

# **RURAL AREAS BETWEEN DECLINE AND RECOVERY. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ECONOMIC, TERRITORIAL AND SOCIAL SITUATION OF RURAL AREAS IN EUROPE**



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## **AGENDA**



For a long time, rural areas have been suffered from economic uncertainty, demographic decline and social isolation. However, recent contributions are evidence of adaptive capacity and transformation, including reaction to economic crisis and urban resilience.

This pattern opens up new perspectives and provide the potential to “re-frame” rural characteristics. This paper investigates economic, territorial and social changes of European rural areas, according to a multidisciplinary approach, and identifies future research directions for rural resilience.

## FACED TO THIS SITUATION



Rural areas can explore two different approaches:

an **equilibrium** or an **evolutionary approach**.

The first one is based on “return to normal” assumptions and it means to surrender to an underdevelopment and subordination state than urban areas.

On the contrary, the second one emphasis on adaptive capacity and transformation.

This presentation would like to invite to **debate** about **rural reactions**

## RURALITY AS A MULTIFUNCTIONAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Rural areas are lagging areas, but..

- GDP is everywhere low, but, since 2008, it is decreased less in predominantly rural areas
- Intermediate and urban areas are less productive than in the past

Rural incomes

- Rural population incomes are lower
- Before economic crisis, urban-rural gap was evident, but, in rural areas closer to urban centers, the difference was shrinking
- The economic crisis has stopped this process of rapprochement and reduced incomes almost everywhere

Agriculture

- Agricultural incomes are lower
- Multifunctional diversification
- Gender diversification
- Easier credit access

Productive structure

- Role of rural marketing
- Relocation firms
- Agro-food restructuring
- Renewable energy
- Attraction of creative people



## RURALITY AS A ENVIRONMENTAL BY DIFFERENT ACCESSIBILITY

- Pressures on natural resources and land conversion, land use and soil consumption are an evident environmental problem for rural areas.
- However, despite these changes, rural areas play a central role in circular economics, not only as suppliers, but recyclers of used resources

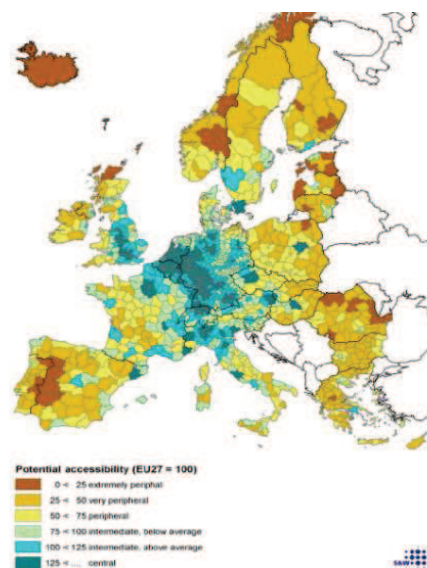


## RURALITY AS A ENVIRONMENTAL BY DIFFERENT ACCESSIBILITY

Rural people should have the same facilities as urban citizens, but in reality, rural areas are characterized by **isolation and limited access to services, job markets**

In all rural areas, there is a **growing differentiated demand** concern with the availability and mix of public and private services

Moreover, rural services are **more expensive** and all local governments are facing **to budget constraints**. Thus contributes to increase social and economic isolation. Investment in **information technology** can help to pass **digital and economic divide** among territories.





## RURILITY AS A NEW SOCIAL SYSTEM

Rural population is **aging and shrinking**, especially in remote rural areas

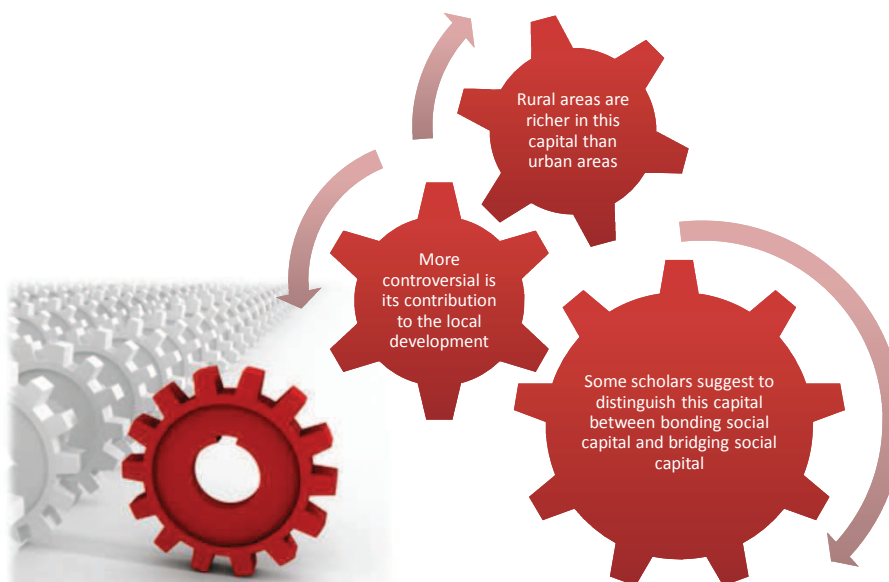
In the rural areas **nearest to the urban structures**, population is **increasing** as urban dwellers move to rural communities in search of lifestyle better conditions

However, since the crisis to date, certain European countries **show an increase in rural population**.

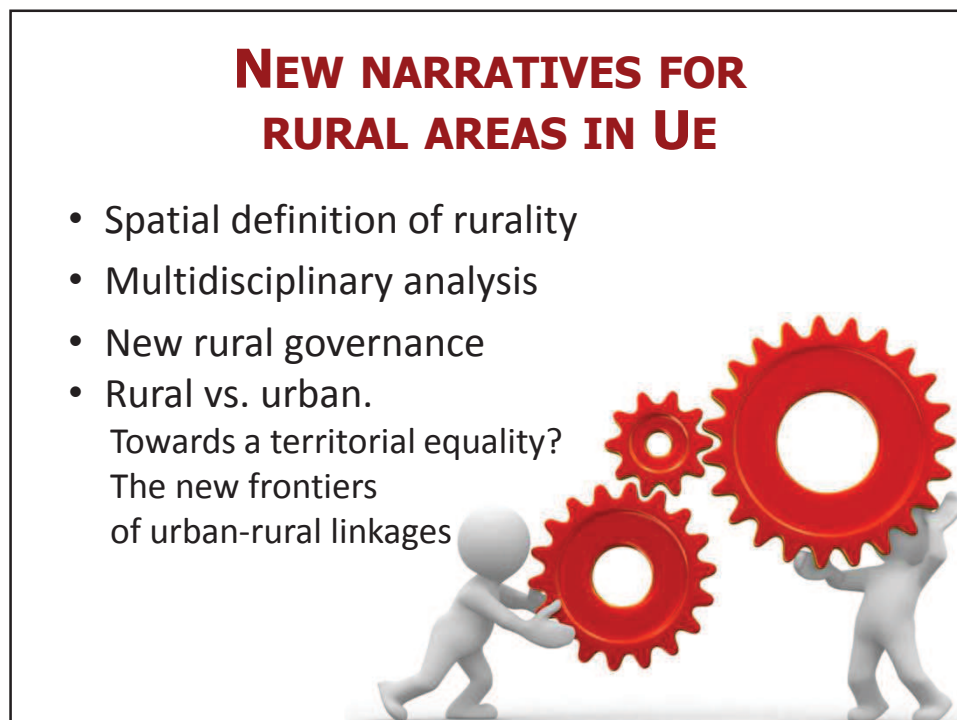
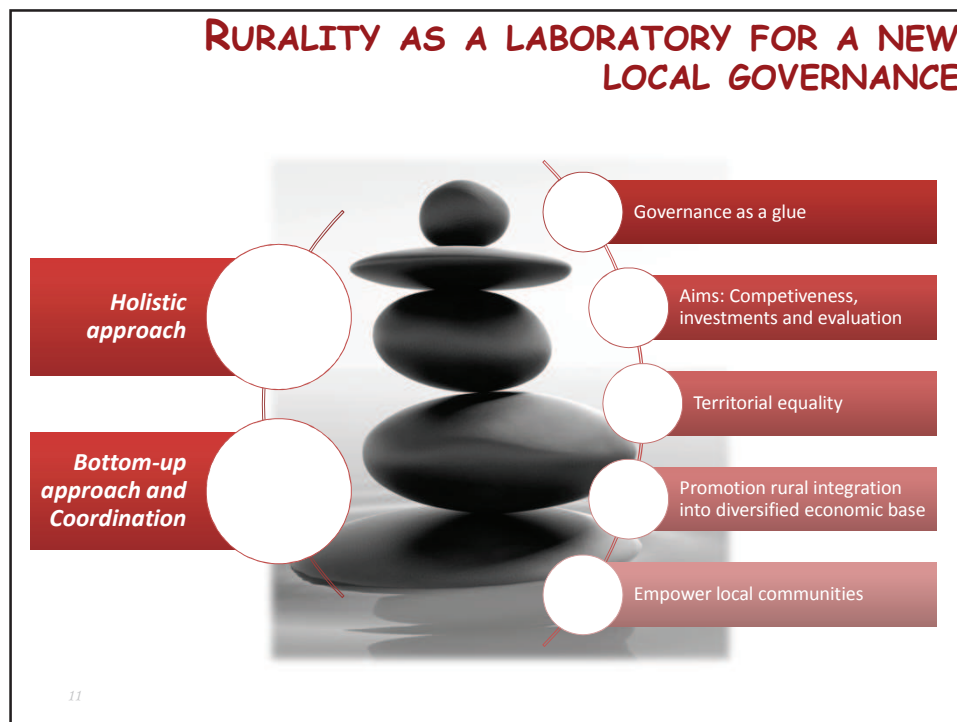
Due to this demographic trend, rural areas are a **mix of established individuals and in-migrants** who create an **heterogeneous social structure** and give different experiences, resources, commitment and skills to their local communities



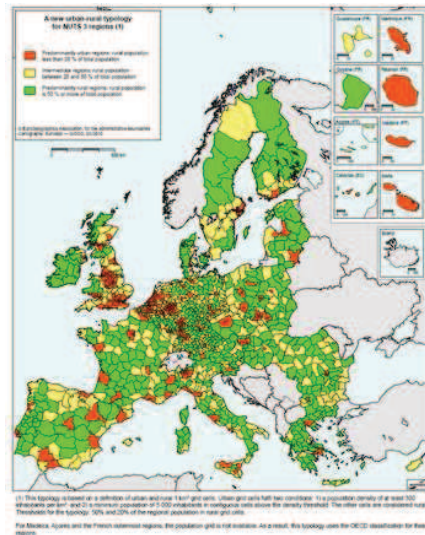
## RURILITY AS A NEW SOCIAL SYSTEM



**Bonding social capital** was found to be significantly higher in **rural areas**  
**Bridging social capital** is marginally higher in **urban areas**



## SPATIAL DEFINITION OF «RURALITY»



A urban-rural typology for NUTS 3 regions

3 Typologies:

“predominant rural”,  
“intermediate” and  
“predominantly urban”

Thanks to  
Eurostat-OECD method

A simple two-step approach to identify population in urban areas:

a population density threshold (300 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>) applied to grid cells of 1 km<sup>2</sup> and a minimum size threshold (5 000 inhabitants) applied to grouped grid cells above the density threshold

Rural areas for difference

## MULTIDISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS

Any studies presents an empirical analysis of the “rurals” different : thus is important because rural is an heterogeneous context and weaknesses in the rural knowledge and skills are especially critical.

However, their effectiveness is reduced by the **excessive segmentation and lack of integration**. To investigate rural changes it is necessary **to abandon the classic lines of enquiry in economic or social matters**.



## MULTIDISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS

The new rural narratives impose rural governance inclusion in **territorial plans and programs** by verifying the **impact** of their decisions on the configuration and the potential for development.

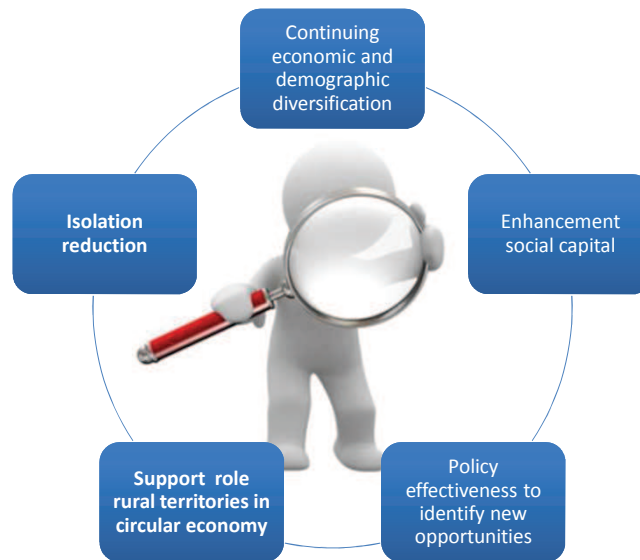


## NEW URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES

- Urban and rural areas are considered **equally important, in their specificity, have equal territorial dignity and are dependent on each other**.
- Establishing **collaborative links among territories** is not so easy with an uncertain outcome and influenced by many factors including location, geographic distance, compatibility of interests.
- In general, **membership of networks** are viewed as important mechanism for expanding available resources in order to increase competitiveness



## NEW FRONTIERS OF RURAL STUDIES



**GRAZIE MILLE!!!!**  
**THANK YOU VERY MUCH**

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