

# Recent Rural Restructuring in East and West Germany: Facts and Backgrounds

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## Introduction

Current Germany is characterised by the huge impacts of the post-war era, in which Germany was divided into two states, both being part and front country of a different, opposing political bloc. Unification meant transfer of institutions from West to East, which evolved under the particular conditions in post-war West Germany. Until 1989 in both parts of Germany the concept of rurality had a different meaning and was linked to different political objectives and sets of policy measures. As a result we find huge structural differences between both parts of Germany, which challenge the unification project. Ten years after the unification in November 1990 East-West differences for every indicator overlay all other differences. However, there are also other historical boundaries, which are of significant importance for rural development, in particular because they have affected and still influence land ownership and farm structures. In both parts of Germany we find also a North-South, and less significant a West-East divide (Struff 1997). The most important cultural border is the protestant-catholic (dominantly a North-South) divide, manifested in the Westphalia Peace in 1648. A second dividing line is the river Elbe. The regions east of the Elbe were germanised during the medieval 'East colonisation'. Large, often feudal, farm estates dominated the farm structure of these regions. Today, prosperous regions are more likely to be in the South west, while regions with structural problems are more likely to be found in the North East.

The institution transfer will allow us, for the purpose of this paper, to describe only one institutional framework. However, we have to consider that those institutions do not necessarily work similarly in the East as in the West. This political framework of regional and agricultural policies has come under pressure after the unification, not only, because of a growing heterogeneity between regions, but also because of the growing numbers of federal states, who are participating in decision making processes, and the changed geopolitical context. Occasionally we will address issues of 'institutional fit' in East Germany. However, even if not explicitly mentioned, it ought to be considered that East-West differences affect *all* issues discussed in this paper.

## Section 1: Socio-demographic changes and economic restructuring in Rural Germany

### Population in Rural Areas

After the OECD definition only a fifth of the German territory is rural, and only 8 percent of the population is living in rural regions. Population density in German rural areas is higher than in most other countries, and the differences between urban and rural regions are lower (Schrader 1999). In comparison to the OECD statistics the official German definition of rural areas<sup>2</sup>, which will be used in the further discussion, covers a much wider area. The share of the total population, which is living in rural areas, is much higher in East than in West Germany (Table 1).

**Table 1 The significance rural areas in Germany**

	Total	Rural Areas in Region Type I (agglomerations)	Rural Areas in Region Type II (urbanised)	Rural Areas in Region Type III (rural)
<b>Population</b>	West 100	2,9	7,1	7,7
<b>Share</b>	East 100	8,5	10,0	11,5
<b>Share of</b>	West 100	6,5	16,3	20,7
<b>Land</b>	East 100	13,0	18,1	35,2
<b>Population</b>	West 254	115	111	95
<b>Density</b>	East 164	108	91	54

Source: BBR 1997, data for rural "Kreise" as defined in footnote 2.

The comparatively high share of rural Kreise in East Germany, which are close to agglomerations is also a result of a high concentration of the population in larger cities (Kroner 1993). During the eighties West Germany and East

<sup>2</sup> Official regional statistics and most regional studies in Germany refer to the regional typology proposed by the Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung (BBR, Federal Office for Construction and Regional Planning). This Typology uses the distance to the next central town (Oberzentrum) and the population density on the administrative level of a Kreis (see section 2). Within this typology three different types of regions and for each region four types of Kreise are defined. However, because some subcategories do not apply in all regions, finally nine types of Kreise are defined. Three of them are defined as rural.:

- rural Kreise in regions with large agglomerations (Regional type I)
- rural Kreise in urbanized regions with agglomeration tendencies (Regional type II)
- rural Kreise in rural regions (Regional type III).

<sup>1</sup> Published in Halferree, Keith, Imre Kovách and Rachel Woodward (eds.): Leadership and Local Power in European Rural Development. Burlington (Ashgate) 2002, pp. 145-172.

Germany (at that time still the GDR) showed different migration trends. While East Germany was characterised by a continuing and strong urbanisation, the development in West Germany was more a retarded urbanisation (Kontuly and Dearden 1998). The latter has similar reasons like a decentralisation of the labour force, housing prices, demographic structures and policy factors as counterurbanisation processes in countries such as the United Kingdom, France and Italy. It might be due to the comparatively homogenous settlement structure that counterurbanisation did not take place in West Germany. Urbanisation in East Germany was the result of housing policy. The mobility was because of administrative restrictions very low.

Unification has had a significant impact on mobility trends. Nationally there is a continuous and dominant migration from East to West. After the opening of the border and enforced by economic crisis in East Germany after the unification a dramatic depopulation of East Germany took place. Although the numbers of migrants have declined, there is still a net migration from East to West. It is estimated that since 1989 almost two million people left East Germany, which is a tenth of the population. Because of its selectivity (it was and is the generation 20 to 35 year old, which leaves) this process had a dramatic effect on the demographic structure of the East German population, which is considered as even more significant than the second world war (Bertram 1997). A second effect was a dramatic drop in birth rates, similar to other Eastern European countries. In contradiction to those it has recovered slightly during the last few years, but still remains on a comparatively low level.

East Germany regions also faced a strong suburbanisation process, supplied with population flows from the cities and rural areas. Migration has mostly affected large cities and remoter rural areas in particular in the North, and the East border regions. Here, added effects of emigration to the West, and suburbanisation has led to a rapid ageing of the remaining population, and a trend towards feminisation.

In West Germany mobility trends are more heterogeneous. The dominant trend is still the migration from North to South. However, this trend is weakening. Mobility studies indicate that employment opportunity *and* rurality (low population density) seem to be the most important positive factors to explain mobility. Therefore, some, but not all, rural areas show clear signs of counterurbanisation processes. Yet, these trends are very selective. While there is a migration surplus in the population over 30, there is a net loss among the younger cohorts (Maretzke 1998).

### Economic structures and (Un-)Employment

Although Germany is identified with manufacturing, services are equally important for employment and even more important for the national income. However, in an international comparison Germany is still one of the more industrialised among modern economies. Unemployment levels are also comparatively high. Major sources of mass unemployment are declining industries.

**Table 2: Structure of the German economy in 1997**

	<b>Employment in percent</b>	<b>Gross Domestic product in percent</b>
<b>Agriculture etc.</b>	2,7	1,1
<b>Manufacturing and Construction</b>	33,3	33,1
<b>Trade, Transport and Communication</b>	19,2	14,4
<b>Services</b>	32,6	37,3
<b>State, Households and others</b>	12,2	14

Source: BMWi 1998.

After a demand led boom after the unification, initiated by the overvaluation of the East German Mark, the West German Economy performed poorly. Therefore it was not able to compensate the dramatic decline in the East German Economy. During the 90s the working population has declined by 2 million, while the total population has grown by 1,5 million due to immigration surplus. This led to a sharp increase in unemployment levels, while the worst could only be prevented because of the massive use of early retirement measures, in particular in East Germany. Currently, in West Germany unemployment is high, and extremely high in East Germany.

Since the unemployment problem in West Germany is related to industrial decline it is somehow not surprising that rural areas' performance during the last two decades in generating jobs is much better than this of urban areas (Schrader 1999). However, to a large extent this performance, in particular in remoter areas, is due to employment growth in manufacturing. Manufacturing still plays a significant greater role in rural areas. Services, which are contributing to employment growth for the whole economy, are still underrepresented in rural economies. Although we still find rural areas with structural problems, the generalisation of rural as backward and declining is certainly not true anymore in West Germany.

**Table 3: Gross Domestic product (GDP) per employed person and unemployment rate in rural areas in West and East Germany (1997)**

	<i>total</i>	<i>Region Type I (agglomerations)</i>	<i>Region Type II (urbanised)</i>	<i>Region Type III (rural)</i>
<i>GDP per employed person (DM)</i>	West 99313 East 61430	84615 53106	84918 54614	76149 57188
<i>Unemployment rate %</i>	West 10,4 East 18,4	8,8 17,3	9,3 19,9	8,7 20,5

Source: Schrader 1999, (data for rural "Kreise" as defined in footnote 2)

In East Germany we find a completely different picture. The economic performance in East Germany is in general below any (rural and urban) West German region. Although the disparities in productivity between rural and urban areas are not as high as in West Germany, unemployment rates in rural areas are higher. The reason for that are the losses of employment opportunities in industries *and* agriculture (see the next section) after the unification. The whole of East Germany is Objective 1 area and obtains priority funding through the European Union.

### Agriculture

One of the most striking differences between East and West we find in agriculture. While agriculture in West Germany can still, despite huge changes over the last decades, be characterised as dominated by small and medium sized family farms, agriculture in East Germany has to deal with the heritage of socialistic collectivisation.

West German agriculture is characterised by comparatively small farms. Between 1949 and 1998 the number of farms in West Germany declined from about 1.6 million to less than half a million. In the same period the number of people employed in agriculture decreased from more than five million to about one Million people. Despite these significant changes economists argue that agricultural restructuring did not lead to a significant change in the relative competitive position of the West German agriculture.

In East Germany, due to land reform before 1949, numbers of farms increased from about 450 thousand to more than 700 thousand, before the collectivisation and further steps over integration led to a significant reduction of numbers of farms. In 1989 a mere number of 8668 farms existed in East Germany either as

co-operatives (LPG) or state owned farms (VEG).<sup>3</sup> The number also includes 3558 private farms, which were church owned or in individual ownership. The latter existed dominantly in horticulture, and were very small (and officially neglected). A specific feature of East German agriculture, even among socialistic countries, was the separation of plant and animal production. Co-operatives and state farms in plant production used per average 4100 ha land and co-operated with 2 to 6 farms specialised in animal production. The employment share of the agricultural sector was 9,6% in 1989. These statistics are not directly comparable to West European countries because agricultural firms in East Germany were highly diversified. They integrated agricultural services, non-agricultural production (in particular construction units), and a wide range of social and cultural units. However, employment in the core agricultural activities was still much higher than in West Germany.

**Table 4: Number of farms and farm sizes in Germany (1998)**

	<i>farm size (ha)</i>	<i>0-50</i>	<i>50-200</i>	<i>200 -</i>	<i>total</i>
<i>West Germany</i>	Number	417 941	64 192	1 558	484 306
	share of farms	86%	13%	0%	100%
	share of land	51%	45%	4%	100%
<i>East Germany</i>	Number	20 183	4 748	5 846	31 997
	share of farms	66%	16%	18%	100%
	share of land	4%	10%	86%	100%

Source: Own calculation according to Agrarbericht (MB) 1999.

After the unification several, partly competing political objectives existed, such as separating business activities and social functions of agricultural firms, encouraging the (re-)establishment of family farming, dealing with severe environmental problems, increasing productivity and cushioning the dramatic social problems. Within three years agricultural employment dropped from over 850,000 to 150,000 people. The most dramatic effects of this development could only be absorbed by a wide use of early retirement measures. It is estimated that until 1993 about 180000 people claimed for early retirement (Schmidt/Neumezler 1993), which embraced almost the entire generation above 55 years. Despite the immense use of social policy measures, the dramatic decline of agricultural production, which went along with industrial decline, contributed significantly to the current high degree of unemployment in rural areas. While the older employees were absorbed by social security measures, and the younger generation emigrated to a large extent, it is the

<sup>3</sup> This paragraph is informed by Wiegand (1994). If not specified the statistics are taken from the official agricultural report of the German government (Agrarbericht, several years).

group of middle aged women, who has been mostly affected by unemployment in rural areas (Zierold et al. 1994). Currently the employment per ha is even lower than in West Germany due to dramatic reduction of animal stocks and the lower capital intensity of production.

Despite the decline in employment, numbers of agricultural firms have grown up to about 32.000 in 1998. Although part time family farms dominate in numbers, their contribution to employment and production is marginal. Instead of a transformation into Western style family farming, the outcome of agricultural restructuring in East Germany is a varied mixture of partly even new models of capitalistic, co-operative and family business type farms. Common features of East German farms are large farm sizes in terms of land (Table 4), but low capital stocks, use of hired labour and almost hundred per cent land tenancy. The economic pressure has lead to an immense growth of productivity, but all farms, not matter of which type, appear to be very vulnerable.

## Section 2: Policies for Rural Areas in the German Federal State

### Regulation to balance regional disparities

Germany is a federal state. The federal constitution stresses the subsidiary principle and regions therefore are powerful. The federal levels are outlined in Table 5.

**Table 5: Administrative levels in the German federal system**

<i>Name*</i>	<i>administrative level</i>	<i>elected Parliament</i>
<b>Bundesrepublik</b>	federal state	Bundestag
<b>Bundesland</b>	region	Landestag
Bezirksregierung (not in all Laender)		(none)
<b>Landkreis / Kreisfreie Stadt</b>	county / town	Kreistag / Stadtrat
<b>Gemeinde/Stadt</b>	Municipality	Gemeinderat
Dorf/Stadtbezirk	community, village	Ortsbeirat (in some Laender), Bezirksvertretung in larger towns

\*levels with elected parliaments in bold).

Regional Policy is the right and obligation of the regions. In principle the federal state has only limited, indirect possibilities to influence regional policies. However, during the post-war period, there has been a slight centralisation process in West Germany. The legitimisation for this process is the objective of 'comparable living conditions' in the German constitution. Therefore, a comprehensive regional policy framework was established in the sixties and seventies, which is still in place nowadays, and has been transferred to East Germany after the unification.

The regions (Bundeslaender) deliver any kind of internal policies from police, education up to economic development. The federal states own institutions are limited to military, external affairs and border protection. Nevertheless, there are some national bodies, but these are mostly formed as associations of regional organisations and the federal government. This construction limits the influence of the federal state on framing legislation or financial incentives. There are also policy arenas such as education, where the federal state has no power at all, and co-ordination takes place in conferences of regional governments, with autonomous power.

A further measure to overcome regional disparity is the Laenderfinanzausgleich (Regional financial adjustment). According to the federal structure the financial constitution has to ensure that the different political bodies can fulfil their obligation. Tax revenue of the most important taxes (income tax, VAT, etc.) are shared between the federal state, the regions and municipalities. Taxes are collected on the regional level, tax incomes are higher in more prosperous regions. The system of financial adjustment shall guarantee that the poorer regions reach at least 95% of the average per capita tax revenue, which remains a constant bargaining issue among regional and national actors.

The federal state pays additional money for some regions to deal with specific budget problems of individual Bundeslaender and to obtain 99% of the average per capita tax revenue. The latter has recently given the reason for a review of the whole system by the constitution court. It leads to the peculiar situation that some of the poorer regions end up with higher tax revenues than more prosperous regions. However, the constitution court did not question the legitimacy of the system, but imposed some reforms in favour of the net contributors (Bundesverfassungsgericht 1999). In recent years more than 40 billion DEM have been annually redistributed, including about 25 billion DEM paid by the federal government. Currently only four of sixteen regions are net contributors. On the regional level a similar system of financial adjustment exists to avoid large disparities between municipalities.

## **The regional planning system**

In accordance with the federal structure Germany has a hierarchical planning system.<sup>4</sup> The role of the federal state is to provide a legal framework (Bundesraumordnungsgesetz, BROG) and framing national plan (Bundesrahmenplan). For rural areas the maintenance of agricultural production, a sufficient population density, an adequate economic performance, the creation of jobs, landscape preservation, and the protection of nature are objectives formulated in the BROG, which are concretised in the national plan. The legal framework is based on the principle of a proactive state. The legal framework and the national plan are concretised and adapted to the specific regional conditions by regional laws and regional development plans. The most important tools of the regional planning system are regional plans for specific areas to co-ordinate between the national, regional and local level. Within the framework of such plans municipalities are responsible for the land use in their territory.

Central measures of the planning system are the concept of central places, the concept of settlement axis, functional divisions of territories, and the definition of planning areas. The concept of central places has been the most important for the planning practice. It has led to a 'silent' passive restructuring in rural areas. The surplus of functions in central places went along with losses in the majority of smaller rural settlements. The definition of functional priorities for sub-regions has also been of some importance, in particular in connection with environmental protection. The definition of 'functions of rural areas', areas of environmental compensation, recreation and agricultural production, is one of the immortal creations in the official language.

### **The joint tasks**

Constitutional obligations for the federal state and the need for co-ordination of regional policies led to the establishment of 'joint tasks' (Gemeinschaftsaufgaben) between the federal state and the Bundesländer under the Great Coalition in the late 60s in West Germany. Two of them are of particular importance for rural development - one is dedicated to the improvement of farm structure (GAK),<sup>5</sup> the other to the improvement of

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<sup>4</sup> This section is informed by Henckel 1999, pp 251-272.

<sup>5</sup> Gemeinschaftsaufgabe zur „Verbesserung der Agrarstruktur und des Kleinstenschenztes“.

regional economic structure (GRW).<sup>6</sup> The joint tasks are integrated in the legal framework of the constitution, which explains their overall stability during the last three decades. Yet, internally objectives and programmes have undergone significant change.

The central body of this joint tasks are planning committees (Planungsausschuss), which are constituted by representatives of the regional and the federal state. They have to agree on a annual framework plan (Rahmenplan) on the principles of funding, programmes and initiatives. Regionally designed development programmes are co-financed on this basis. The federal state contributes sixty percent of the budget, in East German regions seventy per cent. This puts the federal government in a strong position. There is a general concern about the legitimacy of the joint tasks (Johannes 1998). The interweaving of the executives means a restriction of parliamentary rights in the decision making processes. The strong position of the federal government due to its larger financial contribution also raises the question, if this construction allows the federal government to intervene in political issues, which are in the responsibility of the regions. This institution has changed the power structure and the position of local authorities.

The GAK is a second column of German agricultural policy. The first column is the agri-social policy, which includes measures and programmes like social security for farmers or early retirement programmes to encourage farmers to close farms. In 1998 the planned budget for these three measures was 2.7 billion DM. Most of it is directly dedicated to individual farms. Still, almost 60 per cent of these payments to farms in West Germany are dedicated to naturally less favoured regions, which are not necessarily economically disadvantaged. Investment support is more important in East Germany, because of the ongoing restructuring process, but will eventually decrease

The GRW is the central instrument of regional development policies. Financial measures within the framework of the GRW have always been directed towards less favoured regions. A major problem was the definition of such regions. Although the framework itself remained stable, objectives and indicators to identify less favoured regions changed considerably during more than 25 years of its existence (Struff 1992, 1997). Since the late seventieth indicators to measure the degree of unemployment, household incomes, and infrastructure have been used to identify the target regions. As a result of negotiations in a federal system the target areas have always been comparatively large. In 1989, before the unification, 48 per cent of West Germany with more than a third of

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<sup>6</sup> Gemeinschaftsaufgabe zur „Verbesserung der regionalen Wirtschaftsstruktur“.

the population was defined as promotion areas under the GRW. Constant factors within the GRW were always, until 1994, a special promotion for Kreise along the Eastern Border (Zonenrandförderung) and Berlin-West. The support of 'rural areas' has also been a permanent objective within the GRW. However, as Struff (1992, 165) argues, the old industrial regions always had a higher priority. Currently there are A, B and C-Zones. There are no distinctions between rural or urban areas. Most parts of East Germany are designated as A zones with the highest priorities. Some islands within East Germany, in particular surrounding areas of Berlin, are defined as B zones. The C zones are West German regions with disadvantages.

### **European initiatives**

Given the existence of an already well established system of regional development European initiatives have been integrated as additional source of funding. There has been a mutual influence between the European and the national regional policies. While existing national programmes were accepted on the European level, national schemes were altered to allow co-financing of European initiatives. Alternatively, the regions can co-finance initiatives on their own. This was necessary in particular for measures financed through the EFRE in 5b areas in West Germany, which only overlapped to 50 % of the territory with designated areas of the GRW. The fixing of the 5b territory has been an internal process within the regional administration. Again experiences with such procedures already existed, because of the existence of the national programme. Therefore there has been little involvement of the local level, but huge negotiations between the regions, whose objective is to maximise external funds.

It is no surprise that the measures financed within the Objective 5b framework are not new. The most popular individual programme of the 1994 to 1999 period is the 'village renewal' programme (Trissen/Schneider 1998), which exists with alterations since the seventies. Similar can be said about measures of rural and agro-tourism ('Utraub auf dem Bauernhof'), which already have a long tradition in particular in rural development programmes in the South. In Bavaria, which covers the largest share of the 5b area (42%) and population (45%), is the most important rural holiday resort due to a policy of promoting pluriactivity on small farms in the post war period.

There is almost no comprehensive overview about the impacts of rural development schemes in East Germany, which is objective 1 area. The 'village renewal' programme has even been more popular in East Germany due to need for the improvements of the local infrastructure. In a period of budget constrains and cuts in public expenditures on the local level, 'village renewal'

has been the only scheme specifically designated to rural villages. Although it has an infrastructure focus, and is perceived as expert dominated, the refurbishment of village centres and symbolic buildings (decayed churches, village halls or manor houses) contributed positively to the local community. Nevertheless, the economic impacts are minor.

Overall, European Funding has not altered rural policy in Germany significantly, but has been integrated in the administrative routine of a well-established regional planning and economic development framework. However, financial effects have been quite significant, in particular in East Germany.

## **Section 3: Context of Social Change**

### *Changing actors in rural areas in West Germany*

Significant changes in social structures due to migration processes as well as changing occupation structures have shaped rural life in the recent decades. In post-war West Germany the influx of millions of refugees caused a significant population increase in rural areas. The refugees usually developed a parallel structure of clubs and informal networks to the old local establishment. Community studies during the early fifties revealed that the assimilation of refugees has been the more difficult the more the local community was characterised by pure farming activities (Becker 1997: 43). Although many of these new inhabitants emigrated during the sixties and seventies, a significant larger population remained as a lasting effect.

This may be the reason that the analysis of more recent migration into the countryside has not been identified as counter-urbanisation processes as clearly as in other West European countries. Starting in the late 70s low prices for rural housing, an increasing mobility and a rising recognition of nature and ecology provided for a rural population shift. Newcomers from the cities (new 'rural') came to the villages. Young families are the most important group of people to move into the countryside (Becker 1997). The main motive is usually the prospect of the own property in a nice rural setting. In Germany renting is much more common than living in its own property. This is different in the countryside, where living in ones own house is common (Struff 1992). Going along with the new migration trends, renting becomes more common in the countryside too. In the more accessible rural areas within driving distance to industrialised towns, the new rural population is dominated by comparatively well paid employees, commuting to the nearest town.

In remoter rural areas, on the other hand, the new rural population consists of locally rather independent freelance workers, occasionally living in a second home in the countryside, and ‘alternative’<sup>7</sup> lifestyle oriented young. The latter live either on welfare or they started projects in eco-farming or small seminar houses. Partly there are also industry employees in remote areas working in subsidiaries of large companies that had been installed with public subsidies by rural development policy. For some areas retirement migration has also become an important factor. Finally, asylum seekers are also an important source for emigration due to the fact that there are equally distributed over the country.

The migration processes are part of and go along with changes in the occupational structure in the countryside. Economically the prevalence of farmers, local crafters, merchants and pub owners in the 1960s was diversified e.g. by trading and transport businesses as structural adjustment provided less and less farm employment. Agricultural restructuring has had the most significant impact on the occupational structure. Before the vanishing peasant it has been the agricultural worker, which disappeared (Kronka 1990). In the 1980s even in remote rural areas hardly more than 10% of the work force was occupied in farming. Despite the already significant decline of numbers of farms, part-time farming and pluriactivity has contributed to a relative stability. As long as young members of former farming families could somehow make their living in the villages their “‘farming lifestyle” remained stable. Traditional agricultural life style persisted as a domination feature of rural life. However, more recent studies indicate a ‘re-professionalisation’ of agriculture. This includes the prospect that only single farms will remain, while part-time farming will lose its importance (Becker 1997: 156). In the place of agriculture, industry and increasingly the service sector provide jobs.

There are at least to significant impacts of these trends on rural life. The first is the impact on the social composition of the rural population. Herrenknecht (1990) describes the changes on a community level as a shift from a single ‘village culture’ towards heterogeneous ‘villages cultures’. He identifies four main groups:

- ‘old villagers’, the indigenous people in the old centre of the village which act within the triangle of village hall, pubs and church;

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<sup>7</sup> In Germany the environmental movement is characterised as ‘alternative’ movement.

- ‘residential villagers’, which represent a modernising culture. They are living in the new housing estates and act in their own networks of party rooms and sport clubs;
- ‘emancipated villagers’ the ‘Bildungsbürger’, which represent the ‘alternative’ movement and are active in direct marketing, green policies, and youth centres;
- peripheral groups, such as foreigners, asylum seekers, and isolated newcomers.

The ‘residential’ and the ‘emancipated’ villagers challenge the indigenous establishment as well on the political level as well on definition about the legitimate tradition.<sup>8</sup> According to the shift in the voting population in numerous villages and Landkreise new “red-green” majorities took over in regions, which were traditionally dominated by conservatives, sometimes abruptly changing basic policy patterns that they had fought against in the long opposition years. In the region of Luechow-Dannewitz e.g. a new red-green Landkreis coalition in 1994 stopped the acceptance of money granted to the region as compensation for a planned nuclear waste dump which within three years led to a budget cut of roughly 8% and since then to significant budget deficits. In 1998 this coalition gained continued support from a majority of voters.

A second impact is the expansion of the individual actors’ action space. Rural society has become an “automobile society” (Laschewski 1998c). The local economy has become integrated in rural economy networks (Becker 1997: 104), and occupation opportunities as well as leisure time activities, but also relevant politics are located ‘within the region’ rather than to the local community. Herrenknecht (1990) tried to catch these with the concept of the ‘regional’ and regionalised village.

#### *Social change in East Germany*

The GDR faced similar problems with the integration of refugees from the former East German territories. In many respects integration in rural areas was more difficult due to greater destruction because of the war. One major objective of the land reform, which took place in 1945, was to provide land for those refugees. With the land reform a new social group, although from

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<sup>8</sup> See the next section on the issue of ‘rural culture’.

heterogeneous, was created – the new peasants (“Neubaumern”) (Baumkämper 1994). Due to the differences in the historical farm structures, much more land was expropriated in the North than in the small peasant dominated rural regions of the South. This also explains that much more refugees have settled in the North. The new peasants faced considerable difficulties due to lack of resources, and in many cases also skills, because many of them did come from rural regions. There have also been conflicts between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ peasants. Because of the considerable economic problems many of the new peasants gave up rather quickly, either to move to West Germany or to work in the new industrial centres.

Collectivisation in agriculture has partly been motivated by the problems of this social group. In particular in the early fifties new agricultural co-operatives where founded by new peasants who struggled to survive (Laschewski 1998a: 32/33). It has been the majority of the old peasants, which has been forced into co-operatives. In many cases they did not join the existing co-operatives of the new peasants. So for quite about almost a decade in many villages co-operatives of old and new peasants existed alongside each other until they were forced to merge during the sixties. However, recent studies showed that the distinctive role of the ‘old’ peasants remained (Brauer/Wiltsch/Ernst 1996, Laschewski 1998a).

Different to the West in East Germany urbanisation as migration trend continued until the unification. Agricultural industrialisation and the allocation of manufacturing in rural towns determined intra-regional mobility. Due to the concentration of agricultural estates a new hierarchy between villages emerged. Village, which located administrative centres of collective farms benefited, while smaller villages were neglected (Parade 1991). Agricultural co-operatives and state owned farms provided social services and supported infrastructure building. A chairman of co-operative therefore was more influential than local majors. Due to the domination of the Socialist Unity Party, and the centralisation of political decisions the role of the municipalities has been reduced to mobilise the population for ‘voluntary’ actions and political mass events, such as May Day celebrations (Siebert and Laschewski 1999).

The specific process of agricultural industrialisation under socialism had significant effects on local power structures. Ideally, a dual hierarchy with the agricultural technocratic elite, the cadres of the co-operatives, on the one hand, and the party elite has replaced the old rural elite. In particular in the 60s and 70s there have been mechanisms in place to weaken the old elite, e.g. the restriction for children of landowners to access universities. However, although formally disadvantaged, the old peasantry very often remained a strong local force because of informal relationships. That became apparent after the

unification in the agricultural privatisation process (Laschewski 1998a). Informal relationships have been of significant importance because of the permanent shortage of goods. The planned economy produced an extensive informal exchange economy as a parallel world. The occupational position in the formal system because it determined the individual access to resources. Yet, we have to consider that, in particular in the North, in some regions peasantry never existed and in other regions ceased to exist because of exiling during the 50s. It appears that in such communities the technocratic elite, usually recruited from the south, stepped into a position similar to former farm ‘inspectors’ (management), while the party replaced the ‘paternalistic’ absent, feudal landowner. In this regions agricultural employees remained what they always have been – farm workers.

Of particular interest are gender relations. Although women were usually fully employed, a significant degree of a gendered division of labour remained. Women’s occupation concentrated at social services, administration, and animal production. In agricultural production they tended to do less ‘technical’ (manual), more repetitive work, and were likely to be at lower level of the hierarchy. Women usually, although they were fully employed, were alone responsible for household work.

The unification brought several significant changes:

- agricultural co-operatives lost their almost monopolistic position to provide jobs, and also their function to provide social services to the community.
- women have been affected strongly and still are unemployed in rural areas
- the socialist party has been abolished, and lost its status as a legitimate monopolist on public policy issues.
- landowners are ‘passive’ winners due to the re-installation of property rights.
- informal networks lost their economic function due to better supply of goods, the successful establishment of social security systems and economic restructuring. Emigration and long-distance commuting also affects the ability to participate in local activities.
- an influx of West Germans, usually in higher occupational positions in the private (e.g. chartered accountants, lawyers, consultants) as well the public service sector, and occasionally in agriculture.

The primary dividing line of winners and losers in East Germany is between having a job and being unemployed. As a general rule it can be said that the higher the position in the occupational hierarchy the higher is the chance to remain employed. Those, who were employed in sectors, which were



privatised, were more likely to lose their jobs, than those who were taken over by public services. There are also several jobs, which were almost inaccessible for East Germans, and are usually taken over by West Germans. The replacement by West Germans in higher positions in public services, forced former cadres (including university professors) to become entrepreneurs or functionaries in the intermediary sector.

A second dividing line is the distribution of property rights. If locally existent, the landowners were usually in a strong position to re-install their domination in agriculture, which for several reasons not necessarily implied a return to family farming (Laschewski 1998a, 1998b). Elsewhere, it have been either cadres of the former co-operatives or West German, who tried to establish farms. However, apart from very remote rural areas there is also a power shift from agricultural to non-agricultural activities. In many communities the new entrepreneurs (in many cases former cadres) and public servants in higher positions (often West German) represent the new local elite.

Problems of unemployment have a dramatic gender specification in rural areas. For instance, in the unemployment rate in some rural Kreise in Brandenburg is, 24.7% in Gransee and 21.2% in Seelow; in Prenzlau unemployment is close to 23% (the average for the state of Brandenburg is 15.1%). Evidence for individual villages shows an unemployment rate of up to 90% for women (Koeppel 1997). While men might find a job by migration or driving longer distances to their working place – the unemployment rate of women in the countryside remains stable and still is the major problem to life conditions of women in the East. In this point the difference between East and West might be most significant. The old production co-operative (LPG) was more than just a place for earning one's money but a room for interaction, communication and social embeddedness (De Soto and Panzig 1995, Rocksloh-Papendieck 1995).

#### **Section 4: The social representation of rurality**

In this paper we argue that in Germany is a secondary concept, which is usually subordinated to other dominant ideas such as 'region', 'peasant' or 'periphery'/border'. The political administrative representation of rurality can be discovered in regionality. Thus it is not Rurality but Regionality that gives the main orientation. In Germany, as mentioned before, the regional administrative structure as well as the historical construction of autonomous Laender have build a strong local power.

Within official statistics 'rural' does not build a primary category. Different to other countries, such as the United Kingdom, communities are not defined as urban or rural. There is only one secondary statistical categorisation of rurality, which we described earlier, provided by a federal institute for regional planning. Rurality in this sense is a regional characterisation among others.

The representation of rurality in regional policy is twofold. At first rurality is connected with economic 'backwardness'. This rather classical perception has recently been challenged due to the satisfying economic performance in many rural regions. However, Struff (1997: 91/92) sees a persistence of a dominating "mirrored" argumentation pattern among regional economists and planners. The supposed disadvantage of rural regions is deduced from particular advantages of agglomerations.

Rurality is also closely linked to the (national) periphery. Before the unification the 'iron curtain' has been a huge problem for rural development on both sides of the border. In West Germany the dominantly rural areas along the German-German border have received special grants within the 'Gemeinschaftsaufgabe zur Verbesserung der regionalen Wirtschaftsstruktur'. The unification has changed the geography and those parts of East and West Germany, which have been at this border, suddenly are situated right in the centre.

Alongside the regional planning system rurality is linked to the ideas of the 'peasant' and the 'village'. Both concepts have also been at the core of rural sociology. In this context it is worthwhile to mention that it is still more to speak about 'agricultural sociology' (Agrarsociologie) than 'rural sociology'. Bartösius (1994) argues that with a declining numbers of farms and modernisation German rural sociology is in danger to lose its research subject. Both peasants and the village has been discussed under the general idea of modernisation (Kromka 1990). Most empirical work has been done either on peasant mentalities, and households (Pongratz 1990) or as community (village) studies (Struff 2000).

Rurality therefore has been constructed as pre-modern either positively as a resort of cultural distinctiveness or negatively with a notion of a 'cultural lag'. There have been sharp attacks of the 'moderniser' that their opponents positions is a 'peasant ideology' ("Bauernminderideologie"). This indicates that an underlying element of this debate has been the working up of the Nazi-Ideology. On the other hand small family farms have served as symbol for free capitalism and against socialistic suppression (Sinkwitz 1999). Here we also

find a connection to the earlier mentioned regional policies in the 'Zonenrandgebiete'<sup>9</sup> – the West German border region to the East.

The concepts of 'peasants' and 'village' are underlying the agricultural policies in West Germany, which are in principal still in place. The contradictory notions of peasants may explain the inherent contradictions within agricultural policies, which include protectionist (market policy) as well as modernising (structural policy, science) elements. It is also noteworthy that the "village renewal" programme is the only non-agricultural rural development programme under the agricultural policy framework.

The environmental or 'alternative' movement transformed the conflict between 'peasant ideologists' and 'moderniser'. The ecological debate combined with the idea of 'back to nature' is important aspect in the discourse of rural-urban dichotomy at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The revival of the old dualistic system forced rurality into a position to play the opposite part of the industry with a dirty damaging image. Agriculture and rural life were supposed to offer a safe and environmentally sound development, different to the condemned industrial system located primarily in the polluted urban areas. The green movement in Germany started with the discourse on the (Waldsterben) "death of forest" and was based on a critic of the industrial system first. Problems with the sources of emissions and of air pollution were the first topics to become a symbol in the alternative movement. It was accompanied by an approach in search of new ways of life. In this process rurality and rural life had to take the opposite part of a negative image of urbanity. Beside the former visions of rurality a newly positive image during the 70s became apparent.

The countryside ("Das Land") became a new meaning as from the urban region subordinated space, in principal a marxist approach. It is (again) periphery, but not a national one. 'Rural' in this sense became a normative concept (Bodenstedt 1990), which as well opposed to the industrialised-urban way of life as well as 'conventional' farming. Rurality, peasants and village life are needing protection against the destructive forces of modern capitalism. It is not surprising that this approach has been heavily attacked from the remnant 'modernisers', which occasionally try to link this new 'eco-socialist' with national-socialistic ideas (Kromka 1992). Despite the fact that the ideas of this

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<sup>9</sup> The term itself indicates the political relevance. It refers to the situation, when Germany was separated into four occupied 'zones' by the allies after 1945. The existence GDR has not been acknowledged by the FRG. Therefore, it remained the East or Soviet occupied zone, SBZ (Sowjetisch besetzte Zone). Consequently, the border regions were called 'zone border regions'.

movement were supportive to projects, which were not accepted by indigenous rural people, such as building houses with loam, starting-up new (eco-)farms etc. (Höger 1996).

The ideas of the green movement have been institutionalised in political programmes on a regional level. In Hesse, the environmental movement was successful to establish a Regional development programme based on the ideas of self-reliance and endogenous rural development when the Green party became part of the regional government. LEADER in West Germany can be seen as a further step of a process, in which 'alternative' ideas became mainstream and are integrated in the established framework of rural development (Bruckmeier 2000). Within this process rurality is transformed from a political concept into a marketing idea (Hoeger 1996).

If we refer to the earlier mentioned classification of social groups by Herrenknecht (1990), we find that different representations of rurality can be related to different groups. However, as he indicates, local people, in particular the younger generation, tend to be familiar with several identities, and like the shift between different cultures. Cultures become consumables.

These concurrency and equivalence of representations of the rural is also reflected in the current political context, in which new ideas of rurality have only gradually transformed the existing political framework. For instance, intensification and extensification of agricultural production are supported at the same time. This observation is similar to the argument that a movement towards a post-productivist rural society is easier to locate on the rhetorical than the structural and institutional levels of society (Tovey 1998).

## **Section 5: Local Power and Participation**

Local power relations in rural areas have undergone significant changes during the last decades. Vertically, with the evolution of the regional planning and the development system, local government has become more and more subordinated to decision-making processes and regulations on higher levels of the institutional hierarchies. The relatively high communal and local autonomy in former times is getting weaker. Due to the concentration of political power and economic resources on a higher level of the political system more bureaucracy enters into communal institutions.

The political system in Germany is characterised by a state regulation through law and order. This influences decision making processes in

agriculture and rural development policies. Regional policy in Germany presents itself as fairly comprehensive, administration-dominated (bureaucratic) system. The central government is limited to use legal means or financial incentives, which almost inevitably leads to a highly formalised planning system, and the redistribution of money. Although there have been comparatively precise goals behind the policy, continuous re-negotiation between the regions finally always led to an integrative policy of satisfying everybody. For instance, at any time the designated areas within the GRW covered about 50% of the territory and more than a third of the population (Struff 1997). The designation of rural development areas in regional states like Hesse, and Bavaria, which are net contributors within the regional financial adjustment system therefore may appear as 'negotiation mass' to get some money back or to get a bigger share of the cake.

Bargaining processes among the Lander and the federal state in the West German regional were among the characteristic features of regional policies. However, the system is on the way to be changed according to the draft of the agenda 2000. The subsidy flow will change its direction, independent from the negotiations between the regions and the central government, and thus the main issue of negotiation among the actors will be taken over by the EC-policy (Elftges 1998). Furthermore, because of huge differences in economic performance, the Agenda 2000 is reproducing the East-West divide. Rural development policies will, apart from a small area at the former German-German border, only take place in East Germany.

There is a strong domination of civil servants in national as well as regional ministries on the process of political decision making. The construction of the joint tasks of the federal and the regional governments even increased this problem. Within the negotiations regions are not represented by parliaments, but by the ministries and governmental departments. The lack of parliaments' involvement has been heavily criticised (Johannes 1998). On the other hand organised interests, such as farmers' unions, have a considerable influence in decision-making processes.

Centralisation and bureaucratisation have deteriorated local autonomy in the West – and are definitely touching the "rural life world" (every day life). Again, differences between East and West as well as the regional specifications need to be understood as influential to regional autonomy and the self regulating capacities of communal life. Municipalities are more and more regulated and therefore limited in their options. The budget is increasingly dependent on appropriated money. Further limitations derive from unemployment because communities are responsible for the delivery of social benefits for the poorest. This leads to the peculiar situation that those

communities, who need investments most, have to spend comparatively more to private consumption. Finally, municipalities have been subject to communal reforms, which abolished the smaller local parliaments on village level (Henckel 1999). In practice, the remaining rest of local self-administration is the competence to designate housing areas.

While local democracy has been sacrificed to achieve better administrative efficiency, the conflict regulation function of local councils was lost. More and more non-parliamentary forms of protest have become an important element of rural conflict regulation. The effectiveness of protest depends on the ability to organise political demonstrations and legal protest. Therefore, people's participation becomes an important newly induced issue. It is in this context in which environmental movement in West Germany created the concept of autonomous, regional development already a decade before LEADER (Bruckmeier 2000, Pongratz and Kreil 1991). This may explain the doubts of the official regional policy with the establishment of LEADER LEADER I in particular was perceived as on unwanted interference from the European level in regional affairs, and therefore found little support although there was a positive response on the local policy level. In both programmes state administration on the Kreis level has dominated the establishment of LEADER initiatives and the local action groups (if they were implemented at all) (Geißendoerfer et al. 1998, Tissen 1998). As it seems has this initiative been incorporated in the existing, well-established structure of local associations, unions, church organisations, which already play an important role in policy making. This interweaving of corporate actors is typical for the functioning of the German political system, where organised interests dominate decision making processes. Independent initiatives are rare because of the high degree of bureaucracy in the application process and the lack of co-financing, but also the fact that many of the objectives are part of duties of local authorities anyway. This seems to question the legitimacy of public initiatives in the given institutional structure in Germany.

But there are also other examples. The leading actors here are in many cases the 'alternative' new rural. The remnants of the environmental movement today are among the driving forces for a new rural identity and for integrated and participative development approaches. To make a living on the countryside new rural had to start projects, and hardly any project was started without some kind of public subsidy from different pots. Subsidies were granted for job creation, cultural or social initiatives, environmentally friendly agricultural production, or direct or local marketing etc. In addition, there subsidies were granted for specially innovative projects, partly in co-operation with universities, to explore new and alternative ways for rural development. In Hesse, the environmental movement was successful to establish a Regional

development programme based on the ideas of self-reliance and endogenous rural development when the Green party became part of the regional government (Höger 1996).

However, those subsidies were commonly not intended to be part of an 'integrated' strategy. In fact in many instances they were rather disintegrating by providing external support for local residents that were questioning the local order of things. Eco-farming, communal living experiences, seminar houses and the sheer appearance of non-conformist non-resident young people threatened the local institutional structure, as described above. The villagers, in most cases, did not violently defend their local order and institutionalised habits as they might have done a hundred years ago. This surely was due to the fact that disintegration of their community had already begun, but also to the fact that the new rural bought old farmhouses, rented rooms in other houses and demanded local construction services – they bribed the old lifestyle with money. Local residents in many cases tried to stop project growth politically, e.g. by not granting construction permits via the municipal council. LEADER in West Germany can be seen as a further step of a process, in which 'alternative' ideas became mainstream and are integrated in the established framework of rural development (Bruckmeier 2000; Höger 1996).

One can resume that the political programmatic of "people's participation" is a strategy or at least a reaction against negative side effects of earlier structural changes and political decisions in the direction of centralisation and centralisation. However, within the existing political framework it favours social groups, which are able to establish connections to national and regional power centres. Many participative rural development initiatives therefore establish parallel institutions alongside existing local authorities and the existing agriculture policy network, and fail to be 'integrative'.

In East Germany the situation is different. The "symbiotic relationship" between community and agricultural co-operative (Herrenknecht 1995) has been abolished. The political and the economic sphere has been separated. Therefore, the municipalities have gained more power, which is executed by a variety of new and old actors. Local communities' dependence on agricultural firms has been replaced by the dependence on external funding. This state domination also exists in the voluntary sector. This is perhaps not surprising taking into consideration the socialist past. The same may be said about missing social movements, which could play a similar role as the 'alternative' movement in West Germany. However, the evolution of strong voluntary institutions as the foundation for civil society faces huge obstacles in the economic crisis, unemployment, radical social changes and emigration. Under such conditions long term perspectives of participatory approaches are

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challenged by quick 'top-down' solutions. Investments in physical infrastructure have had a high priority in the unification process. This has even more strengthened the position of external (national or regional) actors. It is not sure until now, of the obvious failure of such an approach to establish sustainable structures will eventually increase the chance for local participation.

Currently, participatory approaches face huge difficulties. LEADER, for instance, appears as a tool to facilitate rather conventional ideas of rural development (Bruckmeier 2000). Therefore, it is very likely that the initiators of LEADER initiatives in East Germany are the same elite who is the driving forces behind most other activities. On the one hand the Kreis administration and the organised political networks, on the other hand the former socialist functionaries, qualified staff of former co-operatives, academics, etc., who now engage in new projects and businesses.

Some lessons may also be learned from the attempts to integrate women into local initiatives. As mentioned earlier, women are significantly disadvantaged at local labour markets. One important East-West difference is the attitude towards unpaid work – voluntary activities in the social community services. There is a strong tendency to push women into volunteer jobs and social activities. Now, East women resist and do not show much interest in this type of "uneconomic" engagement – knowing that due to the new cultural standards money and economic calculations have been among the reason for their unemployment and misery. "Many women in rural areas stubbornly insist that they be included in paid work situations. They refuse to commit themselves to participation in other activities as long as this condition is not fulfilled." (Koepl 1997) Their rejection is as well justified as especially unfortunate because particularly "civic and community work represents a major opportunity, besides regular employment, for gaining self-respect and the recognition of others." (Koepl 1997)

Very similar to this are the recommendations to women in the East to take part in the activities concerning the agenda 21 by Betina Irganski (1999). Women in the East who had another background of outside home activities still reject such kind of therapy recommended - they might be willing to work but not without payment. The more interesting point then will be to find their realistic scope of action (Teherani-Kroemer 1997). In search of such a more people oriented approach another type of research is needed.

Women in East Germany were proud to have managed their multiple burden, they felt 'emancipated', and they fondly remember the social context of their workplace including the numerous festivities. Not only in rural areas

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unification set an end to socialist policies designed to enhance women's role (Doelling 1991, Nickel 1990 or Shaffer 1981 cit. Iganiski). There is high consensus among many scientists in the field of women's studies that women have lost what they had perceived as benefits of women policies in the previous political system. Moreover, women are now frequently discriminated, especially when single and with children (Nickel 1990 and De Soto/Panizig 1995). To a number of women, the discontinuity of employment and the collective has become equivalent to the loss of life-quality.

Iganiski referring to Edwards (1985) stresses an interesting relationship that as women's qualification and level of education rises they become involved in voluntary work to a greater extent. It seems justifiable to argue that the reverse may be true as well: as the level of professional involvement decreases the willingness for voluntary work also declines. This is a dilemma for policy-makers who direct resources to structural improvements within a 'central-town' system of priorities and depend largely on voluntary initiatives to revivify social structures in rural areas (Iganiski 1999).

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