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Knowledge, Power and Sustainability in Contemporary Rural Europe

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Abstract

This article looks at the evidence given in the 'cognitive approach to rural sustainable development: the dynamics of expert and lay knowledge' research project of changing rural power relations in the context of sustainability and knowledge use in Europe. It explores what kinds of knowledge contribute to sustainable development in rural development projects and how they are created or empowered, according to the interest and capacity of the different actors involved. The article examines how actors interpret and negotiate the requirement of sustainability. It discusses how the idea and practice of sustainable development can build on local knowledge as a resource for generating activity and for commoditising local goods and service, looking at the potentials of sustainability projects for future rural development, the types of knowledge used in projects and their social sources, dynamics and social availability. It reviews the proliferating project form of management that locks actors into power relations connected to their capacity for knowledge use and discusses the pressure of urban demands on rural sustainability in the context of local autonomy. These issues are elaborated through a study of the interconnection of knowledge and power and the role of the actors in the creating and using knowledge. On the level of public policy, the authors identify the knowledge–power complex as an important factor of decision-making in rural policy and develop a critique of rural policy for its inadequate attention to the interconnection between knowledge, power and interest.

Introduction

Sustainable resource management, sustainability and the knowledge-based society are often regarded as key terms at the heart of European rural development and of the broader development paradigm that has taken hold in Europe. The European Commission, national states and regional governing bodies have started to apply strategies for utilising the knowledge base for the sustainable use of natural resources. Numerous farmers are adopting new sustainability-oriented livelihood strategies distinct from the modernisation, productivity approach (Marsden 2006). Rural development policies at EU and national levels have been influenced by

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managerial approaches to sustainability that focus on technical efficiency and assess knowledge in this context.

Discussions of the overlapping variants of conceptions of sustainability in political and scientific discourses focus on ethical, ecological, developmental and multidimensionality issues. Much less public attention is paid to or academic work done on changing rural power relations, the social potentials in sustainability projects for future rural development, the social sources, dynamics and social availability of knowledge used in projects or the interests of the actors involved. Bruckmeier *et al.* (2006) show that at least four different operational forms of sustainable development can be found in policy documents and programmes across the countries studied in the 'cognitive approach to rural sustainable development: the dynamics of expert and lay knowledge' (CORASON) project. The conservation or renewal of resources, quality of life and the local livelihood-oriented forms are related to the state of resources. Only the participatory management form is associated with resource management through participation or co-operation with actors who have an interest in it (Bruckmeier *et al.* 2006). Issues of power rarely appear in policy discourses and documents.

The classifications of the kinds of knowledge used here, derived from CORASON research, emphasise the social determination resulting from use of scientific, managerial or local forms of knowledge. For example, when hegemonic power-knowledge coalitions dominated by scientific, bureaucratic and local elites control the development process they implement sustainable development strategies that become practices of ecological modernisation. In non-agricultural rural development projects, entrepreneurial and service economy models were found to be widely popular among regional and local authorities, constructing expert managerial knowledge as the dominant form (Gorlach *et al.* 2006).

Sustainability is understood in CORASON as a platform concept where actors may discuss, exchange ideas and fight for their goals, and Bruckmeier (2004) suggests that alternative forms of understanding or reconstructing the concept also identify and map actor-specific practices of knowledge use. Buttel notes that 'Sustainability is employed variously as a critique and sometimes as a defence of prevailing agricultural practices and institutions' (2006, p. 213). Although such examples show that sustainable development projects centrally involve power relations, this power is generally not direct and open 'power on' or 'power over' and its character is strongly related to uses of kinds of knowledge.

The power of the project class, understood as the key actor in sustainable resource management, derives from its mediatory position, which distinguishes it from those who are users of project resources (Kovách and Kučerová 2006). Intellectual property (varying forms of knowledge about resources, management, planning, designing and controlling the development project) provides legitimacy and power for the project class in both redistributive and market-oriented development projects. Shucksmith (2000) reminds us that the way knowledge is used in a sustainable development project can lead to the segmentation of local people and the deprivation and marginalisation of particular social groups inside and outside it. In this context, use of knowledge is a resource of power.

Power relations in the context of sustainability and knowledge use can be analysed in two ways: the power of the projectification process itself as it includes and excludes

actors, and the power relations within the project. Our intention in this article is to demonstrate the importance of considering the specific local contexts in which the development project power and kinds of knowledge are constructed, drawing on the specificities of rural power relations described in the CORASON research reports. The article examines how actors interpret, negotiate, contest or even resist the requirement of sustainability. It discusses how the idea and practice of sustainable development can build on local knowledge as a resource to generate activity and to commodify local goods and services. It looks at the potentials of sustainability projects for future rural development, the kinds of knowledge used in projects and their social sources, dynamics and social availability. These issues are elaborated through a study of the interconnection between knowledge and power and the role of the project class in the creation and use of knowledge.

Our analysis is based on CORASON case studies. Instead of reviewing the 84 case study reports, the article selectively concentrates on those that demonstrate most clearly the contextualised relations between power, sustainability and knowledge use. We first explore different interpretations of sustainability, identifying individual features which are related to actors' interests and knowledge. This is followed by a review of the proliferating project form of management that locks actors into power relations connected to their capacity for knowledge use. Sections 3 and 4 present four case study-based models of the power of projects over actors, and four models of power relations inside sustainable projects, using specific case studies to elaborate the arguments. Our article argues for a new political position on sustainable development that stresses the importance of including local, lay knowledge in sustainable development projects alongside that of managerial knowledge and the project class.

Interpretations of sustainability

The interpretations of sustainability found at national level in the countries studied in CORASON can be understood as a result of the actors' class and power position and interests. A widespread and growing feature of contemporary sustainability discourses is for actors to use the concept for the sake of form, influenced by global, mostly formally politically constructed and 'dictated' ideas. This is apparent from national development plans that include the precise categories of the problems to be addressed in project applications and at local levels, where accepting the basic principles and ideas of sustainable development is imperative for project realisation. The EU is the main origin of operational interpretations of sustainability.

The rules and regulations of the rural development system are well known. On the one hand, project design experts use the ideology of sustainability as an obligatory element of the project plan, while, on the other, it is not strongly related to their development goals. Successful projects, which are the basis of their livelihood and prestige, are those associated with a universal definition of sustainability that they can adapt to all kind of projects.

While this mechanical interpretation (Kasimis *at al.* 2006) was widely found in the CORASON research, a good example comes from the Greek research. Greek policy-making is characterised by a top-down approach to resource management. The main lines of environmental policies are adopted from the EU and developed into a

cohesive national strategy. Expert and scientific knowledge are powerful components of environment discourses in rural Greece; they shape environmental policy measures from a conservationist perspective, with little regard for local needs and little effort to incorporate local knowledge (Bruckmeier *et al.* 2006; Kasimis *et al.* 2006). In central and eastern European countries it is also common that the concept of sustainability is imported from the old EU member countries and adopted in public policy decisions.

A second interpretation of sustainability identified in the research features indistinct, emotional and post-modern elements. Sustainability exercises a global influence on the project and is connected to all the resources in the region but no exact or concrete interpretation of it is apparent. Key actors primarily interested in establishing a new kind of activity use the complex idea of sustainability as a tool to legitimise this, drawing on the prestige of scientific knowledge.

This produces a symbolic interpretation of sustainability, of which the south Italian case of the Aspromonte National Park gives good examples (Fonte and Grando 2006). This park has a strong human presence, unusual in Italian parks and appears to have been created in response to social and political as much as environmental problems. From the outset it was intended as a 'laboratory for sustainable development' rather than a 'nature museum'.

With the appointment in 1999 of a university sociologist as the park president, the Park began to operate in land-use planning and spatial development; to seek interaction and consensus with other local actors (such as municipal mayors, entrepreneurs and farmers) and to make contacts with university experts in planning, ecology and social sciences. Land remains privately owned within the Park but the management can impose restrictions on access to or use of resources, causing several conflicts with local politicians and with local communities, which are now being addressed by expanding the participation of local people in the Park management.

The conflicts reveal the presence of two distinct visions of sustainable rural management in a protected area. One understands this only as nature conservation, therefore Park boundaries should be reduced to those areas that can be entirely removed from economic use. The other offers a distinctive model for local economic activities (such as tourism) so the boundaries should be as large as possible (Bruckmeier *et al.* 2006; Fonte and Grando 2006). The symbolic interpretation of sustainability in the Park project enables the two to function simultaneously.

A third interpretation is found in projects that focus on available rural resources and aiming to sustain – environmentally, economically and also socially – some local goods, services or activities. It is often associated with the use or valorisation of local, lay kinds of knowledge. Clear examples of this organic interpretation of sustainability are not easy to find, but one example is given in the Irish case study of a project driven by a local group called the Suir Fishermen's Federation (SFF), a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) engaged in protecting and expanding their rights to health, quality of life and cultural heritage by managing water quality and repopulating salmon stocks in the river Suir. The SFF is an umbrella organisation representing anglers from different clubs along the river. Their interests are anthropocentric in terms of preserving a local amenity used by residents and tourists alike for its functional and aesthetic qualities that add to their quality of life, and at the same time

they are ecocentric in advocating the intrinsic value of the fish and the river and that they should be facilitated to exist in their own right (Mooney and Tovey 2006).

Project and knowledge

Sustainable development and sustainable resource management are different if interrelated concepts are used in relation to rural development (Bruckmeier *et al.* 2006). In analysing the connections between power, knowledge and sustainability a point to note is that while sustainable resource management can occasionally take the form of individual or non-organised action, the sustainable development process is in most cases related to a proliferation of multiple-actor projects.

Many influential scholars have argued that 'the project' became a prevailing form of management and organisation by the turn of the millennium. Sociological and political science approaches to project proliferation stress its comprehensive nature. Sjöblom argues that a general projectification of development practices in both administration and business is one consequence of the shift from government to governance and the need for strong, if temporary, horizontal and vertical interlinking mechanisms in managing European society and economy (Sjöblom 2006).

EU financing principles, the need to legitimise decisions over redistribution of sources and the requirements of controllability and partnership in initiatives determine that most subsidised activities take a project form. Outsourcing the implementation of administrative reforms to temporary institutions legitimates and regenerates the central state. The dependency of routine and non-routine based network organisations on external resources (Klijn 1997) heightens and consolidates a need to exchange knowledge and information about grants and funding sources. The pressure of project proliferation is so imperative, it has been argued, that the Nordic welfare state has been transformed into a 'project state' (Sjöblom *et al.* 2006).

Böröcz and Sarkat say that the EU is a public authority without a governing apparatus that manages projects to achieve the execution of development goals (Böröcz and Sarkat 2005). Ray (2001) and Kovách (2000) theorise European rural development as a system that has two functions: the expansion of capitalism and the consolidation of system co-ordination and (re)distribution that is structured by horizontal (inter-local) and vertical (centre-to-locality) flows of public funds, power, knowledge, ideas and experience. The form of organisation and management of transfers is the project, defined, according to EU as well as management literature, as comprising interventions into the development process, using a dedicated budget, a fixed time schedule and development goal (Sjöblom 2006). The classic project as a management tool to match rural policy and practice becomes complicated by institutional transformations of civil society and changing attitudes towards policy (Boonstra 2006).

Different evaluations exist of the impact of the project form of management on rural development. The major finding of relevant studies is that projects are transmitters between international regimes, national administrative levels and project actors as well as instruments to legitimise EU policies in member states. The legitimisation process involves numerous actors and interests and has the power to create new political and administrative practices. Sjöblom reviews various strategic purposes of projects that are constituted through information and knowledge flows and require

changes in the organisations' and actors' orientations. He argues that symbolic politics, conflict reduction, innovation and a science of muddling through chaotic complexity are features of projects.

These are all key issues to explore in relation to links between knowledge use, power and sustainability. For example, Temmes suggests that the change from conventional administration to project-based and knowledge-based public management has created a democratic deficit and steering problems in decision making (Temmes 2006). Andersson (2006) and Sulkonen (2006) draw attention to the possibility that the professionalisation of developmental work through projects and the intensive involvement of knowledge holders may lead to those local actors who are intended to benefit deriving few resources and to the emergence of a managerial stratum. Projectified administration may replace 'bottom-up' development with 'top-down', reducing the moral resources of the state and the European Union.

A growing literature exists on the interconnections between power relations and knowledge use capacities (Buller 2000; Mathieu and Gajewski 2002; Woodward and Halfacree 2002). Chapters in the Halfacree *et al*. (2002) anthology highlight how actors with intellectual and knowledge capital can represent their own political, financial and class interests in a projectified European development system. In consequence a new power structure has emerged in the enlarged EU and experts, designers, European and national administrative staffs, holders of intellectual capital and representatives of civil society occupy new social and project class positions (Kovách and Kristóf 2005; Kovách and Kučerová 2006).

Given the way development programmes are designed and managed, the character of the related application system and the effect of the culture economy, the project class uses knowledge and intellectual property as social capital to mediate between levels and actors of development. Much specific knowledge is needed to design development programmes, ideas and images and to write successful applications (Ray 1988). From the perspective of power relations, the project is a framework that locks actors and knowledge uses into power relationships.

In this argument the problem is how to define power. Giddens (1984) explores the way power is structurally embedded and how social structures give individuals a capacity for action as agents who are also aware of the existing distribution of power. This knowledge affects their potential range of action and enables them to act reflexively. According to Clegg (1989), following Foucault, there are three circuits of power: local, meso and global. Such understandings of power are used in policy network analysis.

Goverde and van Tatenhove also see power as having several layers that are not very tightly connected. They offer a three-layer model in which the power networks need not necessarily show a clearly hierarchical structure (Goverde and van Tatenhove 2000). In their model, power is seen as a capacity, as a relational phenomenon and as a product of structure. Goehler (2000) and Dahl's (1989) theories are useful and relevant for understanding links between knowledge use and power relations in territorial development projects (Kovách and Kristóf 2007). Goehler (2000) discusses how the ideas of the transitive (power over) and intransitive (power to) categories of power may be distinguished, while Dahl (1989) makes an analytical distinction between power and power resources, pointing out that the distribution of power

resources does not necessarily correspond to the distribution of power. In Dahl's interpretation power is the act of exercising potential, manifested in decision-making and management processes, and we also focus here on who exercises power in fact, not who has the potential to exercise power. This raises the question of how to understand different interactions between power and knowledge in terms of both the impact of projects on included and excluded actors, and of power relations inside sustainable projects.

Power of the project over actors

Why are projects so magnetic to power and how is this power so compelling? Following Knickel and Renting (2000), we argue that one of the key features of rural development practices is diversity – in development goals, actors, activities and motivations. The presence of a new approach indicates that new actors have recently emerged in the rural development system: experts, designers and administrative staff of projects, holders of intellectual power, representatives of NGOs and other civil society actors. New users of rural resources and new participants in rural development who are heterogeneous in social status have also appeared in both Eastern and Western Europe. They can participate in forming a powerful lobby for local policies and development projects (Bruckmeier and Kopytina 2001; Kovách and Kučerová 2006). Project organisation and management increases in importance in a knowledge-based society in which knowledge is the dominant productive force. Knowledge societies depends on the proliferation of knowledge-intensive actors, essentially grouped in projects (Stehr 2001, David and Foray, 2002).

Rural development comprises a wide variety of activities (Knickel and Renting 2000; Ploeg *et al*. 2000). It fulfils multiple functions such as providing livelihoods and recreation, and nature conservation and production at the same time. It also connects the different interests of a wide variety of social groups. Participation in rural development projects enables different social groups to reach their development goals. At the same time, the system operates through the processes of application, decision-making, controlling, evaluating, and monitoring as a projectified system, and those involved need special knowledge in order to adapt its rules.

Rural sociologists have constructed distinct typologies of actors (Tovey 1998; Bruckmeier and Kopytina 2001; Kovách and Kučerová 2006). Using a case study perspective, we draw attention to the power of rural development projects to involve different types of actors, knowledge uses, interests and goals. For the analysis of knowledge use we apply Bruckmeier's (2004) typology that defines three forms of knowledge: (1) scientific knowledge deriving from research, (2) political and managerial knowledge mainly held by politicians, decision-makers, administrators, project officers and (3) local knowledge, the know-how of rural inhabitants, resource user groups and producers.

Lack of knowledge and resources to obtain development goals characterises all actors in rural development. The key to understanding the power of the project over actors is that actors have partial knowledge and partial resources. To reach their development goals they need external resources and knowledge, and this leads them to co-operate in a project framework. Accessing external resources depends on being

legitimated as a project form of management and organisation. Accordingly, the activities of all rural development actors are imperatively projectificated. The system of project regulations manifests the exercise of power by the project over actors and determines and standardises the behaviour of participants (Bruckmeier 2000; Osti 2000; Ray 2001; Kovách and Kučerová 2006). Rural development projects apply strict formal rules that cannot be ignored and which actors must adopt from the planning period through to execution. Familiarity with these regulations requires special knowledge from the actors. Only those who are familiar with the rules are capable of fulfilling the requirements. The consequence of this upgrading of managerial knowledge is that those actors who possess it are able to acquire distinction and to express their interests.

Understanding the power of the project over the actors needs to be extended by analysing some other dimensions. In what follows we analyse four dimensions, treated here as separable, although we know and emphasise that in real life they are inseparable. This analysis helps to explain why different actors participate in projects and what kind of behaviour and action the project demands from the participants. For each dimension we provide case-study material to illuminate how it has shaped the power exercised by the project over the actors.

Involvement by goals

The first dimension concerns the pressure to adapt development goals. Projects are often based on the individual actors' different goals, which are then transformed through the application of project regulations. The actors, who have certain aims and ideas, participate in the project because they need a constitutional and institutional background in order to obtain development resources. The rural development system offers them possibilities for reaching their goals and for expressing their interests. But to be successful in the system, the goals must be adapted to system rules; their own ideas have to be made to suit the requirements of the project plan (a LEADER programme, for instance).

To rework goals in order to make them suitable to requirements in a regulated system requires special knowledge and experience. Individual goals can be achieved only if they can be connected to the resources of the rural region or stratum and to development policy directions. Success in adaptation necessitates a certain kind of behaviour towards the project which shapes the interests of the participants, their goals and the system of development in the region where the project is realised.

The Kócsújfalu project in the Hortobágy region in Hungary illustrates this process. The key actor here is the Telepesek Társadalmi Múzeum Foundation (TTMF) which came from Budapest to the region. During the Hungarian Stalinist era (1950–1953), 12 camps for deportees were established in the Hortobágy and mid-Tisza region to which Hungarian families that had been labelled enemies of the regime were deported. Historical research in this field had just started following the fall of the socialist system, and civil organisations were founded to revive the memories of past events. The TTMF is one such civil organisation, whose main goals are to protect the heritage of the Hortobágy camps; aiming not only to remember the victims and their history, but also to analyse it.

Lacking local embededdness, the TTMF has to network with local authorities and to mediate with actors engaged in a project to valorise local history for development purposes. A central question was how a historical heritage could be adopted to contemporary life. TTMF has connections with the Hortobágy National Park, which owns the infrastructure and provides social capital and marketing experience, and also with the Menora Foundation, which knows the local history as well as having connections with important institutions. Another important actor is the local government of Tiszafüred (Kócsújfalu, where the project was based, is part of the Tiszafüred municipality).

After negotiations with the authorities over several changes and limitations on development in the original plan, the final project plan was agreed. This was a plan for a social museum. A 'social museum' is not merely a collection of goods. It is intended to be a complex institute with multiple functions: a historical monument, a repository for archives, a research and education centre, a tourist attraction and a recreation area. There are two kinds of participants in the project, with different goals and priorities. The outsiders, including the organising foundation TTMF, experts and scientists emphasise the archival, research and education functions, while locals, including the local government, cultural institutions and entrepreneurs, focus on tourism, recreation, museum and cultural functions (Csurgó and Kalamász 2006).

As the first project of this kind in Hungary (Csurgó and Kalamász 2006), the Kócsújfalu project illustrates how and why actors with specific individual goals become involved in development projects. As the initiating actor, TTMF, did not have enough resources or power to realise their idea and goal, they had to participate in a project where their original idea was transformed into an extensive development goal. This type of actor involvement, centred on realising a specific goal, also influences the power structure inside the projects.

Involvement by knowledge

The second dimension that helps to understand the power exercised by projects over actors is that of knowledge use. Rural development projects rely heavily on all the different types of knowledge (scientific, managerial and local). Several different types of scientific knowledge may be involved, depending on the project goals. We argue that bureaucratic and managerial knowledge is essential to the functioning of almost all projects, regardless of the scale at which they operate. Many types of local knowledge, are also in play (Dargan and Shucksmith 2006). The need for a range of knowledge types means that different actors have to co-operate, as each possesses only partial knowledge. The project as a system strongly encourages the co-operative use of the different forms of knowledge. The capacity to apply knowledge is of paramount importance in the project system and this demands co-operation and knowledge interaction from the actors, even across different and competing interests.

The Slättens Wind Economic Cooperative project in Sweden was driven by a company that builds wind power plants. Because of an increasing local interest in wind power in the region this company established a wind power co-operative. Brochures about the project were sent out to all households in the target area, encouraging them to buy wind power shares. Proposals for a wind farm were

developed with local people who were inspired to buy wind power shares. Most of the shareholders are from the local communities and the largest shareholders are farmers, not investors.

The project combines all types of knowledge. The company that produces the wind power technology uses expert and scientific knowledge. The members of the co-operative use their managerial knowledge of how to establish co-operatives that link the technology to the specific conditions of a locality. Local shareholders use their acquired expert knowledge of technology combined with their local knowledge of local economic, social and cultural conditions (Pedersen 2006).

The demand of projects for knowledge is very clearly represented in this Swedish case. All three knowledge types were needed in this project, with different types assuming importance in different phases of the project. The fact that each knowledge type is equally important encourages a co-operative type of power network among the participants.

Involvement by capacity

The capacity of actors determines both their involvement in projects and their exclusion from them. This dimension reveals projects as a new social arena that creates a new hierarchy and structure in the society, whether or not actors are directly involved in it. Here the project class plays a leading role. To realise the project as they want it and to access external resources, the participation of local society is crucial, but access to project participation demands adequate capacity among local actors:

> the more articulate and powerful individuals and groups were better able to engage with programmes and to apply for grants and submit proposals, while others lacking the former's capacity to act were unable to benefit. (Shucksmith 2000, p. 210)

The selection of participants is determined by their embeddedness in local society or in the network of project actors. Once involved, actors have to conform to regulated behavioural patterns and actions. They must have the capacity to co-operate and to reconcile their interests with others involved. Actors without such capacities are crowded out and have no access to project resources.

The Melissa project in Greece illustrates how professional project class members determine the involvement of actors and their participation capacity. Led by AN.KA, the development agency of Karditsa, it aimed to diversify local agriculture and to change the ways in which farmers worked. To make the project succeed a large number of farmers with different capacity levels had to be involved. The goal was to establish a large-scale community or 'umbrella' farm, made up from many small-scale private farms, creating a new territorial structure to give local cultivation quality certification. Rotation systems could be integrated across farms, breaking with traditional monoculture.

But farmers and the AN.KA interpreted the aims of the project differently. Poor communication about project goals and objectives caused conflicts between the actors, while the lack of understanding on the part of project managers of the farmers' situation and motivations, and a failure to establish participative processes, hindered their efforts to involve the farmers. Although the project did transform the approaches

to cultivation of those farmers who became involved towards more environmentally friendly practices, farmers who were unwilling to take risks when they could not see any benefits were not changed by it (Kasimis *et al.* 2006).

This case illustrates both how projects define capacity and how capacity determines who can participate in the projects. Farmers who understand the aim of the project are able to communicate with members of the agency and are also willing to take the risk of participating in the project, and as a consequence, they exhibit the appropriate behaviour and actions. The project also has power over actors who cannot participate in it, as their exclusion deprives them of the chance to access new resources and supports. The process of selection, based on a particular understanding of actors' capacity, indicates a hierarchical structure where the top stratum of participants have the knowledge and power to select or reject the rest.

Involvement by principles

The final dimension concerns the connection between the project as a system, its participants and the local society. Projects are framed by general principles and whatever the content of the project, all participating actors have to adapt to them. Sustainability, equality and the protection of nature appear as primary principles in rural development projects. Participation is possible only for those who accept and act in terms of these principles, whether out of fear of sanctions or because adopting them opens up novel opportunities and new development resources for the actors. The centrality to the project of principles and the values associated with them place institutional and individual actors who have expert knowledge or who are committed to the right values in a favoured position.

A case study from Portugal illustrates this argument in relation to principles about nature protection. The Castro Verde's zonal plan and agri-environmental scheme were initially set up to involve farmers to maintain local bird life and dry grasslands. Management procedures and rules for its functioning have strongly shaped the process of the project, which was driven by national and regional public administration entities and a national environmental NGO with expert technical and scientific knowledge about ecological processes.

The political decision to use this top-down approach quickly led local farmers to search for opportunities to take advantage of the new environmental constraints they faced. Eventually, the project was expanded to provide services to farmers in struggling rural economies and to recognise the importance of lay, traditional and local knowledge of the area and feed these back into management strategies to determine local natural resource management and use (Rodrigo *et al.* 2006). This is an example of how principles and values can generate projects in a local rural area. Involvement by principles helps to explain the initial dominance of actors with relevant expert knowledge and the power of intellectuals over other actors in the project.

These four examples are intended to show how projects exercise obligatory power over actors. Actors from differing social backgrounds and interests adopt the regulatory system and apply the right behaviour, action and communication patterns; in other words, they become projectified regardless of their position within the project. Not every actor can attain an executive position in the project. Projects create

differentiations between actors and social groups by creating a novel social arena of executive relationships. Those who do not possess the right knowledge or are incapable of adaptation to the principles cannot participate in development projects, which causes a new form of social exclusion.

Knowledge as a base for power inside the rural development project

Looking at power relations within projects we identify two closely linked starting points for the analysis: the actors themselves, with their social and professional backgrounds, ambitions, knowledge and development goals; and the position of the actors within the projects. Discussing regional development projects that involve actors with different social and economic potentials and interests, Sjöblom (2006) argues that in such project networks actors realise a joint interest in regard to financial sources and the legal resources of the political system, while Foucault (1978) (see also Cheshire 2006; Loš'ák 2005) emphasises that power relations are modified by the grip of a precise strategy, which can strengthen local actors as participants or give them a potential to resist.

Regarding the link between actors' power and their knowledge, we need to consider Latour's (1978) suggestion that 'active members' shape claims in different projects. In other words, we need to study not only the impact on projects of existing knowledge and of actors as carriers of this knowledge, but also actors' potential to activate and practically use their knowledge or manipulate other knowledge. No project exist which is based on the activity of one individual actor; no project plan and/or realisation is a one-man show. Sustainable development projects require and work through multilevel power relations, when actors with different kinds of social capital and knowledge contribute to the network and impact on the project process. Our focus on the transmission of knowledge within projects helps to identify several different models of power relations, differentiated according to the origin of the knowledge (local/rural and non-local), the type of knowledge and the influence and control of the knowledge over the project. The core questions are what knowledge is a source of power for actors and how the project network is built.

From our analysis of case studies of more than 80 projects dealing with community development, food processes, ecological problems, implementing innovatory systems in rural areas, the preservation or valorisation of cultural heritage and so on, we have constructed four ideal types of knowledge-power mechanisms, differentiated by the social positions of actors, the capitals which enable them to implement project aims and, in particular, the type of knowledge (expert, scientific, managerial, tacit or lay) which flows into the project.

Dominating power positions and the hierarchical transfer of knowledge

The first ideal type emphasises the way that knowledge is transferred within and by projects and relates this to the type of knowledge involved. Evidence from many cases reveals that there is a top-down transfer of knowledge to the locality. The knowledge in this case is non-local and constitutes a combination of expert and managerial knowledge; a type of knowledge that is frequently absent or inadequate in rural

societies and whose transfer necessarily involves a top-down transmission. Possession of expert managerial knowledge provides the basis for the dominating position of non-local key actors.

In the terms of Goffman's social action analysis (Goffman 1990), a project realised in a specific locality is a 'stage' for these incoming actors, who utilise the capacity of local actors and the locality itself for their own purposes, even when the project is attempting to realise sustainable rural development principles. They have been described as a 'group of innovative people willing to go ahead and keep evolving' (Arévalo *et al.* 2006).

In a case study from Spain the project initiator, the INTERCOOP co-operative, has two interconnected goals, the valorisation and commercialisation of local olive oil production and the valorisation and promotion of the natural history heritage of the locality. Their first strategy has been to create quality-labelled products as part of a marketing and promotion strategy to valorise traditionally produced olives. INTERCOOP established a reference centre, a shop selling its products and a restaurant as part of the drive to create new products and services. The key actors in the project are technical experts and managers from the co-operative. For these incoming actors the rural locality is seen mainly as a source of infrastructure for the project or a place for its realisation (Arévalo *et al.* 2006).

This case illustrates the type of communication that occurs between actors in a hierarchically constructed network where knowledge is being moved from one set of actors to another. The front stage is occupied by the most powerful actors, who dominate the whole project and delegate power to actors on lower stages, local umbrella organisations and individuals. The technicians and managers of INTERCOOP bring their expert managerial knowledge into the project, while local actors are involved but have no chance to participate in the project leadership.

The organisational structure of the project network also positions actors hierarchically, with the technical staff and managers of INTERCOOP on the higher levels and leaders of the local co-operatives lower down. This in turn affects project outcomes. The particular composition and character of existing agrarian co-operatives influences whether or not the rural development discourse is diffused and accepted in a locality, and may facilitate or discourage the adoption of change and the possibility of developing a competitive orientation towards external opportunities (Arévalo *et al.* 2006).

Bottom-up capacity building – the knowledge base of an actor centred power structure

The second model is one where a newly established network operates as a platform to realise a project and to maintain it over the long term. Key actors in this case are usually locals who develop the project idea and make rational decisions to attract knowledge in order to complete the conditions for project realisation. Seeking to realise their visions through a project, they assess the capacity of the project network in terms of the knowledge that is necessary and consequently activate relevant accessible actors to create flows of knowledge into the project.

We illustrate this model with an example from the Scottish research of a project realised on the island of Skye, where the local market is limited and distant from other markets, 26.8 per cent of the total labour-force is engaged in tourism services and

there is a lack of higher educational opportunities. A major difficulty in the locality is retaining young people. A local couple opened the White Wave Outdoor Centre which offers a range of outdoor activities to groups and individuals, including kayaking, canoeing, hill-walking, climbing and archery, and provides seasonal and part-time employment to locals.

The owners designed their initial business project themselves, providing the financial and knowledge resources needed. The knowledge needed includes both managerial expertise and tacit cultural knowledge, as well as the specific knowledge of local conditions, which is important for ensuring the safety of participants in their activities. They subsequently extended the project network by hiring people with expert managerial knowledge during the summers and by co-operating with the Columbia Community and International Leadership Centre to access more expert knowledge,, but it remains local actor-centred (Dargan 2006).

Further examples come from Czech and Hungarian case studies of artisan potters. In both cases the potters (both women) aimed to establish pottery production businesses which required a successful combination of expertise and a lay knowledge of local pottery traditions as well as marketing skills. Both developed marketing plans that combined their knowledge of traditional local pottery art, the re-invention of tradition, managerial knowledge and some practice in the tourist business. They have different strategies for further development, although both are based on mobilising networks and actors who are accessible in the region to strengthen their market position.

In the Czech case, the potter decided to enlarge her activities in her locality and provide services for tourists such as accommodation and courses on the art of pot-making and decoration, and to achieve this she had to mobilise many actors in order to connect together the knowledge necessary for the project: economic managerial skills to maintain and control the cash flow, architectural and design knowledge to reconstruct the workroom and farmhouse and publiciity skills to promote the project as a complete tourist package in the local media (Kučerová and Ševčíková 2006). She focuses on mobilising local actors who operate with local knowledge to renew and to demonstrate local traditions as tourist attractions. The Hungarian potter also uses this kind of knowledge but oriented to a different activity – teaching pottery students, which involves combining formal educational knowledge with local knowledge and co-operation with talented individual potters in the area.

Mobilising knowledge through co-operative power networks

The third model theoretically could be taken as an example of good governance in the projectification process because here knowledge mobilisation practices are based on previously established networks, indicating good experiences of co-operation among the actors involved and, over the longer term, some empowerment of civil society. Actors identify and exploit the specific kinds of knowledge of others who are already part of their networks. This model is centred on exploiting the potentials of actor networks to achieve project goals while simultaneously respecting local social values.

This contrasts with most project cases that use more formal democratic processes of governing. In the latter cases local actors are involved and the realisation of the

project is effected by using their specific knowledge, but the process is mostly top-down, which is at variance with principles of good local governance for endogenous rural development. Paying attention to how sustainable rural projects involve local knowledge and interests offers at least two benefits. It can point us towards methodologically important and sensitive elements in analysing the existing power structure of good governance, beyond ideology and discourse; and it can alert practitioners to the need to identify projects that provide the best example of sustainable initiatives for rural areas, as they take account of local specificity, local knowledge and opinion, and local community needs in developing their form of governance.

In a case study from Norway of a project for nature protection, leading roles were shared between actors across all territorial levels, institutionalising the rules of the particular rural society in the project and helping to create a correspondence between national or even international sustainability values and local or regional goals. The research studied nature protection practices in two municipalities in the Geiranger-Nærøyfjorden region, Stranda and Norddal.

These municipalities are located in an area seeking designation as a UNESCO heritage site, which creates challenges for the economic development of the local communities. In both municipalities the population has been declining for more than two decades and a large part of the land area is permanently covered by snow. Norddal is a farming municipality. Little national capital has been invested in the area, and most of the farms are locally owned and rely on local investments. The other municipality, Stranda, is industrialised and national, regional and local capital is present in it.

The project to achieve UNESCO designation was prone to conflict. Protected area status was supported by the county government and some local interest groups recognised the positive implications its tourism potential could have for the local labour force, but farmers and landowners opposed it as they feared the limitations it would bring on their rights to access and use their land. Under UNESCO rules, however, local actors must be included in the designation process and the protection of the site, so the decision-making committee had to incorporate all the different local interests, with representatives of farmers, tourist businesses, environment and cultural heritage actors from both municipal and county administrative levels making up its 11 members.

Effective lobbying of the representatives – particularly those from country administrative levels who were perceived as highly educated and possessing specific expert knowledge about agriculture and nature protection – became an important issue for local groups. This meant bringing lay and uncodified knowledge based on experience and practice into the project discussions. However, the UNESCO designation process requires the initiative to demonstrate the potential value of designation to come from national as well as local authorities. Ultimately, the national authorities manipulated the formal involvement of the local municipalities in the process, giving them clear instructions on what to do.

Local knowledge can be used effectively only with the co-operation of expert formal knowledge. The Norwegian project 'automatically involves' actors, using already existing and even institutionalised networks (given the international regulations for protected area status). Formal national and regional organisations dominated the process

through their specific expert and scientific knowledge, combined with their power over decision-making. The power relations in this example appear to have been co-operative and democratically co-ordinated, involving the participation of all relevant actors; but this can still contain negative features, as some local knowledge and values are not given expression in the decision-making process, and some actors are not seen as sufficiently knowledgeable to be adequate participatory members (Daugstad *et al.* 2005).

Value-driven knowledge and intellectual power

The basic feature of the final model is multidimensionality, in the terms of both the actors involved and the knowledge that they use. Project orientation in this model is strongly shaped by actors' attempts to realise values. They seek to interpret the core values of a rural sustainable development project and to prompt the project in a specific direction, drawing on their own imagination of valued futures to strengthen certain aspects of it and to reduce those features which do not conform to this desired future.

In summary, the power effect depends on the differentiation between particular actors' values in given projects. Where actors' values are more consistent they can maximise the synergic effect, while inconsistency among actors weakens the project synergy. This can make the achievement of project goals problematic but still help to resolve local social problems. From our analysis of the cases studied in CORASON we make the assumption that ecological goals are most typical of this power network model and that green, ecological values give the most power to intellectuals over actor networks. In this kind of project, scientific knowledge and expert experience appear to make an effective contribution to the optimal realisation of project goals while reducing negative externalities.

A Czech case study of the construction of a highway connecting Prague to Berlin illuminates the operation of intellectuals' power (Kučerová and Ševčíková 2005). State plans for the highway would have brought it through a high-value biotope called Kubačka Hill. The issue was raised and problematised by ecological activists from outside the area, who offered an alternative to the original plan, namely, to build a tunnel through the hill so as not to endanger its flora and fauna.

A range of different actors became drawn into the complicated decision-making process – local politicians, media actors, NGOs and ecological associations' representatives, farmers and interested local people. State agencies presented an expert study to the locals which promised rapid and, economical construction and compensation for ecological losses. The expert studies presented by the environmental associations were initially perceived at local level as offering only information about the negative externalities that could appear when the state plan was realised. Over time this perception changed. From initially approving the state plan the local community came to accept the value-driven expertise of the ecologists and their suggestions were finally adopted. The ecological associations transferred into the project external expert knowledge without any direct financial or material interest (Kučerová and Ševčíková 2005).

The four models outlined above address different types of knowledge and the way they are used in different approaches to projects by actors. They have different

impacts on the sustainability of development projects. The first two models primarily represent projects in which incoming or non-local knowledge has power to shape the project and to drive forward non-rural values. In these kind of projects non-rural actors intervene in rural reality. With respect to sustainable development, the most promising type appears to be the third model, which represents projects based on the bottom-up activities of actors who strengthen their own network and its potential to implement projects effectively. The impact of the fourth model may be positive or negative, as the effects of project realisation strongly depend on its participants – their origin, knowledge and values. When a strong group of actors share more or less the same approach to the projects and when their values tend towards sustainable development principles, the project can be an effective implementation of sustainable development.

Summarising the analysis above of the two layers of relations of power, we suggest that the way in which actors are involved in a project can profoundly influence the power relations inside the project. When involvement is organised by capabilities, members of the local society get involved in ways that allow the project class to create a base for its own development that includes only those actors who are capable of understanding and recognising the opportunities of the project. The fact that in most cases project class members play a leading part in selection by capacity rather clearly forecasts the structure of power in the project where the owners of managerial knowledge are found on the top level and the selected members of the local society on the bottom.

When key actors become involved to achieve their own goals this can lead to an actor-centred power structure where the person with knowledge and ideas plays a leading role in the project. On the other hand, where actors with different partial knowledge participate together and the different kinds of knowledge they possess are regarded as equally important, a co-operative and democratic power network appears among all the actors in the project. Finally, when a project is strongly driven by principles such as environmental protection, sustainability or equality, then the actors who provide the relevant value-driven knowledge to apply these principles can influence the functioning and outcomes of the project. We argue that the sustainability of rural development projects and the use of knowledge in them cannot be understood without analysing the dominating layers and relations of power.

Concluding remarks

This article has sought to problematise policy approaches to sustainable development that ignore power relations around knowledge use in development projects and the power of projects over actors. We argue that sustainability most often operates as a concept that can be used to access resources through projects, and that project proliferation generates new power relations among the actors involved in a project and between actors inside and outside the project. Building power relations that increase local capacity to operate projects for sustainable development should be a key policy objective. The findings of this article suggest that there is a need to rethink approaches to rural sustainability to recognise the interlock between knowledge use and power.

The discussions above suggest that expert managerial knowledge has increased its dominance but that use of all kinds of knowledge, especially local knowledge, is necessary to reach sustainable development goals. Exploitation of local knowledge through networked local actors is an indispensable condition of long-term success in implementing the core ideas of sustainability. The exclusion of local, lay knowledge from projects leads to the exclusion of local people, intensifies the intervention of non-local institutional and individual actors, and threatens local cultural and social autonomy.

At the same time, central to the power of projects over actors, both locals and non-local, is the fact that they need to integrate external and internal resources and different forms of knowledge to obtain their goals. This encourages co-operation between actors within the framework of rural development projects. Pressure for co-operation provides a basis for new rural and non-rural relations, networks and policy structures.

We focused the discussion in this article particularly on holders of managerial knowledge, asking what role the managerial, expert knowledge monopolised by the project class plays in determining the organisational form and internal power relations of sustainable development projects. Earlier studies argued that the emergence of the project class is associated with the key position in contemporary society of expert managerial knowledge.

The present article addresses the knowledge base of power positions more generally, and from this approach we can add that the concept of the project class needs to be expanded. The highlighted features of cognitive strata are intellectual property and a mediating position in projects. The research presented here makes it clear that the fluidity and flexibility that are the social characteristics of the project class may be interpreted in a new way. Owners of all kinds of knowledge and social capital that enable them to control the resources for sustainable development are continuously being involved in a project class position, regardless of their professional status. In that sense, the project class is not only a new group in society but a social position that is permanently changing as involvement in projects shapes access to and succession in it.

Note

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