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PART I

Chapter 1. Post-productivism in rural areas: A contested concept

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Introduction

The concept of 'post-productivism' was introduced in the 1990s as an attempt to explain and theorize changes and trends in contemporary agriculture, where the focus on agricultural production gradually shifted towards demands for amenities, ecosystem services and preservation of cultural landscapes (McCarthy, 2005; Wilson & Rigg, 2003). Thus, post-productivism is a term that is closely related to the 'new way' of looking at rural areas, referred to as the 'new rural paradigm' (OECD, 2006).

Post-productivism embraces both macro and micro changes, and hence captures a whole array of rural issues, such as problems concerning land-use planning, rural development, and social and economic change both on-farm as well as off-farm (Evans, Morris & Winter, 2002). It is also reflected in governmental policy in which a change in direction has taken place over the years, switching from emphasis on supporting agricultural production to incorporating measures for the wider rural development (Evans et al., 2002; Woods, 2011). There are also other areas of research on post-productivism, however, beyond the scope of this paper, such as accounting (e.g. Jack, 2007), socio-political theory (e.g. Fitzpatrick, 2004), and welfare theory (e.g. Goodin, 2001; van der Veen & Groot, 2006).

However, post-productivism has been under critique, both in terms of empirical evidence and theory, and alternative discourses have emerged that according to the critiques better describe the prevailing processes in rural areas, such as multifunctionality (e.g. Björkhaug & Richards, 2007) and ecological modernization (e.g.

Evans et al., 2002). For example, it is argued that agricultural production is still important in rural areas, and that post-productivism applies best to western European countries, especially the United Kingdom (UK) where the development of the theory started (McCarthy, 2005).

The aim of this paper is to portray 'post-productivism' in rural areas in a general sense as described in scientific papers, including the origin of the concept and how it is perceived by and used among scholars. Moreover, the paper also attempts to identify strengths and weaknesses in the post-productivism discourse and to set post-productivism in relation to multifunctionality. The paper is the result of text analysis of a selective choice of literature on post-productivism and multifunctionality, found through database search (foremost Web of Science) and in the generated articles' reference lists. Thus, it does not pretend to be an all-encompassing review capturing all themes or views on post-productivism but rather providing a background that can be used as an introduction to the field. It also serves as a starting point for a future paper that aim to elaborate further on the theoretical (and practical) implications of multifunctionality, post-production and post-productivism for research.

The paper is organized as follows. After a brief introduction the concept of post-productivism is described, including origin, definitions/characteristics, study area, and critique. Then multifunctionality is briefly described, followed by a discussion on research strengths and weaknesses. Finally, conclusions are drawn and future research is proposed.

Post-productivism

Origin

'Post-productivism' became commonly used as a concept in the 1990s by rural geographers to describe "the emergence of a new era of agricultural production" (Woods, 2011, p. 79). This discourse challenged 'productivism', which according to Woods (2011), "refers to a discourse of agricultural organization in which the function of farming was singularly conceived as the production of food and fibre, and which

prioritized increasing agricultural production over all other considerations” (p. 67). Productivism has had a great effect on the countryside as a whole, transforming social structures, environmental conditions, and landscapes in order to reach the highest agricultural production possible (Woods, 2011). Intensification, concentration, and specialization characterize productivist agriculture (Ilbery & Bowler, 1998).

In the 1980s, controversies surrounding state-supported finance of over-production of farm products together with public concerns about environmental impact, food quality and animal welfare led to demand for reforms in agricultural policy and practice. Contrary to what happened in Australia and New Zealand, no radical reforms took place in the European Union (EU) and the United States, where farming lobbies withstood the pressure. Instead, gradual measures were taken (e.g. encouraging farm diversification, payments to farmers for environmental improvements, organic farming support) that resulted in a development towards what later became known as 'post-productivism' (Woods, 2011). The changed focus from productivist agriculture to post-productivist activities is by some researchers referred to as the 'post-productivist transition' (e.g. Ilbery & Bowler, 1998), or the 'post-productivist countryside' (Argent, 2002), and is most evident in the UK and Western Europe (Argent, 2002).

The literature on post-productivism is primarily focusing on agriculture and with an emphasis on the UK. In fact, the conceptualization of post-productivism is based on “the specific historic and contemporary socioeconomic and political situation of UK agricultural and rural change” (Wilson & Rigg, 2003, p. 685). The concept has frequently been used as the antithesis of 'productivism' (Mather, Hill & Nijnik, 2006). In this sense, while productivism refers to intensive farming with high inputs and high yields, post-productivism is “an approach to farming that is environmentally sensitive, not predicated on high yields and where farmers may look to non-agricultural use of their land and resources to supplement their incomes” (Jack, 2007, p. 910). There is also an increased focus on the countryside as a place of consumption (Burton & Wilson, 2006). The concept has also been applied beyond agriculture, including, for example, studies on forestry (Mather et al., 2006), rural governance (Wilson, 2004), second homes (Hoogendoorn, 2010; Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2011), and on wider rural change

such as land use change (e.g. Mather et al., 2006). However, holistic approaches to post-productivism are lacking despite Holmes' (2006) opinion that post-productivism is the only conceptualization with a holistic view of issues relating to rural change. Moreover, Hoogendoorn (2010) argues that relatively few studies of other land uses than agriculture (e.g. forestry, fishing, mining) as well as consumptive uses (e.g. tourism, recreation) exist.

Characteristics of post-productivism

Mather et al. (2006) argue that 'dimensions' rather than 'definitions' is increasingly used in the rural debate to characterize post-productivism because of "the breadth and diversity of meaning" implied in the concept (p. 442). Based on Mather et al. (2006), Markey, Halseth and Manson (2008) group these dimensions as "the nature and type of production (from commodity to noncommodity outputs), the multidimensionality of objectives associated with landscape and resources (including environmental, amenity, and ecosystem service values), and the importance of governance (representing a greater diversity of actors and institutions) in land-use decision-making" (p. 410). Ilbery and Bowler (1998), Wilson (2001), Evans et al. (2002), and Mather et al. (2006) - among the most frequently cited literature- all present dimensions, or characteristics, of post-productivism. Ilbery and Bowler (1998) refer to the 'known characteristics' of post-productivism, which especially apply on agriculture in the EU and the United States. These are: reduced output of food, withdrawal of state subsidies, production of food within an increasingly competitive international market, and growing environmental regulation of agriculture. They also talk about the 'three bipolar dimensions of change' in agriculture which include change from intensification to extensification, from concentration to dispersion, and from specialization to diversification (Ilbery & Bowler, 1998). Next, Wilson (2001) detected seven dimensions of post-productivism, all antitheses of productivism: ideology, actors, food regimes, agricultural production, agricultural policies, farming techniques and environmental impacts. He also argues that all dimensions need to be under consideration for a complete understanding of post-productivism as well as productivism. Moreover, Evans et al. (2002) merged the characteristics of Ilbery and Kneafsey (1997) and Ilbery and Bowler (1998) into five categories which then were each critically assessed to support their critical view of post-

productivism (see section *Critique*). These are: the shift from quantity to quality in food production, the growth of on-farm diversification and off-farm employment (pluriactivity), extensification and the promotion of sustainable farming through agri-environmental policy, dispersion of production patterns, and environmental regulation and restructuring of government support for agriculture (p. 317). Mather et al. (2006), on the other hand, expand the focus on agriculture to also include forestry and land use change. They specifically argue that post-productivism should be perceived as “a *shift* in emphasis, and not as an absolute change from material production to service provision” (p. 451). They looked for evidence of post-productivism in agriculture and forestry in the UK in their evaluation based on the characteristics of Ilbery and Bowler (1998), Wilson (2001) and Evans et al. (2002), and found evidence of change that supports the idea of post-productivism, although of varying magnitude depending on characteristic/dimension.

From a policy perspective, Macken-Walsh (2009) refers to post-productivism as a model that promotes alternative forms of rural economic activity. According to her, post-productivism is one of three main paradigmatic changes in contemporary EU rural development agenda, all with their own set of development challenges; the other two being economic diversification related to globalization, and governance (from top-down to bottom-up). She claims that post-productivism has influenced rural policies with “an increased policy focus away from mainstream commodity productivist models of development towards high value-added and innovation in the rural economy” (p. 22). Accordingly, post-productivist programs have emerged, with focus on environmental, economic and social sustainability, one such initiative being the LEADER program (Macken-Walsh, 2009).

As indicated above, post-productivism is a complex concept that, according to Wilson (2001), encompasses environmental, economic, social and cultural dimensions, thus stretching over several disciplinary domains. Indeed, Hoogendoorn (2010) in his study on second homes in a post-productivist context in South Africa reviewed the debate on post-productivism and concluded “that no single set of categorisations can come close to developing a truly holistic theoretical conceptualisation of the post-productivist

countryside, yet a mix of the different indicators can give a fairly good understanding of the contemporary countryside” (p. 38). Furthermore, he notes that the theory of post-productivism lacks a set of indicators that define a post-productivist countryside. Rather there are different kinds of post-productivist countrysides where “contemporary categorizations are very much case-specific and severely lacking to the broader processes of rural change” (Hoogendoorn, 2010, p. 13). Another comment related to conceptualization is by Wilson (2001) who suggests that rather than productivism and post-productivism being separate entities, there is a spectrum of different views in which “different localities are positioned at different points in a temporal, spatial and conceptual transition from ‘pre-productivist’ to ‘post-productivist’ agricultural regimes” (p. 77). This, he argues, is true within the EU, for example, where some Mediterranean countries have not fully entered the productivist phase, while at the same time the northern European countries "may be firmly embedded in the post-productivist transition" (Wilson, 2011, p. 91). With common policies within EU (e.g. CAP) this means that post-productivist policies may be applied on countries with productivist practices and thinking, resulting in diverging implementation of EU policies (Wilson, 2001). That productivist agriculture often coexists with post-productivist activities has led to some researchers’ preference for alternative concepts such as 'multifunctionality', which they think better describes the ongoing changes in rural areas (see section *Multifunctionality*).

Studies beyond the UK

Literature on post-productivism with focus outside the UK is limited. Nevertheless, the number is increasing and includes studies from, for example, Norway (Björkhaug & Richards 2007), Denmark (Kristensen, 2001), Australia (e.g. Argent, 2002; Björkhaug & Richards, 2007; Holmes, 2002), the United States (e.g. Bergstrom, 2001), South Africa (Hoogendoorn, 2010; Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2011), and at the EU level (e.g. Wilson, 2002). Although, as indicated with this list, most research on post-productivism focuses on developed countries, there are also a limited number of studies on developing countries. One example is Hoogendoorn (2010), who studied the diversification of economic activities (e.g. tourism) and “its place in the post-productivist countryside” in South Africa (p. xvi). More specifically, he demonstrates the connection between post-

productivism, second homes and tourism in a South African context. He argues that a post-productivist countryside started to develop in the post-apartheid era, with second homes and related tourism development (e.g. tourism infrastructure development) playing an important role in the transformation. However, such development raises certain questions such as food security and “over-reliance on consumptive practices that is not necessarily stable” (p. 21), generating few new jobs.

Another example is Wilson and Rigg (2003), who studied post-productivism to see whether it “can be used to understand contemporary agricultural change in developing world regions” (p. 681). The analysis was based on six broader characteristics (or ‘indicators’) of post-productivism with a focus on agricultural regimes: policy change, organic farming, counter-urbanization, the inclusion of environmental NGOs at the core of policy-making, the consumption of the countryside, and on-farm diversification activities (Wilson & Rigg, 2003). They concluded that there are similarities between post-productivism and the developing world, but that it is necessary to adapt and develop the concept “to address specific conditions in the rural South, possibly by combining theoretical approaches surrounding the notion of ‘post-productivism’ developed largely from a Northern perspective, and ‘deagrarianization’ from a Southern perspective” (Wilson & Rigg, 2003, p. 681). Indeed, Wilson and Rigg (2003) argue that the ‘deagrarianization’ in the global South shows similar characteristics as the post-productivist transition in the North, with some overlaps both theoretically and empirically. However, the underlying drivers differ, as well as the implications. Moreover, they argue that a reason for the limited focus on post-productivism in developing countries may be that “the theory of post-productivism cannot easily be ‘exported’ into developing world sociocultural, political and economic contexts” (p. 684). Nevertheless, to increase the usefulness of ‘post-productivism’ as a theoretical framework “to explain the broader patterns of agricultural change in the twenty-first century in any given locality” (p. 684), Wilson and Rigg (2003) argue, it is important that the theoretical debate expand beyond developed countries in order to create a theory that is applicable at a global scale.

Critique

As demonstrated above, post-productivism is a concept subject to different interpretations. Consequently, it is a contested concept with its validity subject to debate. One of the main arguments against post-productivism is the lack of empirical evidence that a post-productivist transition has taken place considering the continued existence of farm production associated with 'productivism' (e.g. intensification and specialization) (e.g. Evans et al., 2002; Mather et al., 2006). For example, Evans et al. (2002) criticize the bipolar relationship productivism/post-productivism saying there is little evidence that "productivist processes are being progressively reversed" (p. 324). Other common critique relates to the focus on the UK, with a limited discussion on the concept's applicability in other countries (Wilson, 2001). One concern is that when the 'post-productivism' framework is applied to other countries than the UK, assumptions are used that are based on UK conditions which may not be transferable to other countries (Wilson & Rigg, 2003). Furthermore, the lack of a clear definition is also subject to critique (Mather et al., 2006; Wilson, 2001), and the reason for that is, according to Wilson (2001), the lack of consensus that post-productivism has replaced the productivist agricultural regime. For example, Mather, et al., (2006) mean that the concept has been used "too widely and too loosely" (p. 441) in the rural sphere and request a clearer definition, one that relates to rural land use; in fact, post-productivism has been more clearly defined in a socio-political and welfare theory (Mather et al., 2006). A direct consequence of the lack of a clear definition may be, according to Mather et al. (2006), that some of the arguments against the validity of post-productivism relate to the fact "that different conclusions can be reached from the empirical evidence; and, that an alternative view of its utility in research can be taken" (p. 443). To avoid the fuzziness surrounding post-productivism and to get a clearer definition, Mather et al. (2006) request a key feature with "a penumbra or periphery of other characteristics that may (sometimes) be associated with it" (p. 443). A suggested feature is the changed emphasis from commodity to non-commodity outputs, including environmental services (including recreation, amenity and ecosystem services) (Mather et al., 2006). Thus, they argue, using 'post-productivism' to describe this changed emphasis from material production to service provision, an "analysis could proceed to establish its extent and empirical evidence could be used to examine its effects" (pp.

443-444). Other such critique relates to the sole focus on agriculture, and the lack of empirical evidence to support the theory of post-productivism (Evans et al., 2002; Mather et al., 2006). Altogether these critiques, according to Mather et al. (2006), constitute a paradox: “On the one hand there is a sectoral and geographical narrowness, while on the other hand there is an elasticity and vagueness” (p. 442). They conclude: “Perhaps it is therefore not surprising that different conclusions have been reached on the validity and usefulness of the concept” (p. 442).

Moreover, Wilson (2001) argues that post-productivism has mainly been defined through exogenous forces of agricultural change (i.e. the seven dimensions, see section *Characteristics of post-productivism*) and thus “has largely failed to take into account the wealth of actor-oriented and behaviourally grounded research” (p. 77) “that also considers the changing endogenous perceptions and attitudes of actors involved in decision-making processes” (p. 85). In addition, Wilson (2007) suggests that instead of using ‘post-productivism’ as the antithesis of ‘productivism’, the concept ‘non-productivism’ would be a better name since it is a ‘true opposite’, contrary to post-productivism.

A final critique is by Evans et al. (2002) who criticize the uncritical use of ‘post-productivism’ and for having little to contribute with in the development of theory in agricultural research, something they refer to as a “theoretical cul-de-sac” (p. 325). They mean that post-productivism focuses on the state before and after without identifying the processes of change. To its defense Mather et al. (2006) suggest that focus on a different sub-discipline (by Evans et al.) may have resulted in a different conclusion. They further describe the development of the concept as being “stretched to unrealistic extents” and uncritically accepted upon its introduction, and thereafter “the call went up for its abandonment” (Mather et al., 2006, p. 454). They oppose the idea of the rejection of the concept, since “there is empirical evidence for the occurrence of post-productivism on the basis of criteria suggested by various contributors to the debate” (p. 454). Instead they see post-productivism as having “sufficient potential [...] to be considered as a helpful concept in relation to the advancement of our understanding of land-use change” (p. 454). Moreover, they argue that post-productivism is a better

concept than the alternatives, such as multifunctionality and ecological modernization, but admit these concepts may overlap (Mather et al., 2006).

Multifunctionality

As mentioned earlier, 'multifunctionality' has emerged as an alternative concept to post-productivism to describe the ongoing changes in rural areas. Woods (2011) describes multifunctionality as the result of attempts by rural geographers to move beyond the deadlock created by the productivist/post-productivist agriculture dichotomy in the late 1990s. Wilson (2001) challenges the linearity in the productivist/post-productivist transition by introducing the concept of 'multifunctional agricultural regime' which "allows for multidimensional coexistence of productivist and post-productivist action and thought", and as he argues, "may, therefore, be a more accurate depiction of the multi-layered nature of rural and agricultural change" (p. 95). Also, multifunctionality "better encapsulates the diversity, non-linearity and spatial heterogeneity that can currently be observed in modern agriculture and rural society" (Wilson, 2001, p. 96). An important point to make is that this conceptualization denotes "an agricultural regime 'beyond post-productivism'" which requires that the post-productivist transition has taken place (Wilson, 2001, p. 96). As such, the multifunctional agricultural regime describes an end-point of contemporary agricultural change (i.e. the endpoint of the post-productivist transition) (Evans et al., 2002; Wilson & Rigg, 2003). Post-productivism, thus, plays a role also in this conceptualization, but only if it is used in the context of the post-productivist transition (Wilson, 2001).

Just as 'post-productivism', 'multifunctionality' has varying definitions depending on context (e.g. agriculture, rural development). For example, in a rural landscape context, multifunctionality refers to "the idea that rural landscapes typically produce a range of commodity and noncommodity use values simultaneously and that policy ought to recognize and protect that entire range of values" (McCarthy, 2005, pp. 773-774). It also emphasizes "the heterogeneous and synergistic aspects of landscapes" (p. 778). Elements of such a multifunctionality scheme include the "disavowal of protectionism *per se*, devolution of governance, increased use of public-private partnerships, voluntary participation in conservation programs, a shift from prohibiting pollution to paying

property owners for providing ecosystem services, the growing use of audits to ensure that farmers are delivering those services” (McCarthy, 2005, p. 779). Moreover, Woods (2011) argues that in expanding beyond a differentiated agricultural economy, multifunctionality "has come to refer to multiple outcomes of agriculture, which includes not only the production of food and other resources, but also social and environmental benefits" (p. 80). He suggests that it is "on the question of what happens to farms that cannot be viably sustained through the free market for agricultural produce" that differentiates multifunctionality from previous approaches (pp. 81-82). He continues with, "multifunctionality recognizes that such farms have a value to the countryside over and above their production of goods for the mass market, and seeks to enable these wider functions to be valorized in order to achieve economic sustainability" (p. 82). Examples are the production of higher-value agricultural goods (e.g. organic food), using the amenity value of farmland through tourism and recreation activities, and the commodification of environmental benefits of farming through the payment of rewards for good stewardship (Woods, 2011).

Also, the term multifunctionality is under critique. For example, Mather, et al., (2006) question the notion of ‘multifunctional agricultural regimes’ since it focuses solely on agriculture. In addition, they argue that it reflects a pre-modern agriculture and forestry, and “does not convey the sense of a shift in emphasis away from material production” which, as already mentioned, they see as the main characteristic of post-productivism (p. 452). They also find it too abstract, and subject to ambiguities.

Discussion and concluding remarks

The above review demonstrates an inherent complexity in the concept of post-productivism; depending on definition and focus different conclusions are drawn. A fundamental problem inherent in the post-productivism discourse is that 'post-productivism' often is used in the sense of describing actual ongoing processes in rural areas (i.e. reflection of reality), as in most articles in this paper, when what it really is is an ideology, like any other '-ism'. That is, it represents a set of ideas, a way of looking at change in rural areas. Thus, without the recognition that this confusion of concept exists, the debate on post-productivism becomes misdirected. Similarly, the concepts of

post-productivism and multifunctionality are not possible to compare since they reflect different things (i.e. ideology versus reflection of reality). Another problem is the perception of post-productivism as a transition (i.e. the 'post-productivist transition') which implies that productivism and post-productivism are stages, one stage replacing another stage (e.g. post-productivist activities replacing agricultural production). However, this contradicts the view of coexistence between productivism and post-productivism action and thought (e.g. Wilson, 2001), and thus they are better perceived as ongoing processes of change. The above-mentioned flaws are also among the main weaknesses in the post-productivism discourse. The former also relates to another weakness, the lack of a consistent theoretical framework; without a clear model to apply on rural areas, post-productivism will most likely remain a contested concept. On the other hand, the lack of fixed criteria may also be seen as a strength due to the dynamic nature of the concept which makes it possible to apply on most rural areas. This relates to what Hoogendoorn (2010) claims, that categorizations are case-specific and that there are no clear set of rules to what constitutes a post-productivist countryside. Consequently, this makes comparisons across rural areas hard to make. Moreover, it opens up for conceptual discussions. Indeed, to reach a clear definition it requires further development of theory by continuing debate and discussions. It is also possible that consensus cannot be reached due to varying conditions (see also section *Future research*).

Another weakness is the main focus on agriculture, although the field has started to broaden to include other natural resources, such as forestry and land use change (e.g. Mather et al., 2006). This single-sector focus does not reflect the current trends in rural areas affected by changes in value systems and life-styles, such as population distribution, mobility patterns, entrepreneurship and the shift of emphasis from production of commodities to non-commodity uses of land (Lundmark, 2010). For example, there are few studies on post-productivism in a context of tourism - the study of Hoogendoorn (2010) mentioned in this review is one of few - and with the notion of increasing importance of tourism for rural areas such studies are of high value. With better understanding of how external and internal forces affect rural development chances to reach successful tourism efforts are higher. Furthermore, the research

emphasis on the UK and other advanced economies (although to a smaller extent) is another weakness that needs to be addressed. As Wilson and Rigg (2003) argue, to increase the usefulness of post-productivism as a theoretical framework, the theory needs to include developing countries as well. Thus, we need to move beyond developed countries and also conduct research in developing countries. In doing that, the research field can gain new input and thus evolve.

The main strength of the post-productivism research is the ongoing debate on the usefulness and validity of the theory to avoid uncritical use of theories, and to guide the research forward. However, the literature, including critical views on post-productivism such as Evans et al. (2002), is getting dated and hence needs to be updated (see section *Future research*).

In this paper multifunctionality was presented as an alternative concept to post-productivism. However, more research is needed to see whether post-productivism is a useful concept reflecting current rural trends, or if multifunctionality may be a more suitable concept. On the other hand, there is also the view that the whole debate/discussion is misdirected due to confusion of concepts where multifunctionality (being a reflection of reality) is compared with post-productivism (being an ideology, an '-ism'). For a more constructive debate, multifunctionality should instead be compared with 'post-production'.

Future research

As mentioned in the introduction, this paper serves as a point of departure for a future paper on the theoretical and practical implications of 'post-productivism' and 'multifunctionality' for research. Among preliminary contents are, for example, the discussion on post-productivism as an '-ism' versus as a concept of reality, as well as the discussion on post-productivism as a transition with stages versus as a process. Other possible future research is an update of the research field on post-productivism, including the more critical views, considering that much of the literature on post-productivism was written 10 to 15 years ago. With an ongoing change in rural areas, conditions that were true then may not remain the same today. For example, the

aspects/issues that were subject to critique may have undergone change and need renewed attention from scholars.

Part of future research could also be to develop a holistic theoretical framework of post-productivism where agricultural production is just one part. This could result in a more useful framework to apply on rural areas as a whole. Indeed, this may also help to get closer to *one* common definition of post-productivism, something that is needed to give more substance to post-productivism as a concept, and to avoid being a buzzword similar to 'sustainable development'. However, it may be necessary to adopt adjusted frameworks to take (national/regional/local) economic, political, social and/or environmental conditions into account. Indeed, reaching a global consensus is likely to be difficult because of different development paths, and different land use patterns in developed countries versus developing countries. Finally, future research could also include conducting more specific studies to gain further knowledge in fields sparingly researched, such as on post-productivism in a context of tourism.

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