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Pathways for sustainable development of  
European rural regions: eco-economical  
strategies and new rural-urban relations

Ina Horlings and Terry Marsden



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The Centre started work in October 2001 under the leadership of Professor Ken Peattie of the Business School, Professor Terry Marsden of the Department of City and Regional Planning and Professor Bob Lee of the Law School. The Centre exists to understand and promote the vital issues of sustainability, accountability and social responsibility, through research into key business relationships.

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## **Pathways for sustainable development of European rural regions: eco-economical strategies and new rural-urban relations**

Ina Horlings and Terry Marsden

### *Abstract:*

In this paper we describe and analyze the variety of strategies in rural regional development followed in European regions by reference first to an analysis of 62 case-studies, and second, in a more in-depth analysis of 12 European regions. The central question is how promising these strategies are in terms of eco-economical development.

In the first part of our analysis, based on the 62 projects, we have distinguished eco-economical strategies shaped along different axes of products and markets which express the differentiated responses to the conventional cost -squeeze in agriculture, agricultural crises and increasing urban demands. In terms of competitiveness promising changes for the development of the eco-economy can be created by combining horizontal and vertical linkages leading to new consumption chains and networks. New rural products and services, new interfaces, re-orientation on rural resources and integral regional development, can potentially function as a counterforce challenging the dominant bio-economic ecological modernization paradigm that is still dominant in many European regions.

In the second part of our analyses of the 12 in-depth European case-studies we raised the question if new urban-rural interfaces can function as a lubricant for this counterforce, stimulating eco-economical strategies which lead to a more multifunctional form of land-use. This showed a large variety and complexity of rural-urban relations organised around the dimensions of:

- 1) remoteness versus closeness: constructing peripherality
- 2) development based on the first or second/third sector
- 3) the degree of endogeneity
- 4) linked or disconnected to cultural/symbolic capital
- 5) agri-ruralism versus post-productivism
- 6) institutional versus informal interaction

The results show that in a situation where regions have to compete more and more internationally on the markets of food, leisure and housing, they can distinguish themselves by utilising their countryside capitals, re-orientating themselves on regional resources, and developing products and services linked to cultural and symbolic capital.

*Keywords:* rural development, eco-economy, sustainable, regional development, competitiveness, rural-urban interfaces, new rural paradigm, Europe.

## **1. Introduction: exploring the features of the ‘new rural development paradigm’.**

Many European rural regions are undergoing a change towards new functions, activities and patterns, responding to forces of counter-urbanisation, agri-food developments, and new patterns of production and consumption based on changing societal demands. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) witnesses the rise of new activities in the countryside and identifies this as ‘a New Rural Paradigm’ for the countryside. This includes a new, multi-sector, place-based approach to rural development which seeks to identify and exploit the varied development potential of rural regions through new industries such as rural tourism, manufacturing or ICT. The core of this new label is to claim a need for a closer interlinkage between rural and urban economy, and to see rural development as a close interplay with regional development more generally. Key elements are more competitiveness between rural areas based on the valorisation of local assets and the exploitation of unused resources and the influence of various sectors. According to the OECD the ‘new rural development’ expresses a shift from subsidy-driven development to more variable development through investments in different countries. It also includes new governance arrangements in which public agents do not dominate, but where there is strong representation by the private business sector to capitalise on new opportunities and resources generated by public or collective action (OECD, 2006: 114).

The aim of this paper is to investigate this new rural development paradigm in a regional context. Rural development stems from combining a wide range of different and often reconfigured rural resources in new ways, as a result of which they flow into a set of new activities, interactions, transactions and networks. This is when synergy is created, especially when new town-countryside relations emerge that support and reproduce these newly emerging activities, relations and networks. In this sense rural development, whilst characterized by distinctive features and processes, cannot be seen in isolation from the wider regional context in which it occurs. It is an embedded and dynamic feature of regionally differentiated development (Marsden and Van der Ploeg, 2008: vi).

We will describe and analyze the variety of strategies in rural regional development followed in European regions by reference first to an analysis of 62 case-studies, and second, in a more in-depth analysis of 12 European regions. An important issue is how promising these strategies are in terms of eco-economical development. Are some of them just survival strategies of an agricultural sector that is doomed to fade away in urbanizing regions? Or can these strategies contribute to more viable and sustainable regions? Kitchen and Marsden (2009) raise the question how should rural economies deal with the challenges of continued peripherality, agricultural decline, low levels of economic activity and expectations, and volatile and variable consumer demand. This is becoming an ever more serious question given the potential role of rural areas as spaces that need to contribute to adapting and mitigating climate change: ‘In the context of growing resource scarcity (not least in food, fuels and energy), and the need to de-carbonise production and consumption systems, it is timely to reconsider the potentialities for combining the ecological with rural social and economic development in innovative ways’ (Kitchen and Marsden 2009: 275).

Such an *eco-economy* places an emphasis upon the recalibration of micro-economic behaviour and practices that, added together, can potentially realign production-consumption chains and capture local and regional value between rural and urban spaces (Kitchen and Marsden, 2009: 275). To bring about these new opportunities, this requires also a re-orientation in the type of vertical and/or horizontal alliances or coalitions (private-private, public-private and public-public) involved in agricultural production and rural development (Horlings et al 2009). This leads to the central question in this paper:

*“What types of strategies and pathways for eco-economical development can be witnessed in rural regions in Europe?”*

A rich variety of case studies has been explored in this field of research, which can be used to identify emerging patterns and processes that are then expressed in various and often connected activities associated with alternative food networks, nature, water and landscape management, tourism, rural-urban relations and regional branding.

In the paper we build on empirical material, gathered in the context of a large European research project, ETUDE, based on 62 European projects and 12 regional in-depth case studies, carried out by research institutes in six European countries<sup>1</sup>. The rich empirical material shows us a broad overview on strategies on rural, regional development in Europe.

The central question is divided in several sub-questions. We start with the question how the complexity and dynamics of rural development can be understood, and which conceptual models for rural, sustainable development can be distinguished? Second, we will focus on the driving forces of rural development. What are the main driving forces that bring about rural transformation? An important aspect of rural transformation, we argue, is the erosion of traditional rural-urban boundaries in European regions. Furthermore we focus on the central question, which eco-economical strategies, contributing to more sustainable development, can be distinguished in practice in Europe, (based on all the 62 case studies). We identify four main strategic pathways, and illustrate these with examples from the cases. We will also mention some constraining factors in the ways actors deal with them.

This applies an analytical model ('the web') as a heuristic device. It provides a way of harnessing diversity and 'photographs' the configuration of dimensions in regional development. In order to fully grasp how the dynamic interplay of actors, practices, resources and regional characteristics leads to regional change we then elaborate on the dynamics of the process of rural change, exploring 12 regional in depth-cases in detail. We will elaborate on the new patterns of rural-urban relations that occur in the process of rural change that function as a cause as well as outcome of rural change. The 12 cases show the rich variety of rural-urban relations in European regions. In the last section conclusions are drawn and some remarks are given about the relevance for

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<sup>1</sup> ETUDE aims to develop an integrated conceptual framework that goes beyond mono-disciplinary and sectoral approaches and integrates several currently emerging theoretical strands. This with the objective to: acquire a better understanding of the dynamics, scope and regional economic impact of rural development processes, whilst reflecting the large heterogeneity of rural areas and activities, assess the differential impact of newly emerging rural constellations in terms of land management, the competitiveness of rural economies and the quality of life in rural areas and explore the interfaces between different rural development trajectories and governance structures and rural policies. For each objective, recommendations are developed that are applicable in the domains of theory, practice and policy. ETUDE is a cooperation between partners of universities and institutes in 6 countries (UK, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, Latvia and Finland), see also [www.etuderd.nl](http://www.etuderd.nl).

the analytical model and the sustainability of the new rural development paradigm in European regions.

## **2. Models and discourses on sustainable rural development**

Both the concepts of rurality and sustainable development have attracted their fair share of reviews and analyses. Since the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development 'Our Common Future' (1988) the number of definitions and views on sustainability has mushroomed (Horlings, 1996; Mebratu, 1998; Robinson 2004). The concept has been analysed in terms of justice (within generations) and resilience (between generations), but there is no fixed relationship between those two and there are no universal rules for evaluating sustainable development (Hermans and Knippenberg, 2006). To enable a discursive approach, the concept of sustainability has been placed in a wider societal context. Hermans et al (2010) describe how some authors like Dryzek label sustainability as an environmental discourse, however, sustainability is also seen as a more integral discourse including, economical, ecological as well as social-cultural aspects (see for example Telos, 2002).

Others have linked the concept of sustainability to the context of agriculture and rural development (Van der Ploeg and Marsden, 2008). Marsden (2003) describes three distinct agrarian production models on a European scale: the 'agro-industrial model', the 'post-productivist model' and the 'rural development model'. The agro-industrial model is associated with the globalised production of standardised products. It reflects the faith in free competition and the application of technology intensive solutions which reduce input costs through economies of scale. The post-productivist model is based on the belief that the agricultural sector (in developed economies) is small and decreasing in economic relevance. The rural landscape becomes 'a consumption good' for the urban population, marginalizing agriculture in the process. Marsden argues that both the agro-industrial and the post-productivist model have severely unsustainable traits. To deal with these unsustainable models, he proposes a new way of looking at rurality: the sustainable, rural development model. He presents sustainable, rural development as an attempt to define agriculture as a multifunctional set of practices that has the potential to enhance the relation between farms and

people, both within rural areas and between rural and urban areas (see Sonnino et al. 2008). On this basis sustainable, rural development is defined as ‘territorially-based development that redefined nature by re-emphasizing food production and agro-ecology and that re-asserts the socio-environmental role of agriculture as a major agent in sustaining economies and cultures’ (Marsden 2003).

The rural, regional arena is the combating ground of the three competing models, rooted in notions about ecological modernisation. Ecological modernisation has become a popular term in policy and politics. Its popularity derives in part from the suggestive power of its combined appeal to notions of development and modernity and to ecological critique (Christoff, 1996: 476). (EM) as such was first used by Jänicke (1984), described as the development of a modern society, based on new technologies, fitting within ecological boundaries. Based on literature of the ‘godfathers’ of ecological modernisation such as Jänicke, Huber and Toffler, the main characteristics of ecological modernisation can be distinguished: 1) a qualitative, economical growth; 2) realisation of ecological goals 3) use of modern technologies which reduce negative environmental effects, for example in energy-production, agri-business, biological and chemical sector and ICT; 4) a steering governmental role 5) a further ‘scientification’ of society (Horlings and Marsden, 2010).

The term ecological modernisation has become contested since the eighties of the last century. In this context the distinction between weak and strong or narrow and broad versions of EM is relevant. (Christoff, 1996; Dryzek, 1997). In Dryzek’s view for example strong EM can be seen as a radical vision on sustainability (Hermans et al, 2010). We can argue here that over recent decades a prevalent but weak form of ecological modernisation has become dominant in agriculture and agri-food, aligned to the dominant food paradigm which is expressed in the current large-scale, high-input, intensive and highly mechanized forms of farming and food processing (Horlings and Marsden, 2010).

The expression of this form of ecological modernisation on the regional scale is the *bio-economy*, characterised by new environmental techniques, state-influence and large private investments, within the context of globalizing markets.

On the other hand we see the rise of an alternative paradigm, a new form of ecological modernisation that is re-embedded in space and place, leading to more sovereignty and autonomy for food producers and processors as a countervailing power to the global forces of agri-food corporatisation. This *eco-economy* is based on agro-ecological principles, local participation and demand-driven knowledge (Horlings and Marsden, 2010). Frouws and Mol see the outlines of such a modernisation processes as they delineate (1997: 271): ‘The ecological modernisation theory analyses possibilities for a process of ‘re-embedding’ economic practices, in view of their ecological dimension, within the institutions of modernity. This modern ‘re-embedding’ process should result in the institutionalism of ‘ecology’ in the social practices and institutions of production and consumption...’

Drawing on various strands of literature, including ecological economics, ecological goods and services, and ecological modernisation we can conceive of the *eco-economy* as an alternative and diverse arena for the development of new production and consumption chains and networks (Marsden, 2009). But how do these complex networks or webs work? To understand the dynamics of rural-, regional development, more recently an integrated conceptual model has been developed in the context of the European research project ETUDE project, in which sustainability is one of six domains (Van der Ploeg and Marsden, 2008). Here rural development is conceptualised as a process concomitant to the unfolding of a rural ‘web’ in the regional context; empirically of rural resources, actors, activities, linkages, transactions, networks and positive externalities and theoretically, of interrelations between six conceptual domains of: endogeneity, novelty, production, social capital, market governance, new institutional arrangements and sustainability (see table 1).

Table 1: Domains of rural development (Marsden, 2009)

<b>Endogeneity</b>	The degree to which rural economies are: a) built upon local resources; b) organised according to local models of resource combination; and c) strengthened through the distribution and reinvestment of produced wealth within the local/ regional constellation
<b>Novelty</b>	New insights, practices, artefacts and/or combinations (of resources, technological procedures, bodies of knowledge, etc.) that carry the promise that specific constellations function better

<b>Social capital</b>	“[T]he norms and networks that enable people to act collectively” (Woolcock and Narayan 2000), or more specifically, the ability of individuals, groups, organisations or institutions to engage in networks, cooperate and employ social relations for common purpose and benefit
<b>Market governance</b>	Institutional capacities to control and strengthen existing markets and/or to construct new ones
<b>New institutional arrangements</b>	New institutional constellations that solve coordination problems and support cooperation among rural actors
<b>Sustainability</b>	Territorially-based development that redefines nature by re-emphasising food production and agro-ecology and that re-asserts the socio-environmental role of agriculture as a major agent in sustaining rural economies and cultures

In this model sustainability is territorially based. Rural development is viewed as a dynamic web of linkages that reshapes the rural whilst enlarging competitiveness and enhancing the quality of life. The model can be used as (Kanemasu, draft):

- a counter-structure; finding transformative space in fissures of the dominant structure
- to illustrate the unfolding of the web as a contested process: power, conflict and social justice
- to analyze policy arrangements within the rural web
- to describe the unfolding of the web as a process of social change: illustrating changing domain interrelations

However, during the ETUDE project, researchers also realized that the rural web is still ‘work in progress’ and can be elaborated and refined for example on aspects like: the influence of external factors, aspects of scale, the conceptualisation of institutional and /policy arrangements, the broad variety of social/human capital, and the issue of regional competitiveness (see Vihinen and Kull, 2009). Theoretical notions from political science can be helpful to complete the sociological model. We will try to re-evaluate some aspects of the model in this paper, focusing on eco-economical strategies and rural-urban linkages.

### **3. Driving forces and developments**

Rural development is a multi-level, multi-actor and multi-faceted process (van der Ploeg et al, 2000). In an enlarged Europe, increasing flows of goods, services, knowledge and people are creating shifts and tensions that challenge the traditional notions of rural embeddedness and continuity. Rural development increasingly needs to be understood as a 'a process that takes into account the mobile as well as fixed assets in and across rural and urban spaces' (Sonnino et al 2008: 49).

A typology of regional differentiation has been made between: 1) specialised agricultural areas, 2) new rural areas, 3) segmented areas and 4) new suburbia. These types reflect differences in rural-urban integration. The last category, the new suburbia, most obviously expresses the urban-rural integration; these are regions where agriculture is declining and where new, often dispersed settlement patterns are emerging in which commuting provides a major link with the urban economies (van der Ploeg and Marsden, 2008).

Regions develop contrasting strategies of adjustment and compromise with the wider economy. Especially in the new suburbia we see a process of rural restructuring (see Marsden, 1998). Over many rural spaces the main restructuring of the land base has little to do with the agricultural sphere. Here extra-agricultural processes exploit the redefined rural resource, like housing. The housing market becomes more regionalised and the spatial patterns of recreational behaviour of citizens cross urban boundaries (Mommaas et al, 2000). The enlarging of urban activities and the spreading of the housing market brings about a suburbanisation of work- and supply-functions. Rural areas become part of a field, where urban-rural boundaries disappear (Verwijnen & Lehtovuori 1999). Rural areas are no longer outside the city, but become an area 'in-between' urbanized spots. In these rural-urban regions a growing intertwining of urban and rural activities occurs.

The new rural paradigm referred to by the OECD, can thus be understood in the context of regional differentiation and the recasting of new rural-urban linkages. We see the emergence of a (not only rural, but also) new *regional* paradigm which can be regarded as a result of re-localisation or a regionalisation process, resulting in new linkages between sectors, businesses, producers and consumers and markets (see table

2). This incorporates both what we identify here as ‘bio-economical’ and ‘eco-economical’ features as a result of adopting either ‘weak’ or ‘strong’ notions of ecological sustainability.

Table 2: Bio- and eco-economical regional development

	<b>Bio-economical regional development</b>	<b>Eco-economical regional development</b>	<b>Eco-economical empirical examples based on Etude projects</b>
<b>Direction of development</b>	Vertical oriented agricultural development	Vertically and horizontally oriented regional development	Regional (product and destiny) branding
<b>Sector</b>	Mono-sector oriented	Multi-sector oriented	Energy production from biomass
<b>Functions (nature, agriculture, tourism)</b>	Mono-functional, spatially divided Increased mobility,	Multifunctional/ integrated Decrease of food miles	Rural services (education, tourism) and multifunctional agriculture (agri-tourism, nature/landscape management, city farms, care farms)
<b>Products &amp; Markets</b>	Agricultural mass production Global markets ‘McDonaldization’	Endogenous development, Regional (niche) products and services Adding local value based on regional assets	Marketing of new breeds/varieties/products; Organic production Culturally embedded products Shortening of food supply chains
<b>Business-relations</b>	Business-to-business	Business to consumer, links to new actors	Direct selling, rural estates, local food for specific groups
<b>Policy</b>	Centralisation Hierarchical levels (state-region-local)	Decentralisation and increasing European influence Fluid planning boundaries New temporary policy arrangements and ‘soft spaces’ of planning	Leader-programmes International partnerships Regional cooperation (public-public, public-private, ‘triple helix’, )

In the bio-economical model regions are part of a global countryside, characterized by free trade, global markets and mass production. The EU Single Market (1993) and Nafta (1994) are well-known examples of the application of free markets. Woods (2007) developed the concept of the ‘global countryside’ to describe regional transformation processes through the globalization lens. The global countryside is the rural equivalent of the well-known ‘global village’: a virtual space having no fixed

borders representing the advanced interconnection and interdependence of localities across the world. One of the aspects of the global countryside is an increasing mobility: transformation of food products all over the world, urbanization and counter-urbanization.

The impacts of this model can be positive (e.g. rural and urban growth) but also has some severe negative side-effects such as environmental degradation, social polarization between locals and newcomers, rich and poor. The mass-production of culture also affects regions; an example is the 'macdonaldization' of production and consumption practices (Ritzer, 2008).

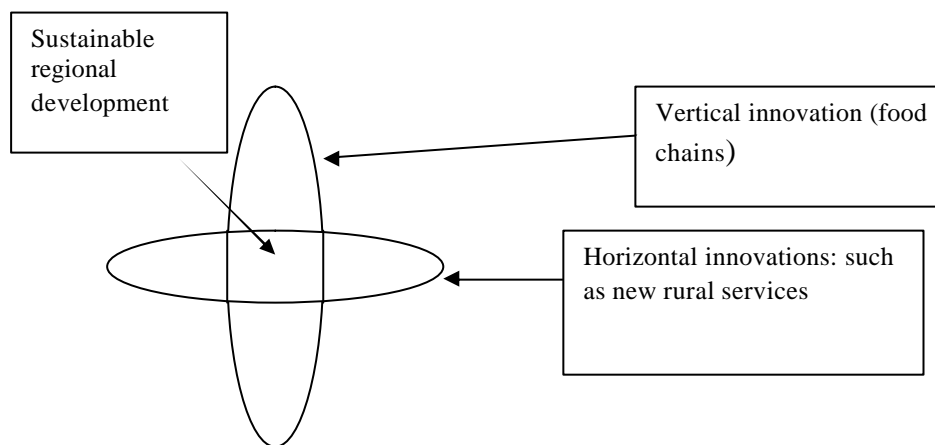
The eco-economical model on the other hand sees the rise of complex networks or webs of viable businesses (many of them small and medium sized new businesses) and economic activities that utilise the varied and differentiated forms of ecological resources in more sustainable and ecologically efficient ways (e.g new renewable energy firms, agri-tourism, food processing and catering, social enterprises). Importantly, these do not result in a net depletion of resources, but instead provide cumulative net benefits that add value to rural and regional spaces in both ecological and economic ways (Kitchen and Marsden, 2009).

The bio-economical model also assumes an erosion of traditional administrative power (see Haarmann, 2009). The binding between government and region is under pressure because 1) powers are transferred to transnational organisations 2) economical activities are less territorial-bounded 3) the national state because less important as a 'source of identification' 4) a growing international competition between regions is competing with the powers and interests of national states (WRR 1998). 'Organisation, reach and meaning' (Frissen, 1999) have become less bounded to regions. As a result new alternative policy arrangements occur, often temporary, in the form of partnerships and alliances (Haarmann, 2009) and new forms of spatial planning, referred to as 'soft spaces' (Haughton, 2009). Sjöblom (2009) sees a move towards administrative *short-termism*, more informal and non-permanent structures in the form of temporary programmes, partnerships and networks. This creates tensions between short-term devices and long-term objectives such as sustainability. Also functional interactions are shifting. For example production, communication and

recreation have become disconnected from living areas. All these aspects lead to more fluid or even semi-virtual regions (see also Hoekveld, 1996).

By contrast eco-economical regional development is difficult to achieve by merely creating vertical linkages (agricultural or bio-energy chains) or horizontal linkages (like the broadening of agriculture with new services) alone. The challenge is to develop novelties by *combining* horizontal and vertical innovation (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Regional development at the crossroad of horizontal and vertical innovation

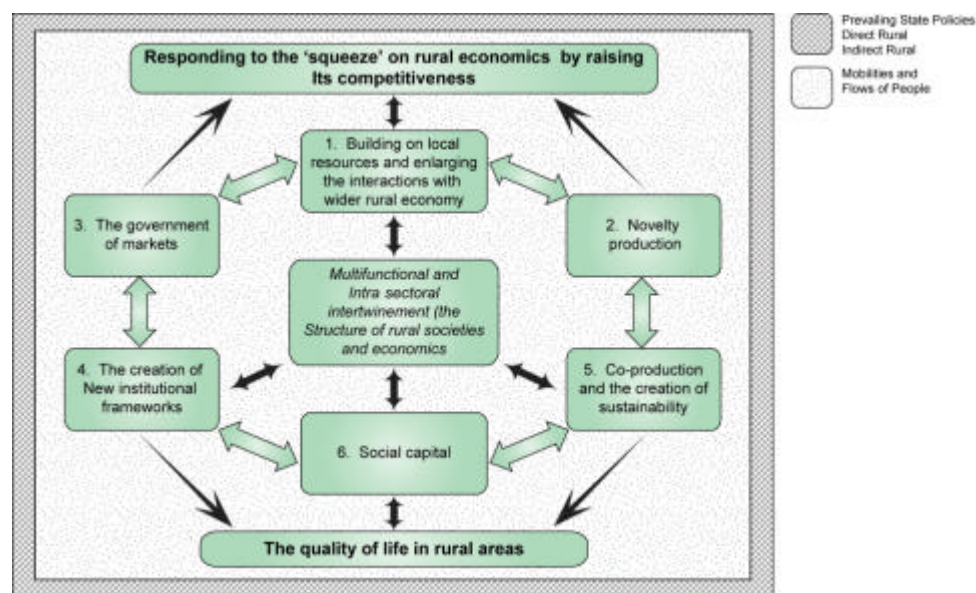


What are the driving forces involved in affecting the growth of the eco-economy? We can see three main motors that bring about rural transformation:

Firstly, the *cost-prices squeeze in agriculture* (as well as other land-based activities, like forestry) requires new answers embedded in rural eco-economical development. Macro-economically, rural economies seem to be caught in the process of a continuous squeeze between the prices and costs associated with land-based production and the growing market and consumer expectation of high-quality or natural rural resource-based goods and services. Faced with these far-reaching concerns and issues farmers are being encouraged towards more 'value-adding' and multi-functionality (see for example Marsden and Sonnino, 2008). In order to escape from the macro-economic traps associated with the devalorisation of the rural resource structures: 'rural areas require managed exposure to these competitive forces

to manage the need to develop, deepen, broaden and reground their actions with the wider, demanding public. Agricultural and wider land-based perspectives need to be reintegrated with broader questions of rural *eco-economic development*' (Kitchen and Marsden, 2009:275). Rural economies respond to the squeeze in agriculture by raising their competitiveness in order to realize quality of life in rural areas (see figure 3).

Figure 3: The squeeze on rural economics and the dynamics of the rural web (Marsden, 2009, forthcoming)



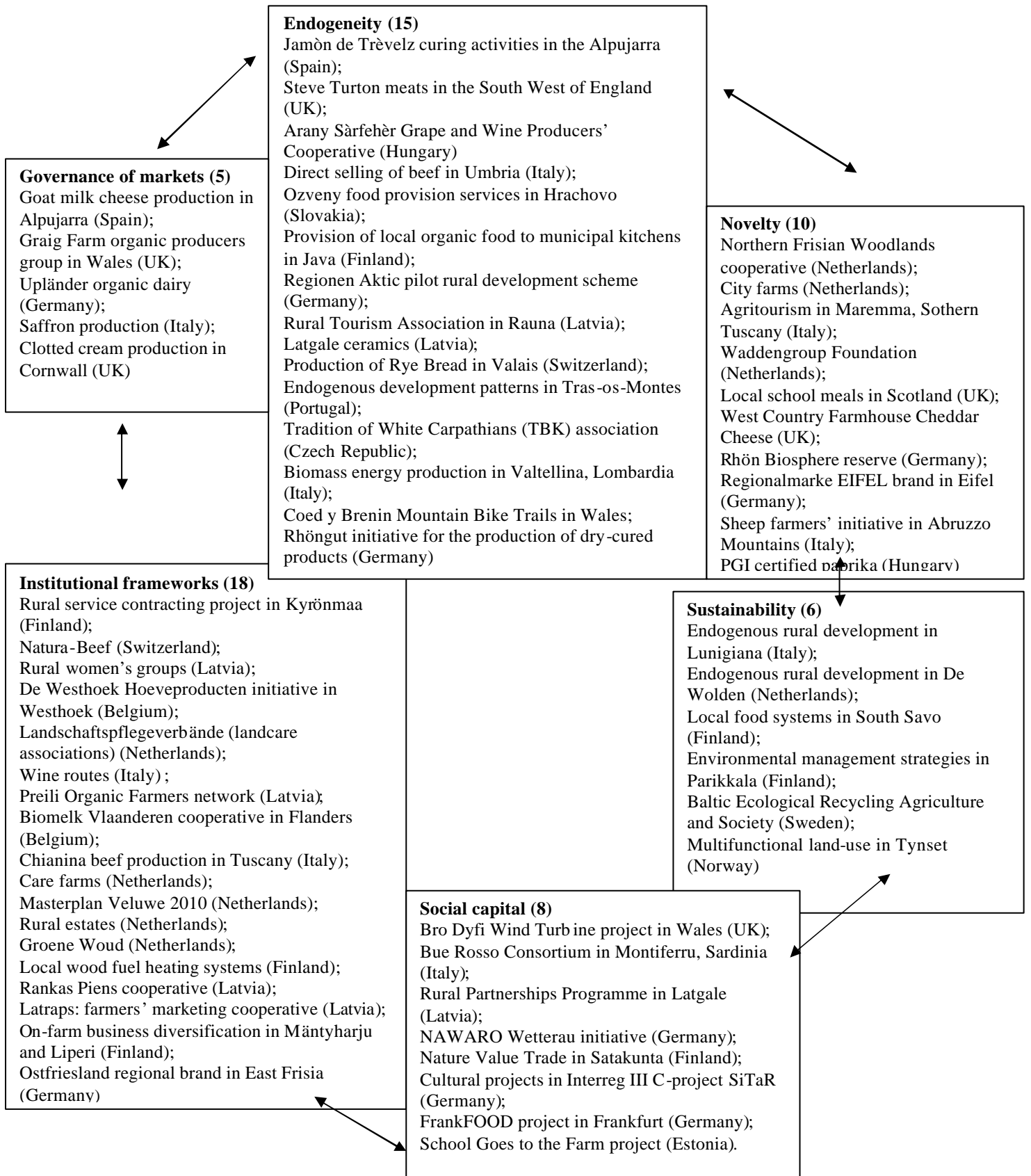
Secondly the *crises in agriculture* such as foot and mouth disease, swine fever, BSE and food scandals, have set the momentum for transition. Environmental problems in agriculture, animal diseases and food scandals, have influenced the image of agriculture. The 'licence to produce' is no longer undisputed. In the Netherlands for example, swine fever was the initiating factor to start a large process of restructuring of sandy areas in the Netherlands (Haarmann 2004). The foot and mouth disease showed the clash between the export-oriented system of agriculture and societal images; citizens as well as farmers protested against the killing of non-vaccinated cows ordered by the national governance (Van Ziel, 2003). In the UK the FMD resulted in, among other things, a 4% loss in agricultural labour between 2000 and 2002. FMD served as a catalyst for a broader shift in agricultural policy, producer attitude and consumer demand.

The third factor is *the changing, societal and more urban demands in the rural arena with the entry of new actors*. New functions, new inhabitants and new practices are taking root in rural areas. While decreasing the power of rural actors, these changes are also diversifying and complicating the rural arena, raising questions about more traditional conceptions of rural space (Frouws, 1998; Marsden 1999). Citizens express their demands, expecting space, quietness and attractive recreational landscapes in the countryside. Sonnino and Marsden see this as illustrations of a post-productivist model which marginalizes agriculture with its vision of the consumption countryside (Sonnino et al, 2008:31).

#### **4. Eco-economical pathways for rural, regional development: empirical analysis**

Based on an analysis of the 62 cases different eco-economical strategies can be distinguished. The cases show a large variety of projects on agricultural production, tourism, education, energy, nature and landscape care and regional branding, but also include research projects, partnerships and grassroots movements. The projects can be distinguished in 6 groups, based on which domain is dominant in the projects (see figure 4).

Figure 4: The 62 project and dominating domains



We can distinguish four key pathways of eco-economical development. These are: (i) (niche-) Innovation; (ii) New interfaces; (iii) Re-orientation on rural resources; and (iv) Integral regional development.

In practice often combinations occur, for example niche innovation occurs by establishing new linkages, branding of new innovative products or combinations of food innovation within a broader framework of regional development. The pathways are divided in sub-strategies and described below.

(i) (niche-) Innovation

Niche innovation refers to a form of regional development where the domain of novelty is dominant or important. Novelty is described in table 1 very broadly, also including innovative institutional arrangements and new knowledge. Instead, we couple this with the term innovation, in order to focus on the development of new product-market combinations linked to sustainability as a basis for eco-economical regional development. (Niche-) innovation is more than technical development. It can be described as the development of new products and markets or both, in order to add value and create new producer-consumer chains.

Innovation in itself doesn't lead to sustainability, but it can be linked to the sustainability domain by:

- a) Developing certification schemes (e.g. organic agriculture);
- b) Production- and quality- guidelines;
- c) New animal breeds/products or varieties,
- d) European labels (such as PDO/PGI status);
- e) Environmental farm management; or
- f) The use of renewable rural sources (such as wind energy or biomass).

Four dimensions of sustainable (niche) innovation can be identified, along the two axes of products and markets (see table 3). We will explain these four dimensions below.

Table 3: Dimensions of product-market innovation

Current	Markets
Improved products in existing markets e.g. marketing organic beef	New products for existing markets e.g. specific breeds
Current products	New products
New markets e.g. local food for schools	New products for new markets e.g. biomass for energy
New	Markets

First, the improvement and marketing of existing products in existing food markets

Examples include a large variety of initiatives and projects in Europe like the promotion of The Rhöngut initiative (production of dry-cured products) and Upländer Diary in Germany, direct selling of beef in Umbria, cooperation of organic entrepreneurs in Järna in Sweden, goat milk production in Alpajurra, improvement of ‘Jamon de Trevelz’ (ham businesses) in Spain, the production of Tuscan Chianina beef, UK initiatives such as West Country Farm House Cheddar, Cornish Clotted Cream, Steve Turton’s Westaways sausages and the Graig farm producers group. In Latvia the Latraps marketing co-operative, cattle breeding and the Preili organic farmers network, Biomilk in Belgium, The entrepreneurs’ cooperative in Het Groene Woud (The Netherlands), The tradition of White Carpathians association (marketing of regional fruit products) in Czech Republic, Hungarian paprika, Natura-beef in Switzerland and the Wine producer’s cooperative in Hungary.

This strategy seems to be dominant within alternative agri-food networks. In terms of innovation the focus is on developing and in many case 'retro-innovating' quality products and marketing tools as a response to the cost-prices squeeze and crises in conventional agricultural markets. The main constraint concerns the competitiveness and regulation in already established markets, which often tend to be dominated by corporate retailers and well-known powerful industrial brands.

Organic production especially, faces difficulties in the marketing of products. An example is the Preili organic farmers' network in Latvia which failed due to the lack of economic, human and social capital, inadequate state support, and a lack of commitment and trust among the members and the lack of appropriate management. In other cases regulation is a constraint, such as hygienic sanitary norms for food in direct selling, e.g. in Umbria. Farmers adapted in this region to the regulation by following a strategy of vertical integration, firstly by developing co-operatives through collective contractual integration with the distribution system and secondly, more autonomously internalizing the slaughtering activity and marketing of beef.

Entrepreneurs cope with the above difficulties by forming cooperatives or associations aimed at collective marketing, vertical integration in the production chain, new product branding, developing quality guidelines to distinguish the product from others, or by applying for and achieving European PDO and PGI labelling designations. In some cases the initiative of 'wilful individuals' or ecological entrepreneurs play a stimulating and key orchestrating role (Jamon de Trevelz, Rodda Creamery in Cornish Clotted Cream, Graig farm producers group and Steve Turnton Westaways sausages).

### *Second, the production and marketing of new products for existing food markets*

Here, innovation is focused on the production of new varieties or breeds or the (re)introduction of agricultural products or non-food products. Examples are new products (Gregoriano cheese, smoked ricotta) of sheep farmers in Abruzzo Mountains, the development of the (almost extinct) breed Bue Rosso in Sardinia, reintroduction of the Saffron Spice in Tuscany, some of the products of the

Waddengroup in the Netherlands, Wine routes in Hungary, Rye Bread in Valais (Switzerland), Dairy Rankas Piens in Latvia.

Most projects are initiated by private actors but also sometimes by public actors (Rye bread, wine routes). Main constraints include the necessary investments for product- and market development. A strategy to cope with these difficulties is collective action, up-scaling and networking, search for support from governmental authorities or European programmes (such as Leader II) and non-governmental organisations (like 'Slow Food'). In some cases innovative new products have been developed by the initiative of visionary individuals (Saffron in Tuscany, Dairy Rankas Piens, Waddengroup and Tegut/Rhongut).

### Thirdly, the production and marketing of agricultural products for new markets

Here, innovation is focused more on finding new groups of consumers, on the local or regional scale, which can contribute to local food sovereignty, the strengthening of producer-consumer relations, or the decrease the 'ecological foot print'. Examples are school catering in the FrankFood project in Germany, delivery of products from Ecological Recycling Agriculture (ERA) to Municipal kitchens in Finland, the School goes to the farm project (Estonia), ERA products for schools and other institutions, restaurants and private consumers in Sweden, city-farms in the Netherlands, the provision of local school meals in East Ayrshire in Scotland, direct sales of Westhoek Hoeve products in Belgium, provision of food services for pensioners in Ozveny Slovakia, and Nawaro Wetterau in Germany (crops for bio-energy and industrial use).

Some of the projects are initiated by women's groups (Westhoek Hoeve products, Ozveny), while others are the result of policy initiatives (Local school meals in Scotland, FrankFood), or European projects such as Interreg IIIB (food for municipal kitchens in Finland).

Some innovative initiatives like City farms (Netherlands) face the problem that there are no institutional procedures for support or policy programmes available for their stimulation. The search for new consumer groups like schools and municipalities can

create difficulties in networking and in breaking into established supplier networks. An interesting example to cope with this problem is the development of school meals in Scotland. Here, the Council organised a tender to attract and enrol as many small and local suppliers as possible and enabled them to compete with large national suppliers. To encourage organic suppliers, the Council made some of the 'straightness' guidelines for class 1 vegetables more flexible. The criteria, based on price and quality rewarded suppliers' specific contributions to sustainable development. The contract was awarded to 7 local suppliers and is working successfully.

#### Fourthly, the production and marketing of new products for new markets

The focus here is on finding completely new product-market combinations, often by crossing the boundaries between different sectors. This implies a more radical break with the past and establishes entirely new eco-economical practices. Examples are Landcare ('Landschaftspflegeverbände) in Germany, local bio-energy heating systems in Finland, nature value trade (protection of nature values by forest-owners) in Stakunta in Finland, energy production based on biomass of forests in Valtellina in Lombardia (Italy), off-farm income generation in the Wolden in the Netherlands, non-agricultural products in the Green Forest, care-farming, rural estates and paid nature/landscape conservation in the Netherlands, wind-energy production (Bro Dyfi) in Wales, mountain trails ('Coed y Brenin') in Wales and Artisan Ceramics in Czech Republic.

Most initiatives are focused on horizontal networks, started by private or public initiatives. An example are the 140 voluntary Landschaftspflegeverbände in Germany which have three major goals: i) to provide impulse for an economic activity, oriented along ecological principles, and an environmentally friendly land use- a development that helps the unique characteristics of each region; (ii) to setup/maintain an extensive network of natural habitats in order to keep the basis necessities of biodiversity life intact in all cultivated landscapes; and (iii) to provide farmers engaged in conservation work with a reliable source of additional income and to help them market products that are typical of their respective regions. This strategy is, the most innovative but also most difficult, combining the constraints of the second and third strategies above.

With regard to these four sub categories we can see that most projects are focused on the first strategy: the renewed and remade marketing of existing food products for existing new markets. The rural development challenge for the future is to strengthen also the other three strategies, especially the fourth: the development of new product-market combinations. These can integrate different rural and urban interfaces (see below) and are often based on redefining natural assets, like landscape quality.

Promising examples have been developed, for example, in the Netherlands where the 'New Markets strategy' attempts to align entrepreneurs from different sectors along innovative regional storylines (such as healthy, cultural and culinary rivers), in order to develop new product-market combinations (see for example ZKA et al, 2005, Mommaas and Janssen, 2008, Horlings and Haarmann, 2009a).

#### (ii) New interfaces

New interfaces are established in the process of rural eco-economical change, between (public and private) actors, producers-consumers, within the production chain, sectors, functions, city-countryside or domains of regional development. These interfaces refer especially to the web domain of institutional arrangements (figure 3) in the sense that new forms of cooperation are formed that enable cooperation between actors. New interfaces as such do not contribute to sustainability automatically. However, linkages between the domains of the web strengthen the coherence of the rural web and create synergy and dynamics within the web which can then create possibilities for sustainable regional development (Van der Ploeg and Marsden, 2008).

Within this strategy different dimensions can be distinguished along the axes of individual and multi-actor and market- versus- public goods (see table 4). We can witness:

- Individual and more direct interfacial market relations between producers and consumers, for example by direct selling of products. An example is the already mentioned direct selling of beef in Umbria.
- Rural services in the form of public goods like health, nature and landscape for individual clients, tourist or consumers. Examples are the care farms, city farms and rural estates in the Netherlands, agri-tourism in Maremma, Southern

Tuscany, the Rural Tourism Association in Rauna (Latvia), protection of nature values by forestry owners in Satakunta in Finland and contracts for rural services in Kyrönmaa in Finland.

- Market products by multi-actor groups, cooperatives or communities. Examples here are the Wind Turbine owned by a local community in Wales and the family based production of Latgale Ceramics (Latvia).
- Public goods produced by associations, communities or cooperatives like the agricultural nature and landscape associations in the Netherlands, the ‘Landschaftspflege verbände’ in Germany, educational activities by Rural women’s groups in Latvia, multifunctional land-use in Tynset (Norway) and the use of locally available commons (‘baldios’) in Tras-os-Montes in Portugal.

Table 4: New interfaces in rural, regional development

<b>Individual</b>	<b>actors</b>
e.g. Direct selling	e.g. Farm care/city farms/rural estates
<b>Market</b>	<b>Public goods</b>
e.g. Community owned wind energy business	e.g. Landscape care (Landschaftspflege Verbände)
<b>Multi</b>	<b>Actor</b>

(iii) Re-orientation on regional resources

This refers to the web domain of endogeneity in the sense that the cases are more or less based on the valorisation of natural assets or rooted in the regional identity. Different dimensions can be distinguished along the axes of product- versus culture- (‘experience’) oriented and agricultural versus regional- oriented.

We can make a distinction between:

- The development of new breeds, food products, production guidelines or collective marketing action. Examples are direct selling of beef in Umbria, goat milk production in Alpajurra, cattle breed in Latvia, fruit production in Czech Republic, biomilk in Vlaanderen, and initiatives on marketing of organic production.
- Culturally embedded agricultural products which aim to tell the 'story of the region' and offer experiences to citizens. These are products that are more rooted in the regional cultural identity and express the symbolic capital of the region. Most of these products have applied for an EU PGI status. Examples are 'Jamon de Trevelz', Chianina beef in Tuscany, Hungarian paprika and wine, West Country farmhouse cheese makers, Cornish Clotted cream, Bue Rosseo in Sardinia, Rue Bread Valais, Waddenproducts and specific cheeses in Abruzzo mountains.
- New products based on regional natural resources; these include bio-energy from forests in Lombardia, local bio-energy heating systems in Finland and Nawaro Wetterau in Germany (crops for industrial use or the production of energy).
- Experience- based branding of entire regions, such as rural transition in Lunigiana, Regionen Aktiv in Germany, Regional brand Ostfriesland and the Rhön Biosphere reserve.

The final category here is especially interesting because it (potentially) can combine the development of horizontal and vertical linkages. An example is the Regionen Aktiv in Germany. Regionen Aktiv is an innovative support schema that specifically addresses the development of rural areas by generating new economic activities and linking them to the enhancement of environmental quality. It is an EU Leader+ type initiative, fully financed from national funds. In 2002 a jury chose 18 'model regions' out of more than 200 applications. One of the regions is Regional Marke Eiffel, a region with a high potential for tourism. The products covered by the 'regionalmarke Eiffel', which includes a large variety of food products, spirits from traditionally management orchards, wood, heating wood and furniture, as well as services in tourism. Brand users in tourism have to prove a minimum quality classification and are, amongst others, obliged to offer up to 30% of 'Regionalmarke Eiffel' products.

Table 5: The degree of re-orientation on natural resources

<b>Agricultural</b>	<b>Products</b>
Regional specific farm practices and products (breeds, guidelines)	Brands of products rooted in cultural identity (eg West County cheese makers)
<b>Product-based</b>	<b>Culture-based</b>
New product-market combinations based on natural resources (bio-energy from forests)	Regional branding eg de Eiffel
<b>Regional</b>	<b>products and services</b>

(iv) Integral regional development projects

The cases that are not yet incorporated in the schema above are aimed at integral and integrated regional development. The focus is not on agricultural development or agri-food networks as such but rather on the integration of different sectors. Examples include:

- Rural Partnerships Programme in Latgale (between Latvia and the UK, Leader II)
- The Interreg IIIc-project SiTaR
- Rural transition in Lunigiana
- The Regional plan for the Veluwe in the Netherlands
- Environmental management agreements in Parikkala in Finland
- On farm business diversification in Mäntyharju and Liperi in Finland.

Most projects are initiated by public actors or research projects. An example is the SiTaR project (Sustainability in Tourism and Resource Management). This is a project of the community initiative EU Interreg III C, having as its goal the strengthening of economic and social cohesion through the promotion of interregional cooperation. Four regions from four member states of the European Union have joined together in the consortia: Burgenland in Austria, the Autonomous Province of Bolzano-South Tyrol in Italy, the Administrative District of Waldeck-Frankenberg, Province of Hesse, in the Federal Republic of Germany, and the West Pannonian Regional Development Agency in Hungary. Two sub-projects are the setting-up of the Cultural Agency 'ago'. The second project was the hosting of a Landscape Art Conference by the Municipal Authority of the City of Lichtenfels.

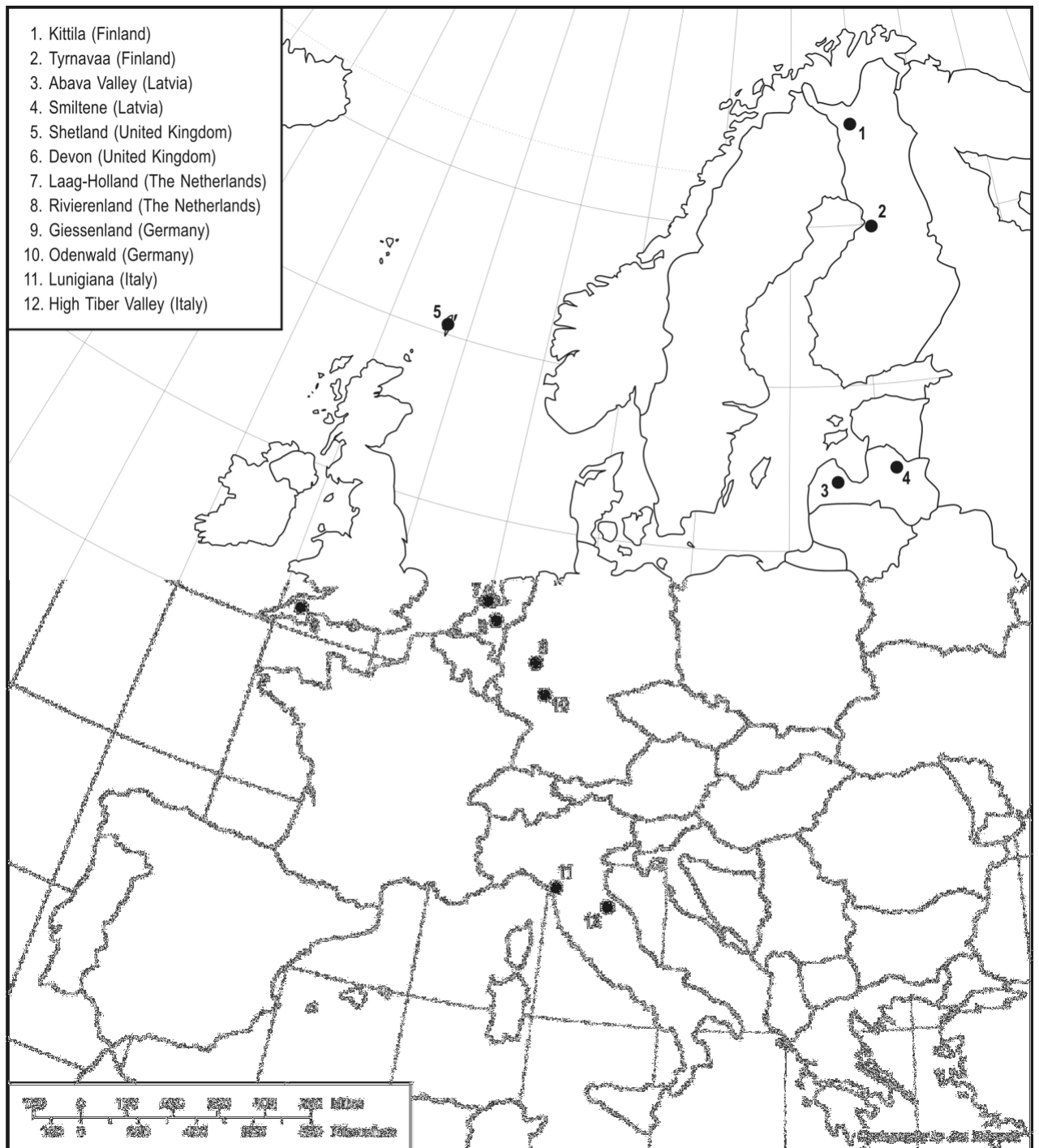
The four dimensions and their associated schema show that a variety of new economical strategies can be distinguished in European regional regions. These strategies express the differentiated responses to the cost-squeeze and crisis in conventional agriculture, and the uneven and diverse nature of new urban demands. However, these development patterns can also create tensions in the rural arena due to competing interests and competition between different forms of land-use and property rights. This is especially occurring in regions where a bio-economical development pattern is dominant, rooted in weak ecological modernisation approaches and expressed in the form of continued dominance of export-oriented large scale agriculture, technological innovation and intensive land-use. One of the clearest examples is Rivierenland, a region in the Netherlands. Rivierengebied is most adequately classified as a segmented rural area in which agricultural development is characterized by the competing co-existence of differentiating bio-economic and economic development patterns. These are in competition for scarce land resources and institutional support. The bio-economic model focuses on narrow cost efficiency and ecological modernization, and tries to strengthen its position by advocating that intensive agricultural production systems are best safeguarded by so-called 'agri business parks'. These are areas with an absolute priority for agricultural modernisation, and are not to be frustrated by any limitations that originate from the growing societal demands for other rural functions, such as the preservation of nature, landscape, leisure, tourism, etc. (Van Broekhuizen et al, 2008).

One implication and potential hypothesis here is that new urban demands, and more broadly new urban-rural interfaces, can indeed and once established function as a lubricant and new driver for eco-economical strategies themselves, leading to more multifunctional forms of land-use (as we see in some of the German and UK cases). This is not sufficiently built into the earlier web model (figure 3), but is certainly an outcome of this empirical analysis. We now address this more in depth in the final section.

## **5. New rural-urban relations as driving forces and outcomes**

In the last section we have analyzed and delineated pathways for an eco-ecological development of regions. In this section we will have a closer look at the inner dynamics in 12 European regions, to give more insight in the pathways for regional development. The 12 Case Study Areas (CSA) are analyzed within the framework of the European research project Etude and are described in table 6. (see also figure 5, map of the locations). For this paper we made use of extensive reports of all the case-studies as well as comparative analysis made in the context of the Etude projects (see references and [www.etuderd.eu](http://www.etuderd.eu)).

Figure 5: Location of the 12 case-studies



In this section we will explore different dimensions of rural-urban relations, since the intertwining of rural and urban influences described earlier seems to be one of the driving forces for the development of the eco-economy as part of sustainable rural development. Our question concerns then, how do these new urban demands function as a lubricant for eco-economical strategies leading to more multifunctional forms of land-use? We need to define rural-urban relations rather broadly, not only as physical

linkages between towns and countryside (infrastructure, commuting, distribution of goods), but also including the *strategic rural responses* to urban demands such as the development of leisure areas, experience-based activities (events, festivals, outdoor sports), rural services and regional quality products (crafts, food). These relations can refer to different rural-urban functions (Berti, 2007), for example:

- Economic: urban area as a market for agriculture production; rural area as tourist area and recreation area for urban centres self-employment or dependency from urban areas; residential area or not;
- Social: ‘own identity’ separated from the urban centres or ‘integrated identity’, out-migration or ‘rururbanisation’ pressures;
- Institutional: relationships between local institutions: separated or integrated or conflicting
- Environmental function: ‘green space’/lung and landscape or adjacent urban area or of society as whole.

Rural-urban relations are thus always *relative*, depending on the specific context and geographical situation. What is described as ‘strong’ rural-urban relations in a northern Finnish rural region could be valued as weak linkages from the perspective of an urbanized country like the Netherlands. Regional relations should thus be evaluated against the wider background of the national geographical and cultural context.

Table 6 describes the main driving forces of development in the 12 CSA, the type of area, the regional development strategy that is dominant, and the main activities that are stimulated by the current institutional/policy arrangements. The table shows first that *a large variety* of regional rural strategies can be witnessed in European regions, dependant on the history, driving forces, regional characteristics and institutional arrangements of each region.

Table 6: Rural-Urban relations in 12 CSA (partly based on Von Münchhausen and Knickel, 2008)

	<b>Driving forces for regional development</b>	<b>Type of Area</b>	<b>Rural-urban relations</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Devon, UK	Footh and Mouth Disease	New rural area	strong	Multifunctional agriculture, responding to societal demands	Farm tourism, direct selling, regional products
Shetland, UK	Narrow economical bases, vulnerability of sectors (such as oil-industry)	Marginal/peripheral area; eventually in transition towards segmented area	weak	Export-oriented oil production, now re-orientating to new urban niche-markets	Destiny branding, new markets like tourism, quality products and energy production (cabled to urban centres)
Lunigiana, Italy	Fragility of the local economy, local identity, rural discourse and 'Tuscany effect'	In transition from marginal area towards new rural area	weak	Short-food chains and rural-tourist system	New niche-food products, organic production and B&B's
High Tiber Valley, Italy	Tobacco industry	In transition from specialized area towards segmented rural area	weak	International consumer and tourism markets	labour intensive production (old furniture, artistic typography, tobacco) Facilities for foreign tourists, festivals and fairs
Giessen, Germany	Unemployment Good connections Urban influence	Metropolitan countryside	strong	Development of non-agricultural sectors and 'quality of life'	Simulation of knowledge, energy and leisure
Oberland, Germany	Remoteness Decrease of dominant	Segmented area, eventually	weak	Development of experience oriented tourism and biomass	Active forms of recreation and wellness

	industrial sector	in transition towards new rural area			Craftsmanship, geo-history, bio-energy
Kittilä, Finland	Mining industry and tourism	Peripheral area	weak	Development of mining and (long-distance and international) tourism	Large ski-resorts, farm tourism and exploitation of a goldmine
Tyrnävä, Finland	Potato cluster	Specialized agricultural area	strong	Specialized export-oriented food production	Seed potato production
Abava Valley, Latvia	Agricultural market squeeze and externally stimulated tourism	Segmented area	strong	Regional tourism and multifunctional agriculture	Rural services such as farm-tourism, green holidays, traditional events, wine festival
Smiltene region, Latvia	Non agricultural production and services	New rural area	strong	Development of sport en culture	Entrepreneurial activity in different branches
Rivierengebied, Netherlands	Agricultural modernization	Segmented rural area	strong	Food production (fruit, dairy) and landscape management	Agri-environmental cooperatives, international-oriented (fruit) production,
Laag-Holland, Netherlands	Multifunctional agriculture	In transition from marginal area towards new rural area	strong	Strengthen rural-urban relations by multifunctional agriculture	Landscape management, regional products, care-farming, rural-urban cooperation

In all the cases rural-urban linkages can be identified, however there is a large variety in degree and type. Two of the CSA are situated in remote European areas. In Kittilä in North Finland, the town represents the centre of the district. Planes provide the access to large cities. On the Shetland Islands access to neighbouring cities relies on boats. Tyrnävä, the second Finish district, shows remarkably strong linkages with the city of Oulu: commuting, industry, consumption, culture, services, marketing of agricultural products, and recreational activities.

In Smiltene novads and in Giessener Land mid-sized cities represent the regional core. Furthermore, both CSA have close linkages to big-sized cities situated in a distance where daily commuting is common. The regions Odenwald in Germany, and both Italian cases and the Abava Valley in Latvia are large territories covering several towns and villages. These regions link to a conurbation with international relevance, but they are not part of it - the rural region's identity borders the urban image.

Laag Holland and Rivierengebied are landscape conservation zones situated close to towns and cities. While Laag Holland is an example for a rural-urban relationship containing several amenities for both areas, Rivierengebied still dispenses with them. Devon in UK represents the largest ETUDE-CSA, for that reason it encompasses remote nature protection areas, rural settlement areas and cities like Plymouth and Exeter. The metropolitan area of London is of regional and market relevance for Devon, but the distance is too far to allow daily exchanges such as commuting or delivering of fresh products (Von Munchausen and Knickel, 2007).

Rural-urban relations can be seen not only as a result of geographical *location*, but also as a consequence of the *history of the region and the particular combination of main driving forces*. An example is the development of the Shetland Islands located in the remote northern part of the UK with very weak rural-urban linkages, mainly driven by the growth of the oil production since the 1970s and a relatively successful fisheries sector. Now the region is moving away from this one-sided economy and diversifying into a segmented area where multifunctional land-use and tourism is stimulated by the public sector.

Another example is Tyrnävä, a region in Lapland in northern Finland nearby the town of Oulo where producers, due to the overproduction of milk in the eighties, turned to the cultivation of grains and potatoes. In the last century the region transformed from being one of the top dairy producing areas of Finland to one of the top seed potato regions in the world, having strong companies in this sector, including research, development, marketing and exporting, producing for global markets. But Tyrnävä is more than an international oriented food production area. It is located nearby the city of Oulo and its surrounding districts which represents one of the biggest urban areas in Finland. The rural region is now transforming into a more residential area for

people who work in the city. The regional dynamics is still based on agricultural development but also on a lifestyle based on commuting.

It turns out then that new rural-urban relations can be *a driving force as well as the outcome* of regional development. In metropolitan areas such as Giessen, the demands and functions of the citizens in the nearby city are a driving force, bringing about a shift towards more attention for rural-urban development. In Giessen the second (manufacturing) and third (services) sectors are more important than agriculture. The region is important not only for commuters but also functions as a leisure area (based on the landscape quality) for inhabitants and visitors, and it has also developed the Giessener land label. Competitiveness in this region could increase based on non-agricultural sectors such as knowledge and energy, while the area is profiling itself as a region with a high quality of life.

In other regions, such as Odenland and Shetland, the (relative) remoteness in combination with environmental qualities can bring about an orientation towards urban demands for leisure areas, which then creates new rural-urban relations as an outcome. Shetland, for example, brands itself as an interesting holiday destination, while the Odenland develops 'experience-oriented' tourism including activities such as hiking, horse-riding, wellness, visits to the Geopark and the mythical 'saga forest'.

Differences in rural-urban linkages in the cases can be positioned along six different dimensions which can be regarded as the cornerstones for a variety of *dynamic pathways of regional development*. We explain these six dimensions below.

(i) Remoteness or closeness or constructing peripherality

In some regions, rural-urban relations are based on remoteness and the supply of food for foreign markets or services for foreign tourists (HTV, Shetland, Kittila and Tyrnävä). Other regions are close to urban centers and focus on the demands of commuters and visitors or function as green space/lung for adjacent urban areas (such as Giessen, Laag Holland, Abava Valley and Smiltene). An example of remoteness is Kittila, a sparsely populated area which has a history of being a successful ski location. The biggest skiing resort of Finland, Levi, is located about 18 km north of

Kittilä's centre. Thanks to the nearby airport, non-stop flights are available to Helsinki (1.5 hour by plane), which makes the region more attractive for citizens from the capital, than for tourists from the closest city, Rovaniemi, (150 km away).

An example of closeness is the region of Smiltene, an attractive region in Latvia, covered for more than 40% with forests, with two towns of regional importance: Cesis and Valmiera. The region has high levels entrepreneurial activity. The major tourism attractions are regular sports events, national and international competitions, like football tournaments, mountain-bike competitions and Baltic car-racing championships. These sports activities are grounded in the local traditions and active sport life of the community turned into attraction for tourists and visitors. According to the Smiltene development plan, the town is becoming a centre for sports and sport related tourist camps. The appropriate infrastructure is being established, for example a new football stadium, a hockey hall, a towns sport hall, skate-parks.

(ii) Development based on the primary sector or second/third sector

In some regions, rural-urban linkages are mainly based on the development of the primary sector (Shetland, Lunigiana, NTV, Tyrnävä, Devon and Laag Holland). In other regions the second or third sector are more important (Giessen, Kittila, Smiltene). In Laag Holland, for example, the valuable landscape is dependent on the farmers' management to keep the landscape open, though farming is difficult on the wet and soft peat soil. The nearby location of the Dutch capital of Amsterdam, offers farmers the chance to move away from the earlier described problem of cost-squeeze and change to multifunctional farming. Now a variety of initiatives are developed like the production of regional quality products ('Waterland meat'), a fresh food shop in the centre of Amsterdam, daycare for urban clients, four star quality recreational stays on farms ('Hotel de Boerenkamer') and a new city 'food strategy' in cooperation with the city.

In other regions non-agricultural sectors are the main drivers for development. We have already mentioned Shetland where the oil sector and the public sector are dominant. In Smiltene a variety of branches are of economical importance, besides forestry and agricultural production, such as road construction, retail trade and

building sectors. Giessen is a metropolitan landscape nearby Frankfurt where other functions such as health care, education, administration and SME's are more important than agriculture. Giessen distinguishes itself as knowledge region, bio-energy cluster and a region with a high quality of life. The region is undergoing a transition process oriented towards technology transformation and incubation, economic clusters (IT, medical technology, medical and social care). The region is also important as a leisure area for the big cities of the Rhein-Main conurbation within a distance of less than 80 km.

(iii) The degree of endogeneity

The domain 'endogeneity' is highly relevant in Giessen, Odenwald, High Tiber Valley, Lunigiana, Abava valley, Devon and Shetland Islands. As such they illustrate how regional development initiatives contribute to endogeneity or to the degree to which rural economies are: a) built upon local resources; b) organised according to local models of resource combination; and c) strengthened through the distribution and reinvestment of produced wealth within the local/ regional constellation. In this way endogeneity refers to the concept of '*countryside capital*' introduced by Garrod et al (2002). Countryside capital is, on the one hand, traditional rural and natural resources such as the landscape, water, forests, buildings, roads, etc., but on the other hand, it is also immaterial resources such as local customs, languages and festivals (Garrod et al, 2006).

In some regions, the high value landscape aspect is emphasized as being an important aspect of the countryside capital (Tyrnävä, Giessener Land, Odenwald, Laag Holland, Rivierengebied and Abava Valley). In Tyrnävä the northern location is an important condition for high-grade potato production, thanks to the cold climate, which offers a natural protection against diseases. The potential of nature and landscape for regional development in this region is however still underused. In other regions, rural resources like the minerals gold (Kittilä) and oil (Shetland) are a driving force for endogenous development, though in Shetland the region bases its branding strategy now on agricultural quality products like knitwear in order to attract more tourists. Devon, Lunigiana and Laag Holland, also focus their endogenous development on culturally embedded food products which express the 'story of the region'. The other

regions also show attempts to mobilise or valorise natural, historic, and cultural and human resources, but this is less obvious.

The link between endogenous agricultural development and natural assets is however not evident. While regions such as Devon and Lunigiana, use their natural assets (landscape) as bases for quality food products, in other regions such as Oberland and Rivierenland, agricultural production is more or less disconnected from the landscape values.

(iv) Linked to or disconnected cultural/symbolic capital

Producer-consumer relations can be linked to natural assets and cultural capital (Lunigiana, Devon, Shetland), thereby using symbolic capital which functions as a cement to align people around the cultural story-line of the region. Rural-urban relations can, on the other hand, also be disconnected from cultural identity (Oberland, Kittila, Tyrnävä).

Lunigiana is an historic region with rich cultural capital (churches, abbeys, pilgrimage route, book festivals, medieval rural villages). The regional image is connected to the local agro-food products. There are 72 local agro-food products, such as lamb of Zeri, bread of Caosola, the PDO Honey of Lunigiana, some wines and the mushroom 'Fungo di Borgotaro'. However, the risk here is indeed the symbolic overexposure and the consequent generation of conflict between lived-perceived-conceived ruralities (for instance you can only find the onion of Treschietto only during the local «Festival of the onion of Treschietto» period).

Regions are also increasingly competing with each other, based on their natural assets and cultural capital. Several of the ETUDE regions develop a *branding strategy*, marketing the 'identity' of the region. A distinction can be made between product branding and destiny branding. In some cases branding is limited to plain marketing, but it can also be more broadly defined as the establishment of new-product-market combinations rooted and embedded in regional assets. In this sense branding can potentially link the domains of endogeneity and sustainability, and they are given life by new rural-urban interactions and practices.

Regional branding can be also seen as a sustainability strategy in itself. An example (from the 62 cases) is the National Landscape Green Forest in the Netherlands; here the entrepreneurs' cooperative considers it the responsibility of its members to invest in landscape quality. This includes not only investment in landscape quality or a financial contribution to a Regional Fund, but also social activities like voluntary work, private cooperation and public-private partnerships.

Important *conditions for branding* as a strategy for more competitiveness are (see Horlings and Haarmann, 2009b, forthcoming): first symbolic capital, which means a feeling of pride, belonging, regional identity and social cohesion, which can offer the glue for a cohesive and binding storyline for the region. A regional storyline links the variety of regional activities under one umbrella strategy, and mobilizes and inspires people (examples are Odenland, Shetland).

A second condition is stocks of social and human capital in order to establish new institutional arrangements such as cooperatives, associations which can lead to collective novelties (e.g the High Tiber Valley). When branding is disconnected from initiatives and novelties, branding will remain shallow marketing without development power. An example is Shetland where the branding strategy is public sector led. In the food and drink sector, a survey has found local producers and processors generally supportive of the idea of branding yet are also unsure about its operation or benefits, concluding that 'progress on the Brand appears to be very slow, and does not appear to be industry-led'.

Third, branding can be supported and coordinated by policy arrangements in order to prevent fragmentation. An example is Kittila in Finland. Finish rural development policies are very strongly institutionalised. The power structures are more decentralised giving space for well-functioning bottom-up policy making. At the local, municipality level, policies are strongly concentrated on mass tourism and encourage enterprises to start new business ventures, especially in the field of tourism.

(v) Rural-urban linkages based on 'agri-ruralism' or 'post-productivism'

In some regions multi-functional agriculture is developing, such as in farm tourism and direct selling (Devon). In others, the valuable landscape is considered more as a consumption space for urban tourists (Odenland, Kittila). Some cases show that what was once a 'contested countryside' (Murdoch et al 2003), divided between post-productivist environmentalist interests and local development and farmer interests, can be overcome. The seeds of this rural transition can be seen especially in the '*new rural areas*' such as regions such as Devon, Laag Holland, Lunigiana and Smiltene.

An example is Devon which has historically been pushed by 'incomers' whose largely middle-class, postproductivist agenda has at times conflicted with local farming and rural development interests concerned about the options and choices available to rural families for sustaining their livelihoods (Murdoch et al 2003: 100). Now the urban demands for valuable landscape become linked to alternative eco-economic agriculture activities such as farm tourism and direct selling. New institutional arrangements, in the form of producer groups and public-private partnerships, tend to play the key facilitating role in this process. In Devon local/organic and sustainable farm tourism are facilitated by a lubricant of new institutional arrangements that function to coordinate and sustain collective actions, delivering outcomes ranging from immediate economic benefits of market governance to the long-term benefits of endogenous development and sustainability.

Another example is Laag Holland; here the Program Office Laag Holland, an organisation of 22 public and private actors worked together on rural development in this National Landscape, linking multifunctional agriculture to the maintenance of the valuable peat landscape.

(vi) Institutional or informal interaction

Competitiveness of regions seems to be stimulated by strong and successful interaction between private and public actors. Cooperation can be formal or informal. Formal cooperation has the advantage to be embedded in policy arrangements which can offer resources (finances, advice and membership to European programmes). Informal cooperation, however, can create possibilities for creating room to manoeuvre and negotiating behind the scenes without having to take a formal position.

We can make a distinction between regions where rural-urban relations are institutionalised, the result of formal governmental cooperation, and regions where rural-urban relations are the result of more informal networks and forms of cooperation. For instance, administration-driven regional management is a typical phenomenon in Kittilä municipality, Giessen district, Odenwald district and Shetland Islands municipalities. In Shetland for example, the provision of resources, employment and leadership in the public sector has been a primary rural development driving force. The council has functioned as a major economic driver on the Island through the provision of funding, regional marketing, business support and training. Public sector organisations have initiated several forums etc. to facilitate multiple-stakeholder dialogue an action as well as successful participatory initiatives.

In some regions like Shetland, Odenwald, Kittila, Smiltene, Lunigiana, Laag Holland, High Tiber valley and Devon, social capital in the form of civil participation and voluntary actions are strongly developed. In Smiltene, for example, community life is a driving force for regional development. In this region there are 15 active NGO's. Smiltene is unique in the level of activity in the population in sports. This seems to have created team spirit and collective identity, local patriotism, which is a driving force behind collective actions for common good. Social capital has played a triggering and a bridging and binding role in the region. Stemming from the local participation traditions (endogeneity), social capital can be also viewed as the initiating dimension for the web dynamics, facilitating actions also on the institutional level.

## **6. Conclusions: exploring and parametising the new rural development paradigm**

The paper has, through two sets of comparative empirical analysis, unpacked some of the key processes involved in what has been termed the new rural development paradigm in Europe. More specifically, we have distinguished eco-economical strategies shaped along different axes of products and markets which express the differentiated responses to the conventional cost -squeeze in agriculture, agricultural crises and increasing urban demands. We made a distinction between eco-economical

strategies pathways based on: 1) (niche)-innovation 2) new interfaces 3) re-orientation on rural resources and 4) integral regional development.

Most of the 62 cases in the first part of the analysis demonstrate strategies which create new social and economic spaces in which new actions and practices are given the capacity to develop. They often continue to face the problem of competition within a market dominated by mass, cheap products. And so their long term sustainability is often in potential jeopardy. Yet in terms of competitiveness we have seen that more promising changes for the development of the eco-economy can be created by combining horizontal and vertical linkages leading to new consumption chains and networks. New rural products and services, new interfaces, re-orientation on rural resources and integral regional development, can potentially function as a counterforce challenging the dominant bio-economic ecological modernization paradigm that is still dominant in many European regions.

We raised the question if new urban demands and more specifically urban-rural interfaces can function as a lubricant for this counterforce, stimulating eco-economical strategies which lead to a more multifunctional form of land-use. The second analysis of 12 in-depth European case-studies showed a large variety and complexity of rural-urban relations organised around the dimensions of:

- 7) remoteness versus closeness: constructing peripherality
- 8) development based on the first or second/third sector
- 9) the degree of endogeneity
- 10) linked or disconnected to cultural/symbolic capital
- 11) agri-ruralism versus post-productivism
- 12) institutional versus informal interaction

The results show that in a situation where regions have to compete more and more internationally on the markets of food, leisure and housing, they can distinguish themselves by utilising their countryside capitals, re-orientating themselves on regional resources, and developing products and services linked to cultural and symbolic capital.

Regional branding can offer the underlying storyline, when it is not mere 'image-making' and marketing but offers an overarching regional agenda that aligns different

interests and actors. Conditions for regional branding are first symbolic capital, which means a feeling of proudness, belonging, regional identity and social cohesion, which forms the glue for a cohesive and binding storyline for the region. Second, social and human capital becomes important in order to establish new institutional arrangements (cooperatives, associations) which lead to collective novelties. Third, the support of policy arrangements provides a basis to prevent fragmentation.

The concept and heuristic framework of 'the rural web' proved useful to identify the interrelated domains of rural eco-economic development and the interactions between the domains. However, external factors such as counter-urbanization and commuting, climate change, and globalisation should be taken more into account as influential factors in rural development. We have thus attempted to enrich and adapt the model by adding rural-urban relations as important driving forces as well as outcomes which can be seen as one of the explaining factors of dynamism in the 'unfolding webs' of rural development. New rural-urban relations in the form of new agricultural rural products and services for urban citizens are established, linked to other sectors such as leisure, energy and health and new networks and interfaces are created, which then, in turn, reinforce the mobilisation of the web and its eco-economical development.

These new rural-urban relations can (potentially) overcome the traditional divides and contestations between agri-industrialism and post-productivism. The seeds of this rural transition can be witnessed especially in 'new rural areas' such as Devon, Laag Holland, Lunigiana and Smiltene, where different 'weak' and 'strong' notions of ecological modernisation compete. The former model focuses on a narrow concept of cost –efficiency and tries to strengthen its position by advocating that agricultural production systems are best safeguarded by so-called agri business parks, areas with an absolute priority for agricultural modernization, over other more multi-functional land uses. However, in the new rural areas multifunctional land-use and the spawning of the eco-economy can challenge this bio-economy creating new challenges of sustainability for eco-economical development.

Whilst international agencies, like the OECD, and numerous scholars are now witnessing the emergence of 'a New Rural Paradigm' (NRP), the vast amount of comparative empirical evidence now available- as partially reflected in the analysis

here- validates these assertions. However, as we have seen here the scientific quest to understand the diversity, context dependency and complexity of its practical expression and, more ambitiously, its conceptual dynamics, has only just begun. This paper has attempted to define some consistent parameters for understanding this complexity, but it has also done so by appreciating that the development of the NRP has to be seen in a contested context in which bio-economic as well as eco-economic models are being actively progressed as ecological modernisation continues to evolve and mutate.

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