Discussion:

REGIO-ERSA Joint Lecture by Prof. Eveline van Leeuwen

Urban-rural interactions.  
More important than ever!

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Eveline’s message

- Intedependancy between rural and urban areas
  - less unbalanced than usually said > potential reciprocal benefits
  - questions diversity / specialization not only within the territories but also between nearby rural and urban territories (at inter & infraregional levels)

- Post-2020 Cohesion Policy: new opportunities
  - emerging models tightening interdependencies (circular economy, bio-based economy, food ... but also residential amenities: health, housing ...)

- Need to mobilize urban and rural populations in a common project despite trust deficit
  - coherence of behaviors, sense of belonging to the same community: strengthen proximity and involvement
Place-based or metropolitan shift?

- Evolution of cohesion policies from one-size-fits-all to place-based (territorial diversity)
- But the primacy of urban areas as places for regional development because advantages in terms of agglomeration: cluster effects, urban externalities, innovation
- At the same time the rural development paradigms have evolved over time, but remain quite disconnected from those of the cities
- Often two models predominate:
  - the city that derives the development of its hinterland,
  - a city disconnected from the rural, and a rural connected (more or less effectively) to globalization (agricultural markets especially, tourism sometimes)
Plurality of interactions between rural and urban

- flow: territorial metabolism
- labor market
- food flow (foodshed)
- interterritoriality: mobility, differentiation of uses of space (leisure, work...)
- contiguity and competition over land: land conflicts linked to urban sprawl
Lack of clear identification of these interactions and interdependencies

- **Globalization model** favorable to disconnection (ex: food supply)
  - Regional development patterns centered than factor endowments and connection to global networks, rather than rural/urban flows

- **Deficit** in taking into account role of rural in cities competitiveness/attractiveness (et vice versa), in global transition (land use, waste)

- **Risk of fragmentation** and underestimation of the "urban debt" for development
  - Mistrust of institutions, development models and political staff: Political divide
  - Not feeling heard: policies and rules are made for urban people and impose unfair constraints on rural people
Is diversity the solution?

- Reflections on **smart specialization** focused on the notion of region-wide relatedness: **degree and type of specialization / variety within a region is questioned.**
- Interest of **Eveline's approach**: question the specialization / diversity taking into account the **interactions with other municipalities**
  - More than the own diversity of a territory, **the diversity of the nearby territories counts** in terms of access to the labor market, for all types but especially urban
  - Positive effect also for rural areas that can **borrow the size of populated neighbors**
  - **Specialized rural areas benefit less from nearby** (what about smart specialization?)
Poor smart development policies for rural areas

- Rural areas mainly lack of several smart development factors, like Embeddedness; Relatedness; Connectivity; Entrepreneurship; Critical mass

- Smart development strategies are adapted to well developed or intermediate regions with both urban and rural areas if they have a sufficiently large population base

- But they offer only very limited possibilities for peripheral/remote regions, because of the lack of scale
  - low density (lack of - strong - relations)
  - lack of diversification (technological relatedness only apply to highly diversified firms structure)
  - lack of intermediate organization and innovation brokers
The question of innovation

- Innovation at the rural level is not limited to technology.
- A large part of innovations is not linked with the production process, but with social processes:
  - *organizational* innovation,
  - *social* innovation
  - *institutional* innovation
- A way to go ahead: an integrative perspective for innovation in all its dimensions and to all kinds of territories: **territorial innovation** (innovation is not only metropolitan).
Adapt policies to the peculiarity of rural contexts and to their diversity

- Innovation in rural areas is based on specific processes due to lower density, structure of the economies (SMEs, agriculture, etc.) and deficit in accompanying measures
- Related variety more people-based than techno-based
- Adapt innovation support for specific businesses and rural areas: lack of relativity, connectivity and entrepreneurial density
- Nature and culture based amenities and food production are competitive advantages of rural areas (foster multifunctionnallity of smart agriculture)
- Synergies between various land uses must be taken into account
- Reflection on relations between (more or less) urban and rural areas are at stake specially for local food productions
- New knowledge about socioeconomic, ecological processes and territorial governance
Questions addressed to research

- Develop **robust analytical frameworks...and data** to capture the diversity and complexity of rural-urban interactions.

- Better understanding of the **specificities** of the forms of innovation, entrepreneurship, and connection in **rural areas (linked to urban)**, and to adapt policies and support systems to this end.

- **Validity:** Are rural-urban interactions valid for all profiles of rural areas? For all sizes of urban areas? For all EU-27 countries? Specificity of border regions?

- How to deal with the **risk of capture of agricultural (or bio-based) value added** by farms located in urban areas (Von Thunen)? How to deal in a region with the question of the **hierarchy of places** (Christaller)? Differences between rural and urban regions (**clusters and shapes**)?
Suggestions for post-2020 Cohesion Policy

- **Assess place-based and smart specialization CP shift**: is it better or does it reinforce the core-periphery effects?

- **Adapt the orientation of cohesion policies** and support systems considering rural/urban interactions: allocation of means and incentives

- Going through **place-sensitive distributed development strategies** (Iammarino et al., 2017)

- **Encourage experimentation** with respect to **new opportunities (bio-based)**

- **What governance** for integrated and balanced rural / urban interactions? (Importance of **quality of governance and institutions** in regional performances)
Thanks for your attention

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