

IMPROVED URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES AS AN EU RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY MEASURE

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INTRODUCTION

In EU discourses, urban-rural linkages are usually constructed from an urban perspective, with rural areas conceptualised as residuals between dynamic urban growth nodes. References to urban-rural linkages, where in evidence, have generally been confined to the domain of Spatial planning and Cohesion policy. However, the Commission's recent communication, 'The CAP towards 2020' (European Commission 2010), proposes improving the links between rural and urban areas as a means of contributing to the balanced territorial development of rural areas. This instrument from Spatial planning and Cohesion policy with the wider aims of regional and societal development becomes dedicated to providing benefits to rural areas.

The more territorial aspects of the CAP to date have been addressed in its 'second pillar' and have focused on: improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector; improving the environment and the countryside; improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy; and building local capacity for employment and diversification (European Council 2006). CAP towards 2020 suggests that there is still much support for a rural development policy that continues to contribute to:

- The competitiveness of agriculture;
- The sustainable management of natural resources; and
- The balanced territorial development of rural areas (European Commission 2010).

'Balanced territorial development', the Communication says, will be achieved by "empowering people in local areas; building capacity and improving local conditions and links between rural and urban areas" (p.10). Most of these sound very similar to

‘improving the quality of life’ and ‘building local capacity’ of the current rural development policies. However, the explicit reference to developing ‘links between rural and urban areas’ is an additional means of addressing rural development, and as such is worthy of attention.

This paper draws on twelve Exemplar Region reports from the ESPON EDORA project to explore how the concept of rural-urban linkages might be usefully developed as a tool of EU rural development policy. In most respects it exploits the lack of specificity in CAP Towards 2020 about the types of linkages envisaged and of the definition of ‘urban’. However, for the purposes of this paper, we assume that *proximity* between the linking urban and rural areas is implied in the Communication, in line with the Green Paper’s call for increased cooperation across regional borders and the need for functional approaches to regions (European Commission 2008).

ANALYSIS OF EDORA EXEMPLAR REGIONS REPORTS

Introduction

The EDORA project (ESPON 2013/1/2) gathered qualitative evidence of rural development in 12 NUTS3 case study Exemplar Regions across the EU, written up as holistic accounts which also commented upon the three meta-narratives of the project, one of which was urban-rural relations. As illustrated in Table 1, they represented a range of regions in terms of their rurality, their proximity to a city, their performance, and their structural type as classified by the EDORA project typology¹ (Copus and Noguera 2010).

¹ The three typologies attempt to capture the following aspects of rural differentiation: (i) *Rurality/accessibility*. This typology relates to the Rural-Urban meta-narrative, and was developed in DG Regio from the OECD typology by Dijkstra, L. and H. Poelman (2008). "Remote Rural Regions." *Regional Focus* 01/2008.

Four types of (non-urban) regions are distinguished; Intermediate Accessible, Intermediate Remote, Predominantly Rural Accessible, and Predominantly Rural Remote. (ii) *Economic Restructuring*. This typology relates to both the Agri-Centric and Global Competition meta-narratives, and was developed from 13 indicators, using a multi-criteria, disaggregative approach. Again four types of non-urban regions were distinguished: Agrarian, Consumption Countryside, Diversified (with strong secondary sector) and Diversified (with strong market services sector). (iii) *Performance*. This typology places regions on a continuum between “accumulation” and “depletion”². The performance typology derives its rationale mainly from the Rural-Urban meta-narrative. It is based upon a synthetic index of performance, incorporating 5 indicators. Four types of region are distinguished; Accumulating, Above Average, Below Average, and Depleting.

Table 1: Exemplar Regions according to the EDORA Classifications

Country	Region	Rurality Type	Close to City?	Performance	Structural Type
Finland	South Savo	Predominantly Rural	No	Below Average	Diversified (Strong Market Services (SMS))
Germany	Mansfeld-Sudharz	Intermediate	Yes	Depleting	Diversified (SMS)
Germany	Neumarkt	Predominantly Rural	Yes	Accumulating	Diversified (SMS)
Poland	Chelmsko-Zamojski	Predominantly Rural	Yes	Depleting	Diversified (Strong Secondary Sector (SSS))
Poland	Ostrolecko-Siedlecki	Predominantly Rural	Yes	Depleting	Agriculture
Slovenia	Osrednjeslovenska	Intermediate	Yes	Accumulating	Consumption Countryside
Slovenia	Zasavska	Intermediate	Yes	Below Average	Diversified (SSS)
Spain	Teruel	Predominantly Rural	No	Accumulating	Diversified (SSS)
Spain	La Rioja	Intermediate	Yes	Accumulating	Diversified (SSS)
Sweden	Jonkoping	Predominantly Rural	Yes	Above Average	Consumption Countryside
UK	North Yorkshire	Intermediate	Yes	Accumulating	Diversified (SMS)
UK	Skye and Lochalsh	Predominantly Rural	No	Above Average	Consumption Countryside

The full Exemplar Region reports are presented as EDORA Working Papers 11 to 22 and are available at www.nordregio.se/edora.

This paper draws on a discourse analysis of the Exemplar Region reports to explore firstly the linkages of rural areas, people and institutions with proximate urban areas. The analysis is presented under a series of subheadings:

- The diversity of rural-urban linkages
- Negative aspects of rural-urban linkages
- Constraints on the development of rural-urban linkages

Secondly, it goes on to analyse evidence from the reports of what other linkages might be important to rural areas, and the characteristics of the Exemplar Regions which had weak rural-urban linkages. Thirdly, it uses analysis of the reports to discuss what might be meant by an ‘urban area’.

Rural – Urban Linkages

The Diversity of Rural-Urban Linkages

There was much evidence in the Exemplar Regions reports that individuals, or people representing organisations, came together for common purposes, as cooperative ventures. Although there were many examples of voluntary and inclusive networks forming, it was difficult to assess when these were rural-rural linkages or rural-urban linkages. This suggests both the lack of importance informal networks might ascribe to formal geographic boundaries, but also how fuzzy the boundaries between rural and urban areas are.

Some cooperative ventures were clearly rural-focused. Many Exemplar Region reports emphasised the role of the Leader programme/approach and the activities of the Local Action Groups. Those that could be discerned with some certainty as rural-urban ventures were formal public sector amalgamations, cooperations and projects set up in recognition of their interdependencies. In Jonkoping there were municipal

amalgamations that had reinforced formal connections between urban and rural areas. In Osrednjeslovenska the programme of Coexistence between Town and Countryside aimed “to create new opportunities for economic development and new employment prospects at the fringe of the town, to enrich the town and its supplies and to link the town with the neighbouring areas in the region”. The Neumarkt region was an active player in the Metropolitan Region Nuremberg, an informal, consensus based forum, and in North Yorkshire, the rural region was involved in a process of developing city-regions.

Integrated or joint planning for urban and rural areas was apparent in some reports. In both North Yorkshire and Jonkoping restructuring into functional or city-regions had been accompanied by ‘rural’ policies being subsumed into all the policies of the higher level regional tier through a process of ‘mainstreaming’. Some regions had a planned approach to the development of ‘urban’ hubs of employment and service activity. For example, the Jonkoping report discussed how a regional centre was being built which would provide such a hub, but with the rural hinterland providing an attractive rural area; and the Osrednjeslovenska report outlined how polycentric regional development had been encouraged since the 1970s. The account in the Neumarkt report of ensuring that the new high speed rail link connected with the region via a local link line stressed the importance of cross-region planning.

The need for joint planning between urban and rural areas in places where this was non-existent or weak was also apparent in some reports. The La Rioja and Osrednjeslovenska reports emphasised the wider planning implications of the flows created by commuting and counter-urbanisation: that development in rural areas needed to be regulated if their attraction as residential areas was to be conserved.

Rural-urban linkages often appeared as flows, in particular of goods and people, but also of less tangible entities such as ideas and knowledge. Some regions were predominantly primary producers or involved in manufacturing and their reports tended to discuss the shipment of goods in and out of the region. The South Savo report, for example, talked of importing inputs for forestry, agriculture and food processing. However, these narratives were by no means exclusively of rural-urban linkages: there was a geographic agnosticism about trading linkages.

People flowed in and out of all the regions. A common narrative was of how young people were leaving the rural areas, either for work or for education (e.g., South Savo, Zasavska). Sometimes this involved a move up the settlement hierarchy to major cities in the home country, but often the migration was to distant cities or other countries (eg Chelmsko-Zamojski). Some rural regions also experienced enough counterurbanisation flows of population to mean that their overall population trends were on an upward trajectory. Osrednjeslovenska and North Yorkshire were both examples of rural regions in this situation, although people immigrated from a range of 'other' places rather than specifically from proximate urban areas.

Some people flowed between rural and urban areas on a daily basis for work. Commuting to cities and more urban areas was the most common direction of flow reported in a number of regional reports (e.g., Zasavska, La Rioja, Osrednjeslovenska). However, there were some reports of noteworthy counter-flows into rural towns (e.g. North Yorkshire) or to large service centres located out of town (e.g., Osrednjeslovenska) in addition to flows to major conurbations for work. In North Yorkshire, one of the seven Districts experienced two thirds of its working population outcommuting for work. In most cases these patterns of daily activity were reported as driven by the employment market, but the Jonkoping report implied a more explicitly planned approach: the county administration saw facilitating "living in one place and working or shopping in another ... as crucial for the future development" and intended to build a vital regional centre, using the surrounding rural hinterlands as attractive residential areas.

The development of cultural and place-based tourism was regularly outlined in the regional reports, and created irregular flows of people into rural areas. In some regions this was about attracting city dwellers from proximate regions for rural 'getaways'. For city dwellers, Neumarkt's rural attractions could be accessed within an hours' travel, and much of the tourism development was based around very short trips – sometimes just an evening with dinner away from the city – and weekend breaks.

Flows of ideas and knowledge from outside the rural area were presented in some reports as important to development. The Mansfeld-Sudharz report stressed the support they were given by external organisations such as national economic advisers and federal and state policy-makers to help them reverse their depletion. Universities also had a role to play: in Neumarkt two University outposts reinforced the institutional ties to Nuremberg and Erding where their main campuses were located. In Osrednjeslovenska, the University of Ljubljana was within the rural region and linked into the regional plan: an incubator had been set up which offered assistance in the form of knowledge and skills to new enterprises, and linked them with a broader domestic and international environment. Some regions also stressed the importance of flows of knowledge and ideas from the rural region to urban regions. In Osrednjeslovenska, traditional rural practices, products and services were demonstrated to urban dwellers in annual city events.

There were also developments to support the flows of goods and people between urban and rural areas. In 2006 a new high speed rail line was opened between Nuremberg and Munich; although there are no stations within Neumarkt region, a dedicated connecting train conveyed people to and from this main line, which had significantly reduced commuting times to major cities, and allowed city-dwellers to visit the region for evenings as well as for overnight breaks. There were many regions where the proximity of an existing, or new, major road or motorway enabled flows of goods or services (e.g., Teruel, Neumarkt, Mansfeld-Sudharz). In some cases, infrastructures specific to their geographies had made/would make a significant difference to the flows: a bridge to the mainland (Skye) and the construction of new and modernised EU Schengen area border crossings (Chelmsko-Zamojski).

Some of the rural-urban linkages discussed in the Exemplar Region reports, as cooperative ventures, as joint governance or planning partnerships, or as flows of goods and people had long histories, but others were recent developments.

The different forms of rural-urban linkages outlined above suggest the need for EU rural policy to clarify what types of linkages would be eligible for support. It will also be important to consider which might be amenable to policy interventions. Some, such as public sector led joint ventures or transport infrastructures, would be

easy to identify and support; others, such as migration patterns might be more difficult to influence directly, but might have significant impacts on the development of rural regions.

Negative Aspects of Rural-Urban Linkages

Rural-urban linkages can be beneficial for rural areas, as outlined in the previous subsection, but they can also have negative effects. The reports outlined how the attraction of cities by rural young people contributed significantly to an ageing rural population – even where counterurbanisation occurred, the outflows tended to be of young people and the inflows of older people. Outmigration of people of all ages could be dramatic, such as in Mansfeld-Sudharz, where the annual outflow had been between 8% and 11% for 2000 – 2009. Commuting flows were predominantly into more urban areas for work; this cast rural areas in the role of residential area. The North Yorkshire report identified how there was a fear that the dormitory nature of the rural region might destroy the strong ‘community spirit’ that used to exist.

Although this increase in population could serve to make rural areas more sustainable, the La Rioja and Osrednjeslovenska reports emphasised the wider planning implications of the flows created by commuting and counter-urbanisation: that development in rural areas needed to be regulated if their attractiveness as residential areas was to be conserved. The North Yorkshire and Skye reports stressed how local people were unable to afford the rural housing because wealthy immigrants bought up housing stock. In Skye, the tourist industry exacerbated these housing problems “as those with surplus land or houses modernise them and then let them out by the night or week during the summer months as holiday lets. As a result, many local residents live in this kind of accommodation during the winter, but scramble during the summer when their leases are terminated in favour of the higher rents paid by short term lets.”

Incorporation of rural areas into larger ‘functional regions’ or ‘city regions’ was discussed in two Exemplar Region reports. In the case of Jonkoping the benefits of strengthening the linkages were stressed; by contrast the North Yorkshire report described “a fear from some that city-regions will amalgamate with the more affluent accessible parts of North Yorkshire, leaving a residue of remote and impoverished rural parts without effective formal links into the wider region”, and how rural areas

in such governance structures could feel powerless when their resourcing was “determined by a distant, urban-dominated decision making forum”.

Rural-urban linkages are not automatically positive; any rural policy aimed at promoting such linkages will need to safeguard against negative outcomes for rural areas. In terms of improving the decision-making and joint planning linkages, rural policy interventions will need to ensure that rural areas are not cast in the role of junior partners which help implement an urban agenda.

Constraints on the Development of Rural-Local Linkages

The South Savo, Skye and Teruel Exemplar Regions were all classified as remote from a city in the EDORA typology, and these all had few opportunities to forge linkages with proximate urban areas – the situation of these regions is discussed in more detail in a subsequent section. However, many of the regions classified as ‘close to a city’ in the EDORA typology also reported constraints on forming proximate rural-urban linkages. Ostrolecko-Siedlecki and Chelmsko-Zamojski both reported that the cities within their boundaries had little socio-economic influence on the rural hinterland. Chelmsko-Zamojski region was also constrained in continuing its longstanding linkages eastwards with the Ukraine because of the EU’s Schengen area border.

In the case of Mansfeld-Sudharz, rural-urban linkages were not strong because of the distances to urban centres and because of its historic border to the west as the dividing line between East and West Germany. In Zasavska the transport system was under-developed and roads were in a poor condition. A number of regions classified as ‘close to a city’ reported that urban areas were not easily accessible to part of their regions: the central part of the Jonkoping region; the southern mountainous areas of La Rioja; the upland and coastal areas in North Yorkshire.

Flows of goods and people between urban and rural areas necessitate not only relative short distances and benign topographies but also good transport links. In Ostrolecko-Siedlecki internal rail connections were poor, making it far easier to travel to Warsaw (outside the region) than between the two cities (Ostrolecko and Siedlecki) within the

region. In recognition of such constraining factors, some regional reports stressed travel times rather than just distances. Roads in some regions were reported to be in bad condition, leaving them poorly connected (e.g., Zasavska, Skye). In South Savo the roads could not be maintained because of the partial abandonment of some sparsely populated areas. The constraints on the flow of less tangible goods via telecommunications were stressed in some reports: for example, in Skye mobile phone coverage was said to be ‘uneven at best’ and broadband access limited.

A rural policy intent on improving rural-urban linkages has the potential to address some of these constraints. However, it is likely to offer little support to rural areas that are remote from urban areas.

The Exclusiveness of a Policy Focus on Rural-Urban Linkages

Other Spatial Linkages

Proximate rural-urban linkages were only one form of spatial linkage that the Exemplar Region reports described. Many were very local such as the 4,500 community-led local action groups engaged in rural development, and federated across Sweden as the Village Action Movement. A similar movement was active in South Savo, the closeness of community was described in the Skye report and the community spirit was noted in North Yorkshire. There were local farming unions, associations and co-operatives, farms owned by families and family partnerships which were passed from generation to generation, on Skye there was the long history of community ownership of land, and so on. Many linkages were at a slightly higher scale, but still firmly rooted in a rural area. There were agri-tourism associations, organisations promoting local tourism and culture, rural municipalities developing local networks and many examples of Leader Local Action Groups and travel within the rural area for work, leisure or services.

Many useful linkages, though, were between the rural area and people and places elsewhere, but these were not necessarily proximate rural-urban linkages. There were descriptions of rural regions as historic ‘transit zones’ and ‘crossroads’ which had influenced current developments, such as La Rioja where people (and goods) not only

passed through, but settled and brought a wide range of geographic/cultural influences, and Chelmsko-Zamojski which had a long history as a place where “different cultures, religions and traditions” coincided. Neumarkt was connected to national and international freight centres via the new Danube-Main canal, and had benefited from the rapid expansion and upgrading of its telecommunications infrastructure. Osrednjeslovenska region was described in the Exemplar Region report as “fully included in globalisation processes”. The wines of La Rioja were produced for an international market using global capital. Ostrolecko-Siedlecki was benefiting from foreign investment in its dairy sector; Teruel from in-migration of young people from Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe. The tourism activities of some of the rural regions attracted people from all over the world. On Skye, people visited to trace their Scottish roots; South Savo was attracting retired people who had originated in the region and were now second home owners.

Some rural area non-proximate linkages were with people and places in their own country. South Savo was dependent on its summer visitors from all parts of Finland to keep its ‘lake country’ viable, Teruel had recently developed its outdoor tourism potential and attracted many Spanish city dwellers for its mountain activities. The Neumarkt region was seen as a source of ideas and knowledge: it had won numerous awards for its development programmes and in 2009 was chosen as a national model region for promoting and testing climate change adaptation strategies. Some rural regions had stronger links with distant cities than with their proximate urban areas, often because of transport networks. Teruel had recently been able to develop its outdoor tourism potential because a new road which linked two major Spanish cities passed through the region; in Ostrolecko-Siedlecki it was far easier to travel to Warsaw by public transport than to use buses or trains to get between Ostrolecko and Siedlecki, the region’s two urban settlements. Mansfeld-Sudharz enlisted federal government support and sponsorship in tackling their spiral of socio-economic depletion.

Some linkages between rural areas and extra-local places were described as mutual relationships; others were described more as external forces that impacted on their rural areas. These impacts could be positive impacts, such as the UNESCO World Heritage Site designations for Martin Luther’s birthplace and burial site which were

highly beneficial to Mansfeld-Sudharz's burgeoning tourism industry. Membership of the EU was also described as an impact upon a number of rural regions. Positive statements about EU accession explained how in Ostrolecko-Siedlecki the dairy industry had increased dramatically, in Chelmsko-Zamojski region foreign investment had intensified, and La Rioja region noted a significant increase in the production and sale of wine in foreign and new markets following accession and successive GATT rounds. However not all aspects of EU membership were viewed so positively, with some regional restructuring and boundary issues concerned with EU accession causing difficulties. The possible withdrawal of EU CAP subsidies to farmers in upland areas was seen as a threat in the North Yorkshire and Skye reports.

Linkages other than specifically rural-urban linkages were evident in the Exemplar Region reports and were given some significance. These were intra rural linkages, and extra-local linkages that were relational rather than proximate.

Weak Rural-Urban Linkages and Distance to a City

Of the twelve exemplar region reports, three were classified in the EDORA typology as not 'close to a city' and nine as 'close to a city'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, of the former, none reported strong rural-urban linkages within or with places adjacent to, their regions; more interesting is the fact that four of the latter also reported on weak rural-urban linkages. This section explores the development of these seven regions in more detail to add to our understanding of the value of rural-urban linkages.

All three 'remote' exemplar regions were also classified in the EDORA typology as 'predominantly rural'. However, further analysis of these three 'remote' region reports found that while proximate rural-urban linkages were weak or non-existent, extra-rural linkages were not absent from the narratives. In Teruel, what had been a land-locked region because of its mountains and poor transport infrastructure was transformed by a major new highway built to link two main cities in Spain (Valencia, 1.5 million population and Zaragoza, 1 million population), each more than 150 km from Teruel. These were not the closest cities to the rural region, but the road brought them close in relational geography terms, and brought mutual benefits. Teruel, with its mountains and natural landscapes, was attractive to the citizens of Valencia and

Zaragoza for outdoor recreation. Ski-ing, in particular, was very popular as it provided them with a much closer resort. Young immigrants had arrived from outside Spain to service the needs of the tourism industry.

South Savo, with a large proportion of its area taken by lakes and forests had a few urban centres in the region, but these were poorly connected; of more significance were connections to urban centres in Southern Finland. Its natural beauty and branding as an 'eco-province' attracted tourists and second home owners in the summer. Half the summer cottages were owned by people from outside the region and outsiders built most of the new summer residences. Most of the flows of goods and tourists were from other regions or other countries. South Savo had extra-local linkages, but none that could be described as rural-urban: they were mainly with individuals from outside the region rather than with places or institutions.

The Skye and Lochalsh region includes a number of islands, with the main island being Skye. The report explained how the region had a dispersed population of less than 12,000, indicative of few major settlements. It was very poorly served by road, rail, boat and telecommunication networks which might have linked it to areas with more developed urban areas. However, its cultural identity and natural beauty produced the 'magic of Skye' which attracted tourists and incomers to the region. Many of the visitors came from all over the world to trace their ancestry to the area before the draconian Highland Clearances that had forced crofters to leave Skye. Again, their extra-local linkages were strong, but with individuals around the world rather than to proximate urban areas.

Four rural regions classified as 'close to a city' reported that this had not provided a significant impetus to their development. While many of the 'close to a city' regions were classified as above average/accumulating in terms of performance, these four were all classified as below average/depleting. All were regions in post-socialist states, and reported on problems of post-industrial decline, semi-subsistence agriculture, and/or the aftermath of regional restructuring, suggesting that their stock of territorial assets were low. Two reported, though, that major road projects organised at a higher level of government 'passed through' (Mansfeld-Sudharz) or were 'nearby' (Zasavska) and had had a significant impact on their regions, even if

this was not the primary objective of the scheme. There was evidence in all their reports that strategies were being developed that would improve their linkages to the extra-local; various forms of local tourism were commonly identified.

While significant proximate rural-urban linkages were not an option for the predominantly rural regions that were not ‘close to a city’, all reported on significant linkages with people and places that were extra-local. Being a ‘close to a city’ region, though, appeared to be only a necessary, and not sufficient, prerequisite for proximate urban-rural linkages to form.

What Constitutes an Urban Area?

Differentiating what were rural-urban linkages, as opposed to rural-rural linkages or rural-extra rural linkages in the reports was challenging. Conceptualising these linkages as boundary-spanning was problematic – a number of the Exemplar Regions at NUTS3 level, although ‘rural regions’, incorporated ‘cities’, with Osrednjeslovenska incorporating the capital city of Slovenia. Within-the-region rural-urban linkages were governed by a single region, whereas for others these needed cooperation between proximate regions.

The population size of a place might be another means of defining the urban in the proposed rural-urban linkages. There was some consensus in the regional reports that there were some ‘major cities’ in each state, but beyond that, most references to ‘urban’ places in terms of population size were relative rather than absolute: they were more urbanised than the rural areas, and often formed part of a hierarchy of ‘urban’ settlements. Their conceptualisation of ‘urban’ included not only the relative size of the place, but also its function, as a service centre and/or a place of employment.

For example, in the Chelmsko-Zamojski report, the network of small towns was emphasised, which could be considered “to be the local development centres, in which the inhabitants have access to ... market services, administration, primary and secondary education, health care, banking and trade”. Likewise, the North Yorkshire report described a network of 28 ‘market towns’ and Jonkoping its hierarchy of

service centres at different scales. The development of ‘polycentricity’ had been a strategic goal in many of the regions, some building on historic settlement patterns, such as in the case of North Yorkshire, but others developing new-build plans as a counter to centralising tendencies (e.g., Jonkoping, Osrednjeslovenska).

From a rural perspective, it appears that relating to an ‘urban’ area could take a number of forms. This might be with a significant city within or adjacent to the rural region. It might also be with a more urbanised place, defined not so much by size statistics as by function as a service and/or market centre. In some cases, such as in Jonkoping, a hierarchy of service centres was being developed, with each scale forming the ‘urban’ linkage to its rural hinterland.

POLICY REFLECTIONS

The discourse analysis reveals four broad types of rural-urban cooperation that can be distinguished:

- (a) *Cooperative ventures* – where individuals or organisations come together for a common purpose. These may be rural-rural, (an example being the Swedish Village Action Movement), or rural-urban. Examples of the latter usually involve local government entities, rather than individuals or organisations.
- (b) *Functional networks* – including the export of primary products, commuting, migration, tourism and recreation flows, and dissemination of information. There is a close connection between functional networks and regional infrastructure provision.
- (c) *Other socio-economic connections* – These are similar to (b), but rather than being defined by current patterns of interaction, are more a function of the settlement structure, and long established network pathways.
- (d) *Regional boundaries and administrative structure* – which can have profound influences upon specific forms of interaction, such as provision of services, either enabling or constraining rural-urban linkages.

The review highlights two general observations, the first being the impression of asymmetry of power between rural and urban actors, and the second being the weight given in the Exemplar Region reports to local, rather than inter-regional or international, examples of cooperative ventures.

The important role of ‘intangible assets’ or ‘soft factors’ in most forms of territorial cooperation is also revealed through the analysis. Clearly cooperative ventures in general, and re-localisation initiatives, are not produced by market forces alone, they require the mobilisation of social capital, and a capacity for - and ethos of - cooperation between public, private and third sector actors. Often the initiation and successful development of such activities depends upon rather special individuals, with specific training and experience, so human capital is also an important prerequisite. The nature of regional/local governance structures, and their relationships with national and European policy administrations, is also crucial. Specific points are: that an appropriate array of intangible assets represents a fundamental precondition for success of territorial cooperation, including rural-urban cooperation; that a substantial body of knowledge exists about these phenomena, but this needs to be further developed with respect to specifically rural contexts; and that reinforcement of certain intangible assets in rural areas may provide a powerful lever through which rural policy may facilitate rural-urban cooperation.

Specific policy implications with regard to fostering rural-urban cooperation can be distilled down to the following key points:

- The *overall goals* of urban-rural cooperation will include both substantive improvements in rural conditions and resources, and improvements in the associated governance processes.
- The need to ensure greater *clarity* in and *awareness* of the objectives and means of urban-rural cooperation (whatever form it may take), across all the actors (public, private, or third sector) and across all scales, (international, national, regional or local).

- The desirability that interventions are sensitive to both *local/micro* regional specificities and to broad *macro*-scale contexts.
- The development of ‘hubs’ (for the delivery of services or the diffusion of information) and the nurturing of networks (either local/horizontal for bonding or thematic/vertical for ‘bridging’) are useful priorities for policy.

Reflecting on these points it becomes clear that rural-urban cooperation should not be envisaged as standalone policy activity, which can be easily ‘bolted on’ to existing programmes. It needs to be viewed as integral, or structural, at the full range of scales of implementation. This means that, whilst it will be important to explore and flesh out the specific suggestions of ‘hub’ development and thematic networks, the main implications relate to the ‘weaving in’ of rural-urban cooperation principles across a wide range of policy contexts. It follows that EU Cohesion policy can have an important role in terms of developing pilot projects which exhibit best practice, but that, in the longer term, the Territorial Agenda (because it focuses upon establishing common objectives and policy principles for Member States) could potentially be more influential.

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