

1996-02

# Rurality, locality and industrial change: a Micro-Scale investigation of manufacturing growth in the district of leominster

Yarwood, R

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/3253>

---

10.1016/0016-7185(95)00041-0

Geoforum

Elsevier BV

---

*All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.*

Rurality, Locality and Industrial Change: Evidence from a Micro-Scale Investigation  
in Hereford and Worcester

Dr. Richard Yarwood

Lecturer in Geography, Geography Division, Worcester College of Higher  
Education, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ

Yarwood, R. (1996) 'Rurality, Locality and Industrial Change: a Micro-Scale  
Investigation of Manufacturing Growth in the District of Leominster' *Geoforum* 27.1,  
23-37. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/0016718595000410>

Rurality, Locality and Industrial Change: Evidence from a Micro-Scale Investigation  
in Hereford and Worcester

**Abstract**

Geographers have recently sought to understand countryside change by examining economic restructuring and its impact on local social coherences. However, despite renewed interest in the locale, many investigations of the rural economy have been at a macro-scale. It is argued that this broad brush approach has neglected many important aspects of rural restructuring and, in particular, social and cultural constructions of change. This paper considers manufacturing growth in rural areas and focuses on Western Hereford and Worcester. Based on the findings of a micro-scale investigation of a rural industrial estate, it examines the causes of manufacturing growth and assesses its impact on job creation, local restructuring and in-migration.

## **Introduction**

It is widely recognised that the rural economy has undergone significant restructuring in recent years (CHAMPION 1987; DAY *et al.*, 1989; GUDGIN, 1990; CLOKE and GOODWIN, 1992; MARSDEN *et al.*, 1993;). Studies based on aggregate data have highlighted the importance of manufacturing growth in the rural economy. FOTHERGILL *et al.* (1985, p.149) state that 'in 1981 rural manufacturing employment was still significantly higher than in 1960 and the rural area's share of national stock of manufacturing jobs increased throughout the period'. More recently, CURRAN and STOREY (1993, p.16) have suggested that there is 'faster employment growth, higher rates of profitability and higher birth rates of firms in rural areas'. Although CHAMPION and TOWNSEND (1990, p.245) have pointed out that rural manufacturing jobs declined by 2.8% during the 1980s, this compared to a far greater loss of 15.7% on a national scale. Despite this decrease, CLOKE and GOODWIN (1992, p.329) consider that 'rural industrialisation seems likely to continue as an important component of restructuring' and GUDGIN (1990, p.375) agrees that this trend will not end 'for several decades yet'.

However, despite these trends, recent work (CURRAN and STOREY, 1993) has suggested that there is very little difference between businesses operating in urban and rural localities and that 'the problems of operating a business are the same irrespective of location' (p.16). More specifically, KEEBLE *et al.* (1992) have identified that firms in rural locations are constricted more by shortages of skilled labour, small premises, and lack of technical and managerial innovation, than distance from urban markets. This has lead CURRAN and STOREY (p.15) to conclude that Britain has 'an essentially urban economy' and that the problems of rurality and isolation have very little effect on the development of British firms.

Whilst it would be naive in the extreme to suggest that rurality *per se* can influence economic growth (see CLOKE *et al.*, 1992, p. 146), PRATT (1995) has suggested that the term rural has been often been misused in the study of rural industrialisation. In many instances 'rural' is used to classify different localities which share similar characteristics. These classifications are based on variables which are seen to reflect the functional significance of rural areas. As HALFACREE (1993, p.23) suggests, these represent attempts 'to fit definitions to what we intuitively consider to be rural'. For example, FOTHERGILL *et al.* (1985) and GUDGIN (1990) defined rural areas 'as local authorities in which all settlements had fewer than 35,000 people in 1971'; more recently KEEBLE *et al.* (1992) classified rural areas as those which exhibited 'low population density, a relatively high proportion of the population of working age engaged in agriculture and remoteness from large towns'; and TOWNSEND (1991, 1993) based his analysis of the rural economy in the 1980s on the OPCS classification of districts with 'similar characteristics' (OPSC, 1989). Although these classifications have been useful to highlight spatial difference and change in the British economy, their descriptive nature has meant that they have contributed little towards explaining these variations.

In the field of rural geography, similar attempts to distinguish rural areas on a functional basis (see, for example, CLOKE 1977, CLOKE and EDWARDS, 1986) were abandoned (CLOKE, 1994) as political economy perspectives (CLOKE, 1989) emphasised that countryside change reflected national transitions in economic, political and social structures. HOGGART (1989, 1990), for example, called for researchers to 'do away' with categories of urban and rural and, instead, to focus the casual features that transcended and shaped these environments. It was therefore misleading to consider surface differences between 'rural' and 'urban' areas.

However, there has been recent recognition that the term rural 'lingers in the realms of ideology with some important results' (HARVEY, 1989, p.72). This concept is

reflected in CLOKE and GOODWIN's (1992, 1993) attempt to find a theoretical 'middle ground' that denies 'rurality is in itself a deterministically casual mechanism' and yet suggests that people 'behave as though rural is real to them and is influential in their locational decisions' (CLOKE and GOODWIN, 1993, p.168). This is briefly summarised below.

The authors draw upon regulation theory to suggest that modes of production are maintained by sets of social and cultural norms or 'structured coherences'. Changes in production impose changes in these coherences which lead to new ways of 'living and thinking and feeling of life' (GRAMSCI, 1971 quoted in CLOKE and GOODWIN, 1993, p.169). Thus, as new rounds of capital are invested in the countryside they create, and indeed rely, on new ways of seeing the countryside. For example, the authors (CLOKE and GOODWIN, 1992, p.328) suggest that many new forms of consumption rely on the marketing of a sanitised 'rural idyll' which gives the impression of an unchanging and problem-free countryside. Likewise, it is suggested that the main role of state agencies has been to make remote rural areas *seem* attractive to outside investors. Constructions of rurality therefore play an important role in determining change in the countryside.

Although CLOKE and GOODWIN (1993, p.327) identify four different rounds of investment that have affected the countryside since the 1960s, they stress that change has been uneven and has 'taken different forms and has proceeded at different scales at different times in different rural areas.' It is therefore not only important to consider rural change as a socially constructed process, but also to study its impact on particular places.

These concepts have been used to guide empirical investigations of rural change. Notably, the authors have used this framework to explain social and cultural difference in rural Wales (CLOKE and MILBOURNE, 1992; CLOKE and DAVIES,

1992; CLOKE, GOODWIN and MILBOURNE, 1995) and other writers have recognised that the social construction of rurality plays an importance role in other rural issues, including: migration (HALFACREE, 1993), social life (JONES, 1995); the lifestyles of children (PHILO, 1992) and rural 'others' (MURDOCH and PRATT, 1993, 1994; PHILO, 1993), including 'new age' travelers (HALFACREE, 1995). However, these ideas have yet to be fully applied to the investigation of economic change (PRATT, 1995). As the earlier discussion highlighted, studies of rural industrialisation have all too often used rural as a functional rather than a social construction.

This paper uses the framework suggested by CLOKE and GOODWIN (1992) to examine industrial change experienced in the district of Leominster, located in western Hereford and Worcester (Figure 1). It focuses primarily on the manufacturing sector and, in particular, on change found on the district's largest industrial estate. It has three main goals.

Firstly, despite a resurgence of interest in place (BRADLEY and LOWE, 1984; JOHNSTON, 1991), many studies of economic change have been based on aggregate data, often at a regional scale, and have given little attention to the impact of restructuring at a sub-regional level, especially in remoter localities (COOKE'S (1989) locality work is based on seven 'urban' areas, for example). GOULD and KEEBLE (1984, p.200) have suggested that 'new firms are of greater significance locally, in particular on villages or small towns, than regional statistics suggest' and KEEBLE (1990, p. 243) has called for 'micro-level research on .... firm/small firm development in Britain's smaller towns and rural areas'. By adopting a micro-scale approach, this paper considers how rural social coherences (CLOKE and GOODWIN 1992) effect and are affected by manufacturing change.

Secondly, the paper examines whether social constructions of rurality can influence industrial growth in the countryside. Particular attention is given to the ways in which state and private investors view rurality and whether these have implications for industrial growth.

Thirdly, whilst there has been widespread attention given to the impact of agricultural restructuring (NEWBY, 1985) rural industrialisation has not been considered in the same detail (DAY *et al.*, 1989; PRATT, 1995). Consequently there has been widespread debate about the causes of this process (cf. MASSEY and MEEGAN, 1978; FOTHERGILL and GUDGIN, 1982; PERRY, 1979, 1987; KEEBLE, 1993). By concentrating on manufacturing growth in the district, it is hoped that this micro-scale study will provide evidence which may inform wider discussions about the nature of rural industrialisation.

### **Leominster District**

Since the 1960s, the district of Leominster underwent several important changes in its economic structure and social composition. After experiencing depopulation in the 1950s, a sustained period of in-migration led to a rise in population from 33,240 in 1961 to 39,304 in 1991 (1961 and 1991 Censuses), an increase of 18 percent. This introduced new people to the area, especially from the West Midlands conurbation (FLOWERDEW and BOYLE, 1992). Significant changes occurred in the employment structure of the district, which were consistent with CLOKE and GOODWIN'S (1992, p.327) analysis of rural economic change. Agriculture declined as the major employer in the district, whilst manufacturing and service jobs increased. In 1951, the Census recorded that 40.3% of the workforce were employed in agriculture, but by 1991 this had fallen to 14.9%. Changes in the service sector were less dramatic. In 1951 it employed 25% of the district's workforce, compared to 27% in 1991. Manufacturing, though, increased dramatically in significance, employing

8.6% of the district's workforce in 1951, and 19% in 1991. Although employment alone may not be an indicator of economic performance (for example, increased mechanisation on many farms has led to greater productivity but smaller workforces (BRITTON, 1990), DAY et al. (1989) point out that changes in occupational structure have important consequences for local social composition.

State agencies played a part in this transition. In 1984, the Development Commission recognised the need to combat agricultural decline and economic hardship in the district (BOWLER and LEWIS, 1991; RDC, 1991) and consequently, central and western Herefordshire (excluding Hereford) was specified as a Rural Development Area (RDA). This designation allowed the 'the provision of workspace for manufacturing and other employment needs' (RDC, 1991, p.5) through grants, sites and support for local authorities. This was consistent with County Council policy outlined in successive structure plans. For example, the 1982 Structure Plan suggested that 'the best hope for the area would appear to be in continuing to encourage small scale industry to set up here' (HEREFORD and WORCESTER, 1982, p.36). The policy remained operative in the nineties: 'small scale industrial and commercial development will generally be encouraged' (HEREFORD and WORCESTER, 1990, p.10).

It is important to note what these agencies regarded as 'rural'. Despite a recognised decline in agricultural jobs and the need to create alternative employment, considerable value was placed on the preservation of land for environmental and agricultural purposes. This constrained economic development to sites 'in or around the main urban areas of the county' (HEREFORD and WORCESTER, 1990, p.9). Therefore although on the one hand industrialisation was seen as important for the rural economy, it was also viewed as incompatible with other rural landuses and was therefore limited to what were seen as 'urban' (or at least built up) locations. As a consequence, industrial growth was directed into specialist industrial estates on the

peripheries of the major settlements. The largest of these estates was located in the town of Leominster. Between 1971 and 1991, it nearly doubled in size (Table 1) so that over half of the district's industrial premises were located there (Chamber of Trade and Commerce data). By 1992 it included forty-eight companies which employed over nine hundred people (author's survey).

The town of Leominster was therefore the most important centre for industrial growth in the district. However, it has already been noted that some studies of the rural economy have ignored industrial growth in towns over 10,000 people (see GUDGIN 1990 for example) because they have used arbitrary definitions of 'rural' which are designed to ignore built up areas of this size. It is possible that by adopting functional definitions of rurality, some important changes in the rural economy have been ignored. It is therefore important to emphasise social definitions and uses of 'rurality', if a economic change in the countryside is to be fully understood.

### **The Survey Framework**

Although these secondary data imply that a significant transformation occurred in the manufacturing base of the district, they give no indication about the nature of this change nor its impact on local social coherences. In order to address these issues, firms located on Leominster industrial estate were examined using a questionnaire survey. Whilst it was acknowledged that some industrial development had occurred outside this site, it was felt that county council's policy of concentration meant that the estate would have experienced the most significant and relevant economic changes in the district.

Companies were surveyed during the summer of 1992 in the manner advocated by MOYES and WESTHEAD (1990). Firms were contacted, without notice, by means of a personal approach. Immediately following this, a face-to-face interview was

conducted between the researcher and a member of management using a standardised questionnaire. This approach proved remarkably successful and succeeded in contacting 95% of premises on the Leominster industrial estate, a total of forty-six firms. The following sections discuss its main findings.

### **The Structural Characteristics of Leominster Industrial Estate**

It has been emphasised that economic restructuring has been uneven and has affected different rural localities in different ways (MARS DEN *et al.* 1993). This section analyses the firms on the estate to determine the nature of change in Leominster. It is, however, accepted that the estate was more attractive to some companies (particularly those encouraged by the RDC) than others and therefore the results emphasise these sectors of the local economy.

Out of the 46 surveyed firms, 27 (59%) were classed as manufacturing. However, apart from one firm which made printed circuit boards and another which constructed electronic weighing machines, there was little evidence of any 'high-technology' companies on this estate. Rather, firms produced standardised products such as clothing, furniture, plastic moldings or foodstuffs. The other 19 firms (41% of the total) were classed as 'non-manufacturing' (Table 2) and provided services such as retailing, wholesaling, distribution and transport.

Table 2 illustrates the origins of the companies in more detail. It distinguishes between 'indigenous' plants, which had only ever operated on the estate; 'migrant' plants, which had transferred from another site and 'branch' plants, which had been established on the estate by firms with headquarters elsewhere. In all of these categories local reorganisation played an important role in their development. The majority of 'migrant' plants, for example, transferred over very short distances to the estate and often from another location in the county. Thirteen (42%) of these firms

relocated from elsewhere in Leominster itself and a further 6 (29%) relocated from former sites in the Hereford and Worcester. Seventy-five percent of these firms stated that this was because the estate offered them larger premises and better opportunities for expansion.

Long distant movement was limited by comparison and only 5 (21%) migrant firms originated from outside the county. Behavioural motives were the main reasons for making these moves. For example, two firms relocated from the South East because their owners preferred the rural environment of Hereford, whilst the another moved from London because the owner claimed he mistook Herefordshire for Hertfordshire when he acquired his premises! Despite these cases, physical relocations from metropolitan areas did not play a major role in the development of the estate. Movements were predominantly local and initiated by the availability of space.

Similar trends were noted with the establishment of branch plants on the estate. Although two firms had headquarters abroad, the survey revealed that nine branch plants (70%) had head offices elsewhere in the county, including four in Leominster itself. In most cases (86%) branch plants were established because the estate had offered them the physical space to expand. There was no indication that branch plant investment resulted from a crisis of accumulation in metropolitan locations (MEEGAN, 1988) but, rather, it was due to local reorganisation.

These findings, together with the high percentage of 'indigenous' plants located on the estate, strongly supported GUDGIN'S (1990) hypothesis that localised expansion and re-location are important components of rural industrial growth. The impact of investment and migration from outside the county played only a minor role in the growth of the estate.

However, this did not imply that companies operated in isolation. Products were brought and sold in other localities, linking the estate with wider (See Tables 3 and 4) circuits of production and consumption. It was noted that manufacturing firms had significantly wider linkages than non-manufacturing firms. This confirmed that service companies were not part of a 'branch line' round of investment but, rather that they offered support, such as tool-hire or printing services, to other local companies.

This section has given some attention to the development of the industrial estates in Leominster. It has been illustrated that much of this growth has been due to local factors and, in particular, local reorganisation to overcome constraints of space. There appeared to be limited investment from industrial capital outside the district. Nevertheless, the development of the estates illustrated that Leominster district had experienced a significant growth in its industrial base. This had important implications for the local labour market, which are now explored in greater detail.

### **The Consequences of Industrial Growth**

CLOKE and GOODWIN (1992, 1993) consider that changes in production lead to the construction of new 'social coherences' in specific localities. More specifically, DAY *et al.* (1989) suggest that the restructuring of production in a given rural locality will lead to changes in its local occupational structure. In turn, the characteristics of people who are employed within it will 'help shape the nature and powers of the places they occupy' (p.230). The following section considers the employment structure of the estates and the implications of change on local labour markets. Particular attention is given to impacts of employment training on local workforces and the effect that job creation has on migration to the locality. Attention is also given to the attitudes of employers towards their workforces and, in doing so, some consideration is given to the ways in which changing employment structures reflect and alter constructions of rurality in the district.

### **i) Employment Structure**

Although it was not possible to consider the multiplier effect of industrial growth on other areas of local employment, the survey did allow a thorough consideration of the estate's employment characteristics.

Manufacturing firms were the most important employers on the estate and accounted for 68% of total employment (Table 6). It has been argued (see for example MASSEY, 1983, 1984; KEEBLE 1993) that these firms have chosen to locate in rural areas in order to exploit 'green' labour markets. More specifically, this involves the employment of women (frequently on a part-time basis) to reduce statutory benefits such as sick pay, pensions and holiday allowances. However, the employment structures of the surveyed companies suggested that this was not the case. Table 5 illustrates that whilst the majority (75%) of managerial staff were male and most (81%) clerical staff were female, the majority (72%) of manual workers (skilled and semi-skilled) were also male. Although nearly all (97%) part-time workers were female, very few of the total workforce (less than 4%) were employed on this basis.

The majority of employment was generated by indigenous firms (Table 5). Only 6% of employees worked for companies which had moved, either completely or as branch plants, from outside the county. By contrast, sixty-two percent of the workforce were employed by companies which had always been located in Leominster and the remaining third were employed by firms which had moved from elsewhere in Hereford and Worcester.

However, the survey did not reveal any other significant differences between the employment trends of 'indigenous', 'migrant' and 'branch' plants. All of the surveyed managers suggested that the size of their workforce had fluctuated over time.

Companies recruited most strongly when they were first established on the estate and then increased or decreased levels of recruitment according to need. For example, six firms reported that the late 1980s had been a period of growth when their workforces had expanded considerably. During the early 1990s, five companies experienced a significant decline in their numbers. These fluctuations might reflect wider patterns of growth and decline experienced by the UK economy during this period (see TOWNSEND, 1993), especially since most firms were connected with wider national markets (see Table 3 and 4).

## **ii) Recruitment, Migration and Social Recomposition**

It has been speculated by some commentators that the growth of rural manufacturing has contributed towards the process of counterurbanisation (see, for example, MOSELEY, 1984 ; FIELDING, 1989). However, it has already been established that most companies moved over very short distances to the estate. Consequently, only four jobs were transferred with firms that moved from outside the county. In all four cases these were the owners who wanted to move their companies for personal and environmental reasons. The establishment of new branch plants by firms with headquarters outside the county led only to the movement of a few key managerial personnel. Instead, firms looked towards their local labour markets for employees. Since Leominster lacked fast transport links to other areas of the county, there was also very little long distance commuting to the industrial estate and three quarters of employees were resident in or within ten miles of Leominster (Table 9). Labourforces were, therefore, predominantly local.

Nearly all firms (indigenous, migrant and branch) used local sources when attempting to recruit new employees. These included local newspapers; adverts in shops; friends and family; schools and the nearest job-centres (Table 8). Since new vacancies were not advertised in other localities, they were unlikely to attract applicants and therefore

in-migrants from them. It appeared, therefore, that job creation did not significantly influence counterurbanisation in the locality.

An exception occurred when managerial posts were vacant. Then, the search for employees then became wider and resorted to advertisements in the national press and specialist trade journals. The growth of the firms on the estate had a very selective impact on job-led migration and mainly attracted service classes from outside the district. These new middle classes have social and cultural impacts which are wide ranging and have been the subject of other investigations (see CLOKE and THRIFT, 1987; THRIFT 1987).

However, nearly half (45%) of managers said that they found local recruitment a problem. Eight firms reported that specialist skills were unavailable from local people; nine others complained that local workforces had a poor attitude towards industrial work and a further two firms admitted that the work they offered was unappealing, offered few prospects and therefore failed to attract many applicants.

These opinions demonstrate some of the tensions associated with the destruction and re-construction of local coherences in the countryside. It must be remembered that before 1960, agriculture was the dominant employer in the district and would have contributed strongly towards the creation of shared working practices and the social coherences associated with them. Indeed, some employers still associated the labour market with an agricultural background. For example, one employer claimed that locals were 'too agricultural'; another that they were too 'in bred' and another, reflecting a commonly held opinion, that 'locals were unused to industrial work.'

These comments suggest that many of the cultural associations of previous social coherences had important consequences in the formation of others. In particular, they contributed towards a poor perception of local workforces which made some employers reluctant to use local labour. This would suggest that local cultures and

perceptions of them can play a role in regulating the restructuring process. This supported COOKE'S (1990) suggestion that local difference can effect wider structural changes or, as CLOKE and GOODWIN (1992) suggest, that local cultures act as a type of 'glue' between different rounds of investment.

Despite these problems, the quality of local labour did not seem to have hindered industrial growth in Leominster. The number and size of companies operating on the estate increased (Tables 1 and 7) and did so using predominantly indigenous labour (Tables 8 and 9). Since most managers actually used local labour, this might suggest that the problems associated with local workforces were more perceived than real. Indeed, recent work by JONES and JONES (1994) has suggested that individual employers can hold significantly different opinions about local workforces, depending on their length of residence in the locality and their previous perceptions of it. In this instance, though, no significant differences were noted between the managers of plants which had transferred from outside the county (either as branch plants or as migrants) and those with more local origins.

### **iii) Policy Issues**

If local skills were unsuitable, however, then companies did little to improve them (Table 10). In the case of manual workers, training was normally limited to in-house instruction to enable low-skilled and repetitive operation of machinery. It was rare that companies offered any training leading to specialist skills or qualifications. For example, only four firms offered any form of management training and only seven helped prepare employees for City and Guilds qualifications. This implied that firms either employed people who were already skilled - such as managers or clerical workers - or employed unskilled workers and offered them limited training to perform very specific tasks. Companies will therefore attract service class migrants

from outside the district and, conversely, force people seeking professional training to work outside the district.

These private companies did not therefore play a significant role in restructuring the skills of the indigenous labour market. KEEBLE *et al.* (1992, p. xiii) have suggested that unskilled local workforces have hindered rural businesses and that it should be a government policy to ensure that 'local labour has the skills to meet the needs of modern rural industry'. It is therefore essential that training opportunities are improved in the locality. However, as the County Council has noted, this is difficult: 'there are problems of inaccessibility from rural areas to training courses for skills development' (HEREFORD AND WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL 1994, p. vi). It is perhaps ironic to note that whilst agricultural colleges are situated in rural parts of the county such as Holme Lacy or Pershore, the county's technical colleges, which provide industrial training courses, are located in the cities of Worcester and Hereford.

KEEBLE *et al.* (1992) have also stressed the need to develop managerial, technical and entrepreneurial talents to ensure business success. Traditionally, people have been recruited from higher education institutions to provide these skills. Although there are plans to develop a university in Worcester to serve 'the needs of its regional community, local industry and commerce' (WORCESTER COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION 1994, p.2), there are currently no universities in the county of Hereford and Worcester. Thus, the lack of opportunities for a university education and managerial training (see above) in the county may be constraining the development of these skills.

However, apart from a lack of training, there are a number of other problems which are constraining the development of a qualified industrial workforce in rural areas. For example, the County Council has noted that the continuing out-migration of young people is 'resulting in an ageing and less adaptable workforce' (HEREFORD AND

WORCESTER 1994, p. 6). Similarly, it has noted that a lack of childcare facilities is restricting opportunities for women to return to work (1994, p.vi). If new workforces are to be developed, then there is a need to tackle wider social problems in rural areas. A recent attempt to do this has been via a 'Rural Strategy' initiated by Hereford and Worcester County Council. This is described a partnership between a range of local agencies, including businesses, Hereford and Worcester Training and Enterprise Council (HAWTEC), education establishments, farmers, recreational groups, churches and other groups with interests in the countryside. Whilst the effectiveness of this project remains to be seen, it is worth noting that these agents reflect different political, social, economic and cultural structures. This confirms MARSDEN *et al.*'s (1993) suggestion that countryside change should be conceptualised by considering all of these casual features and also confirms that economic change is bound up with a whole range of other important transitions.

On a more practical note, it should be stressed that any attempt to deal with economic change in the countryside (such as employment provision and training) must therefore also deal with other social changes (such as the provision of affordable homes for young industrial workers or childcare for women workers). Since these are beyond the scope of most employers (although traditionally, agricultural workers were offered tied housing) and it requires a greater political will (McLAUGHLIN 1987, CLOKE 1993) to ensure success.

### **Community Involvement**

So far, it has been assumed that social change in individual localities can be traced to changes in new modes of production, which lead to changes in occupational structure, which, in turn, help to transform the nature of individual localities. (DAY *et al.* 1989) Indeed, much has been written about the impact of new populations and class restructuring on rural social coherences (see, for example CLOKE and THRIFT 1987,

MASSEY 1983). Although it is recognised that this may take many forms, it has been suggested that some of these social and cultural changes manifest themselves in the operation of local clubs and organisations. For example, the report on 'Lifestyles in rural England' (CLOKE *et al.* 1994) suggests some rural residents view 'newcomers' as 'taking over' community organisations and JONES (1993) has illustrated that status as 'newcomer' or 'local' can be determined by membership of different organisations.

It is also worth noting that local companies can also directly influenced local social networks. Over half (52%) of companies offered sponsorship for local activities. These ranged from funding local galas or shows, to sponsorship of sports clubs and contributions towards the financing of local schools. Clearly, this investment in the community benefited the ends of the company concerned. For example, sponsorship can serve in an advertising function - for example, in the support of agricultural shows or local galas by companies with agricultural interests - and can also lead to tax relief. Whilst many geographers have focused on the role of newcomers and key participants in the changing social structure of rural areas, the survey suggested that new firms can also play a role in this process, by directly investing capital - that otherwise would not be available - into the community. Further research is needed on this topic and, in particular, whether sponsorship and other attempts at community integration can play a role in the societalisation of local populations.

## **Conclusions**

This paper has adopted a micro-scale approach to the study of rural industrialisation by examining a selected industrial estate within one remote district. It has confirmed some of the problems facing companies in the countryside. More importantly, though, it has allowed a consideration of the social and cultural factors which underpin many of these problems. These two sets of findings are discussed below.

The companies on the estate faced many of the constraints which have hindered industrial growth in other rural areas and have been highlighted in other studies. In particular, many companies found it hard to recruit a suitably skilled industrial workforce. KEEBLE *et al.* (1992) have suggested that this is one of the main barriers to business success in the countryside and that greater emphasis should be given towards suitable training. However, the paper has suggested that training opportunities are severely limited in the district and that private companies and state agencies need to improve access to training initiatives and vocational courses.

The survey also noted that the growth of the estate in Leominster was mainly influenced by local reorganisation. The estate offered local firms room to expand and the opportunity of obtaining larger premises. Consequently, most 'migrant' firms moved over very short distances to the estate and many 'branch' plants were established by other locally-based parent plants. As GUDGIN (1990) has suggested, it would appear that rural areas can offer opportunities for expansion and that this is an important factor in the growth of rural manufacturing. However, since most migrant and branch firms on the estate had moved from elsewhere in the locality, this might imply that there was a lack of space in other areas of the district. As KEEBLE *et al.* (1992) have suggested, there is a need for more industrial premises in remoter rural areas. Although some attention has been given to the provision of workspace in these places (LEOMINSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL, 1988), attempts have been somewhat piecemeal and have been confined to the conversion of redundant agricultural premises. More detailed consideration needs to be given to the constraints of firms situated outside the industrial estate.

In the introduction of this paper, it was argued that greater attention needed to be given to the role social and cultural constructions of rurality in the process of industrial change. Using CLOKE and GOODWIN'S (1992, p. 334) framework, it was hypothesised that local cultures acted as a kind of cultural 'glue' between new rounds of investment, with significant consequences. Indeed, there was strong indication that

local constructions of rurality played an important part in determining the nature of rural change and industrial growth in Leominster.

It was noted that until the 1960s, agriculture dominated the district and was the single most important employer. Although the district had undergone important changes in its economic structure and social composition, there was evidence to suggest that agriculture was still viewed as an important component of rurality in the area. These perceptions had some effect on the development of Leominster's industrial estate.

State agencies continued to regard agriculture as the most important activity in the area. For example, the RDC designated Western Hereford and Worcester as a RDA and made it a priority to combat '*agricultural* decline and economic hardship' (RDC 1991, p.4, emphasis added). As part of strategy, the development of industrial employment was often seen as an alternative to agricultural work. Similarly, county council strategy confined the development of estates to what were viewed as urban areas to preserve agricultural land. Thus, the agricultural activity dominated many planning strategies and was still viewed as important in the district. For example, in a document encouraging economic diversity, LEOMINSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL (1988, p.1) still considered that 'the lynch pin of the rural economy is agriculture'. Likewise, many employees strongly perceived the area to be agricultural in nature and consequently felt that workforces lacked the experience, skills and attitude for industrial work and were only suited to farm-work.

Although new modes of production, such as manufacturing companies, were evident in the locality, many attitudes remain associated with the previous dominance of agriculture. It has yet to be appreciated by employers and state agencies that new modes of production require new ways of seeing the countryside and that, in particular, the term 'rural' should not be associated synonymously with agriculture.

Although it should be stressed that rurality *per se* does not influence industrial development, this paper has suggested that if rural industrialisation is to be understood, there is a need to consider economic changes within wider political, cultural and social contexts. This has consequences for policy issues and academic study.

Firstly, in terms of policy, there is a need to address wider social problems in rural areas. It is impossible to simply deal with problems of training or economic development alone. Issues such as affordable local housing or childcare facilities are inseparable from the need to support a stable and modern workforce. Initiatives such as the Rural Strategy (HEREFORD and WORCESTER 1994) should be welcomed, albeit cautiously, for its attempt to integrate a range of rural problems into a coherent strategy which recognises the diversity of values held by different groups about the countryside.

This paper has suggested that closer scrutiny should be given to recruitment, training and the influence of companies on social networks or coherences in local areas. Greater attention should therefore be paid to local, as well as regional, patterns of restructuring. Studies of individual places will allow closer investigation of the social, political, cultural and economic factors which influence industrial change in the countryside. Micro as well as macro investigations should be employed to achieve this.

### **Acknowledgments**

Thanks go to Tony Moyes and two anonymous referees for constructive comments on an initial draft of this paper. This paper was first presented at the annual conference of the Rural Economy and Society Study Group, 1994.

## **Bibliography**

BOWLER, I. and LEWIS, G. (1991) Community involvement in rural development: the example of the Rural Development Commission, In: *People in the Countryside*, pp.160 - 177, A.Champion and C.Watkins (Eds). Paul Chapman Publishing, London.

BRADLEY, A. and LOWE, P. (Eds.) (1984) *Locality and Rurality: Economy and Society in Rural Regions*. Geo Books, Norwich.

BRITTON, D. (1990) *Agriculture in Britain*, C.A.B, Wallingford.

CHAMPION, A. (1987) *Changing places: Britain's demographic, economic and social complexion*. Edward Arnold, London.

CHAMPION, A. and TOWNSEND, A. (1990) *Contemporary Britain: a geographical perspective*. Edward Arnold, London.

CLOKE, P. (1977) An index of rurality for England and Wales, *Regional Studies*, **11**, 31 - 46.

CLOKE, P. (1989) Rural geography and political economy, In: *New Models in Geography*, Volume 1, pp. 164 - 197, R. Peet and N. Thrift (Eds). Unwin Hyman, London.

CLOKE, P. (1993) On problems and solutions: the reproduction of problems for rural communities in Britain during the 1980s, *Journal of Rural Studies*, **9**, 113 - 121.

- CLOKE, P. (1994) (En)culturing political economy: a life in the day of a 'rural geographer', In: *Writing the Rural*, pp.149 - 190, P. Cloke, M. Doel, D.Matless, M.Phillips, N.Thrift. Paul Chapman Publishing, London.
- CLOKE, P. and DAVIES, L. (1992) Deprivation and lifestyle in rural Wales I - towards a cultural dimension, *Journal of Rural Studies*, **8**, 321-336.
- CLOKE, P. and EDWARDS, G. (1986) Rurality in England and Wales: a replication of the 1971 index, *Regional Studies*, **20**, 289-306.
- CLOKE, P. and GOODWIN, M. (1992) Conceptualising countryside change: from post-Fordism to rural structured coherence, *Transactions of Institute of British Geographers*, **17**, 321-336.
- CLOKE, P. and GOODWIN, M. (1993) Rural change: structured coherence or unstructured incoherence, *Terra*, **105**, 166 - 174.
- CLOKE, P., MILBOURNE, P. and THOMAS, C. (1994) *Lifestyles in Rural England*, Rural Development Commission, Salisbury.
- CLOKE, P., GOODWIN, M and MILBOURNE, P (1995) Regulation theory and rural research; theorising the rural transition, *Environment and Planning A: Society and Space*, forthcoming.
- CLOKE, P. and MILBOURNE, P. (1992) Deprivation and lifestyle in rural Wales II - rurality and cultural dimension, *Journal of Rural Studies*, **8**, 351-372.
- CLOKE, P., PHILO, C. and SADLER, C. (1992) *Approaching Human Geography*. Paul Chapman Publishing, London.

- CLOKE, P. and THRIFT, N. (1987) Intra-class conflict in rural areas, In: *Rural Restructuring: Global Processes and their Responses*, pp. 165-181, T.Marsden, P.Lowe, and S.Whatmore, (Eds). David Fulton Publishers, London.
- COOKE, P. (Ed.) (1990) *Localities: the Changing Face of Urban Britain*. Unwin Hyman, London.
- CURRAN, J. and STOREY, D. (Eds) (1993) *Small Firms in Urban and Rural Locations*, Routledge, London.
- DAY, G., REES, M. and MURDOCH, J. (1989) Social change, rural localities and the state: the restructuring of rural Wales, *Journal of Rural Studies*, **5**, 227-244.
- FLOWERDEW, R. and BOYLE, P. (1992) Migration trends for the West Midlands: suburbanisation, counterurbanisation or rural depopulation? In: *Migration Processes and Patterns, Volume 2, Population Redistribution in the United Kingdom*, J. Stillwell, P.Rees and P.Boden. Belhaven, London.
- FOTHERGILL, S. and GUDGIN, G (1982) *Unequal Growth*. Heinemann, London.
- FOTHERGILL, S., GUDGIN,G., KITSON, D. and MONK, A. (1985) Rural industrialisation: trends and causes, In: *Industrialisation of the Countryside*, pp. 147-160, M.Healey, and B.Ilbery, (Eds). Geo Books, Norwich.
- FIELDING, A. (1989) Population distribution in Western Europe: trends since 1950 and the debate about counterurbanisation, In: *Advances in Regional*

- Demography*, pp. 167-179, P.Congdon, and P.Bathey, (Eds.). Belhaven Press, London.
- GOULD, A. and KEEBLE, D. (1984) New firms and rural industrialisation, *Regional Studies*, **18**, 189-202.
- GUDGIN, G. (1990) Appendix F. Beyond farming: economic change in rural areas of the United Kingdom, In: *Faith in the Countryside*, pp. 369-380, The report of the Archbishop's commission in rural areas. Acora, Bournemouth.
- HALFACREE, K. (1993) Locality and social representation: space, discourse and alternative definitions of rural, *Journal of Rural Studies*, **9**, 23-28.
- HALFACREE, K. (1995) Out of place in the countryside: travellers and the rural 'idyll', *Antipode*, **25**, forthcoming.
- HARVEY, D. (1989) *The Urban Experience*, Blackwell, London.
- HEREFORD and WORCESTER (1982) *Review of structure plans: Hereford and Worcester County*, Hereford and Worcester County Council, Worcester.
- HEREFORD and WORCESTER (1990) *Hereford and Worcester County Council structure plan written statement (1986 - 2001)*, Hereford and Worcester County Council, Worcester.
- HEREFORD and WORCESTER (1994) *Rural Strategy, Draft Report*, Hereford and Worcester County Council, Worcester.
- HOGGART, K (1989) Not a definition of rural, *Area*, **20**, 35-40.

- HOGGART, K. (1990) Let's do away with rural, *Journal of Rural Studies*, **6**, 245 - 257.
- JOHNSTON, R. (1991) *A Question of Place*, Blackwell, London.
- JONES, N. (1993) *Living in Rural Wales*, Gomer, Llandysul.
- JONES, O. (1995) Lay discourses of the rural: developments and implications for rural studies, *Journal of Rural Studies*, **11**, 35- 50.
- JONES, S. and JONES, D. (1994) *Vacancies and Recruitment in a Peripheral Labour Market: a case study of North West Wales*, Research Paper RP 94/23 School of Accounting, Banking and Economics, University of Wales, Bangor.
- KEEBLE, D. (1985) Entrepreneurship and manufacturing firm formation: the East Anglian case, In: *Industrialisation of the Countryside*, pp.197-219, M.Healey and B.Ilbery, (Eds.). Geo Books, Norwich.
- KEEBLE, D. (1990) Small firms, new firms and uneven regional development in the United Kingdom, *Area*, **22**, 234-245.
- KEEBLE, D. (1993) Small firm creation, innovation and growth and the urban-rural shift, In: *Small Firms in Urban and Rural Areas*, pp. 55-78, J.Curran, and D. Storey, (Eds.). Routledge, London.
- KEEBLE, D., TYLER, P., BROOM, G., and LEWIS, J., (1992) *Business success in the countryside*, HMSO, London.

- LEOMINSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL (1988) *Broadening the base of the rural Economy*, Leominster.
- MARSDEN, T., MURDOCH, J., LOWE, P., MUNTON, R., FLYNN, A. (1993) *Constructing the Countryside*, UCL Press, London.
- MASSEY, D. (1983) Industrial restructuring as class restructuring, *Regional Studies*, 17, 73 - 89.
- MASSEY, D. (1984) *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structure and the Geography of Production*, MacMillan, London.
- MASSEY, D. and MEEGAN, R. (1978) Industrial Restructuring versus the cities, *Urban Studies*, **15**, 273 - 288.
- McLAUGHLIN, B. (1987) Rural policy into the 1990s: self help or self deception *Journal of Rural Studies*, **4**, 81-90.
- MEEGAN, R. (1988) A Crisis of mass production? In: *The Economy in Question*, pp.136-183, D.Massey and J.Allen (Eds.). Sage, London.
- MOSELEY, M (1984) The rival of rural areas in advanced economies: a review of some causes and consequences, *Geoforum*, **15**, 447-456.
- MOYES, A. and WESTHEAD, P. (1990) *New Firms and their Founders in Rural and Urban Wales*, Monograph No.4, RSLU, Aberystwyth.
- MURDOCH, J and PRATT, A. (1993) Rural Studies: modernism, postmodernism and the Post Rural, *Journal of Rural Studies*, **9**, 411-428.

MURDOCH, J and PRATT, A. (1994) Rural studies of power and the power of rural studies: a reply to Philo, *Journal of Rural Studies*, **10**, 83 - 88.

NEWBY, H. (1985) *A Green and Pleasant Land? Social Change in Rural England*  
Wildwood House, London

OPSC (1989) *Key population and vital statistics*, HMSO, London.

PERRY, R. (1979) Why do manufacturing firms come to Cornwall? In: *Summary of studies of the Cornish economy*, Cornwall Industrial Development Association, CIA, Camborne.

PERRY, R. (1987) Eligibility and access to small factories: a case study in Cornwall, *Journal of Rural Studies*, **3**, 15-22.

PHILO, C. (1992) Neglected rural geographies: a review, *Journal of Rural Studies*, **8**, 193-209.

PHILO, C. (1993) Postmodern rural geography? A reply to Murdoch and Pratt, *Journal of Rural Studies*, **9**, 429-436.

PRATT, A (1995) Book review of Curran and Storey (1993) op cit, *Journal of Rural Studies*, **11**, 102 - 103.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (1991) *Hereford and Worcester rural development area 1991 submission, third strategy and programme*, Hereford.

THRIFT, N. (1987) Manufacturing rural geography? *Journal of Rural Studies*, **3**, 77-83.

TOWNSEND, A. (1991) New forms of employment in rural areas: a national perspective, In: *People in the countryside: studies of social change in rural Britain*, pp. 84-95, A. Champion C.Watkins (Eds.) Paul Chapman, London.

TOWNSEND, A. (1993) The urban-rural cycle in the Thatcher growth years, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, **18**, 207-221.

WORCESTER COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION (1994) *Strategic Plan*, Unpublished, Worcester College of Higher Education.

Table 1

DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC CHANGE IN LEOMINSTER

	Change in Resident		Number of Firms on	
	Population		the Industrial Estate	
	1971	1991	1971	1991
Leominster	7,078	9,928	25	48

(Sources: 1971, 1991 Census; Hereford Chamber of Trade  
Commerce; Author's Survey)

and

Table 2

FUNCTION OF PLANTS

Plant	Function		
	Manufacturing	Non-	Total
		Manufacturing	
Indigenous	6	3	9
-----			
Migrant Plants			
Origin			
Leominster	7	6	13

Inside County	6		6
Outside County	2	3	5
Total Migrants	15	9	24
-----			
Branch Plants			
Headquarters			
In Leominster	1	3	4
Inside County	3	2	5
Outside County	2	2	4
Branch Plants	6	7	13
-----			
Total Firms	27	19	46
-----			

Source: Author's survey

Table 3

ORIGIN OF RAW MATERIALS

-----			
Source of Bought Goods			
-----			
Function	In County	National	International
-----			

Manufacturing	6	21	11
Non-Manufacturing	12	10	1

---

Total	18	31	12
-------	----	----	----

---

Source: Author's Survey

(N.b Since more than one source/location of materials could be given, these numbers total greater than the actual number of firms)

Table 4

DESTINATION OF SOLD GOODS OR SERVICES

---

Destination of Sold Goods/Services

---

Function	In County	National	International
----------	-----------	----------	---------------

---

Manufacturing	9	23	9
Non-Manufacturing	19	4	1

---

Total	28	27	10
-------	----	----	----

---

Source: Author's Survey

(N.b Since more than one source/location of materials could be given, these numbers total greater than the actual number of firms)

Table 5

NUMBERS EMPLOYED ON THE INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, BY STATUS OF PLANT

Plant	Employment Status							
	Management		Clerical		Manual		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Indigenous	16	17	2	11	69	10	125	
-----								
Migrant Plants								
Origin								
Leominster	27	5	10	10	90	31	173	
Inside County	12	4	-	13	69	30	128	
Outside County	5	3	-	2	28	7	45	
Total Migrants	44	12	10	25	187	68	346	
-----Branch Plants								
Headquarters								
In Leominster	17	2	-	10	155	101	285	
Inside County	21	2	5	23	106	18	175	
Outside County	3	1	-	3	2	4	13	
Total Branches	41	5	5	36	263	123	473	
-----								
Total Firms	101	34	17	72	519	201	944	

Source: Author's Survey

Table 6

NUMBERS EMPLOYED ON THE INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, BY FUNCTION OF PLANT

Function	Employment Status						
	Management Clerical		Manual	Total		Male	
	Male	Female	Male	Female			
Female							
Manufacturing	60	14	17	57	295	196	639
Non-manufacturing	41	20		15	224	5	305_ _
Total	101	34	17	72	519	201	944

Source: Author's Survey

Table 7

NET EMPLOYMENT CHANGES1

---

Plant	Management	Clerical	Manual	Total
	First Year Net Change	First Year Net Change	First Year Net Change	First Year Net Change

Indigenous	15 (18)	3 (10)	13 (66)	31 (94)
------------	---------	--------	---------	---------

---

Migrant Plants

Origin

Leominster	18 (14)	1 (19)	49 (72)	68 (105)
Inside County	3 (13)	3 (10)	15 (84)	21 (107)
Outside County	4 (4)	1 (1)	31 (3)	36 (8)

Total Migrants	25 (31)	5 (30)	95 (159)	125 (220)
----------------	---------	--------	----------	-----------

---

Branch Plants

Headquarters

In Leominster	2 (17)	1 (9)	9 (247)	12 (273)
Inside County	7 (16)	6 (22)	72 (103)	85 (141)
Outside County	1 (3)	- (3)	1 (5)	2 (11)

Total Branches	10 (36)	7 (34)	82 (355)	99 (425)
----------------	---------	--------	----------	----------

---

Total	75 (85)	15 (74)	190 (580)	225 (739)
-------	---------	---------	-----------	-----------

Source: Author's Survey

1. Firms were asked how many people they employed after their first year in operation. These figures were subtracted from current employment figures (Table 6) to give the net increase in employment generated by firms on the estate during their operational life. It is recognised that these figures hide redundancies and other job losses.

Table 8

METHODS OF RECRUITMENT

Plant	Employment Status		
	Managerial	Clerical	Manual
Job Centres	1	2	28
Local Papers	-	2	12
National Papers	1	-	2
Trade Journals	1	1	6
Word of Mouth	1	3	19
Family	-	-	1
Local Papers	-	-	3
Schools	-	-	5
Training Schemes	1	-	6

Source: Author's Survey

Table 9

EMPLOYEES' PLACES OF RESIDENCE

Place of Residence				
Status	Within Leominster	10 Miles of Leominster	Elsewhere in County	Total
Management	34%	10%	55%	100%
Clerical	71%	8%	21%	100%
Manual	70%	11%	19%	100%
All Employees	64%	11%	25%	100%

Source: Author's survey

Table 10

THE NUMBER OF FIRMS OFFERING TRAINING TO EMPLOYEES

Training Offered	Management	Clerical	Manual
College Courses	3	-	7
In House Training	1	-	27
Government Training Scheme	-	2	17
Totals	4	2	51

Source: Author's Survey

