

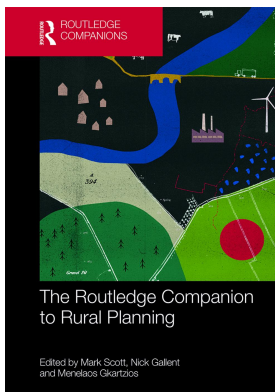
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## **The Routledge Companion to Rural Planning A Handbook for Practice**

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### **The evolution of rural planning in the Global North**

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# The evolution of rural planning in the Global North

*Mark B. Lapping and Mark Scott*

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## Introduction

In the previous chapter, Gallent and Gkartzios outlined the nature and scope of rural planning and how this relates to our understanding or conceptualisation of rurality. Building on their assessment, this chapter will examine the evolution of rural policy and planning practice within the context of the Global North. As recorded by Lapping (2006), many of the early pioneers of planning, particularly within the Anglo-American tradition, held an avowed interest in rural people and places, with many foundational planning ideas focused on rural challenges. In the US, this included the early ‘regionalists’ and the tradition of rural mega-projects for regional development, with the 1930s depression era Tennessee Valley Authority’s hydroelectric schemes providing the exemplar. In rapidly urbanising and industrialising European contexts, the early decades of the twentieth century witnessed new planning policies designed to protect rural places from urban encroachment and sprawl, seeking to preserve the unique qualities of rural places. For example, as far back as 1926, Patrick Abercrombie raised concerns with people ‘colonising’ the English countryside and the need to preserve the countryside on aesthetic grounds as England’s greatest national monument (Abercrombie, 1926). However, despite the centrality of ‘rural’ concerns to the early planning project, the post-Second World War era was marked by an increasing focus on urban debates within planning, and rural planning began to play a more marginal role within both the planning profession and academy.

In this chapter, we examine how rural policy and planning have evolved in the Global North, selectively focusing on the North American (USA and Canada), some European and Japanese experiences. Accordingly, the chapter is structured as follows: firstly, the US experiences of rural development and planning are outlined, followed by a review of the evolution of rural planning in Canada. The chapter then compares this evolution to the European experience, by examining firstly, the emergence of the European approach to endogenous rural development – with two illustrative examples of Ireland and Sweden – followed by a brief overview of spatial planning in rural Europe. We then examine the how rural planning and policy have evolved in Japan, a highly urbanised country with an ageing rural population. While place-based rural development and rural planning are both *spatial* approaches to policy and managing rural change, the chapter

suggests that these two policy domains are often poorly integrated in practice. The chapter concludes by calling for more imaginative and innovative responses to planning for the rural environment, economy and communities.

## Rural policy and planning in the USA

In a recently published assessment of the practice of rural planning in North America, several findings point to the changes occurring both in rural regions as well as the very nature and characteristics of planning in such places (Frank and Hibbard, 2016). The study sums up the current rural situation thus:

The rural areas of North America are at a vital transition point in the early years of the twenty-first century. They are experiencing fundamental shifts in their economies. Agriculture and natural-resource production continue to become more and more capital intensive; many rural places are shifting from being sites of production to consumption, driven by their natural amenities; and others are losing their economic *raison d'être* altogether.

*(Frank and Hibbard, 2016: 299)*

Long viewed by the larger national policy nexus as essentially residual areas, Frank and Hibbard continue that 'rural areas in the US have been a bathtub that's draining, extracting people and resources' for the emerging globalised post-industrial world (*ibid.*: 302). While seen by many as an accurate picture of much of rural North America, such a generalisation masks the reality that different rural areas, such as those on the urban/rural fringe, as well as those with high amenity values, are witnessing growth often accompanied by the in-migration of non-traditional populations. Perhaps the most accurate portrayal of rural planning in North America is one that places less stress on land use, once the *sine qua non* of rural planning. Land use issues are now but a part of a larger and more comprehensive rural development thrust. What has been emerging is a broader development emphasis stressing locally based and locally focused sustainability planning – in its broadest sense – as an appropriate response to post-industrialisation, neo-liberalism and globalisation along with profound environmental challenges, notably related to climate change. Much the same may be said of other rural areas throughout the Global North.

Despite some attempts in the 1970s and 1980s to craft federal responses to rural planning problems, there is no national land use planning policy in the United States. Instead, land use has historically been understood as essentially 'local' in nature and hence has been the domain of states, municipalities and communities to enact land use policies and programmes. Indeed, commentators during those decades talked about a 'quiet revolution' in land use among many states that attempted to develop aggressive and far-sighted planning systems (Bosselman and Callies, 1972). In terms of rural areas, the focus was often on preserving productive agricultural and grazing lands. Over the years, many of these efforts have been eroded in a piecemeal fashion. In terms of actual policies to preserve farmland as a state-wide priority, many of the most progressive states, like Oregon, Florida, California, Vermont and Hawaii, among others, have seen their efforts stalled, at best, and rolled back in the most extreme case. The result has been the on-going loss of prime agricultural lands. The private sector, in the form of non-government organisations (NGOs) such as the American Farmland Trust and any number of local and state-wide land trusts, have attempted with some success to fill the gap that has been created by the retrenchment in public sector programmes. However, because in most cases the focus has been

on preserving farmland rather than preserving and enhancing farming *per se*, these efforts often missed the mark. Further, given that agriculture defines the economic base and rationale in only a dwindling number of America's rural counties and communities – and tend to be concentrated in distinct regions, like the Great Plains – many rural problems have remained fundamentally unaddressed over the past several decades.

In term of federal involvement in rural planning and rural development, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been and remains the 'lead' agency since the 1980s. This reflects a long-held view that agriculture equated rural and that rural areas were essentially populated by farm families. Over the years the majority of USDA funding has been devoted to increasing farm incomes and price stability in commodity markets, especially on large and corporate farms. While evidence suggests that subsidies and income supports for farming have helped to increase farm incomes and productivity, such programming has also had the perverse impact of pushing more and more rural labour out of such regions and into metropolitan areas (USDA, 2007).

The agency has an undersecretary for rural development, and its task has essentially been to advocate for resources as well as to coordinate services for rural America across all other federal agencies – including those for housing and urban development, health and human services and interior – which have programming that touches the lives of many rural Americas. Each presidential administration has attempted to find programme efficiencies and increases in programme impact, but sometimes ends-up just reducing federal financial support to localities. The 1990s saw the emergence of a number of state level rural development councils with a federally funded director whose job was to act as a liaison between that state's governor and various federal agencies to provide greater coordination of programming. Some of these councils remain active though the federal financial support for these entities has largely disappeared. All too often these councils failed to garner genuine local or grass-roots support as they were perceived as top-down rather than bottom-up entities. Also in the 1990s the Rockefeller Report, named after former Arkansas governor Winthrop Rockefeller who chaired the commission that generated the study, issued a report to the president, entitled *Revitalizing Rural America* (in Honadle, 2001). While the report made many recommendations, the most substantial one may well have been the need to 'target' and concentrate federal programmes in specific places rather than to distribute them broadly across rural America. This utterly failed to take hold given that it is the normative political tendency of public officials to bestow federal largess among as many constituents and places as possible. This is a reality that continues to the present day. Each new administration, so it seems, pledges reform, seeks change, promulgates policies, reorganises within and between the USDA and other agencies, and reimagines, repackages, and renames existing programmes. The underlining issue may well be that for contemporary rural America, the USDA is less relevant than in past decades. The assumption that the USDA must remain the key federal agency in rural development increasingly seems a dubious proposition, for as Freshwater and Scorsone (2002) rightly observe, farm policy has lost much of its ability to shape realities in rural America. Overall, as one of the most astute students of American rural policy, Beth Honadle, has written, '[i]t seems that most people no longer expect the Federal government to make a major rural policy pronouncement' (Honadle, 2001: 106).

If there has been an absence of an avowed American rural policy, numerous state and local programmes and projects, often supported with modest federal funding, have attempted to address outstanding issues. Unfortunately, too few states have funded their own projects and programmes preferring to utilise pass-through financial support from the federal government. For the longest time these programmes have tended to embrace a place-based or a territorially defined approach. Borrowing from the experiences of urban communities, place-based strategies, like enterprise zones, have sought to attract economic activity into rural communities.

As in some lagging metropolitan regions, place-based rural strategies have been focused on underperforming places by supporting infrastructure investments, industrial parks, tax-increment financing, 'Main Street' or downtown renewal projects, and other initiatives. The goal of such programmes has been to make such places more attractive to private sector investment. Public investments targeted to rural areas have a substantial history in the United States tracing back to the Tennessee Valley Authority which sought, during the Great Depression, to energise the middle South through massive investments in hydroelectric dams that provided cheap power to bring manufacturing to the region (Martin, 1967; Hargrove and Conklin, 1983). Behind such approaches lies the concept of agglomeration which, over time, creates defined industrial clusters that generate numerous spillover effects that, in turn, broaden and deepen wealth creation. Overall the effectiveness of such place-based focused programming in rural areas has been mixed at best and has increasingly been challenged (OECD, 2006; Partridge and Olfert, 2009).

There has developed over the past decade or so considerable criticism of this approach. Some have argued that the roots of the criticism of place-based strategies reflects a 'managerial turn' toward a more market-oriented approach that discounts the value of place distinctiveness and meaning (Padt and Luloff, 2009). Nevertheless the orientation is changing and instead of place-based approaches many advocate a people-based or people-oriented approach that focuses greater attention on enhancing population quality through greater access to education and training, health and human services investments, social capital formation and reinforcement, tourism development, local leadership cultivation and, most especially, entrepreneurship development. The state-wide small business development centres, funded in part by the US Department of Commerce, have been especially active in terms of the latter type of programming. Likewise, the Cooperative Extension Service, components of the land-grant university system, have been aggressive in nurturing change in rural areas with this people-oriented and bottom-up development approach, often referred to as asset-based development. Given the American emphasis on labour mobility, the fear is, of course, that such investments will ultimately lead to the further out-migration of labour from rural communities. Perhaps to counter this concern, entrepreneurship initiatives have been emphasised as a means both to create new sources of wealth and employment as well as helping in the intergenerational transfer of local assets, such as grocery stores and other key local businesses, due to retirements and/or relocations. Preventing the 'hollowing out' of small town and community business and commercial districts has been an important objective. Yet, one of the great obstacles facing existing and new business start-ups in rural areas has historically been the limited access to adequate financing, as well as the absence of a national commitment to provide appropriate digital communications technologies, such as high-speed broadband as well as transportation infrastructure, such as upgrades to rural airports. If there is a growing 'digital divide' in the United States, it is not only between the rich and the poor but also between metropolitan regions and many rural areas

In contrast, some rural places are not facing problems of the out-migration of the young and educated, isolated rapidly ageing populations, or the stagnation of economic activity. Communities in the urban/rural fringe within commuting distance of metropolitan employment and service opportunities continue to grow across the American landscape. While there has been considerable discussion about the 'urban comeback' and indeed, many cities are witnessing in-migration and growth, the urban fringe continues to be a 'contested landscape' loaded with land use conflicts, local political turmoil and the infrastructure and housing demands generated by growth (Furuseth and Lapping, 1999). And still other more rural places and small towns are facing problems generated by growth. Invariably these are places with intrinsically high amenity value which have been attracting population and service sector employment growth linked to second-home development, leisure facilities and sites (e.g. ski areas), and emerging

rural retirement opportunities. These new rural residents are part of a trend of amenity migrants who seek out leisure and retirement housing. Some argue that this development reflects ‘newer attitudes towards mobility, wealth, and the construction of identity in global society’ rather than a return to the rural roots of the nation (Esparza, 2011). These new rural residents tend to be highly selective, better educated and wealthier adults who are attracted to ‘rural areas that offer scenic beauty (e.g. mountains, beaches, lakes, and river) and those places near or adjacent to urban centers’ (Longino and Hass, 1993: 18). Lower living costs, a fear of urban crime, and favourable climates also contribute to the ‘pull factors’ generating rural amenity-based in-migration. While many new rural residents generate demands for services and stimulate new employment opportunities, conflicts sometimes emerge between long-time residents and newcomers largely around issues of the cost and provision of public services and infrastructure, rising housing costs and taxes. For long-time elderly residents who depend on transfer payments, like pensions and Social Security, being priced out of the housing market has become a genuine concern. And for those who work in the service sector, rising housing prices may force them ever further away from their place of work thus requiring longer commutes. This can translate into additional change in nearby communities which now host service workers as they become ‘gateway communities’ for the more amenity-rich locations. As Marcouillier et al. (2011) conclude, exurban amenity-driven growth has created both rural ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’.

Several other planning developments warrant note. The ‘Smart Growth’ movement has a strong urban emphasis that tries to rebuild many cities, better integrate mass transit with housing and commercial development, enhance community ‘walkability’ and a reduction in vehicular use and dependence – with Portland, Oregon leading the way. The smart growth movement has an important theoretical linkage with ‘new urbanism’ and form-based zoning and planning. In rural areas and small towns smart growth has manifested itself in greater attention being paid to downtown and Main Street renewal, walkability, mixed-use zoning and, most importantly, the preservation of open space (Daniels and Lapping, 2005). Likewise, the rise of the local food movement is having potentially significant consequences for small communities and rural areas. Growing consumer demand for locally produced foods as well as organic and non-GMO commodities has led to something of a renaissance in small scale agriculture across the country. More and more communities, urban and rural, are establishing programmes to accommodate and nurture local foods, re-establish the once declining fortunes of farmer’s markets, and support mechanisms promoting direct farm-to-consumer sales. Maine has been in the forefront of these developments having recently passed into law ‘food sovereignty’ legislation that allows such farm-based direct sales to consumers with minimal oversight by state agencies (Bayly, 2017). The State of Vermont is leading the way in developing an integrated state-wide approach to local food production, processing and distribution through its ‘Farm-to-Plate’ strategy (Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, 2018). These developments are taking place in two of America’s most rural states where family farming is facing substantial problems. Finally, many communities are seeking to help with the rapid ageing of rural America through instituting in a wide array of approaches to support ageing-in-place. These programmes are aimed at permitting rural elders to remain in the rural communities and places where they raised their families and lived for years and where they can maintain their social connections and support systems.

### **Canadian rural policy and planning**

Like the United States, Canada has a federal form of government. Inherent in this framework is a level of tension between the federal government and provincial governments. This makes intergovernmental relationships a little more difficult in Canada than in the US context. If one

accepts a very broad definition of rural, then the creation in 1999 of a new federal territory, Nunavut, surely ranks as one of the most interesting developments in rural policy. A polar territory slightly smaller than Mexico with approximately 37,000 largely aboriginal inhabitants spread across a vast wilderness, Nunavut depends on resource extraction, including gold mining, traditional Inuit livelihoods and self-provisioning, and government supports.

Canada faces a good many rural problems which are not dissimilar from those in other developed economies of the Global North. In terms of the preservation of agricultural land, the Province of British Columbia has led the way in addressing the problem as early as the late 1970s. Of its pioneering Agricultural Land Reserve Programme, which protects approximately 5 million acres, two leading researchers have written that ‘It is impossible not to be impressed by the qualities of the political act which grasped the farmland nettle . . . it is skilful, logical, bold and strong’ (Wilson and Pierce, 1982: 17). Yet, as in so many regions in the Global North, urban sprawl is eroding some of the most valuable farmland in the province and the nation (Hume, 2013). More generally, however, as one recently published report notes:

The problems that rural Canada face include: social and economic restructuring; decline in the manufacturing sector; demographic ageing as young people leave their home communities; and the diminishing of the social safety net because of the decline of the Canadian welfare state and the rise of the Canadian neoliberal state.

(Lauzon *et al.*, 2017: 2–3)

Canadian rural policy has also historically focused on agriculture. At the federal level there has been a recognition that this is no longer entirely relevant and appropriate, and slowly a sectoral approach focused on agriculture is gradually being replaced. At the federal level, a rural secretariat was established to bring greater continuity and coordination to rural programming among all ministries. While agricultural policies remain quite important in the Prairie provinces, other regions, particularly those with high levels of chronic unemployment, like the Maritimes, require programmes that emphasise business and entrepreneurial development. Some of these efforts have had a positive impact (Savoie, 1992). These policies reflect the fact that traditionally for much of Canada, as Freshwater (1991) has noted, regional policy *is* rural policy. Canadian public policy has concentrated for well over two generations or more on regional disparities (Savoie, 2000). This orientation is underscored, for example, by the establishment of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) which funds projects and programmes throughout the Maritime provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. While the approach of ACOA might work in the Maritime provinces, there is a recognition that other regions and areas of Canada require different approaches. In western Canada the Western Economic Diversification programme has reached out to traditionally under-represented groups to help address the problem of a rural skills gap. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recently highlighted the programme’s mobile laboratory initiative which brings training in carpentry, auto services, and machining to rural areas as a ‘best practice’ (OECD, 2011). All of these programmes and more are buttressed by the national Community Futures Network of Canada which, through nearly 300 local organisations, provides training and loans to support small business formation and growth (see <http://communityfuturescanada.ca> for details). In other words, where regional policy is rural policy, Canada has recognised that one size does not fit all.

Something of a hybrid between place-based and people-based development paradigms is emerging in the Province of Quebec. It is place-based in the sense that, as Reimer and Markey (2008: 4) argue, specific places are ‘where people’s assets are situated, that is where services are

delivered, that is where governance takes place'. But it is also people-based in that it seeks to strengthen local social capacity through enhancing social capital, better local government performance in economic development, and civil society more broadly. The OECD (2010: 1) has gone so far as to say that 'Quebec has developed one of the most advanced rural policy approaches in the OECD . . . as suggested in the OECD's New Rural Paradigm'. Enshrined in its 'Politique nationale de la ruralité' (PNR), provincial policy tries to focus programmes and investments in socio-economic growth and development through the enhancement of social capital and civil society, asking local governments to become more directly involved in local entrepreneurial growth through public/private partnerships, more non-government development agencies and by assuming greater responsibility for self-development (OECD, 2011). Further, it supports collaboration between rural communities and municipalities and attempts to reduce programme and investment duplication. Bruno Jean has written, relative to Quebec, that 'the paradox of our post-modern world is that it is going in two opposite directions: globalization being one direction, and the rediscovery of the virtues of local communities being the other' (Jean, 2006: 65). The success or failure of Quebec's approach to rural development may well determine if it is possible for rural people and places to live in both worlds at one and the same time.

## Rural policy and planning in the European Union territory

### *Rural development*

As discussed in detail in Chapters 9 and 14, rural development policy in Europe has witnessed considerable convergence, leading some commentators to suggest that a Europeanisation of rural development has taken place, whereby EU promoted policy and practices have been mainstreamed within member states' rural development policies and into local development strategies (Shortall and Shucksmith, 2001; Ward and Lowe, 2004). European approaches to rural issues echo much of the evolution of rural development in North America with a distinctive shift from a rural modernisation paradigm, viewing agriculture as synonymous with rural, towards a focus on endogenous, bottom-up rural development, focused on territorial and integrated development usually at the local scale.

As outlined by Woods (2011), rural modernisation gained momentum in Europe after the Second World War – particularly focused on enhancing food security on a continent scarred by food shortages during and in the aftermath of the war. National policies prioritised agricultural modernisation through a transition from subsistence farming towards commercial food production through the mechanisation and industrialisation of farming, farmer training and extension programmes, the application of new agri-chemicals and biotechnologies, farm consolidation and specialisation, and the reorganisation of the agri-food sector. This drive towards productivism was often supported through state support, and with the emergence of the European Economic Community (later the EU) in 1957, the establishment of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for agricultural subsidies and price support.

However, by the 1980s, CAP was increasingly criticised, particularly in relation to budget resources and as further consolidating regional disparities across Europe. Moreover, while CAP represented the EU's primary policy programme for supporting rural areas (and EU's most ambitious cross-national project), CAP had a singular focus on agriculture that failed to recognise other dimensions of the rural economy and society and, as a top-down centrally defined programme, neglected the diversity of rural Europe. In this context, in both the EU and member states, a policy discourse emerged in the 1990s which envisaged a fundamental shift in rural policy from sectoral support policies (predominantly agriculture) to territorial



development and spatial approaches (Moseley, 1997, 2000; Shortall and Shucksmith, 2001). This policy shift recognised that spatial strategies and policies can integrate sectoral dimensions to public policy delivery (agriculture, housing, employment creation, transport, etc.) and offer holistic approaches to balancing the economic, social and environmental processes which shape Europe's rural areas. Throughout the 1990s, rural development theory and practice was firmly focused on local development and bottom-up approaches to face the challenge of the continued re-structuring of the agricultural industry, exemplified by the EU's LEADER programme (see, for example, Amdam, 1995; Moseley, 1997, 2000; Ploeg et al., 2000; Ray, 2000, 2002; Scott, 2002; Shucksmith, 2000).

Established in 1991, the Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale (LEADER) programme represented a venture by the European Commission's DGVI (Agriculture) into a participatory, 'bottom-up' approach to rural development. The LEADER initiative aspired to be geared to local requirements and local origin, making use of available organisational capacity and expertise (CEC, 1991). The programme aimed to establish a network of rural development action groups enjoying a substantial degree of flexibility in implementing at a local level the initiatives financed by 'global grants'. From its inception, the LEADER approach was defined by the EC more as a set of principles than through 'pre-ordained', technocratic, sectoral measures (Ray, 1998). Participation at the local level meant an emphasis on community-based strategies. Having designed a LEADER plan and had it approved by the EC, a local action group would gain access to a block grant from the Structural Funds. As Ray highlights, the combination of a small 'grass roots' organisation, the flexibility of a block grant system of funding and the guiding objective to search for local innovative development projects marked the LEADER programme as potentially a very new policy style. The essential elements of this approach to rural development are identified by Moseley (1997) and Ray (2000) and include: a territorial and integrated focus; an endogenous development accent; the use of local resources; and local contextualisation through active public participation (see also the review in this Companion by Gkartzios and Lowe, Chapter 14). These themes are further elaborated through a brief discussion of rural policy in Ireland and Sweden.

Among all OECD countries no nation has a higher percentage of its population living in rural areas than Ireland. As recorded at the last Census in 2016, approximately forty per cent of the Irish population lives in rural areas, defined as living in settlements of less than 1500 people (CSO, 2016). However, the issue of rural population decline has provided *the* central narrative for rural policy in Ireland, with most western counties experiencing population loss for most of the last century, either through emigration (typically to US, UK or Australian cities) or through out-migration to eastern counties or to large urban centres in Ireland. In more recent times, the Irish economy has become more concentrated in the capital city, Dublin, leading to significant regional imbalances and following the Irish economic crash and international financial crisis of 2007/2008, rural Ireland has been deeply affected by a range of austerity measures (Murphy and Scott, 2014). While public and private sector services have been withdrawing for many years from rural Ireland, this process intensified during the post-crash years with businesses, hospital services, post offices, police stations and banking services closed or rationalised into larger urban centres – representing symbolic decline of many rural places.

Rural underdevelopment and measures for its alleviation have a long history in the Republic of Ireland, dating back, at least, to the efforts of the Congested Districts Board at the end of the nineteenth century (Cawley and Keane, 1999). Moreover, this interest in rural issues was often underpinned by local and community involvement, exemplified by the Muintir Na Tire (National Association for the Promotion of Community Development in Ireland movement) movement in the 1930s, and the 'Save the West' campaign of the 1960s

(see Varley and Curtin, 1999). Although rural policy in the 1960s and 1970s was dominated by the modernisation of the agricultural sector (particularly in the wake of joining the European Economic Community in 1973), by the mid- to late 1980s, increasingly rural policy looked beyond agriculture resulting from the increased recognition given to rural areas by the EU and the growing realisation that the Common Agricultural Policy and top-down policies were not reducing regional disparities (McDonagh, 2002).

Throughout the 1990s, Ireland's rural areas, as elsewhere, increasingly embraced local action and local development solutions to face the challenge of the continued re-structuring of the agricultural industry, exemplified by the EU's LEADER programme. This approach to local development has been widely adopted in the Irish Republic, with a proliferation of rural development partnerships throughout the State, and increasingly the local partnership model has become mainstreamed into national rural development programmes. Reflecting and in parallel to European policy discourses, a suite of territorial rural development initiatives have been advanced in partnership with rural communities since the early 1990s focusing on local development, such as the Pilot Programme for Integrated Rural Development (1988–1990); the EU LEADER Programmes (I, II and LEADER+) (since 1991); area-partnerships for social inclusion (since 1991); and three successive National Rural Development Programmes (adopted since 2000). The current thrust of rural development policy is outlined in the Government's Action Plan for Rural Ireland (Government of Ireland, 2017), which represents a continuity with LEADER-style measures (aligned with local government reform) while also providing a significant new focus on small town and village physical regeneration.

In contrast to this widespread interest in rural development, the appetite for land-use planning or spatial planning in rural Ireland has been more limited. Historically, the fate of smaller settlements and rural areas received less than significant attention from physical planners, with rural areas often perceived as 'scenic backdrops to the drama of urban based investment in infrastructure, industry and services' (Greer and Murray, 1993: 3). This focus on the urban was reinforced by a lack of development pressures on the countryside due to historically high levels of out migration from rural communities, and also by the common perception of the rural arena as agricultural space. This standpoint has led to the operation of a liberal planning system in rural Ireland, described as one of the more lax rural planning regimes in Europe (Duffy, 2000) leading to relaxed attitudes towards building new single, dispersed dwellings in the open countryside (McGrath, 1998). This has led Gallent et al. (2003: 90) in a comparative European study of rural housing to classify rural planning in Ireland as a *laissez-faire* regime, suggesting that: 'the tradition of a more relaxed approach to regulation, and what many see as the underperformance in planning is merely an expression of Irish attitudes towards government intervention'.

### **Sweden**

Few nations have so embraced the structure for rural development established by the European Union (EU) and the OECD as has Sweden. Throughout the years and the many changes that EU policy has seen—whether through the Mansholt Plan of 1968, the McSharry reforms of 1992 or the CAP and its sub components—Swedish programming has had a consistent sectoral orientation toward agriculture as the focus of national rural development policy (Ilkonen and Knobbloch, 2007). But as the CAP itself has changed and matured, so has Sweden's policy system to reflect a broader conception of the relationship between agriculture and the rural (Granvik et al., 2012). What has emerged has been a more nuanced strategy that has sought increased competitiveness in both the agricultural and forestry sectors, improvement in the environmental quality of rural places, a commitment to economic diversification in the countryside and,

using the LEADER approach, a strong push to build civil society and stronger local governance through inclusive public/private partnerships (Lindberg et al., 2012). There is some evidence that, after a modest start, such partnerships – especially where government has initially assumed a role in establishing such organisations – are taking hold in the Swedish countryside, especially as they concern the utilisation of natural resources (Bjarstig, 2017; Bjarstig and Sandstrom, 2017).

This more sophisticated approach still sees a multifunctional agriculture as one of the essential elements of Swedish rural policy, with food production combined with value-added activities to enhance the rural economy (UN, 2005). While recognising that those farms located near to population centres tend to be economically stronger, the policy provides that those in ‘less favoured’ regions are to be provided with compensation to maintain the agricultural landscape that is necessary for biodiversity and to support the growth of tourism. Additionally, a policy thrust to enhance Sweden’s culinary traditions and innovations has buttressed agriculture in many places. As Rytkonen has observed, ‘[t]he reemergence of farm dairies, the establishment of a wine sector, the intensification of farm tourism, the constant increase of farm stores is just some of the many expressions of the new Swedish rurality’ (Rytkonen, 2014: 1196).

Most recently the Swedish government has reinforced this multifunctional approach to agriculture by proposing a national food strategy (Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, 2017). The strategy is a comprehensive plan that looks at all facets of the Swedish food value chain. It sets targets to be reached by 2030. The plan stresses the need for greater food self-sufficiency, a more competitive system in the global marketplace, greater organic and local food production, substituting biofuels for fossil fuels, and animal welfare and environmental stewardship consistent with resilience and sustainability principles. The plan calls for new investments in research and scientific innovation, technology transfer within the entire value chain, increases in the amount of pastureland and direct support for farms in more marginally fertile areas. Further, the plan calls for changes in the CAP and some of its mechanisms (Ernkran, 2017). While ambitious, if the strategy is instituted and fully funded, its impact on rural Sweden can be transformative.

To assist rural economic development and technology transfer in all sectors, rural broadband has been expanded. Recognising that the private sector would not undertake this investment outside of population centres, the national government has used its funding to do so. The result has been that the Fibre to the Home Council Europe (FTTH) considers Sweden to be a ‘showcase’ for rural broadband (Babaali, 2013). As one OECD study has noted, ‘The Internet offers the possibility to provide services in rural areas and for providers in rural areas to offer services outside their immediate territory’ (OECD, 2011: 125). Enhanced broadband coverage is but one element of a larger rural infrastructure commitment.

### ***Spatial planning and rural Europe***

While rural development within the EU has witnessed a convergence of approaches across its member states, spatial planning for rural regions across the EU is much more diverse. Firstly, spatial planning is not a competency of the EU and therefore spatial planning remains a concern for individual member states with significantly less influence from European wide institutions compared to other policy areas, despite efforts to introduce a common spatial vocabulary as discussed further below, and a gradual shift from merely regulating land use change to enhanced ‘spatial’ governance. Secondly, and relatedly, spatial planning traditions, governance and legal systems vary widely across the European territory (Knaap et al., 2015). In this context, various commentators have attempted to group European planning systems into broad typologies. Nadin and Stead (2008), for example, identify three governance types in Europe: a Nordic model, an Anglo-Saxon model and continental/corporatist models. In turn, these have influenced a variety of planning

cultures including comprehensive integrated planning (e.g. Netherlands, Germany), land-use regulation and management (e.g. traditionally the approach in the UK and Ireland), regional economic planning (e.g. France) and urbanism (closely aligned with urban design, more common in southern Europe). More recently, these traditions have become more blurred in practice.

While European planning systems remain rooted in contrasting governance traditions, the EU has nevertheless sought to exert influence on spatial development through regional development initiatives, environmental directives, and structural and cohesion funding to foster coordination and integration (Faludi, 2015). Moreover, for almost two decades the EU has attempted to influence national and regional planning through a growing interest in strategic spatial planning, as illustrated with its publication of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (CSD, 1999) and subsequent development of the EU's 'Territorial Agenda', culminating in the publication of the Territorial Agenda of the EU 2020 (CEC, 2011). Through this EU spatial planning process, a new discourse of European spatial development has taken shape, with the definition of a new policy discourse, new knowledge forms and knowledge transfer, and new policy options (Richardson, 2000). ESDP promoted concepts – such as polycentric urban development, balanced spatial development, a new urban–rural relationship and transnational planning – were increasingly translated and applied into individual member state's national and regional policies and strategies throughout the 2000s (Healey, 2004; Lambregts and Zonneveld, 2004; Krätke, 2001).

The publication of the ESDP in 1999 also supplied a new vocabulary for *rural* spatial planning and has enabled policy-makers in member states an opportunity to 'rethink' spatial policies for rural Europe. In contrast to the emphasis on *local* development within rural development debates, the ESDP proposed tying rural areas much more into their urban and regional contexts and 'transform the countryside both physically and socially into images and identities of those who consume rural resources' (Hadjimichalis, 2003: 108). In this regard, the ESDP called for the strengthening of the partnership between urban and rural areas to overcome 'the outdated dualism between city and countryside' (CSD, 1999: 19) and to provide an integrated approach to regional problems. As Tewdwr-Jones and Williams (2001) argue, this focus on core-periphery (or urban–rural) relations necessitates an analysis of territory, rather than periphery, urban or rural alone.

However, both this policy direction and the ESDP's construction of rurality are contested. Hadjimichalis (2003) argues that from a rural perspective, a strong urban bias is evident in the ESDP. First, he suggests that cities are constructed as the sole driving forces and motors of regional development, which could lead to further agglomeration and a widening gap between urban and rural areas. This raises questions relating to the future of rural territory and space, particularly for population movement, if non-urban areas are constructed as areas of agriculture, green tourism and environmental protection (Richardson, 2000). Second, Hadjimichalis is critical of the ESDP's polycentric urban model, which may be relevant in flat, economically mature north-central EU countries like north-central France, Germany, Benelux and Denmark, but it marginalises rural and peripheral geography such as south-eastern Europe and Nordic countries. And third, Hadjimichalis criticises the urban–rural partnership for submerging small rural towns into their large counterparts, as urban needs predominate. As Richardson observes:

The construction of rurality in this discourse raises many concerns for those with specific interests in rural development. Within this discourse, rurality is partly defined in a relational way – in relation to the urban – in partnership, but also in a way that subsumes the rural into a new European regional political economy. Cities and regions are the principal units of implementation of the ESDP's policies.

(Richardson, 2000: 66)

As this critique suggests, the very notion of rurality is often deeply contested within planning policy, which is also reflected in contrasting approaches to how Europe's individual member states' conceive and frame the role and function of rural places within planning systems across the European territory. In broad terms, in more urbanised EU countries, planning in rural places has tended to prioritise protecting rural landscapes – related to aesthetic preferences, preventing urban sprawl and amenity protection – and protecting agricultural land for productive purposes. These countries, such as the Netherlands and Britain, tend to have mature and highly regulated planning systems. In contrast, in more predominately rural regions, or more peripheral regions, promoting development has often been prioritised over protection, favouring local development interests over the perceived preferences of external interests (e.g. environmental groups). In these cases, countries such as Greece, Spain and Ireland, development is less regulated, often characterised by *laissez-faire* approaches or by market enabling planning regimes (see, for example, Economou, 1997; Gkartziou and Shucksmith, 2015; and Chapter 13, this volume). In both highly urban societies and predominantly rural regions, local spatial planning and rural development policies are often poorly integrated (Gkartziou and Scott, 2014; Scott and Murray, 2009), with planning policy focused on managing physical change in the countryside and rural development concerned primarily with promoting economic and community development. This fragmentation reflects conflicting and competing constructions of rurality and is reinforced by local governance arrangements: formulating agreed rural sustainable development policies at a local level, therefore, remains an elusive and contested policy goal.

### Rural policy and planning in Japan

Japan may well be a harbinger of things to come in many countries of the global North. With falling fertility rates and very little in-migration, Japan's population is rapidly ageing and declining. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the nation's rural areas. Rural Japan is, quite simply, hollowing out (Tanaka and Iwasawa, 2010).

Starting with the Meiji Restoration in 1869 through to the post-Second World War II period, Japan undertook significant reforms that profoundly altered land-use and land management as well as land tenure from a near feudal system to a unique small holdership pattern devoted to the intensive production of rice (Sorenson, 2010). The agricultural landscape of Japan is defined by man-made rice paddies connected through extensive irrigation systems. Farmed and settled land, the latter typified by high density living in village communities, contrasts with mountainous, forested landscapes. Forests cover marginally less Japanese land than in Scandinavian countries, and wilderness areas, either in the form of national parks, other protected lands, or privately owned tracts, play a crucial role in protecting the headwaters of rivers that provide much of the water for hydroelectric facilities and the country's irrigations systems, so vital to rice production.

In both its planning and agricultural/rural policy there has been a certain consistency and continuity in that Japan's policy system is heavily concentrated and top-down. It has been shaped by the almost uninterrupted political dominance of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party since the end of the Second World War. Agricultural land ownerships are quite small and were reduced in size even further to provide support for returning soldiers after the war. It has been the policy of Japan's federal government to favour agriculture in certain ways, not the least of which has been a pricing strategy for rice production that has kept farm incomes at or near par with those of urban workers. This reflected a growing concern over the disparity between urban-rural incomes (Hashimoto and Nishi, 2016). This has had the result, along with some

other factors of a cultural nature, of reducing the willingness of farmers to convert land to more intensive uses. Indeed, even large-scale farmers have found it difficult to expand their operations by any means other than leaseholds. A National Land Agency monitors land markets but has little power to intervene in transaction. Most farm families secure substantial income from off-farm work with one or more members of the household working in nearby villages or in cities. As Tabayashi and Iguchi (2005) point out, contemporary Japanese agriculture is defined by part-time farm households with ageing and female farmers. Further, Hebbert (1989: 141) has documented the highly mechanised and efficient nature of contemporary Japanese farming thus:

With mechanized planters, monorail or cable conveyors, lightweight sprinklers, vinyl greenhouses and artificial fertilizers, crops have increased as effort has diminished. The productivity of Japanese farming per unit area is the highest in the world . . .

*(Hebbert, 1989: 141)*

As Japan industrialised and urbanised at unprecedented rates in the post-Second World War era, the pressure to convert farmland to other uses intensified despite popular concerns. A strategy to develop industry and land in and around growth-pole metropolitan areas was instituted as part of a national approach to development. Invariably it saw farmland near urban areas as potential development sites for industries and housing. In the early 1950s, The Agricultural Land Act was implemented to give prefecture (the equivalent of states or provinces) governors greater control over land conversion. Later in that decade, the central government's Ministry of Agriculture established a set of standards for agricultural land conversion. Neither of the two measures proved to be particularly effective. By 1969 the situation grew so dire that the Agricultural Promotion Areas Act was passed into law, which gave the prefectural governors the power to control potential conversions. In the year prior to the establishment of agricultural zones under the promotions act, a complex national city planning law was instituted that essentially tried to create green belts and urban growth boundaries as constraints against sprawl and development. These approaches failed to constrain land conversions. In the case of Tokyo's greenbelt, it was 'abolished so soon mainly because of strong development pressure and fierce political opposition from property owners and developers' (Ding and Zhao, 2011: 914). Despite the creation of a National Land Use Plan instituted in 1978, pressure on farmland continued apace. Additionally, some farmland, especially in mountainous and other marginal areas, was simply abandoned because no one was left in the community to farm it (Hashiguchi, 2014). Various other plans to conserve forests and conservation areas have been implemented but essentially village or rural planning in Japan lacks coherence and direction. As one assessment notes, 'rural landscapes are an important conservation challenge in Japan because they are being lost rapidly' (Natori et al., 2011: 285).

If turning around Japan's demographic decline is proving difficult to achieve, attempts to make the country's rural areas more resilient and sustainable has a somewhat longer history. The post-Second World War land reform included a programme that focused on enhancing the lives of rural women. Known as the Rural Livelihood Improvement Programme (R-LIP), women were introduced to concepts and methods of community leadership, alternative modes of income generation and family health enhancement. These efforts were similar to the work of the American Cooperative Extension Service and other programmes within some OECD nations (Mizuno, 2012). Another important effort to assist farmers has been the development of food cooperatives that connect producers with consumers. These function as networks that bring together women as producers with women as consumers, and as food safety issues have emerged over the decades, so have these institutions. Such programmes have the benefit of supporting

local or what Odagiri (2011) has called Japan's 'tiny economies'. Other EU LEADER-like programmes have begun to be introduced in Japan, including the conceptualisation in policy of farming as a multifunctional activity and greater urban–rural linkages.

Various government ministries have, over the years, invested in rural infrastructure projects such as roads, sewage and water systems, and other sanitation projects (Hashimoto and Nishi, 2016). Some of these projects were geared to stimulate tourism in rural Japan. Given the nature of Japanese culture, returning to rural areas has long had a certain appeal for urbanites and governments at all levels have seized upon tourism as a way to diversify rural economies (Creighton, 1997; see also Japan Times, 2018). As in cases elsewhere, some of these investments have increased land prices in rural areas and brought with them damage to the local agricultural economy and negative externalities in the environment (Goto, 2008). Other programmes and policies, such as providing mobile food and medical services, have also been implemented. Yet, as in some other countries of the Global North, it is hard to see how Japan will surmount some of its demographic and economic challenges to produce better outcomes for its rural communities and people.

## Conclusion

While rural development policy has slowly evolved from a focus on agricultural modernisation to a broader focus on territorial development, over the past half-century the landscape for rural planning has remained largely static. As Lapping (2006: 118) suggests, 'rural planning and policy has demonstrated an amazing consistency and lack of imagination in terms of their focus and orientation. In many national and international contexts an emphasis on agriculture as the rural persists.'

Despite rapidly changing demographic, social, environmental and economic realities, rural planning policy and practice often continue to emphasise the primacy of agriculture, which in turn can produce policies that hamper the wider development of the rural economy or society. In the so-called 'urban age', rural planning has become more marginal within the planning profession and planning academia, as cities are framed as the key drivers of innovation and economic growth, with the rural constructed as the scenic backdrop or 'breadbasket'. Rural areas increasingly become sites for urban infrastructure, often mega projects, to connect cities and create new scale-economies. However, as the remaining chapters in this book demonstrate, it is now timely to reimagine and reinvigorate rural planning to move beyond narrow development versus preservation debates to imagine more sustainable rural futures. In addition to identifying some of the limitations of rural planning through examining its evolution, the chapter has also highlighted some examples of better practice across North America and the EU. This includes experimenting with rural governance arrangements, the importance of 'community' as a building block for local policy formulation, transitioning towards multifunctional agriculture and rural places, and new infrastructural needs (particularly broadband roll-out) to support rural communities and as well as diversified and creative economies. In this context, there is considerable scope for more comparative research for cross-learning and practice-transfer.

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