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# ***New paradigms and major questions for the future for rural development in Mediterranean***

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Driven by a CAP obliged to evolve under the twin pressure of the liberalisation of markets and the 're-ruralisation' of European agricultural areas, rural development policies in European countries have gradually gained substance since the early 1990s when the CAP 'second pillar' appeared. Although they are still very and perhaps over oriented towards the agricultural sector, they are steadily extending their field of actions to areas that echo this new complexity of the 'rural' aspect of Europe:

- ❑ the revitalisation of rural areas aimed at territorial cohesion and regional equilibrium,
- ❑ the diversification of economic activities, support for the creation of businesses, use of assets and the promotion of rural tourism,
- ❑ the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources.

The taking into account of rural areas results from another recent history in the countries south of the Mediterranean—that of the results of the structural adjustment policies of the 1980s and the swelling of perils: the degradation of food safety, 'diseconomy' in rural areas that are incapable of responding to the employment requirements of the resident population, increased poverty, social instability and the accelerated degradation of natural resources.

The policy responses of states to the difficulties of rural areas—'*Stratégie 2020*' in Morocco, 'PNDAR' in Algeria, 'PDRI' in Tunisia or the "*vision stratégique du développement socioéconomique 2022*"—all feature three central preoccupations:

- ❑ better living conditions through improved infrastructure and services,
- ❑ improved income for the population through an increase in farmers' incomes and/or the creation of income-generating activities,
- ❑ sustainable management of natural resources.

It should be noted that these objectives are not awarded the same priority in the various national policies. The main axes of national rural development policies in Egypt and Turkey are large hydro-agricultural development policies. These are structuring projects such as the GAP project in south-east Anatolia and the desert farming projects in Egypt involving hydraulic developments and the populating of these new areas. In Morocco and Tunisia, the main approach in rural development policies is the fight against poverty and the improvement of living conditions whereas in Algeria stress is laid on the diversification and job creation within the framework of neighbourhood projects.

The structuring of rural development policies in the countries around the Mediterranean is centred on the common determinants employment, quality of life and the environment and they award an increasingly large position to the resident populations as players in these policies. In the north, civil society and the various local institutions, whether professional or not, public or private, are mobilised at all stages from the devising of a strategy by identifying priorities to project design and then the management of actions. In the south, whether as part of intentions or in practice, this affirmation of the role of civil society is also observed even though ad hoc institutions are often lacking and the players' capacity to handle their new responsibilities is still weak.

The organisation of local discussion and partnership facilities and the training of the players concerned will certainly be a condition for the success of this new pathway for the implementation of the development of rural areas. We consider that it is important in a concluding article to go more deeply into the new paradigms of rural development including governance and the place of civil society, to mention some of the major questions for the future of rural development around the Mediterranean and finally present some of the challenges that those involved in development will have to face.

## **I - The paradigms of rural development around in the Mediterranean area**

A renewal of theories of development took place in the 1990s with the emergence of new paradigms that have inspired approaches to rural development directly or indirectly.

New social demand is developing north of the Mediterranean and giving rural areas new functions. After a period of modernisation of agriculture during which the main function was that of increasing agricultural production to feed the population by supplying products at low prices and to increase agricultural and food industry exports, social demand is moving towards quality. Both quality of life and quality of products are concerned.

Quality of life has two dimensions:

- ❑ the first is the increase in the time devoted to leisure and a search for leisure activities that are closer to nature,
- ❑ the second is environment-related and concerns the quality of the physical environment (housing, workplace and leisure sites) with less pollution of air and water, less noise pollution and less visual pollution.

There are also two aspects in the quality of products:

- ❑ quality related to the security of foodstuffs. Demand for products that are safe for health is strong after the shocks caused by various events (BSE, etc.),
- ❑ quality related to a return to tastes and authenticity after the period of development of industrial foodstuffs and fast eating styles.

The rural world incorporates these two features that are becoming an essential paradigm in rural development strategies. Numerous rural regions in the countries in the north have made the quality of life or product quality a major axis of their development strategies. Initiatives for the highlighting of local products are increasing through the anchorage of these products in a quality approach and identification with a region and hence specific quality and special know-how.

Sustainable development is another paradigm linked to the first one. Sustainable development has been part of all national and international policies and in citizens' awareness for about 15 years. A clean environment, the conservation of natural resources and heritage conservation now form strong social demand in the northern countries with heritage understood in the broad sense covering the natural (landscapes), built and cultural heritage.

In contrast, sustainability in the southern countries concerns mainly the management and conservation of rare, fragile resources, a crucial question for the development of these countries.

The sustainable management of natural resources assumes the strong involvement of local stakeholders. The third paradigm is that of governance, that is to say the sharing and distribution of powers among the various stakeholder groups, including institutional players. Good governance consists of a situation in which the mechanisms of information, negotiations and decision-making allow the involvement of all groups of stakeholders. This requires a legal framework, an institutional system and financial resources.

The decentralisation process is supposed to implement new governance but it raises the problem of the appropriate spatial level for decision-making and action. The difficulty lies in the spatial and institutional level that allows closeness to the local population while conserving sufficient dimension to be able to mobilise resources and conduct actions. If the space is too small the capacity for negotiation and mobilising resources is weak or even non-existent and if it is too large closeness to the population disappears. The successive phases of *'intercommunalité'* in France running from *'intercommunal'* charters to *'pays'*—local areas— is an example of the search for an appropriate level for the formulation of local development strategies, the mobilisation of players and the implementation of actions and projects.

The decentralisation process is accompanied by a contract approach. The various groups of players negotiate to define the priorities for a given period and mobilise the resources required to attain the objectives. They can thus judge the effectiveness of the actions conducted and adjust their priorities from one contract period to another. This is 'internal' contractualisation in a given region between the various groups of players and also 'external', that is to say between all the players and the public authorities.

It should be remembered that the decentralisation process that has been running for several decades in the countries in the north is in reality in the design and starting-up phase in the southern countries.

This paradigm of governance and that of decentralisation/contractualisation leads to the question of the appropriate area for rural development. Designing major political orientations is clearly handled at the national level or even the supranational level within the framework of the EU. However, rural development can only be 'local' in the sense that it involves taking into account the diversity and special features of each rural area, involving local players and setting up development based on the use of local resources. The whole question is that of defining what is meant by 'local' and this can only result from the evolutions described above.

Indeed, population growth in rural areas, the diversification of occupations and the development of small urban centres contribute to mark rural development in a region. Rural development becomes regional development.

A regional area is a social, economic and historical construct, in other words a space that has been taken over by a population for the modulation of the landscapes, production of know-how and the establishment of networks. It is not just the physical support for an activity but contributes to the existence of the activity and its progress through the potential that it supplies. It is the site for the mobilisation of social capital, joint learning and the production of social cultural and—more and more—economic identity.

In both the northern countries and those to the south and east of the Mediterranean, changes have resulted in rural areas no longer being closed and inward looking. They are open to other areas, at the national level through frequent relations with cities and at the international level through the market and globalisation. As a result, a strategy for the development of rural areas cannot ignore or cannot help but integrate the hinging of rural and urban spheres. The analyses of relations between urban centres and rural areas provide numerous points for reflection on the positive or negative impact that these urban centres have on rural development.

Other paradigms of rural development concern the southern countries first and foremost, given the level of development of their rural societies.

With the support of certain international organisations, the fight against poverty has become central to rural development policies. Reducing poverty and the gap between rural and urban zones guides political orientations and policies. However, the poverty that it is wished to reduce should be examined for a moment: it is reduced to its most simple expression (if we refer to Amartya Sen's theories), that is to say income. This is certainly an essential component of poverty but we know today that it is not sufficient for fighting poverty in the long term.

The southern countries are subjected to global economic development imperatives and the development of rural areas is set in this context. The economic aspect of rural development leads to the need to increase production and productivity to meet the needs of the population and to increase exports. Such economic development involves improving the quality of factors of production, including labour and infrastructure.

The emergence of civil society is the final rural development paradigm in the southern countries. It cannot be denied that there is a movement, hesitant it is true, for the construction of civil society in the countries south of the Mediterranean and the rural world does not escape the phenomenon. Internal and external factors contribute to this:

- ❑ in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria where state intervention in agriculture was strong, the reduction of such intervention and the weakening of state services and structures as a result of structural adjustment have left a vacuum,
- ❑ aid from international organisations and NGOs increasingly requires partnership with the population, whence the founding in recent years of numerous associations within the framework of the setting up of development actions,
- ❑ rural exodus traditionally emptied villages of young people with a certain level of education. Today, with high unemployment in the towns, this young, educated population returns to the villages and is often at the origin of initiatives for the creation of local associations.

The movement does not make progress at the same rate everywhere, comes up against many difficulties and the resulting organisations are not always very effective. However, it is fully legitimate to take it into consideration as it opens up prospects for development and is a true challenge for the future.

## II - The major questions for the future and the challenges

Three conclusions can be drawn from the three points described above:

- ❑ the rural world is an important component of Mediterranean societies through its demographic features, its position in the economy and its various functions and especially those related to the sustainability and conservation of resources,
- ❑ rural development policies have changed greatly and are inspired by new paradigms,
- ❑ the rural world is opening increasingly towards the outside at the national and/or international levels.

In spite of these changes—or as a result of them—many crucial questions and new challenges remain and must be examined:

- ❑ In the context of globalisation and the opening of economies, rural areas in the Mediterranean region are in competition via the world market. A large proportion of these rural areas are being excluded from the market. These are the marginal areas (mountain zones, arid or semi-arid zones, etc.) where productivity is low (zones of small and micro family farms) and that do not possess the features required to be competitive according to world market standards. What will become of the populations of these regions that the world market does not need? What future do they have ?
- ❑ This first question leads to another related to the function of rural development. Analysis of present rural development policies and their objectives shows how rural development is perceived :
  - either as a remedy to lessen the negative effects of globalisation for rural areas. In this case policies aim at redistribution,
  - or as an alternative to globalisation or at least to the economic model assumed by the latter. In this case, development strategies seek to use goods and services that are

'outside' the world market by using innovative functioning and organisation of the production of these goods and services.

Rural development seems to be a palliative in both cases. Given the changes observed and the dynamics of globalisation and its unexpected effects, would it not be more judicious to see rural development in a different way and give it back its position as a component of an overall sustainable development process ?

- ❑ The regionalisation movement is one of the effects of globalisation. This movement is going towards the creation of regional areas that go beyond national areas (at the scale of a set of countries for the creation of economic blocks and large markets) and also in the opposite direction, that is to say the emergence of regions as infra-national spaces. The affirmation of regions with regard to economy and identity brings us back to the regional paradigm and the need for reflection on the new links between town and country or between rural and urban areas. Research conducted in France, Greece and elsewhere shows that different development approaches in small and medium-sized towns have different effects on rural areas. The development of these urban centres is dynamic for the rural area in some cases and causes desertification in others.
- ❑ In the context of the comparative failure of conventional modes of cooperation and given the affirming of regions as active entities, especially in the countries north of the Mediterranean, and the forward march of decentralisation processes or at least the determination to implement this in the southern countries, one can rightly wonder about the advantages of another cooperation mode, that is to say decentralised cooperation. This seems to be more suited to the nature and requirements of rural development policies through the closeness to players and the flexibility that it can have. These advantages means that it can increase the efficiency of cooperation actions in the economic sense, that is to say input/output relations, and with regard to the sustainability of the effects of these actions and can also contribute to the strengthening of the decentralisation processes that have started in the southern countries by providing players with a learning facility.
- ❑ All the new rural development paradigms mentioned above underline the important or even vital role of rural institutions and organisations. In a general manner, institutional analysis has clearly demonstrated the link between institutional efficiency and economic performance at both macro and micro levels. At the macro level, an efficient institutional environment is one in which property rights are clearly determined and the rules of operation clearly identified and respected. At the micro level, institutional and organisational structures are chosen that enable a reduction of transaction costs as efficiency means reducing production and transaction costs. Another aspect is that rural development is increasingly territorial and requires the mobilisation of players; this needs efficient institutional structures and institutions representing civil society. The question that follows this observation is that of how to support the structuring of the rural world in particular in the southern and eastern countries.
- ❑ The studies conducted on the subject of rural institutions and organisations in the southern countries agree that the identification of the question of training is a requirement and a necessity. This concerns the training of local development officers, local leaders and elected officials. It is an essential condition for the institutions and organisations to play their roles satisfactorily and to become centres for negotiation, for the drafting of a development 'project' and contractualisation centred on the latter. How can this training be provided on a long term basis? How can it reach those who should receive it and under what conditions ?
- ❑ The institutional question goes beyond the question of training. Given the current problematics of rural development in a context of globalisation and that of the use of local resources, thought must be devoted to the use of new modes of coordination between players. Studies conducted on diasporas or emigrants from certain Mediterranean countries show the role that can be played by networks and social capital in the development of underprivileged regions. In addition to training, all institutional structuring requires a long learning period for all the stakeholders.

- ❑ The questions above and analysis of experiences of local rural development show the need for an overall, contractualised view and also a long period of time. The processes of mobilisation, negotiation and contractualisation require several years, in addition to time for training and learning by players in the southern countries. How can the different time horizons be integrated in development policies without giving way to pressure from short-term emergencies ?
- ❑ Rural development is a long, slow process and so rural development policies must be designed to cover extensive periods of time. Furthermore, the rural development process must change continuously to adapt to local contexts that we know are very varied while remaining in line with global orientations and policies. Whence the need to design policies not as rigid frameworks but to accompany this process. This means greater flexibility in implementation and modes of application.
- ❑ The last major question—that is also a great challenge—is that of the sustainability of resources. Between under-exploitation in the north and over-exploitation in the south, means must be sought to achieve a balance between the conservation of resources and economic development leading to the deterioration of non-exploited resources on the one hand and the degradation of over-exploited resources on the other.

## Conclusion

Like all development processes, rural development in the Mediterranean region is an economic, social and political challenge. The issues are as follows:

- ❑ in the northern countries, the issues are those of territorial cohesion, the quality of life and products and environmental and heritage conservation,
- ❑ in the southern countries, the issues are economic development, the improvement of living conditions of rural populations, equity to reduce the gap between urban and rural and the management of rare, fragile natural resources. Indeed, the southern countries are subjected to economic imperatives that lead to the over-exploitation of their resources and face the triple challenge of producing more with decreasing resources and conserving the quality of the latter.

It should be remembered that structural adjustment policies have often had disastrous effects in rural zones in the southern countries. Globalisation may further aggravate these effects by excluding populations and their production from the market. The increasing poverty of the populations of rural zones means that the latter become areas of strong social tension and a fertile terrain for all kinds of radicalisation.

In the face of the scale of these issues, thought must be devoted to the most appropriate means. In this reflection, we think we should first of all favour the use of two types of capital—human capital and institutional capital. Training and learning by players, institutional structuring and the use of new modes of coordination between players form the basic conditions for rural development both north and south of the Mediterranean.