

Rural Restructuring: Local Sustainable Solutions to the Rural Challenge

An ICLRD Conference



**The Blackwater Learning Centre
Knockconan, Co. Monaghan**

8 May 2009.



Programme:

13.00 Lunch

09.30 Registration & Tea/Coffee

10.00 Welcome & Introduction

John Driscoll, Director, ICLRD & Fr. Sean Nolan, Truagh Development Association

Chair: Michael Kenny, Dept. Adult and Community Education, NUI Maynooth

10.10 What is Rural Restructuring? An Introduction to a Much-Discussed Topic

Michael Kenny, Dept. Adult and Community Education, NUI Maynooth

Explaining Rural Restructuring
DVD by Mount Allison University, Canada

10.30 Keynote Address: Bucking the Trend – The 'Local' as Centres of Growth and Development

Roger Turner, Head of Rural Economies, Commission for Rural Communities, U.K

11.00 Sustainable Rural Development: Spatial Planning, Rural Communities and Rural Restructuring

ICLRD Research Team

11.25 Q&A

11.40 Refreshments

12.00 Parallel Workshops:

(1) Rural Economic Diversification

Chair & Rapporteur: Dr. Caroline Crowley, Dept. Geography, University College Cork

Presenter 1: Workspace – Adopting an Economic Model to Local Community Development

Brian Murray, CEO, Workspace, Draperstown

Presenter 2: Innovation and Business Clustering: A Case Study of the Irish Furniture Industry

Kevin Heanue, Research Officer, Teagasc

Discussion and Q&A

(2) Unleashing Local Potential by Building on a Rural Area's Asset-Base

Chair & Rapporteur: Gerry McAlinden, Development Consultant

Presenter 1: Developing a Strategic Vision and Translating this into an Action Plan

Maura Walsh, Manager, IRD Duhallow

Presenter 2: Realising Asset-Based Development and Local Potentiality: The Petal Model

Geoff Brown, Project Manager, Rural Programme, Carnegie UK

Discussion and Q&A

14.15 Drama: Knockconan National School

14.30 Parallel Workshops:

(3) The Impact of Government Policy on Rural Development

Chair & Rapporteur: Padraig Maguire, RPG Implementation Officer, Border Regional Authority

Presenter 1: Planning for Rural Development – A New Emphasis

Zita Murphy, Rural Policy Division, Department for Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) & Dr. Sally Shortall, ESRC/ DARD Fellow, Queens University Belfast

Presenter 2: The Review of Public Administration and Rural Development

Iain Frazer, Acting Chief Executive, Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council

Presenter 3: Learning from Experience: Mainstreaming Sustainable Development Practice

Declan Nelson, County Manager, Monaghan County Council

Discussion and Q&A

(4) Approaches to Rural Restructuring

Chair & Rapporteur: John Breen, Director of Community & Enterprise, Kerry County Council

Presenter 1: Micro-Enterprises & the Knowledge Economy: Growing the New Rural Economy through Cooperation

Eoin Magennis, Policy Research Manager, InterTradelreland

Presenter 2: The Role of Education in Rural Restructuring

Kate Clifford, Education & Training Manager, The Rural College, Draperstown & Dr. Jude Stephens, The Gibson Institute for Land, Food and the Environment, Queens University Belfast

Presenter 3: The Natural Landscape: 'Lands' of Opportunity (Natura 2000, Habitats Directive)

Mr. Peter Carville, Assistant Director, National Parks and Wildlife Service

Discussion and Q&A

15.45 Refreshments

16.00 Feedback from Workshops

16.15 Meeting the Challenge of Rural Restructuring: Cultivating Self-Belief and Motivating Rural Communities

Peter Quinn, Managing Director, Peter Quinn Consultancy Services

16.30 Close of Conference

Michael Kenny, Dept. Adult and Community Education, NUI Maynooth

ICLRD – An Introduction

Developed out of a unique collaboration between academics and spatial planning specialists, the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) is a North-South-U.S. partnership (see www.iclrd.org). With an emphasis on spatial planning issues and the development of physical, social and economic infrastructures that can improve the lives of people on the island of Ireland and elsewhere, the ICLRd engages in a diverse, yet complementary, range of research and training programmes. Partners include the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) at National University of Ireland Maynooth, the School of the Built Environment at University of Ulster, Athlone Institute of Technology, the Centre for Cross-Border Studies in Armagh, and the Institute for International Urban Development in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Context

The European Commission has, since the early 1990's, promoted the concept of rural communities developing their own economies through the promotion of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). More recently, the revisited Lisbon and Gotenborg agendas prioritise the goals of growth, competitiveness and job creation, and sustainability respectively. The diversification away from agriculture involves the development of micro-businesses in tourism, crafts, child-care, cultural heritage, teleworking and renewable energy. Building on this, the rural development programme for the period 2007-13 has, as one of its objectives, the improvement of quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy by turning the challenges facing rural areas into opportunities; with this to be achieved by developing local infrastructure and human capital which in turn will improve conditions for growth.



Collaborative planning is integral to turning local challenges into opportunities and meeting the objectives of Lisbon, Gotenborg, the European Territorial Cooperation agenda and the wider rural development programme. As a process, collaborative spatial planning has an important role to play in addressing and meeting the needs of both urban and rural communities on the island of Ireland. This involves developing a vision, focusing on people, place and space, and working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders.

Background to this Event

There are many types of rural area; ranging from the very remote to the peri-urban. Each type of rural area experiences its own range of challenges – some of which are generic and others which are place-specific. For the past 8 months, the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) has been considering the role of rural restructuring and economic diversification, together with the growing importance of the urban-rural relationship, in the achievement of balanced spatial development. Through three case study areas, this research study reflects on what took place between the late 1980s to present day when rural diversification was mooted across a similar range of sectors with the objective of promoting the development of rural economies throughout Europe. The case study areas are: Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy (North Monaghan / South Tyrone), Duhallow (North West Cork / East Kerry) and Draperstown (Magherafelt District).

Both Draperstown and Duhallow have been engaged in the process of rural restructuring for the past twenty-five years and, over this time, have built up a wealth of experience; not only from their successes but also from initiatives that have not worked out and/or not gone to plan. For Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy, the challenges facing this rural community are complex and it too has had its successes and failings. Historically, the challenges facing this cross-border community have been further exacerbated by its border location and the impact of decades of back-to-back policy development across both administrations (North and South). More recently, the economic downturn has seen many initiatives and enterprises in the three areas struggle to survive and/or 'go to the wall'. But the communities remain committed to the development of their respective areas and have taken a pro-active approach to the question: 'Where to from here?'.

There is growing recognition that rural areas – and their balanced development – are an important policy area in their own right; and that the current political climate facilitates the development of rural communities on a North, South and cross-border basis. This 1-day conference will consider:

- Who has a 'vision' for the rural?
- What role has local potential / assets to play in the process of rural restructuring?
- To what extent is there vertical and horizontal integration between policy and practice as it relates to rural development?
- What role does education and life-long learning have to play in rural development?

Aimed at community and local development agencies, businesses and business networks, practitioners, policy makers and academics, attendance at this event is free of charge.