

# **Rural Restructuring Under Globalization in Eastern Coastal China: What Can be Learned From Wales?**

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## **Abstract**

The differentiation of rural development in eastern coastal China has been exaggerated by the rapid rural restructuring under globalization, since economic reforms and an open-door policy were initiated in 1978. The problems associated with rural restructuring in China may in part be addressed by drawing on experiences and achievements from other countries, including Britain, which may have experienced similar developmental stages as part of their trajectory of rural progression. This paper examines the different trajectories of rural development and different policies and strategies for rural development in eastern coastal China and Wales, identifying points of convergence and divergence, and considering the possible lessons that China might take from the experience of rural development in Wales.

Keywords: Rural restructuring, globalization, comparative study, Wales, eastern coastal China

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## **1.0 Introduction**

In 2006, the Chinese government introduced a program for ‘Building a New Countryside’, an integrated approach to rural development focused on the five major objectives of advancing production: improving livelihoods, promoting a civilized social atmosphere, developing clean and tidy villages, and enhancing efficient management (Long, Liu, Wu, & Dong, 2010). The policy marked both the latest articulation of a trajectory of economic liberalization in rural China that has been pursued since 1978, and a new recognition of the centrality of rural restructuring to the development of the national economy. As China emerges as a global economic super-power, and as it edges towards becoming a majority-urban population, so challenges arise for the Chinese government in ensuring that rural regions can adequately supply resources including food, land and labour; and in avoiding political instability by tackling the growing prosperity gap between urban and rural regions (Long, Zou, & Liu, 2009; Xu & Tan, 2002).

However, whereas during the 1980s and 1990s the restructuring of rural China was largely driven by internal national dynamics and reforms, and arguably had a

limited impact outside China, the outcomes of the current policies for rural development will be of global significance. Rural China is increasingly integrated into global social and economic networks. The question of whether rural China can meet the food demands of the country's booming cities; the modernization of Chinese farming; the diversification of the rural economy away from agriculture into new sectors, including manufacturing and tourism; the opportunities created for would-be migrants: all will have reverberations in rural regions around the world.

Global integration has also brought convergence between the dynamics driving change in rural China, and those experienced in other parts of the world. Increased political, economic and cultural openness has exposed rural localities in China to globalization processes – such as global trade and economic competition, international migration, and cultural assimilation – that are already contributing to the reconstitution of rural places elsewhere (Woods, 2007). Furthermore, there are some notable resonances between challenges facing China today and experiences of rural regions in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand during periods of urbanization and social and economic restructuring in the last century. For example, issues of food security, the loss of land to urban encroachment, the depopulation of rural communities (and especially out-migration of younger, educated residents), rural poverty, inefficient agricultural production and abandoned and substandard housing, were widespread in rural Europe in the decades following the Second World War, and informed the development of the European Community's Common Agricultural Policy and regional development programs.

From this global perspective, it is legitimate to consider how China's policies for rural development fit into the wider international context. Indeed, there has been notable interest from both government and academic circles in China over the last decade in examining rural development policies and practice in other countries, and in learning from international experience, through various conferences, exchanges and research visits. Globalization has increased the international transferability of knowledge and practice in economic development, and there are many successful examples of transferring international knowledge and practice, and of providing international solutions to local strategic problems (Alene, Manyong, & Coulibaly, 2006; Kiss, Castro, & Newcombe, 2002; McAllister, Smith, & Waddle, 1998; Ten Asbroek et al., 2005; Van Dormael, Dugas, & Diarra, 2007). Yet, international policy transfer can still be fraught with potential difficulties, especially when practiced across vastly differing political, cultural and geographical contexts. In particular, China remains wedded to a modernization paradigm in rural development that has been largely abandoned in both the global north and the global south (Woods, 2010a), and its current political system does not readily lend itself to adopting the European 'new rural development paradigm' with an emphasis on community empowerment and 'bottom-up' regeneration (van der Ploeg et al., 2000).

In this article we cautiously examine the similarities and differences between Chinese and European approaches to rural development through the juxtaposition of two contrasting narratives of regional rural restructuring, in eastern coastal China, and in Wales, Great Britain. The exercise is not intended as a comparative evaluation of policy approaches – the geographical, cultural and political differences between the two case studies are too great for any causality in explaining differing outcomes to be attributed to policy variations – but rather as a way of illustrating in a grounded manner the impacts of the strategies pursued in

each region. As such, the paper aims to reveal similarities and contrasts, and to consider whether there are lessons or examples of good practice that could be translated from Europe to China to enhance future rural development.

## **2.0 Modernization, Globalization and Rural Development in Europe and China**

For most of the period since the early twentieth century, rural development has been primarily framed by the discourse of modernization. Based on the conflation of development and modernity, and the assumption that rural areas lag behind urban areas in both respects, the modernization paradigm holds that rural development requires the spatial diffusion of modernity from cities to the countryside. This is understood in social, technological and cultural terms, as well as economic terms, such that rural modernization commonly involves four parallel processes: *agricultural modernization*, involving the mechanization and industrialization of farming; *economic modernization*, diversifying rural economies away from agriculture to embrace ‘modern’ industries; *infrastructure modernization*, expanding transport and communications infrastructure, installing electricity and improving housing; and *social modernization*, challenging the perceived ‘backward’, traditional rural social structures (Woods, 2010a).

In Europe, the modernization paradigm reached its zenith in rural development after the Second World War. The continent faced major challenges in securing food supplies for a booming urban population, and in maintaining a viable economic and social structure in rural communities experiencing rapid depopulation. The response involved all four dimensions of modernization. Agriculture was mechanized and industrialized with the assistance of subsidies and price supports provided by national governments and, after 1957, through the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Economic Community (later the European Union). As the agricultural workforce contracted even further as a result, the state intervened to promote economic diversification, particularly by promoting the development of manufacturing industry. Support was provided through grant-aid, but also by infrastructure projects, including new roads, bridges, tunnels and airports, power stations and reservoirs supplying mains electricity and water, and new factories and housing. In turn, these infrastructure projects facilitated social modernization and cultural change, as rural society was integrated into modern consumer society.

Modernization programs in Europe helped to stabilize rural population decline, diversify rural economies and improve accessibility. In Britain, in particular, rural modernization initiatives created the conditions that facilitated a reversal in the migration trend, from urbanization to counterurbanization. Modernization was also closely associated with globalization in rural areas. Improvements to the transport and communications infrastructure increased access to rural areas for trade, tourism and migration; agricultural modernization promoted specialization of production within an increasingly international market; economic diversification was achieved through inward investment by transnational corporations establishing branch plants in rural localities; and social modernization opened up rural culture to global media. These globalization processes stimulated the economic development of many rural districts, but they also introduced new risks, including, for example, the vulnerability of rural branch plants to distant decision-making by transnational corporations (Woods, 2010a; see also Epp and Whitson (2001) on Canada, and Eversole and Martin (2006) on Australia). At the same time, the

principles of modernization came to be challenged by in-migrants pursuing the anti-modern ideal of the rural idyll, by environmentalists attacking the ecological impacts of modernization projects, and by political activists claiming that modernization had failed to benefit endogenous rural populations (Woods, 2010a).

From the 1980s onwards, the critique of the modernization paradigm gathered force in European rural development policy and practice, with van der Ploeg et al. (2000) observing that, “rural development is on the agenda precisely because the modernization paradigm has reached its intellectual and practical limits” (p. 395). In its place emerged a new approach that van der Ploeg et al. (2000) label ‘the new rural development paradigm’, and which included a shift in emphasis from inward investment to endogenous development, from top-down planning to bottom-up initiative, and from sectoral modernization to territorially-based integrated rural development (Woods, 2010a). The principles of the new paradigm were articulated for European rural policy in the Cork Declaration issued by the European Conference on Rural Development in 1996, which has informed subsequent reforms of the EU Common Agricultural Policy and implementation of EU Structural Fund programs for rural and regional development. Agricultural policy now emphasizes diversification and agri-environmental schemes over increasing production; and rural development schemes are delivered through a partnership approach engaging local people in projects that tend to focus on exploiting endogenous natural and cultural resources.

Although rural development policies are primarily the domain of national governments, or supra-national regional bodies such as the European Union, ideas about approaches to rural development have always circulated internationally. Nation states copied each other in the race for modernization, and the emerging academic disciplines of agricultural economics and rural sociology helped to disseminate the modernization discourse. The modernization paradigm also framed approaches to rural development in imperial colonies, and was continued by post-independence governments in Africa and South East Asia (Akiyama & Larson, 2004; Potter, Binns, Elliot, & Smith, 2008; Zezza, Carletto, Davis, Stamoulis, & Winters, 2009). Initially, international bodies such as the World Bank reinforced the modernization approach, but more recently they have become champions of a new ‘community-centred’ approach to rural development that has mirrored the new rural development paradigm in the global north (Shepherd, 1998; Zezza et al., 2009).

China’s political and economic independence has enabled it to follow a more distinctive trajectory, and to diverge from global trends in rural development. Rural modernization was first promoted in the 1930s, but significantly through models that were marked out from western approaches by emphasizing and preserving aspects of traditional Chinese rural culture (Lynch, 2010; Zanasi, 2004). Rural modernization was further de-westernized during the Cultural Revolution, with the assertion of a new policy of collectivization of agriculture, which critics have argued led to at least two decades of agricultural stagnation, with the result that China’s rural economy remained relatively undeveloped (Long, Heilig, Li, & Zhang, 2007; Putterman, 1997). It was only following the introduction of Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms in 1978 that rural development returned to the political agenda, as it was realized that objectives for economic growth could only be achieved by modernizing social and economic structures in rural China.

Since the 1970s, rural development in China has been advanced around three key policy strategies: the implementation of a household responsibility system; the

development of township and village enterprises (TVEs); and the goal of ‘building a new countryside’. Each of these policy objectives has had a substantial impact across the social and economic canvass of the Chinese countryside, involving changes to the rural population structure, rural lifestyles, employment structure, industrial structure, community organization, accessibility of rural areas, and rural cultures.

The introduction of the ‘household responsibility system’ between 1979 and 1984 has been an epoch-making reform in rural China, transforming the agricultural sector from collective management to private production (Tilt, 2008; Unger, 2002). The household responsibility system contracted land to individual households for a period of 15 years<sup>1</sup>, with relative autonomy over land use decisions and crop selection. After fulfilling procurement quota obligations, farmers were entitled to sell their surplus on the market or retain it for their own use. By linking rewards directly to effort, the contracting system enhanced incentives and promoted efficient production. As such, the introduction of the household responsibility system has encouraged entrepreneurialism and aroused enthusiasm in Chinese peasants for private enterprise, helping to shift the Chinese countryside from self-sufficiency towards a market economy, hence creating opportunities for development of TVEs (Jefferson, 1993; Unger & Chan, 1999; Weitzman & Xu, 1994). The number of TVEs increased from 1.5 million in 1978 to over 23 million in 1993 (Liang, Chen, & Gu, 2002), with the current figure likely to be significantly higher still.

China’s TVEs have contributed significantly to the increase in rural income levels and employment by making full use of the local resources, utilizing the capital scattered in the peasant’s hands, developing the expertise of skilled craft-workers, and improving incomes for peasant households. Almost half of TVEs are manufacturing enterprises, with significant numbers also involved in construction, commerce and services (Mukherjee & Zhang, 2007). As such, TVEs have facilitated the diversification of the rural labour market, with non-agricultural employed in rural China increasing from 5 per cent in 1978 to 25 per cent in 2000 (ibid.). However, the rapid rate of development has also generated problems, such as shortages of materials, energy and capital due to the growth of rural enterprises outstripping supply, and worsening environmental quality because of a lack of treatment for the disposal of polluted water, poisonous gas and wastes (Long, Zou, et al., 2009).

Furthermore, whilst the implementation of the household responsibility system and the development of TVEs have promoted rural modernization, they have been progressed in a wider context of economic liberalization in China that has continued to be driven by urban expansion and industrialization. As such, economic growth has been greater in cities than in rural areas, and the income gap between urban and rural regions has widened (Xu et al., 2002). The disparities in wealth have contributed to large-scale rural-to-urban migration in China, producing an estimated 100 million internal migrants within the country by the late 1990s (Liang et al., 2002).

In response to these pressures, the Chinese government recognized the importance of stabilizing rural regions and adopting a more integrated approach to rural

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<sup>1</sup> Initially, the term of land contracts was 15 years. In 1995, it was extended to 30 years and although an extension to 70 years has been discussed, the continuation of 15-year term was confirmed in government documents in early 2009 ([http://www.bjreview.com.cn/document/txt/2009-01/05/content\\_173368\\_3.htm](http://www.bjreview.com.cn/document/txt/2009-01/05/content_173368_3.htm)).

development. From 2004 to 2009, the top-priority annual ‘number one policy document’ of the Chinese government was devoted to rural issues. These documents, which set out the key policy task of the central government for the coming year, successively addressed increasing farmers’ incomes (2004); improving agricultural production capacity (2005); advancing the ‘building a new countryside’ scheme (2006); developing modern agriculture (2007); resolving rural problems (2008); and stabilizing agricultural prices and increasing farmers’ incomes (2009). Together, these stated actions were encompassed in the overarching agenda of ‘building a new countryside’, which targeted five major objectives (Long et al., 2010):

1. Advanced production: Developing modern agriculture and strengthening the productive forces of the countryside.
2. Improved livelihoods: Increasing the living standards and incomes of farmers.
3. A civilized social atmosphere: Building a more civilized and harmonious society.
4. Clean and tidy villages: Expanding the use of clean fuels such as marsh gas and solar energies and improving the standard of rural housing according to a scientific village plan.
5. Efficient management: Promoting the establishment of new primary organizations, strengthening their service function, and implementing democratic management and open government.

As such, the ‘building a new countryside’ agenda has shifted the emphasis of rural policy from the concern of earlier strategies with structural adjustments aimed at stimulating private enterprise, to a more holistic concern with broad social, economic and environmental improvements, involving collective action. Although ‘building a new countryside’ remains an overtly modernizing program, it contains elements that resonate with aspects of the ‘new rural development paradigm’ in Europe and elsewhere. It is in this context that there is growing interest from Chinese scientists and rural development practitioners in learning from international experiences.

The remainder of this paper examines further the differences and similarities in rural development in Europe and China, and lessons to be learned, by focusing on rural development policy and implementation in two case study regions: Wales in the United Kingdom, and first, Eastern Coastal China.

### **3.0 Rural Restructuring in Eastern Coastal China**

#### ***3.1 Economic Reform and Rural Restructuring***

The eastern coastal region of China is a geographical and cultural territory that includes the administrative provinces of Hebei, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong and Hainan, as well as the municipal regions of Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai (Long, Zou, et al., 2009). Its population of over 469 million represents 36.3% of the total Chinese population in 2006, and incorporates major cities including Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Guangzhou and Qingdao. However, the region also includes an extensive rural area, embracing the fertile plains in Jiangsu and Shandong provinces and the mountainous districts of Fujian, and Zhejiang provinces, and varying in degrees of accessibility and infrastructure development, agriculture type and natural resources. The eastern coastal region

was the first area of China to be opened to international trade and thus has the most developed degree of engagement with the global economy (Liu, Wang, & Long, 2008; Long, Zou, et al., 2009). As early as 1986 the region was producing three-quarters of China's exports (Goodman, 2008), and its coastal proximity has enabled it to benefit from investment from Japan and South Korea, as well as from developing economic relations with Taiwan.

Whilst the scale and pace of rural restructuring in eastern coastal China has been strongly influenced by the region's geographical position and context, the processes and conditions of change have been steered by the evolution of macroeconomic policy in China. From the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the initiation of Deng Xiaoping's reforms in 1978, economic policy in China followed a central planning model. The development of agriculture and industry was unbalanced and a "dual track" structure was formalized in the national economy, with industrialization rapidly progressed at the expense of agriculture and the peasant economy (Wu, 1997). As described above, it was only following the liberalization of China's economy after 1978 that significant rural development and restructuring commenced, including the implementation of the household responsibility system and the development of township and village enterprises (TVEs).

The geographical position of eastern coastal China and its early engagement with the global economy aided market reforms and economic development, and the region quickly started to experience pronounced changes in its rural economy and society. In particular, these included a dramatic re-alignment of its economy away from agriculture (Cai & Smit, 1994; Liu, Wang, Gao, & Deng, 2005). Between 1978 and 2005, the contribution of primary industries to the region's GDP decreased from 23.3% to 7.9%, whilst that of tertiary industries increased from 19.8% to 40.5% (Liu, 2007). Over the same period, the proportion of the regional labor force employed in agriculture fell from 90.8% to 47.9% (ibid.). The amount of farmland in the region has similarly declined steadily, with 1.71 million hectares lost between 1996 and 2005, largely due to industrialization, urbanization, the expansion of rural housing, and the adjustment of agricultural structures and household withdrawal from farming (ibid.). Meanwhile, the fragmentation and structural complexity of agricultural holdings has increased, with consequences for economies of scale in the management of farming (Long, Liu, Wu, & Dong, 2009). Rampant urbanization has also encroached on rural areas, and according to analysis by Long, Zou, et al. (2009), only 38.4% of the total territory of eastern coastal China can be classified as strongly rural (with a rurality degree index of above 0.5).

The effects of political-economic reforms and growing prosperity can also be observed in aspects of social restructuring in eastern coastal China, notably changing household structures and the consequential demand for new housing. Before 1978, growth in the rural housing stock in China was limited for cultural, political and economic reasons. The Chinese tradition of 'Si Shi Tong Tang', in which three or four generations would commonly live together in one house, restrained demand for new housing, as did social and political suspicion of multi-property ownership or aspirations for a more capacious house as expressions of capitalism (so-called 'capitalism's tail') (Long, Heilig, et al., 2007). Additionally, the low incomes obtained from work on collective farms meant that most rural households lacked the resources to improve their housing conditions. However, the increasing affluence of many farmers after 1978 created the opportunity for rural

households to improve their property, or to move to new houses, with growing preferences for multi-functional, more comfortable or more spacious houses. At the same time, cultural changes have meant that the model of ‘*Si Shi Tong Tang*’ is no longer popular, and many young couples prefer to have their own housing. Accordingly, as Sargeson (2002) argues, the combination of the expanded social and demographic aspirations of families and the reconfiguration of rural households’ economic activities has stimulated a major boom in rural house-building in eastern coastal China. Thus, although the rural population in eastern coastal China decreased from 306 million in 1978 to 219 million in 2005, the amount of land per capita used for rural housing increased (Liu, 2007). This has been reflected in a change in the topography of rural settlement in the region, as farmers have demonstrated a preference for building their houses in valleys, close to roads and other infrastructure, which in turn has contributed to the loss of agricultural land (Long, Heilig, et al., 2007; Xu, 2004; Yang & Li, 2000).

Restructuring has also further integrated rural and urban economies in eastern coastal China, including through the dynamics of the labor market. The processes of economic restructuring and modernization have reinforced the division between the unskilled and manual labor of primary industries and the skilled labor of the secondary and tertiary sectors, which has a distinctive spatial expression. Limitations in the intra-regional flow of production elements have constrained the development of demand for skilled technical and professional labor in rural regions, thus consolidating an urban-rural divide (Long, Zou, et al., 2009; Zhou & Fan, 1988). Accordingly, although the initial impact of liberalization reforms was to reduce the income gap between urban and rural residents, since the mid 1980s the gap widened considerably in line with the acceleration of industrial development in urban areas, from 1.86:1 in 1985 to 3.31:1 in 2008 (NBSC, 2009). The income gap is further reinforced by the operation of ‘price scissors’ in which farmers are disadvantaged by the dissonance between artificially low prices for agricultural products and the high prices of exchange for industrial goods (Wu, 1997). Collectively, these factors have fuelled mass economic migration from the Chinese countryside to towns and cities, including intra-regional migration to eastern coastal China’s booming cities.

China’s rural-to-urban labor migration has delivered some benefits to rural districts through remittances and through the physical and human capital brought back by return migrants (Ma, 1999); however, these positive effects have been more than outweighed by the problems generated by the depopulation by the countryside. In particular, out-migration has been led by younger and better educated rural residents, producing a ‘brain drain’ that has seen rural communities lose their most active population segment. In many cases, adult migrants have left children with family members, creating social issues as families are divided and children are raised without parental care and support (Ye, Murray, & Wang, 2005). Rural migrants arriving in cities are vulnerable to exploitation and economic volatility, and discriminated against politically and socially. Rural migrants are not granted permanent household registration in cities and are not eligible for many social welfare and economic opportunities that are reserved for permanent urban residents (Shen, 2002).

The migration out-flow has also impacted on the fabric of the countryside in eastern coastal China. In many villages houses have become vacant as owners are absent as migrant workers in cities, or due to abandonment in depopulation or for



newer housing (Long, Heilig, et al., 2007). Similarly, some high quality farmland has been abandoned as farmers have become migrant workers, and as the agricultural labor force has been depleted (Li & Wang, 2003; Long, Liu, et al., 2009; Long, Tang, Li, & Heilig, 2007). These social, economic and environmental impacts of rural out-migrant have intensified with restructuring, yet the speed of restructuring left policy lagging and its only recently that the Chinese government has acted to respond to the rural problem with the adoption of the ‘building a new countryside’ agenda.

### ***3.2 Building a New Countryside***

The implementation of the ‘building a new countryside’ policy has had far-reaching impacts in the rural districts of eastern coastal China, with actions focused on transforming traditional farming into modern large-scale agriculture; developing industries in new development zones and industrial parks; and consolidating rural housing in new town communities (Long, Zou, et al., 2009). The last dimension, shifting from a pattern of dispersed rural housing to new nuclear communities, has been the most prominent aspect of the policy in the region. Aimed primarily at identifying releasing land for industrial and urban development, the consolidation of rural housing has been advanced through an innovative land management policy balancing the increase in land for urban construction with a decrease in construction on rural land. In practice, this has involved a county-level land use planning and development control system that involves the identification of land for construction in concentrated settlement pockets, and the corresponding identification of existing dispersed rural properties for demolition and return to cultivated land (Long, Liu, et al., 2009).

Significantly, the process of land displacement and centralized settlement planning has been implemented at the local level, involving the collective action of local actors. However, Long, Liu, et al. (2009) have argued that this mode of operation is problematic. There is fundamentally a disjuncture between the aspirations of developers and the skills and expectations of the rural population. The policy is aimed at creating the infrastructure for industrial development, but the upgrading of the skills base of the peasants has not kept up with the demands of the industrial revolution. Similarly, whilst the construction of high-rise apartment buildings has been favored in order to maximize land for industrial development, this style of housing is often not desired by the displaced rural residents used to living in individual houses in the rural landscape. Thus, whilst the ‘building a new countryside’ policy has been implemented through local actors, it has arguably not been responsive to local priorities and opinions.

Xu (1999) argued that China’s economic policy relies too much on a top-down approach in monitoring, control and supervision. The style has been continued in the implementation of the ‘building a new countryside’ policy in eastern coastal China. A lack of local embeddedness and naturalization in the development of policies has created difficulties in the implementation of strategies such as housing consolidation, which have encountered reluctance and resistance on the part of peasants. Regeneration policies have similarly failed to take account of rural circumstances and needs. For example, some development zones and industrial parks are established in small towns with poor infrastructure that have difficulty in attracting outward investment. Local cadres have simply imitated examples from other towns, without taking local differences into account, and hoped for a miracle.

As such, local advantages in endogenous resources, technologies and production traditions are frequently neglected in rural development strategies by decision-makers who have prioritized finding funds for immediate actions and benefits over long-term planning for sustainable development. Similarly, the interdependence between agriculture and the rural economy, society and environment has arguably received limited attention in eastern coastal China, with, for example, the environmental cost of industrialized agriculture and the impact on the rural labor market being ignored.

As China consequently wrestles with the search for appropriate and effective mechanisms for rural development, it may be instructive to turn to the experience of rural development in Europe, where policy-makers have tried and tested a number of approaches over the last fifty years, which we illustrate in the next section by focusing on the example of Wales, in the United Kingdom.

## **4.0 Experiences and lessons of rural restructuring in Wales**

### ***4.1 Rural restructuring in Wales***

Wales has been a predominantly urban and industrialized country since the late nineteenth century, yet the majority of its land area continues to be rural, and its rural heritage is a powerful element in its national identity. Around 960,000 people, out of Wales's total population of 3 million, live in rural areas, but rural Wales has a relatively low population density by British standards, no towns of over 20,000 inhabitants, relatively poor transport networks, and a difficult upland topography. Most of the region is classified as a 'less favorable area' for agriculture, but whilst less than 2% of the population of Wales is now employed in farming, this is still the highest proportion of the constituent nations of Great Britain.

The trajectory of rural restructuring in Wales can be traced to the late nineteenth century and the development of the South Wales coalfield and the associated urbanization and industrialization of the South Wales valleys and coastal plains, as well as urbanization and industrialization in North East Wales. Towns and cities such as Cardiff, Swansea, Newport, Wrexham, Merthyr Tydfil and the Rhondda, became industrial powerhouses connected to global economic networks, and acted as magnets for migrants from the struggling rural areas of Wales. The rural counties of Mid Wales lost a quarter of their population between 1871 and 1961, a greater rate of population decline than any other part of Britain (Woods, 2010b). The scale of depopulation in rural Wales, and the implications for the fabric of rural society and Welsh culture, was such that the new Welsh nationalist party, Plaid Cymru, unsuccessfully campaigned on a platform of rural resettlement during the 1930s and 1940s (Gruffudd, 1995).

By the 1940s and 1950s, rural Wales was confronted by a range of problems that have resonance with the contemporary situation of rural China. Agriculture was in dire need of modernization, farm incomes were precarious, and opportunities for employment outside primary industries were limited. The infrastructure of the region was weak and standards of living were low. At least a quarter of houses in Mid Wales were without a piped water supply and over 3,000 farms did not have mains electricity (Hooson & Jenkins, 1965). Depopulation not only continued, but accelerated to around 4% a year between 1951 and 1961 (Woods, 2010b). Rural Wales was increasingly portrayed as a region in crisis, and in response the British government established a committee of inquiry to examine the reasons for the

region's decline and propose action to stimulate development (Beacham Committee, 1964).

The priorities of the British government in responding to the problems of restructuring in rural Wales during this period were again remarkably similar to the objectives of rural policy in contemporary China: stabilizing agricultural incomes; stimulating enterprise; and modernizing the rural economy and society. The problem of farm incomes was addressed through the system of agricultural subsidies and price supports put in place by the 1947 Agriculture Act, which offered farmers a guaranteed price for their produce, but which also encouraged mechanization and intensification, thus reducing the agricultural labor force. Moreover, the small hill farms of rural Wales were poorly suited to the type of intensive, industrial agriculture that the productivist system promoted, and farm incomes in Wales remained relatively low, with many Welsh farmers dependent on subsidies.

The problems of diversifying the economy, stimulating enterprise and modernizing the infrastructure of rural Wales required a more targeted approach. The Mid Wales Industrial Association was set up in 1957 to encourage industrialization in the region, and following the recommendations of the Beacham Committee, the Mid Wales Development Corporation was established in 1965 to oversee the expansion Newtown in Powys as a centre for industrial and population growth. In 1976, the functions of these two bodies were taken over by the Development Board for Rural Wales (DBRW). These government agencies sought to develop rural Wales through a strategy that included encouraging small enterprises, training the labor force with new skills, building industrial estates and factory units, and attracting inward investment. In particular, an emphasis was placed on developing manufacturing industry. At the same time, efforts were made to improve infrastructure, with plans for new roads and airports, and an ambitious scheme to restructure the traditionally dispersed rural settlement pattern around a number of 'growth centres' (Williams, 1985; Woods, 2010b). In many of these respects the post-war strategy for rural development in Wales has parallels in the contemporary experiences of eastern coastal China.

The strategy produced mixed results. The ambitions for infrastructure development and settlement rationalization were never fully realized, but economic development achieved more success. Between 1977 and 1985, over 200 new factories were established in the DBRW area, increasing manufacturing employment by 61% from 3,921 to 6,330 (Edwards, 1985). Together with the more general process of counterurbanization, which gathered momentum in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s, this industrialization helped to reverse the trend of depopulation and improve income levels and standards of living. Yet, as Cloke, Goodwin and Milbourne (1997) have recorded, pockets of poverty, deprivation and depopulation still persist, and part of the region was awarded 'Objective 1' status in the European Union's Structural Funds in 2000, indicating that its GDP was below 75% of the EU average.

However, the essentially top-down strategy of rural development, driven by a non-elected central government agency, was increasingly criticized for failing to engage with local communities, failing to reflect local needs, and for creating jobs for in-migrants rather than for endogenous residents. In a particularly strident critique, focused on the county of Gwynedd but relevant for rural Wales as a whole, Lovering (1983) attacked the development strategy for subordinating the economy of rural Wales to economic conditions and decision-making elsewhere:

*“So what was post-war development all about? Did it really herald a ‘new industrial era’ as local MPs promised? It was becoming obvious by the mid-1970s that this was far from the truth. Post-war economic change created a new structure of economic dependence – the economy of North West Wales being dependent in the literal sense that its different segments depended on economic conditions elsewhere, and did not sustain each other. Working people in Gwynedd had been given a new role as providers of cheap unskilled short-term labour. Those who wanted more either had to leave the area or, if they were fortunate, enter the professions. Modern construction projects recreated a large temporary, rootless workforce reminiscent of the ‘navvies’ of the previous century. Modern manufacturing and service industries, largely owned outside, created a lop-sided labour market, which in turn generated pools of real poverty. The state, through a variety of channels, softened the effect by pumping money in, and by directly creating a large proportion of local jobs, but at the same time it encouraged the process through regional aid.” (Lovering, 1983, p. 53).*

Moreover, by the late 1980s the economic stimulation of industrialization was beginning to falter. Faced with increasing global competition, manufacturing in rural Wales went into decline as factories were closed and production relocated to cheaper locations elsewhere, including China. In contrast, the more sustainable elements of growth in rural Wales appeared to come from the in-migration of ex-urban residents, often for amenity or lifestyle change reasons, the expansion of the service sector, and the increasing population of rural tourism. Yet, the methods of DBRW’s development strategy were arguably ill-suited to capitalizing on these opportunities. As such, for both political and economic reasons, the approach of rural development in Wales was fundamentally realigned during the 1980s and 1990s to a new emphasis on bottom-up, community-led regeneration.

#### ***4.2 Community Action: A Process of Embeddedness and Naturalization***

The first steps towards community-led rural regeneration in Wales can be traced back to the late 1960s (Edwards, 1998). Following the success of an experimental community-based strategy adopted in Glyncoed, a deprived community suffering from depopulation, economic decay and social disadvantage (Broady, 1973), a series of initiatives were introduced in Wales in the 1970s involving community participation as the planning solution for tackling rural disadvantage (Edwards, 1998). Examples included the Antur Llanaelhaearn initiative on the Llŷn peninsula in North Wales launched in 1974, which ran economic aims in parallel with an objective of restoring social vitality to rural communities, and Antur Teifi in southern Ceredigion, which emerged in 1978 (Cloke & Laycock, 1981; Moss, 1978). These two pilot initiatives served as role models for small-scale, area-based community action in Wales, involving the key elements of employment of a local animateur, wider community involvement, and the development of bids by local residents for external funding and support from local authorities or development agencies (Edwards, 1998).

In the late 1970s, Development Board for Rural Wales (DBRW) launched its Social Development Grant Fund with the aim of pump-priming community projects throughout rural mid-Wales. It encouraged local problem/need

identification, local participation and self-help in delivery and partnership guidance and funding from DBRW, and led to considerable investment in social and environmental improvement projects targeted at both the total community and various age-specific subgroups throughout a large area of rural Wales over the next 15 years (Edwards, 1991). Edwards (1998) argued that such involvement with community action initiated, and subsequently embedded, the idea of rural development as a partnership engagement that was agency-led but resident-driven. During the 1980s, the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) initiated a related strategy focusing on economic regeneration in rural districts in north and south Wales, which were seen as pilot initiatives involving a partnership between statutory bodies, local authorities, the private sector and communities. The schemes were to have ownership by the communities, integration between various agencies, and appropriate delivery mechanisms for the effective provision of services to the community. Similarly, in 1987 a partnership of the Countryside Commission in Wales, the Prince of Wales's Committee and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers established the 'Local Jigsaw/Jigso' scheme to encourage local participation in community development (Edwards, 1998; Hughes, 1992, 1993). The success of these initiatives with their clear focus on economic regeneration led to the expansion of this mode of engagement after 1990, including through Welsh participants in the European Union's LEADER program of community initiatives, and was enshrined in the 1996 'rural white paper' policy document for Wales.

As such, responsibility for rural development and regeneration in Wales has been increasingly decentralized. Local authorities are required to take a leading role in delivering national policies whilst addressing local needs and priorities. They have a statutory duty to prepare, in partnership with community stakeholders, community strategies for promoting the well-being of their areas. Local authorities covering rural areas are also encouraged to prepare integrated rural development strategies. Following the establishment of the devolved National Assembly for Wales in 1999, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) have created a joint set of policy priorities which outline shared priorities to achieve change at the local level, including better opportunities for learning, a better stronger economy, better health and wellbeing, better quality of life, and better simpler government (WRO, 2004).

Additionally, there is growing recognition of the potential for non-statutory organizations to contribute to rural community regeneration, which can be shown by an increasingly strong emphasis on community empowerment. The Welsh Assembly Government and its sponsored bodies have committed themselves to providing the opportunities and support for communities to participate more fully in their own development and regeneration. At the same time, communities are urged to take responsibility for identifying and addressing their own needs, problems and challenges (WRO, 2004). Increasingly, regeneration initiatives require the inclusion of a range of local stakeholders, with partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors seen as integral to sustainable rural development in Wales. As the Wales Council for Voluntary Action has argued, "a strong relationship between local government and the voluntary sector is the basis for a vibrant local democracy and active, inclusive communities" (WCVA, 2003).

The engagement of local communities and the principle of cross-sectoral and transcalar partnership working between different agencies are supposed to make rural

development more responsive to local needs and facilitate the capitalization of endogenous resources. In principle, this ‘bottom-up’ approach is argued to provide a flexible and efficient way of addressing the needs of rural areas, whilst the decentralization of support from established statutory agencies is contended to maximize a region’s regeneration capacity. Ray (2001) refers to this approach as a neo-endogenous approach to rural development which reflects the balance between extra-local funding, resources and policy frameworks with local endogenous decision-making and responsibility. Yet, these strategies can also produce fragmentation and duplication in the process of rural development. In Wales, the adoption of the approach has led to a proliferation of partnerships active in rural development, with overlapping objectives and territorial remit (Edwards, Goodwin, & Pemberton, & Woods, 2000; 2001; Edwards, Goodwin, & Woods, 2003).

Moreover, Edwards et al. (2000, 2001, 2003) and others have suggested that regeneration is still in many ways heavily ‘top-down’ because of the funding rules set by central government and the leading role played by local authorities and government agencies. Many programs in Wales are dependent on grass-roots delivery, but the structure of programs and conditions of funding are often imposed from the top-down by the sponsoring agencies. The criteria that local partnerships must meet even to be eligible to bid for regeneration funding are centrally defined, as are the audit paths groups must follow if they do receive funding (WRO, 2004). A typical case is the Communities First program, which aims to build leadership capacity and encourage empowerment within the most deprived communities in Wales. To some extent, this degree of steering may undermine the endogenous nature of these schemes, and there are also reservations over the extent to which local partnerships are actually representative of, and democratically accountable to, local communities (Derkzen & Bock, 2009; Derkzen, Franklin, & Bock, 2008; Edwards et al., 2000).

### ***4.3 Integrated Rural Development Policy and Agricultural Restructuring***

The shift in strategy for rural development in Wales represented not only a change in the style of governance and policy implementation, but also a change in the focus and objectives of rural development policy. Whereas the emphasis during the 1960s and 1970s had been on attracting inward investment, the emphasis is now on utilizing and valorizing the endogenous resources of the region, including its people and its environment. Inevitably this has brought agriculture back into the picture for rural development in Wales. During the post-war period the policy concerns of agriculture were largely separated from other aspects of the rural economy. The imperative to maintain farm incomes and modernize agriculture was delivered through the mechanisms of price supports and subsidies put in place by the 1947 Agriculture Act, quite independently of other economic development measures. Rural development, per se, was about developing the non-agricultural rural economy, and agencies such as the Development Board for Rural Wales had no remit over agriculture.

Since the early 1990s, however, the dominant rural policy discourse in Europe has been that of integrated rural policy, recognizing the inter-connection and inter-dependence not only of different economic sectors, but also of economic, social and environmental processes in the countryside. Integrated rural development has become a core feature of European Union rural policy (CEC, 1997), but has also been specifically promoted in the Welsh context from the 1996 Rural White Paper

onwards and implemented through subsequent rural development initiatives (Bristow, 2000; Welsh Office, 1996; WRO, 2004). Significantly, whilst in England and Scotland integrated rural policy has been associated with the weakening of agriculture's privileged place in rural policy and the assertion of a new vision of the countryside in which farming plays a minor part (Woods, 2008), in Wales agriculture remains at the heart of the new integrated rural policy (Goodwin, 2008). This was evident in the positioning of the Welsh Assembly Government's key policy document on rural policy, *Farming for the Future*.

Thus, the farming sector is seen as a key contributor to endogenous rural development that revolves around new premium agri-food products – in some cases produced largely for export (Woods, 2010b) – sustainable tourism, and other elements in a new 'eco-economy' (Kitchen & Marsden, 2009). Equally, integrated rural development is also now seen as the preferred method for stabilizing farm incomes, both by rewarding farmers for good environmental stewardship and improvements to footpaths and recreational infrastructure – particularly through schemes such as Tir Gofal and Tir Mynydd – and by encouraging the diversification of farm enterprises into tourism or specialist food production (Evans & Ilbery, 1992; Ilbery, 1991). As such, individual farmers are coaxed through these policies into making decisions about the future development of their business, that essentially concern six possible options: 1) extending the agro-industrial model of farming through further development of conventional products; 2) redeploying resources into the development on-farm of 'new agricultural products or services'; 3) redeploying resources into non-food/fibre products on-farm; 4) redeploying human resources into off-farm employment; 5) continuing with conventional production and accept lower business income; or 6) moving to hobby farming or semi-retirement (Evans, 2009).

Integrated rural policy also means recognizing that the economic well-being of the countryside is affected by political decisions taken about social policies or about public services. The greater awareness of these connections has been promoted by the implementation of 'rural proofing' in Wales and England, whereby new policies developed by any government department are now supposed to be assessed for their impact on rural communities (DEFRA, 2000).

#### ***4.4 Longevity and Sustainability of Rural Development Initiatives***

Achieving sustainable rural development is as much dependent on the continuity of support over time as it is on the type and level of support within a locality. This can be seen in the case of Pembrokeshire, in south west Wales, which has been cited as an excellent example of a region which has had a long-standing commitment to building community capacity (WRO, 2004). Pembrokeshire initiated a progressive approach to community development in the 1970s, when a newly-created local group assumed responsibility from the local authority for developing day-care, child care, information technology and some aspects of sports provision. The scope of community action in the locality was extended in the 1980s when the group, SPARC (South Pembrokeshire Action for Rural Communities) (later renamed PLANED – Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development), achieved LEADER status in the first round of the program operated by the then European Community, becoming involved in a range of bottom-up rural regeneration projects. It maintained this status through LEADER II and LEADER+, becoming the only Local Action Group in Wales to

be involved in all three rounds of LEADER, as well as gaining funding from the EU Objective 1 program after 2000. As a result, Pembrokeshire has been one of the main beneficiaries of financial support from the European Union in Wales. Thus, the continuity of organization and funding has been significant in creating strong institutional foundations in Pembrokeshire, facilitating the area's capacity to benefit from new programs (Asby & Midmore, 1995).

As such, there is increasing recognition that programs targeted at the sustainable development and regeneration of communities in Wales must themselves be sustained. However, many of the early community regeneration programs targeted at communities in Wales often funded 'one-off' projects that were limited in scope, short-term in focus and frequently unsustainable once funding from external sources was withdrawn (WRO, 2004). For example, Edwards et al. (2000) found that almost half of the partnerships operating in Mid Wales in the late 1990s had been constituted for a fixed limited life, often of less than five years, usually because funding has only been secured for a limited period, or because the partnership forms part of a limited-life program. The voluntary sector, in particular, is critical of the current trend for project funding and ad hoc, short-term grants, and has called for more secure arrangements (Collis, 2003). In response to these concerns, recent funding programs, such as Communities First, have begun to place more emphasis on a longer-term approach.

## **5.0 Discussion and Conclusions**

Eastern coastal China and Wales are vastly different regions. They differ in size, population, natural environment, economic structure and level of development. They also represent different stages in the trajectory of rural restructuring – whilst Eastern coastal China struggles with problems of rural depopulation, agricultural modernization and alleviating severe rural poverty, the major challenges confronting rural Wales include coping with in-migration, gentrification, a precarious remnant agricultural sector and a collapsing manufacturing sector. However there are more parallels between the two regions than might be expected. In particular, many of the issues facing rural eastern coastal China today are similar to those found in rural Wales after the Second World War: significant out-migration, especially of younger and more skilled residents; limited employment opportunities; an out-dated agricultural sector; household incomes below those in urban areas; poor housing conditions; and an inadequate infrastructure. Moreover, the rural development strategy adopted in eastern coastal China has resonance with that followed in post-war Wales. As such, it becomes possible to suggest that rural development in China might be improved by learning lessons from the Welsh experience.



Table 1. *Comparison of Rural Development Approaches Between Wales and Eastern Coastal China*

Measures	Wales	Eastern Coastal China	What China Can Learn
Community action	A process of embeddedness and naturalization	Lack of embeddedness and naturalization	To foster and pay more attention to embeddedness and naturalization
Approach to rural community regeneration	‘Bottom-up’ accompanied by ‘top-down’ element	Top-down’ accompanied by few ‘bottom-up’ elements	More ‘bottom-up’ and less ‘top-down’
Rural development policy and agricultural restructuring	Integrated rural development policy emphasizing the interdependence between agriculture and the rural economy, society and environment	Waiting to be improved in this aspect	Paying more attention to the interdependence between agriculture and the rural economy, society and environment
Implementing rural Proofing	Yes	No	Introducing rural proofing
Towards limited-life Funding	Lessons: it will restrict the potential for long-term planning for community and economic development	Refusing nobody’s offer	Drawing the lessons of rural Wales and paying close to long-term sustainable development
Rural development mode responding to globalization	Towards place-based rural development	Not clear	Adopting space-based or place-based rural development mode according to different local socio-economic conditions

Table 1 summarizes the different approaches to rural development in eastern coastal China and in Wales, and highlights potential lessons that could be learned. Essentially, these can be reduced to a contrast between a top-down approach focused on modernization and overcoming geographical peripherality, as practised in eastern coastal China today and as previously practised in rural Wales, and an alternative bottom-up approach emphasizing endogenous development and place-based regeneration, as has become dominant in Wales over the last two decades. Both approaches have their merits and disadvantages. Bristow (2000) argued that a top-down emphasis on inward investment and job creation is important for generating employment and income growth but may fail to make the links with

other rural activities that would establish resilience to the increasingly competitive pressures evident; however, a bottom-up emphasis based on local empowerment is likely to lead to more diverse and embedded activities, but may not be sufficient on its own to buttress the rural economy against the pressures of globalization. The experience of Wales has indicated that community-led initiatives are more likely to succeed in the long term than ‘top-down’ approach (Greenlees, 1998). However, in eastern coastal China, the approach to rural community regeneration is mainly top-down accompanied by few bottom-up elements. Accordingly, an approach to rural community regeneration with more ‘bottom-up’ and less ‘top-down’ will be helpful for resolving the exposed issues in the process of rural restructuring in eastern coastal China.

The objective of community action in rural Wales has been to target material economic and social needs, through local specification and engagement. In so doing the initiatives built on natural co-operation, but allowed expression of local dissatisfaction with central delivery and a degree of self-determination (Edwards, 1998). As practised in rural Wales, bottom-up development encompasses different strategies for local participation in community action that exhibit multiple perspectives on its role and purpose; these reflect the interests of the actors and agencies involved. As such, whilst the bottom-up approach has become increasingly embedded in policy in Wales, it has also been constantly re-examined and re-made, fine-tuned to fit particular circumstances (Edwards, 1998).

Moseley (2003) points out that it is important to note the danger of what might be called ‘project-ism’ – the assumption that promoting discrete one-off projects comprises all of what is possible or necessary to achieve one’s goals. Sometimes, long-term and necessarily wide-ranging strategic plans need to be implemented through short-term and more precise ‘operational plans’, which stress the role of individual ‘tasks’ linked to strategic objectives, each with their own targets, costing and allocation of responsibility. Under this condition, ‘local’ actors may need to seek to persuade the key partners in rural development – the transport providers, the land-use planners, the agricultural agencies, the housing providers – to respect ‘sustainability’ in their day-to-day dealings with the local area in question (Moseley, 2003, p. 24). Sustainable local development must be based on a vision relating more to long-term human welfare than to maximizing the production of goods and services or the crude creation of as many jobs as possible.

Turning to eastern coastal China, the emphasis has been on top-down large-scale projects and strategies, but in line with Moseley’s observation, these have frequently required implementation at the local scale. The attempt to balance the increase in urban construction land with a decrease in rural construction land is a case in point. It is a centrally-directed policy, but in theory should be implemented by village collectives through village plans. Yet, in practice local discrimination and input has been limited and there has been resistance from rural residents who resent being compelled into new housing projects. The short-comings of the program can therefore be identified as resulting from a lack of embeddedness and naturalization in rural communities. However, the fostering process of embeddedness and naturalization will take a long period, which also depends on many factors such as local socio-economic conditions and residents’ educational level. The experience of rural Wales shows that at least ten years is needed.

The lessons of rural Wales also show that the limited-life funding in rural regeneration restricts the potential for long-term planning for community and

economic development. However, in eastern coastal China short-termism is reinforced by the eagerness of local cadres to bid for every available funding source. In order to actively respond to the ‘building a new countryside’ policy, there are special funds earmarked for investing in rural development in China’s local governments and different central ministries, such as the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Water Resources, the Ministry of Land and Resources, and the Ministry of Construction. Usually, pilot villages or counties are chosen to receive these funds. In general, these pilot villages or counties have a good location and a relatively strong economic base, which means that they are the easiest to develop, and successes in these communities may not translate to other more peripheral or economically deprived areas. Furthermore, as these funds are normally allocated for a specific ‘project’ defined by the sponsoring ministry or administration, and as each agency and scheme will have its own conditions, in order to obtain the funds villages are required cater to the requirements of the departments who fund them, even changing their existing plans to fit. As such, long-term strategic planning is trumped by the need to meet short-term objectives dictated by limited life funding. In the process of rural restructuring in eastern coastal China, the lessons of rural Wales need to be drawn on, with longer-term initiatives introduced and projects unfavorable for local long-term sustainable development avoided.

The shift from top-down to bottom-up rural development in Wales has meant not only a change in the administrative structure and processes, but also in the focus of development strategies. For much of the post-war period, rural development strategy generally focused on measures to combat rural Wales’s disadvantaged position in the twentieth-century space-economy, helping it to participate in the emerging global economy through improved infrastructure, support for export-orientated industries and inward investment. However, these measures require large-scale top-down intervention and planning. Individual communities, supposedly empowered through bottom-up approaches, do not have the resources or the scope to engage in these activities and therefore instead focus on utilizing local resources and place-based regeneration. Place-based regeneration has hence become a hallmark of neoliberal rural development not only in Wales, but across Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand, and is championed by advocates as the way forward (Halseth, Markey, & Bruce, 2010). Yet, place cannot be divorced from the space-economy, and place-based endogenous development will generally only be successful if geographical conditions are appropriate to allow access to external markets (Woods, 2010b).

This paradox is again evident in the contemporary situation in eastern coastal China. Over the last three decades since the start of Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms, policies for rural development have focused on overcoming the backward and marginalized position of rural regions, resulting in rapid industrialization and urbanization (Long, Zou, et al., 2009). This strategy has delivered benefits, but it increasingly seems that a new approach is required for the next phase of rural development, which could emphasize place-based regeneration. The major requisite for such an approach to be successful is the presence of a large and affluent urban middle class with the money and time to spend on consuming countryside commodities. This includes not only the consumption of speciality craft and food products from specific rural localities, but also rural tourism and recreation and even migration to rural communities for lifestyle purposes. It is the presence of such a class in western society that has enabled the switch to place-

based rural development, and the nature of the growth of the Chinese economy suggests that these conditions are likely to come into existence in China very soon. Indeed, there are already some isolated examples of place-based rural development for tourism and amenity, such as the ‘water town’ of Luzhi in Jiangsu province (Fan, Wall, & Mitchell, 2008). However, these opportunities are likely to be largely limited to those rural areas closest to urban centers, at least initially. More remote rural communities may exhibit a strong sense of solidarity and social capital, which are essential requirements for successful bottom-up development, but their potential for attracting tourists, capturing passing trade or pulling-in lifestyle migrants from towns and cities, will be restricted by distance and poor accessibility. As such, a combination of place-based and space-focused rural development will continue to be needed in eastern coastal China.

Achieving successful rural development in the globalizing countryside is a difficult challenge that requires sensitivity to both economic and political factors. Top-down, infrastructure-focused strategies, as currently dominate in eastern coastal China, can deliver economic benefits but can also be politically unpopular. The pursuit of such an approach in rural Wales during the 1960s and 1970s was successful in helping to halt depopulation, diversify employment opportunities and improve living standards, but the lack of engagement of local communities and the perceived bias towards creating jobs for in-migrants also contributed to the rise of Welsh nationalism as a political force in the region. If China wishes to marry economic growth and political stability, some move towards a more inclusive and participatory form of rural development would be advisable, but with the qualifying understanding that not all rural district will benefit equally from endogenous place-based regeneration. In negotiating this precarious path, China has the opportunity to learn from the experiences of Wales and other western countries, but any international transfer of models and strategies for rural development will need to be modified for the particular cultural, economic and political traditions and circumstances of China.

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