy measures that might cope better with the increasingly diverse circumstances and pathways that young people experience (chapter 3, p. 57). The series of youth-specific programmes that were studied in the project, focussed primarily on the promotion of youth involvement in local networks, such as those provided through the LEADER Community Initiative or other experimental, youth-specific local action programmes (particularly, chapter 6, p.119), the *Youthreach* programme in Ireland (chapter 2, p. 19ff), the creation of the Suomussalmi Youth Workshop in Finland (chapter 4, p. 67), and the role of the "Centre de Resources" in France (chapter 5, S. 87).

It is essential to realise that quantitatively and qualitatively enhancing young people's local participation is made particularly difficult by the divide that separates, on the one hand, young people's aspirations and their approach to taking action and, on the other, adult thinking on how to address local and regional affairs. There is also a widening gap between a public discourse that increasingly stresses a commitment to integrating all social groups in the discussion, formulation and implementation of local development measures, and the practical inclusion of such groups as young people, children, women (to some extent), ethnic minorities, and the disabled into the very same processes. To bridge this gap, it is essential to recognise that the widening and deepening of youth participation takes time: it is a task that cannot be put off to some later date, but rather that their current concerns need to be taken seriously into account and mechanisms developed to raise participation and awareness on both sides.

Bearing in mind that young people threatened by exclusion constitute one of the most difficult target groups to address, policymakers have to realise that there is a grave risk not only of failure, but also of further stigmatisation and exclusion of "marginalised youth" if measures are oriented directly towards them from the very beginning. A more comprehensive and integrative approach is required, allowing lessons from a more detailed analysis of the problem to be factored into programme conception and design.

A much greater range of policies than those explicitly targeting youth have significant implications for young people in rural areas and this may explain why interviewees rarely referred explicitly to current youth-specific policies, but rather expressed their views on a set of measures that seemed to determine their perceptions of what actions were being taken and whether young people were being supported or not. Since local/regional influence on general policy is minimal, specifically territorially-designed programmes are of particular importance and deserve more detailed attention. However, it has to be said that the potential implicit in the youth-specific aspects of existing programmes hardly constitutes a basis of information for enhancing youth participation. The information available on the youth dimensions of policy is limited in many respects and there is ample scope to improve programme performance with regard to young people's needs. However, discussion on youth specific programme design has only begun very recently and some local and regional initiatives have already turned their attention toward young people's problems, with the strategic aim of giving them greater priority in the future.

If democracy is seen as requiring that all groups in society have the right to be informed, accepted as "partners" and to contribute to and shape the future, the concept and practice of participation becomes a fundamental issue. As both political attitudes and life style aspirations are forged substantially during childhood and youth, the role of schooling and home-based socialisation is pivotal to inculcating both a clear sense of what participation is in principle, and an active attitude towards participation in practice. The recognition that, besides being essential to meeting the equality and equity needs of different sections of society, an effective public, community and political process is also crucial to ensuring young people's involvement and integration in society, is particularly pertinent to bottom-up local development in general, and to grass-roots regional and rural development programmes in particular. The objective of active citizenship, i.e. integrating young people as active agents in local development challenges the orientation, content and priorities of many of today's policies and programmes and points to the need for considerable shifts in local social structures and power relations, some of which are already ongoing.

'Youth spirit' *can* make a difference

The research summarised in this volume took on the challenging task of trying to compare young people's views and forms of policy action across selected rural territories in Europe. As many youth researchers have repeatedly stressed, there exist insufficient systematically comparative data on the basis of which territorial differences in school-to-work transitions and young people's values and viewpoints can be accurately assessed (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998). However, as our analysis shows, it is not just that different localities face distinct situations and have different development trajectories, but that rural youth experience an *uneven development of individualisation processes*, i.e. their school-to-work transitions are differentially marked by inclusionary and exclusionary factors. While the experience of rural and urban youth may be quite distinct, comparison with the findings from research on young people's integration/marginalisation in urban areas suggests that there is an overlap with regard to the major issues affecting young people. Nevertheless, the experiences voiced by our young rural interviewees provide an eloquent elaboration on some of the paradoxes that all young people confront, caught as they are between the supposedly diametrically opposed world views that we associate with the words "urban" and "rural".

However, even if for most young people the urban-rural distinction is not so clear-cut, they nevertheless have to cope with a number of specific problems arising out of the fact that they live in rural areas. In many of the interviews, young people referred to certain features of rural life that suggested that remoteness matters particularly to young people. The diversity of regional contexts, the influence of different institutional arrangements and the impact of distinct regional identities all exert a strong influence over young people's assessment of their own future prospects and quality of life in their regions of origin. The Finnish, Portuguese and Austrian study areas provide particular examples in which the impact of territorial and/or regional specificities have been most evident:

- In the very peripheral study area in Finland one would have expected to encounter a much greater threat of out-migration among young people, particularly since the unemployment rate is one of the highest in Europe. Yet attachment to the area seems extremely high and young people appreciate the security and quality of life that their traditional rural community affords (chapter 4, S. 73ff).
- In the Portuguese study area, situated in a major vineyard area, young people were found often to be simultaneously active in vari-

ous groups and activities. Many local organisations, cultural associations and sports clubs are extremely popular with young people (chapter 7, p. 142). These local advantages, along with the support provided by close-knit local social networks, caused many to suggest in their interviews that their most likely future was to stay in the region, notwithstanding the many social, educational and employment problems that they confronted.

- In recent years, young people in the mountainous Austrian study area had seen little improvement to their prospects. With weak economic performance and a strong orientation towards outside regions, community spirit had fallen to very low levels, and it was only recently, following a re-orientation of policy emphasis towards the exploitation of regional strengths and meeting youth needs, that young people have begun to upwardly revise their evaluation of rural life in general, and the existence of specific rural amenities in particular. It seems that this shift in perspectives was only possible once young people were convinced that decision makers accepted the key role of cultural development and interaction in local development (chapter 6, p. 116).

Furthermore, our interpretation of the many statements made by young people during the interviews, not only allowed us to gain a better understanding of their perspectives on a wide range of topics, but also how the views and positions they adopt are seen by adults. Very often youth behaviour and action is seen as immature, irrelevant to local issues and/or unhelpful in identifying solutions. Indeed, adults often dismiss young people's views without trying to understand their world-view or making any effort to identify alternative means by which to achieve greater youth participation. This type of attitude fuels young people's dissatisfaction with rural society and further encourages them to associate life in the city (or in other, more prosperous regions) with freedom from the constraints and barriers they face at home.

Nevertheless, the ongoing debates on how to increase participation in local development and tackle social exclusion processes, along with the recognition of the problems young people face in their transition from school to work, provides momentum for the widening and deepening of youth specific initiatives. Beyond introducing youth as a cross-cutting issue in evaluation programmes, it is important to highlight positive examples in which programmes specifically targeting young people have been successful. While such cases can be of particular value in policy and political discourse, they can play a crucial role in convincing young people that policies can be

developed that address their specific problems and thereby widen the scope and intensity of youth involvement both in the policy process and in local development initiatives.

When exploring young people's integration in rural society, we came across evidence of the *polarisation* to which they fall victim, with some more integrated and others much less integrated into community life, education, employment, and with different groups and categories benefiting to rather different extents from local and non-local opportunities. Yet the existence of such differences is rarely publicised or identified as a major regional problem; instead the "plight" of the rural areas is simply juxtaposed in a general manner with the more favourable urban economic context, almost as if such duality were natural. It has to be remembered, however, that significant social processes cut across the diverse and complex experiences of young people, the implications of which are not only important for young and old alike, but for society as a whole.

It is therefore a matter of deep concern that an understanding be developed of what "being young" means in different contexts, and how young people cope with the changes currently affecting rural life and youth development. In this regard, it seems important first of all to listen to what young people have to say, then to be open to the alternative approaches to problem solving, development and participation that young people directly or indirectly articulate. Only a society that is genuinely open to dialogue with those with different, divergent and sometimes uncomfortable views can create the space in which to promote real participation and increase the integration of those currently or potentially threatened by social exclusion.

References:

Burnett, J., Jentsch, B., and Shucksmith, M. (eds., 2001): Policies and Young People in Rural Development, Final report for the European Commission Research DG B.I.2, The Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, Aberdeen (Scotland), 332 S., http://www.abdn.ac.uk/arkleton/paypird.htm

Cloke, P. and Little, J. (1997), Conclusion, Marginality and rural other, chapter 15, in: Cloke P. and Little, J. (eds.), *Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginalisation and Rurality*, Routledge, London, New York, pp. 272-285.

Commission of the European Communities (2000), Commission Notice to the Member States of 14 April 2000 laying down guidelines for the Community initiative for rural development (Leader+*), Official Journal of*

the European Communities, (2000/C139/05), 18.5.2000, Brussels.

Dax, T. and Hebertshuber, M. (2002), Regional and Rural Development in Austria and its Influence on Leadership and Local Power, in: Halfacre, K., Kovách, I. and Woodward, R. (eds.), *Leadership and Local Power in European Rural Development*, Perspectives on Rural Policy and Planning series, Ashgate, Aldershot (England), pp. 203-229.

Dax, T., Machold, I. and Meisinger, C. (2002), Rural Development Programmes and their Impact on Youth Integration, in: Jentsch, B. and Shucksmith, M. (eds.), *Young People in Rural Areas of Europe*, Ashgate, Aldershot (England).

Dey, I. And Jentsch, B. (2000), 'Quality Jobs' and 'Real Choice' for Rural Youth: a Reassessment, Arkleton Research Papers No. 6, University of Aberdeen (Scotland).

European Commission (2001), *A new impetus for European youth,* White paper, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 98 pp. (http:/ /europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/ lb_jeun_en.pdf)

Gudmundsson, G. (2001), European Commission White Paper on Youth consultation process: report of the research consultations pillar.

Horelli, L. (2000), Young People's Participation in Local Development: Lip Service or Serious Business? In: Helve, H. and Wallace, C. (eds.), *Youth, Citizenship and Empowerment*, Ashgate, Aldershot., pp. 57-71.

Jones, G. (2002), The youth divide, in: Joseph Rowntree Foundation – JRF (ed.), *Foundations – analysis informing change*, York (England), July.

Lowe, P., Ray, C., Ward, N., Wood, D. and R. Woodward (1999), Participation in Rural Development, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and working Conditions, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg,100 pp.

Scheer, G.(1998), Neuer Regionalismus: Vom alten zum neuen Regionalismus, in: *RAUM* (31), Vienna, pp.20-23.

Shucksmith, M. (2000), *Exclusive Countryside: Social inclusion and regeneration in rural Britain*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York (England).

Wallace, C. and Kovatcheva, S. (1998), *Youth in Society, The Construction and Deconstruction of Youth in East and West Europe*, MacMillan Press, London.

Wyn, J. and White R. (1997), *Rethinking Youth*, Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks (USA) and New Delhi (India).

Publications of
Bundesanstalt für Bergbauernfragen

No. 50: Jung und niemals zu Hause
  Perspectives of young people in rural areas
  Thomas Dax, Ingrid Machold, 2002

No. 49: Beschäftigungseffekte agrar- und regionalpolitischer Maßnahmen.
  Employment effects of agricultural policy measures
  Oliver Tamme, 2002

No. 48: Biodiversität im Alpengebiet
  Biodiversity in mountain areas - OECD case study *)
  BA für Bergbauernfragen und Umweltbundesamt, 2002

No. 47: Keine Berglandwirtschaft ohne Ausgleichszahlungen
  Evaluation of the compensatory allowances system for
  less favoured areas
  Gerhard Hovorka, 2001

No. 46: Die vielen Gesichter der ländlichen Armut
  An analysis of rural poverty in Austria
  Georg Wiesinger, 2000

No. 45: Zukunft mit Aussicht: Papers on agricultural and regional policy,
  environment and socio-economic research in rural areas
  editey by Gerhard Hovorka, 2000)

No. 44: Mountain Farming and the Environment: Towards Integration
  Perspectives for mountain policies in Central and Eastern Alps
  Thomas Dax, Georg Wiesinger, 1998

No. 43: Die Kulturlandschaft im Berggebiet in Österreich
  Rural amenity in Austria - an OECD case study of rural landscape*)
  Gerhard Hovorka , 1999

No. 34: Pluriactivity and rural development: Theoretical framework
  Thomas Dax, Theresia Oedl-Wieser, 1995

These books are available from Bundesanstalt für Bergbauernfragen.
  Tel: +43/1/504 88 69 - 0; Fax: +43/1/504 88 69 - 39;
  office@babf.bmlf.gv.at

*) also available as OECD publication in English and French

Birgit Jentsch and Mark Shucksmith (eds.): Young People in Rural Areas of Europe

Despite an EU-wide commitment to rural development, certain aspects of the countryside and rural living have so far been neglected. In particular, very little research has focused on how how young people live in rural areas, on their incomes and quality of life, their perceptions of how policies impact upon them, and how they are affected by the dynamics of social and economic change. Based on the two-year European research project on policies and young people in rural development (PaYPiRD), this edited volume examines these issues and compares young people's experiences of rural life in the UK, Ireland, Finland, France, Germany, Austria and Portugal.

The volume is organised thematically so that each chapter addresses a specific topic across all of the countries. These topics are: the attractiveness of rural areas to young people; the impact of programmes under the European Employment Guidelines; rural youth in local community development and partnerships; rural development programmes and their impact on youth integration; the role of social networks; and the transition from education to employment.

It reviews relevant policies and highlights not only the pressures on young people in rural areas but also what might be done to address these issues. This book is an essential companion to the current volume of national studies.

This book will be available from Ashgate Publishing from February 2003.

Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Gower House, Croft Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 3HR, UK;
Tel: +44 (0) 1252 331551 Fax: +44 (0) 1252 344405
email: ccourt@ashgatepub.co.uk