The concept of neo-endogenous rural development originated in Newcastle’s Centre for Rural Economy in 1995. It proposed a new ‘networked’ model of development, acknowledging that both local and extra-local factors are critical to processes of rural development. In particular, the balance of internal and external control of development processes and how to enhance the capacity of local actors to steer these larger processes to their collective benefit are vital. This new model was a critique of the ‘top-down’ approach of exogenous development and transformed the model of ‘bottom-up’, endogenous development, based on local, participative approaches.

During 2007-08 Professor Mark Shucksmith chaired the Scottish Government’s Inquiry into the Future of Crofting, delivering a report and recommendations for far-reaching changes in government policy and practice. The Crofting Inquiry report proposed local mobilisation and community empowerment supported by generative state action and by refocused policy instruments which would operate to encourage local strategies and initiative. In terms of governance, regulation would be in the hands of locally-elected bodies, rather than an appointed Crofters Commission. Local communities, supported by HIE’s Community Land Unit, would be encouraged to engage in deliberative place-shaping, articulating their own community development strategies. Alongside these changes in governance, other recommendations sought to address unhelpful policies, by refocusing agricultural support, economic development, housing and planning policies towards support for locally-agreed place-shaping strategies.

The proposals recommended local mobilisation to be encouraged by the generative power of the state and other actors and the harmonisation of policy instruments. Using this approach, the inquiry sought to build the capacity of crofting communities to mobilise themselves strategically and collaboratively, empowering communities at various levels. Its recommendations informed a major overhaul of Scottish crofting legislation and governance which was aimed at reversing the decline of crofting and rural depopulation in the Scottish Highlands and Islands. This culminated in the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 and the setting up of an elected Crofting Commission in 2012 to replace the appointed Crofters Commission. The focus of the reforms has been to address deeply embedded challenges to peripheral rural areas that also have resonances across Europe.

http://www.ncl.ac.uk/socialrenewal/about/people/staff/profile/markshucksmith.html

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