



Oral Communications

Theme 1 - Agri-food Systems, Forestry and Circular Economy

Abstract 1.1

#68 - Place, Product and Governance: Territorial Dynamics of Geographical Indications in Slovenia

Presenting Author: Erik Logar, ZRC SAZU, Anton Melik Geographical Institute, Slovenia

Abstract:

Geographical Indications (GIs), including the EU quality schemes Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), represent a place-based policy instrument linking product quality and reputation to a defined territory, production practices, and local heritage. Despite this territorial embeddedness, GIs remain under-researched within rural geography, particularly in post-socialist contexts. This study examines how GI schemes shape rural cooperation and territorial development in Slovenia and asks why many registered designations remain weakly institutionalised in practice. A mixed-methods approach was applied, combining qualitative interviews with producers and other key stakeholders, analysis of governance arrangements, and comparison across regional contexts.

Findings show that PDO and PGI schemes can strengthen producer cooperation, joint marketing, resource sharing, and knowledge exchange, especially in several regions characterised by established traditions of collective action. In contrast, in areas where historical distrust toward collective organisation persists, cooperation tends to remain limited, resulting in weaker market outcomes and reduced territorial benefits. A major constraint is fragmented governance and the lack of a dedicated national support structure that would provide coordination, guidance, and systematic exchange of good practices. A recurring pattern is that initial enthusiasm surrounding registration often declines rapidly after GI status is awarded. As a result, many designations become “sleeping beauties”: formally recognised but largely inactive as drivers of marketing, local networks, or rural development.

The effectiveness of GIs in Slovenia depends strongly on territorial context, governance quality, and pre-existing social relations. Unlocking their rural development potential requires improved coordination, stronger local governance capacities, and deliberate efforts to build trust among producers. The study highlights the value of geographical approaches for opening the “black box” of GI governance and explaining why place-based policy instruments may remain dormant in post-socialist rural settings.

Keywords:

geographical indications; territorial development; stakeholder governance; producer cooperation; post-socialist contexts





Abstract 1.2

#72 - Role of Protected Denominations of Origin in the resilience of Dehesas ecosystems

Presenting Author: Antonio Fernandez Ranchal, Agricultural Economics, Universidad de Cordoba, Spain

Co-author: M Mar Delgado-Serrano, Agricultural Economics, Universidad de Cordoba, Spain

Abstract:

The Dehesa is a traditional agroforestry system shaped by long-standing interactions between people and nature, creating a unique bio-cultural landscape in the Iberian Peninsula recognised as a High Nature Value farming system. This savannah-like system is characterised by the coexistence of *Quercus* species with crops or permanent pastures. Despite its cultural, ecological, and economic importance, the Dehesa faces multiple interconnected threats. Climate change increasingly disrupts acorn production, while tree ageing, poor management, pest outbreaks affecting holm oaks, and overgrazing by livestock contribute to ecological decline. Socioeconomic challenges, including rural depopulation, limited generational renewal, and unfair commercial practices, intensify these environmental

The most valuable product from the Dehesa is Iberico ham, made from pure Iberico pigs raised extensively and traditionally fed on acorns during the autumn season. This feeding regime underpins the ham's distinctive quality, flavour, and nutritional properties. However, its high prestige, market value, and consumer ignorance have led to overstocking and frequent mislabelling of the Dehesa image, resulting in market hams not derived from pure Iberico pigs or from Dehesa-based systems, undermining authenticity, increasing vulnerabilities, and endangering the long-term resilience of the Dehesa.

The research objective is to analyse how Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) schemes, based on strict traceability rules for origin, production methods, and product characteristics, promote resilience. The resilience of the Los Pedroches Iberico ham PDO value chain was examined through participatory methods involving over 50 stakeholders. A vulnerability matrix highlighted precipitation and tree density as critical environmental factors influencing acorn availability, while unfair marketing practices and the entry of large firms primarily threaten social and economic resilience.

Results showed that PDO standards strengthen environmental resilience by limiting pig stocking density; economic resilience through premium pricing, and social resilience by ensuring processing, employment, and income remain within the designated territory. Using focus groups and ranking methods, stakeholders also identified different adaptive mechanisms to address vulnerabilities and evaluated their feasibility.

This research was developed within the framework of the H2020 MOVING Project, funded by the European Commission.

Keywords:

Dehesas, Resilience, Protected Denomination of Origin, Los Pedroches DOP





Abstract 1.3

#87 - Drought mitigation, survival results one year after planting, in a field trial with strawberry trees

Presenting Author: Patrícia Santos, ESAC/IPC

Co-author: Ana Pereira, ESAC/IPC

Co-author: Anne Boulet, ESAC/IPC

Co-author: Filomena Gomes, ESAC/IPC, CERNAS

Co-author: António Ferreira, ESAC/IPC, CERNAS

Abstract:

Arbutus unedo L. exhibits high ecological plasticity, including tolerance to degraded soils, and has considerable socio-economic relevance, mainly through brandy production. The species is also widely used in forestry due to its strong post-fire resprouting capacity. The increased frequency and intensity of droughts due to climate change poses a threat to the establishment of plantations. This study evaluated various methods to mitigate the effects of drought on the success of forestry plantations. The trial was established on 6 February 25 in Signo Samo (40°1'50.7"N-7°55'30.91"W), on acidic soil with a slope superior to 30°. The terrain was terraced and 700 kg/ha of limestone were applied. Eleven treatments were tested (5 plants/treatment/block, 220 plants in total, across four blocks). The following management techniques were tested (individually or in combination): (i)-applying mulching (to reduce water loss and weeds germination); (ii)-applying commercial units of mycorrhizae (endo-&-ectomycorrhizae-Asfertglobal); (iii)-dipping plants roots in a *Pisolithus tinctorius* spore suspension; (iv)-applying compost manure (10L/plant) and (v)-using a water-retainer (G300, 2g/plant). These were compared with a control and an operational fertilization treatment consisting of controlled-release fertilizer (9:20:8 +14CaO+3MgO+0.1B; 30g/plant) and 18% superphosphate (140g/plant applied 20cm from the plant). After one year, mineral fertilization without mulching resulted in the lowest survival rate (45%; $P < 5\%$). In contrast, treatments combining spore suspension, mulching, hydro-retainer, and endomycorrhizae significantly increased survival, reaching 100% in the spore suspension + mulching and G300 + endomycorrhizae + mulching treatments. Although mineral fertilization promoted greater shoot growth, it may have limited root development, reducing drought tolerance. Mulching consistently enhanced survival, indicating that management strategies should prioritize practices that stimulate root development and improve resilience under water-limited conditions.

Keywords:

Arbutus unedo (L.); mulching; mycorrhiza; *P. tinctorius* spore suspension; water retaining agents.



Abstract 1.4

#89 - The Role of *Arbutus unedo* in Early Successional Forestry for Soil Restoration

Presenting Author: Ana Pereira, ESAC/IPC

Co-author: José Mateus, Cooperativa Integral Minga, C.R.L

Co-author: Maria Vidal, ESAC/IPC, CERNAS, CERES

Co-author: João Marcelino, Homegrid, Lda

Co-author: Filomena Gomes, ESAC/IPC, CERNAS

Abstract:

This study evaluates an ecological restoration project conducted in a 12-ha area of Serra da Estrela, Portugal, aimed at replacing widespread *Eucalyptus* and *Acacia* species in abandoned rural landscapes that contribute to soil degradation, low biodiversity, and increased wildfire risk. The main objective was to assess whether the phased removal of these species, designed to minimise exposure to strong mountain winds, combined with their gradual replacement by native Mediterranean species selected according to edaphic suitability, could promote ecosystem recovery. *Quercus robur* and *Quercus pyrenaica* were established on Cambisols, while riparian species such as *Fraxinus* spp. were planted along temporary watercourses. *Quercus faginea* and *Arbutus unedo* were introduced on Lithosols due to their tolerance of nutrient-poor conditions, and fruit trees (olive, chestnut, and almond) were planted in deeper soils. Emphasis was given to *Arbutus unedo* as a pioneer species in shallow, rocky Lithosols. Granite outcrops were mechanically fragmented to access deeper soil pockets, and planting pits were amended with manure (10 L/plant) and biomass mulch (30 L/plant). Under these conditions, *A. unedo* achieved a survival rate of approximately 85%, indicating high establishment success under harsh edaphic conditions and supporting its use as a pioneer species in degraded rocky areas. In parallel, a progeny trial and an ex situ genetic reserve were established using progenies from a first-generation *A. unedo* seed production orchard composed of individuals certified by the Portuguese Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF) under the qualified category. This approach integrates ecological restoration with long-term genetic improvement and conservation objectives. At this early successional stage, *A. unedo* plays a key role in soil formation, organic matter accumulation, microclimatic regulation, and increased water infiltration rates, contributing to enhanced ecosystem resilience to wildfire. Simultaneously, it represents a potentially profitable crop through the production of fermentable fruits and fruit-based distillates.

Keywords:

Autochthonous species, Biomass mulch, Pioneer species, Progeny trial, Strawberry tree



Abstract 1.5

#95 - French rural protest through twenty five years of agricultural elections. Trade union balance of power and spatial trajectories

Presenting Author: Pierre Guillemain, INRAE UR ASTER

Co-author: Adrien Baysse-Lainé, CNRS UMR PACTE

Co-author: Michaël Bermond, University of Caen Normandy/CNRS UMR ESO

Abstract:

Rural protests are a well-established subject in rural geography, studied e.g. through the various forms of farmers' mobilization ("action-oriented", "progressive farmers" or "established unions"). Since 2024, farmers' protests have reached an unparalleled scale in the EU, leading to rapid environmental political setbacks.

Within this context, France appears to be specific insofar as agricultural governance is determined by the results of professional elections held at the provincial level, to which three main farmers' unions run. The 2025 elections marked the end of the long-standing dominance of the FNSEA union, with several Chambers of Agriculture now being led by a protesters' union (the "Rural Coordination"). This presentation questions the territorial factors explaining the evolution of each farmers' union's electoral results across the 5 last elections (2001, 2007, 2013, 2019 and 2025).

Our methodology builds on a novel dataset featuring the results of 467 provincial ballots, that we compiled, cleaned and formatted. We carried out statistical and cartographic analyses of these data.

Our results show the spatial extension of the conservative 'action-oriented farmers' tendency, in the face of the decline and stabilization (in isolated provinces) of the 'progressive farmers' tendency, and the decrease of 'established unions', still resisting in the most productive field crops regions. We cross these results with farmers' unions direct actions during the campaign for the 2025 professional elections, showing in which provinces the tensions between unions summit. Lastly, we analyze the spatial relationship between the overrepresentation of each farmers' unions and the pathways of agricultural transitions.

Keywords:

Agricultural unionism and elections; Rural protest; Statistical typology; France (2001-2025).





Abstract 1.6

#178 - Multifunctional Agricultural Buildings and the Reterritorialisation of Agriculture: Towards a New Paradigm of Farm Restructuring? Insights from Three Rural Territories in Occitanie (Southern France)

Presenting Author: Orlane Rouquier, UMR LISST, University of Toulouse – Jean Jaurès

Co-author: Coline Perrin, UMR INNOVATION, INRAE

Co-author: Michaël Pouzenc, UMR LISST, University of Toulouse – Jean Jaurès

Abstract:

In the context of the reterritorialisation of agriculture and food systems, farms are increasingly transforming and diversifying, changes that are most visibly manifested in the built environment. Often associated with the establishment of new agricultural project holders or with changes in existing farming systems, this paradigm shift can lead to the emergence of multifunctional agricultural buildings. What development trajectories do these projects follow? What building models are implemented, within which settings and for which uses? To address these questions, a qualitative multiscalar methodology was deployed across three rural territories in southern France, selected for the diversity of their landscape and agricultural contexts (plains, hillsides and mountains; livestock farming, mixed farming, market gardening...), enabling the documentation of a variety of built forms. The methodology is based on 101 semi-structured interviews conducted with farmers (n=60) and key stakeholders (agricultural and rural development officials, elected representatives, local authorities), 58 farm visits documented with sketches and maps, and a collection of photographs, between 2020 and 2023. The case studies were selected using representative sampling based on the type of production and the functions of the buildings. Results highlight that multifunctionality reshapes the concept of agricultural buildings by integrating an agri-food dimension. These emerging dynamics run counter to the sectoralisation of agriculture and the specialisation of the built environment. They highlight the ingenuity of project holders in reconciling multiple functions within their farms. From an architectural and organisational perspective, multifunctional buildings take a wide range of forms and layouts, including the combination of activities within a single structure, the organisation at the farm scale, or the location in strategic places within the territory through shared facilities. These projects rely on various strategies, ranging from the restructuring of existing buildings to the construction of new ones. In conclusion, multifunctional agricultural buildings reveal ongoing transformations in rural spaces.

Keywords:

Farm buildings, rural transformations, reterritorialisation of agriculture, agri-food systems





Abstract 1.7

#187 - Geographical Indications : levers for agroecological transition in agricultural sectors ? Case of terroir plant and animal productions in Occitanie (France).

Presenting Author: GUIBERT Cécile, Ecole d'Ingénieurs de Purpan and Université Toulouse 2 Jean Jaurès (UMR 5193 CNRS LISST)

Co-author: FRAYSSIGNES Julien, Ecole d'Ingénieurs de Purpan and Université Toulouse 2 Jean Jaurès (UMR 5193 CNRS LISST)

Abstract:

Intrinsically linked to a specific terroir and to quality requirements, agricultural sectors with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) or Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) are both vectors of traditional practices and transition dynamics, but the variety of these sectors leads to disagreement on how to approach the agroecological transition.

This paper examines how terroir sectors are addressing the agroecological transition and if there are specific differences between animal and plant production in Occitanie (France) ; one of the regions in Europe with the most Geographical Indications (GI), because of its diverse territories and a limited level of agricultural intensification.

Based on a thesis and a research internship in Geography, this study draws on 55 semi-structured interviews conducted with collective structures, representing 48 PDO or PGI in animal and plant production (excluding wine production). The purpose is dual : conduct an exhaustive overview of the actions taken to facilitate the transition (understood as a change to improve sustainability) in one hand, and a thematic discourse analysis to compare the different sectors' perspectives on the transition.

Three main findings emerged. We identified a wide variety of actions and scales, often additional to initial specifications. However, the most recent sectors have included sustainability criteria from the outset (e.g., PDOs "Châtaignes des Cévennes" and "Porc Noir de Bigorre"). Similarity in the types of action appears to depend more on common production conditions than on territorial characteristics. Finally, representations of the transition generally show little uptake of agroecology but a shared understanding of the transition as a necessary and continuous improvement.

Several points for discussion emerge regarding the capacity of GIs to drive transition dynamics. The complementarity between terroir and transition seems more evident for the most territorialized sectors, especially in animal production. Their approach to sustainability is based on a complex definition, territorial and rarely focused on a particular theme (like reducing the use of pesticides). We assume that strongest commitments to transition in plant production are found among organic farming stakeholders, while for cheese and meat, they are found in PDO/PGI collectives. Therefore, the choice of stakeholders and scales is crucial to understand their transition dynamics.

Keywords:

Geographical Indication, terroir, transition, territorial anchoring,





Abstract 1.8

#205 - Promising Business Models and Social Innovations for the Sustainable Transition of Agri-Food and Forestry Systems

Presenting Author: Christos Politis, Q-PLAN International

Co-author: Elli Roma-Athanasiadou, Q-PLAN International

Abstract:

In the context of the bioeconomy transition, agriculture and forestry play a pivotal role in reconciling productivity with ecological integrity, circular resource use, and rural resilience. The main objective of the study was to identify, assess, and systematise good practices of business models (BM) and social innovations (SI) in farming and forestry. These practices refer to transformations that farmers and forest owners can adopt to enhance the environmental sustainability, economic viability, and social value creation of their activities.

The study follows a multi-step mixed-methods approach. First, 34 real-life cases involving firms and SI initiatives across Europe were mapped and empirically analysed using a typology of sustainable BM transformation. From these cases, 20 practices were shortlisted based on their relevance, replicability, and sustainability potential and were examined in greater depth. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with representatives of the selected initiatives and analysed using qualitative thematic analysis. In parallel, market and policy conditions affecting the implementation of these practices were examined through desk research. Finally, a short online survey involving 168 stakeholders—including farmers, forest owners, advisors, and consumers—was carried out using purposive sampling to capture the norms, values, and perceptions influencing the adoption of each practice.

The results are presented as 20 structured good practices. Some practices suggest sustainable BMs applicable to for-profit enterprises, while others represent SI approaches suitable for bottom-up initiatives. The practices span agri-food and forestry value chains and include circular bio-based production, carbon farming, agroecology, precision agriculture, cooperative models, and ecosystem service valorisation. In parallel, the results from the stakeholder survey, capturing perceptions across five European countries, constitute a standalone contribution to understanding real-world attitudes shaping the adoption of sustainable practices and are also presented.

The research activities were funded by the European Union and conducted within the Horizon Europe project “PRUDENT” (101134051).

Keywords:

Sustainable agri-food and forestry systems; Business models; Social innovation; Good practices; Stakeholder perceptions;





Abstract 1.9

#216 - Modernization of Italian Almond sector: a production model between marginal landscape agriculture and super-intensive agriculture.

Presenting Author: Ortolani Livia, CREA Agricultural Policies and Bioeconomics

Co-author: Verrascina Milena, CREA Agricultural Policies and Bioeconomics

Co-author: Baralla Silvia, CREA Agricultural Policies and Bioeconomics

Abstract:

Almond production moved, in the last ten years, from a typical mediterranean crop at risk of disappearing (Frattaroli et al. 2014) to a productive one, due to consumption trends, innovative food processing and circular economy opportunities (Ollani et al. 2024).

The almond consumption increased in Italy by 20% in the last three years (ISMEA,2025), creating a potential national market that is currently not satisfied with national production. Almond production in Italy is traditionally concentrated in Sicily (60%) and Apulia (35%) regions. However, more recently new almond orchards are developing in more northern regions as an opportunity for crop diversification and farm level and for reaching innovative niche markets.

Climate change, digital, agroecological and diet transitions are offering an opportunity for re-designing a traditional agricultural sector such as the one of almond production in an innovative and modern perspective. This works want to explore what are the almonds production models developing in between the more traditional and marginal ones and the super-intensive models coming from California and Spain.

A series of qualitative interviews have been carried on with actors of the almond sector all over Italy with the aim of identify individual farmers or cooperatives strategies to reshape the way they manage their land and run their business creating an innovative modern almond sector in the country. A series of case studies will be compared in order to identify lesson learned and perspectives from different experiences.

The identification of a diverse set of models ask for further research and discussion in order to understand what contributes to sustainability goals. At theoretical level it is interesting to look at the impact of consumption patterns and digitalization in a marginal agricultural sector such as the one of nuts, and almond in particular, and the capacity of farmers to adapt to broader sociotechnical transformations.

Keywords:

Almond production, Digitalization, Farm transformation, Consumption patterns





Abstract 1.10

#221 - Assessing methodologies for engaging stakeholders in building an agroecological regional food system in Portugal's Oeste region

Presenting Author: Luís Duarte, University of Évora, MED & Change, IIFA

Co-author: José Muñoz-Rojas, University of Évora, MED & Change, DPAO

Co-author: Octávio Sacramento, UTAD, CETRAD

Co-author: María Rivera Méndez, University of Évora, MED & Change

Abstract:

Current agricultural and food systems face major challenges in protecting ecosystems, ensuring access to healthy and affordable food, and sustaining territorial vitality. Agroecology—understood as a scientific discipline, a set of agricultural practices, and a socio-political movement—has emerged as a promising response due to its systemic and transformative orientation. Central to agroecology is a transdisciplinary, participatory, and action-oriented approach to research and innovation. In this context, this paper presents ongoing research on stakeholder engagement practices in Portugal's Oeste region, aimed at fostering a regional food system grounded in agroecological principles. The study adopts a participatory action research approach, involving diverse regional actors in the co-construction of a food policy council informed by existing operational frameworks. The primary objective is to assess a specific methodology under development by the Agroecology Partnership for mobilizing and engaging stakeholders in this process. Data is collected through a survey of participating actors, focusing on their experiences, expectations, and perceived barriers and incentives for engagement. By analyzing these responses, the study seeks to evaluate the methodology's effectiveness and identify key factors shaping stakeholder participation. Preliminary findings indicate strong interest in the creation of a regional food policy council, alongside high expectations regarding its potential role in supporting agroecological transitions.

Keywords:

Agroecology, Food policy councils, Participatory action research, Stakeholder engagement, Agroecological living labs





Abstract 1.11

#245 - Continuity of transhumance in Romania: spatiotemporal configuration and drivers of change.

Presenting Author: Ilinca-Valentina Stoica, University of Bucharest, Romania

Co-author: David Lucian, Institute of Ethnography and Folklore, Romanian Academy, Romania

Co-author: Virghileanu Marina, University of Bucharest, Romania

Co-author: Zamfir Daniela, University of Bucharest, Romania

Abstract:

Transhumance, defined as a traditional pastoral system, has a long history in Romania and is still practised today in various forms. The current research examines the spatio-temporal configuration of Carpathian transhumance from both historical and contemporary viewpoints, highlighting its current characteristics and influencing factors. The methodology employed the identification and investigation of previous studies to understand the development of this type of pastoralism, especially in the communist and post-communist periods. Deeper insights were based on aggregate analysis and extracting the narratives from semi-structured interviews with 15 shepherds from different places. Then, to illustrate features of the territorial dynamics, GIS techniques were utilised. The results capture the characteristics and dynamics of this practice, as well as its socio-economic implications.

Furthermore, changes that occurred in the post-communist period are explained, along with highlighting factors that have led to a gradual decrease in both the number of people practising it and the distances involved. Among these factors, particular emphasis is placed on the effects of legislation and policies, as well as on social and economic conditions. Additionally, new trends have also emerged more recently, such as the use of modern means of transportation and sometimes the diversification of activities through tourism. At a broader level, reflecting its importance, in 2023, Romania's transhumance, as well as that of 9 other countries, was included on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list. This status highlights the importance of preserving transhumance, including specific knowledge.

Keywords:

Carpathian Mountains, traditional practice, dynamics





Abstract 1.12

#265 - Facilitating Food System Transitions: A Case Study of Capacity-Building Among Young Food Actors

Presenting Author: Mikelis Grivins, Riga Stradins University

Co-author: Ilze Mileiko, Riga Stradins University

Abstract:

Societal change has long been a central concern of the social sciences. Growing evidence linking contemporary global crises to prevailing modes of action (at both individual and organisational levels) has renewed interest in societal change, with particular emphasis on the possibility of steering transformative processes. In this context, approaches such as transition theory, the theory of planned behaviour, and related frameworks have emerged. While these perspectives offer strong theoretical accounts of large-scale societal shifts, they often struggle to provide practical guidance on how such change can be initiated and supported in practice.

This presentation examines a case study of an attempt to facilitate a transition within food systems. It focuses on a network of young food enthusiasts brought together to equip them with resources intended to support engagement in local change processes. The initiative provided participants with tools to develop novel activities, strengthened connections among enthusiasts across the EU, exposed them to promising examples of change, and offered access to experts from across the food supply chain.

The study addresses two key questions: (1) how the programme developed for the participants evolved during implementation and adapted to become more effective; and (2) how effective the programme was in contributing to change within food systems. The analysis draws on interviews and surveys with participants, as well as observations conducted during network activities, to assess the effectiveness of the approach.

The findings illustrate that, in order to remain relevant, the programme itself underwent substantial transformation during its implementation. Furthermore, while the initiative had limited broader systemic impacts, it contributed to strengthening the capacities of local actors, thereby creating new potential for future change.

Keywords:

Not provided



Abstract 1.13

#268 - Defining Authenticity in Beverage Production: Polish Practices in the Manufacture of Natural Craft Sodas

Presenting Author: Michał Męczyński, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Faculty of Human Geography and Planning

Abstract:

The non-alcoholic beverage market is increasingly shifting toward healthier, natural craft alternatives. Natural craft sodas (NCS) are part of this trend, appealing to consumers seeking high quality products free from preservatives and artificial additives. For entrepreneurs, NCS also offer opportunities to build premium brands rooted in local resources. As with other craft products, authenticity plays a central role in how these beverages are produced and presented.

This study investigates how Polish NCS producers construct and communicate authenticity. It involved a mixed method approach that includes one in depth interview with an expert – a pioneer in Poland in the production of craft fruit beverages and a survey among fourteen producers of NCS. The study presents how producers engage with six recognised modes of authenticity, defined by Thurnell-Read (2019); procedural, material, geographical, temporal, oppositional and biographical.

The findings show that producers draw on all six modes, though with varying intensity. Material, biographical, and procedural authenticity are emphasised most strongly, reflected in natural ingredients, personal entrepreneurial stories, and transparent, hands on production processes. Oppositional and temporal authenticity also appear in narratives contrasting NCS with mass market sodas and referencing traditional or rediscovered recipes. Surprisingly, geographical authenticity plays a more limited role. Although production relies on local resources, distribution often extends to national and international markets, reducing the prominence of regional identity. Overall, the Polish NCS sector demonstrates how authenticity is actively crafted to meet consumer expectations and differentiate products within a growing craft beverage market.

Keywords:

authenticity, modes of authenticity, market for craft sodas, natural craft sodas, Poland



Abstract 1.14

#269 - Hacking the food system: the transformative value of collaborative agri-food innovation spaces in rural regions

Presenting Author: Federica Ammaturo, Geography Department, Humboldt University, Germany

Abstract:

Food systems are at the centre of global attention especially for their negative externalities affecting people and the earth. Though it being a global issue, requiring global solutions, regions and local contexts play a vital role in addressing food system transformation, and they are the stage in which conflicts, negotiations, agreements and actions are made and where agricultural innovation is implemented with often contested directionalities. With two case studies of collaborative spaces for agri-food innovation in rural regions in Italy and France, the paper investigates how spaces of collaborative thinking, prototyping and making contribute to addressing food-systems transformation at a regional scale by “hacking”, intended as an act of value co-creation through practice. Building on the concept of hacking as a device of a broader framework for valuation in innovation processes, the paper discusses the novelty carried by spaces for agri-food innovation into a socio-spatial transformation such as that of food systems. Findings show the transformative potential of these spaces for regional agri-cultures, and set a framework for possible implementation of the concept in other regional contexts. The paper contributes to research on regional innovation and value creation by adding a novel perspective to how food systems transformation can be achieved in a collaborative manner by regional actors. In particular, it demonstrates how spaces of agri-food innovation contribute to addressing such transformation at a regional scale by creating value through collaborative thinking, prototyping and making. The academic relevance lies in conceptualising hacking as a valuation device, bringing the theory of valuation to (counter)cultural spaces of co-creation. Nevertheless, the main goal of this paper is more pragmatic towards practitioners and policy-makers not to reduce these spaces as reliable tools for transformative agency, but to consider their practices as collaborative models for hacking the current food system.

Keywords:

food systems transformation; hacking; valuation devices; regional development





Abstract 1.15

#284 - Redesigning Mediterranean Agroforestry through Living Labs: Fig-Based Foodscapes for Sustainable Agri-Food Transitions

Presenting Author: Mariagiulia Mariani, University of Pisa

Abstract:

Introduction, Objectives and Methodology

Agriculture and forestry are central to the bioeconomy transition, particularly in Mediterranean regions facing climate stress, soil degradation, and biodiversity loss. Agroforestry has re-emerged as a promising agroecological strategy to reconcile productivity with ecological integrity, yet its adoption remains limited due to technical, economic, and governance barriers. This paper presents the AGROFIG project, which aims to redesign agroforestry systems based on fig trees (*Ficus carica* L.) through a foodscape approach that integrates ecological, socio-economic, and cultural dimensions. The research combines scientific inquiry with participatory innovation, using four Living Labs located in Italy, Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey as experimental and social learning environments.

Results and Discussion

Living Labs engage farmers, researchers, value-chain actors, policymakers, and civil society in the co-design, testing, and evaluation of fig-based agroforestry systems. These systems integrate fig trees with herbaceous crops and cover crops to enhance soil health, biodiversity, water efficiency, and farm income. The foodscape lens allows analysis of how agroforestry reshapes relationships between production practices, landscapes, local knowledge, and governance arrangements. Preliminary results highlight the role of participatory processes in addressing adoption barriers, aligning agroecological practices with local contexts, and strengthening multifunctional land use. Agroforestry emerges not only as a technical solution, but as a socially embedded innovation within rural bioeconomies.

Conclusions

The AGROFIG experience demonstrates how Living Labs can function as laboratories of sustainable futures, enabling the redesign of Mediterranean foodscapes that connect agroforestry, food security, and circular bioeconomy goals. Fig-based agroforestry systems show strong potential for scaling agroecological transitions while reinforcing rural resilience and stakeholder participation.

Keywords:

agroforestry; foodscapes; Living Labs; fig cultivation; bioeconomy transition





Abstract 1.16

#309 - When agri-food chains fail: emergencies, logistics, and spatial-temporal maneuvers

Presenting Author: Shu-Wei Kuo, Graduate Institute of Building and Planning, National Taiwan University

Co-author: Chi-Mao Wang, Department of Bio-Industry Communication and Development, National Taiwan University

Abstract:

This paper examines how supermarkets maintain their dominance in volatile and crisis-prone agri-food markets, with a particular focus on the logistics systems that support this. Existing research on global agri-food chains has highlighted the dominant role of supermarkets with respect to controlling value distribution, setting prices, and managing logistics operations. While the use of the concept of commodity chains has helped to unpack the governance structures found within these systems, it remains limited in terms of accounting for the ways in which emergent events reshape chain organization. There has also been insufficient attention paid to the ways in which chains may be reassembled, how value flows may be disrupted, and how certain factors can become disarticulated in times of crisis. To address this theoretical gap, this paper draws on recent work on logistics power and assemblage thinking to propose the concept of spatial-temporal maneuvering. By intervening in the spatial and temporal mobilities of goods and people, large retailers can secure control over value distribution and reconfigure the roles of various actants within the network, displacing any related risks onto smallholders and similar minor actors. The power to do this is achieved through the creation of a dynamic socio-technical assemblage that involves algorithms, data systems, cold chain infrastructure, satellite warehousing, and physical labor practices. By examining a qualitative study of Taiwanese retailers' responses to emergent events, including COVID-19 and extreme climate conditions, this paper offers a pragmatic analysis of how such disruptions impact agri-food chain governance. By emphasizing spatial-temporal reorchestration in response to crisis, the paper thus contributes to the ongoing debates in the literature around mobilities and logistics.

Keywords:

Supermarkets, agri-food, emergencies, logistics, spatial-temporal maneuvers





Abstract 1.17

#310 - Food Choices as Everyday Practice: Culture, Habit, and Identity Explored through Participatory Action Research

Presenting Author: Sara van de Lustgraaf, Professorship Living Environment in Transition, research center for built environment NoorderRuimte Groningen, The Netherlands

Abstract:

Food choices are often approached as the outcome of availability, affordability, or policy interventions. While these perspectives are valuable, they offer limited insight into how people actually engage with food in their everyday lives. This contribution examines food choices in rural areas across Europe as social and cultural practices, shaped by habit, environment, and identity.

The research employs participatory action research (PAR), inspired by earlier projects that placed participation and co-creation at their core. Participants are involved not only as respondents, but as co-researchers who collectively reflect on their daily food practices. This approach makes it possible to explore how food choices are influenced by local infrastructure, community structures, and cultural norms, and how policies and interventions align with the needs of residents.

The aim is to gain insight into the meanings attached to food choices, the role of routines and social interactions, and opportunities for participatory interventions that promote health, sustainability, and inclusive agri-food systems. By drawing on experiences from diverse rural regions across Europe, the research contributes to a broader understanding of context-specific challenges and opportunities within agri-food systems.

This contribution presents the research design, methods, and ethical considerations, and invites conference participants to engage in dialogue, provide feedback, and collaborate on the further development and European application of the research.

Keywords:

Not provided





Theme 2 - Climate Transitions, Landscapes and Environment

Abstract 2.1

#47 - Climate change – an increase of thermal indices in a workplace

Presenting Author: Paweł Wrona, Department of Safety Engineering, Faculty of Mining, Safety Engineering and Industrial Automation, Silesian, University of Technology, 44-100 Gliwice, Poland

Co-author: José Fernandes, Department of Geotechnical Engineering, School of Engineering (ISEP), Polytechnic of Porto, Rua Dr. António Bernardino de Almeida, 431, 4249-015, Porto and GeoBioTec|UA, Aveiro, Portugal

Abstract:

Reports of weather variations confirm the ongoing climate change around the world. Basing on C3S, ERA5/ECMWF and WMO reports, in 2024, the global average temperature reached 15.10°C, which is 0.12°C higher than the previous highest annual value of 2023. It was also the first year in which the global average temperature clearly exceeded 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level. A local temperature increase of approximately +5°C relative to the pre-industrial period can be observed in the cities; however, this reflects the combined effect of global warming, Europe's above-average regional warming, and the urban heat island effect. The temperature rise may lead to an increased thermal risk for workers. For the assessment of thermal conditions, the PMV and PPD indices are commonly used. However, more advanced and complex tools, such as ET (Effective Temperature), SET (Standard Effective Temperature), WBGT (Wet Bulb Globe Temperature) and TDI (Thermal Discomfort Index), can also be applied. Thermal Discomfort Index was developed at the Silesian University of Technology based on long-term studies of workers in underground facilities. It accounts for multiple factors, including dry-bulb air temperature, relative humidity, air velocity, the level of acclimatization, and clothing thermal resistance. The paper presents the results of simulations of changes in the mentioned indicators for a hypothetical workplace under assumed temperature increases and varying values of the remaining parameters. TDI index was used only as a comparative tool. Drawing on projections from the International Labour Organization and the observed indices levels corresponding to a +5 °C local temperature increase, it is estimated that worker productivity in exposed workplaces could decline by approximately 7 %, underscoring the necessity for technical mitigation measures, schedule adjustments, or reductions in working hours. On average, a 7 % decline in productivity would correspond to an annual loss of approximately €2,780 in effective working time per employee in EU.

Keywords:

climate change, thermal risk, heat hazard





Abstract 2.2

#49 - Contributions of biogeography to the analysis of rural landscapes: examples from Brazil and Costa Rica

Presenting Author: Karine Bueno Vargas, Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro

Co-author: Sueli Angelo Furlan, Universidad de São Paulo

Co-author: Carlos Morera Beita, Universidad Nacional da Costa Rica

Abstract:

Biogeography has expanded its analytical scope by integrating cultural, historical, and identity-related dimensions into the understanding of rural landscape transformations. In territories managed by traditional communities - such as family farmers, Indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendant groups - landscapes reflect not only ecological processes but also cultural practices and senses of belonging that shape rural identities. These territories, however, face social vulnerabilities arising from the devaluation of traditional knowledge, pressure from homogenizing development models, and environmental legislation that often separates communities from nature. This study presents the concept of Cultural Systems of Conservation, highlighting the contributions of cultural biogeography to rural landscape analysis and to the recognition of social opportunities embedded in traditional land-use practices. The methodological approach is analytical and descriptive, based on a theoretical review developed during the author's postdoctoral research at the University of São Paulo, combined with international research mobility in Costa Rica and fieldwork conducted in the state of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and in the provinces of Guanacaste and Limón (Costa Rica). The findings indicate that tropical landscapes managed by traditional communities display high levels of socioecological resilience and natural regeneration. In tropical rainforests, the temporary use of land for small-scale shifting cultivation (roças) promotes ecological succession and increased floristic diversity, contributing to food security and cultural continuity. In savannas and dry forests, traditional fire management plays a crucial role in species regeneration, dormancy-breaking processes, and wildfire prevention during dry seasons, demonstrating adaptive strategies to environmental variability. It is concluded that land-use practices such as agroforestry systems, shifting cultivation, and extractive reserves represent nature-based social solutions that foster environmental conservation and food security. Recognizing these systems is essential to reducing rural vulnerabilities and strengthening communities, cultures, and identities amid contemporary rural transformations.

Keywords:

Cultural Biogeography; Rural Landscapes; Traditional Communities; Socioecological Resilience; Nature-Based Solutions.





Abstract 2.3

#83 - Knowledge-co-production on future climate-change-induced natural hazard risks in Alpine regions

Presenting Author: Matthias Buchecker, Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL, Unit Economics and Social Sciences, CH-8903 Birmensdorf, Switzerland

Co-author: Elisabeth Maidl, Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL, Unit Economics and Social Sciences, CH-8903 Birmensdorf, Switzerland

Co-author: Leonora Seiler, Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL, Unit Economics and Social Sciences, CH-8903 Birmensdorf, Switzerland

Abstract:

Climate change is expected to have massive impacts on Alpine natural hazards. Therefore, early local discussions on anticipatory prevention measures would be important. However, high uncertainties and in particular a shared understanding of the issue is lacking. Regional stakeholders, experts in natural hazards management and scientists hold specific knowledge on future regional risks. This diversity of views makes it difficult to find common and broadly accepted prevention measures. A knowledge exchange among these actors on eye level in a knowledge-co-production process is expected to enable a broader and shared understanding of such complex risks and to allow for finding shared long-term solution strategies. However, studies that examine the effect of knowledge co-production on future hazard risks are lacking so far.

The transdisciplinary project tested and evaluated the feasibility of knowledge co-production for the anticipatory prevention of climate change-induced mass movement risks in Alpine regions using an intervention research design. In this knowledge co-production process, representatives of the three basic actor groups co-developed system models of the future hazard risks and mentally simulated the effects of potential solutions. The evaluation of this process based on repeated measurement of participants and non-participants perspectives on the issue and the monitoring of the process confirmed that participants perspectives on the issue converged during the process, and that a shared understanding of the issue and shared long-term solution strategies could be achieved within a few hours of intensive exchange.

Keywords:

Climate change, knowledge-co-creation, participatory process, actor groups, evaluation



Abstract 2.4

#105 - How Humans Shaped Two World Heritage Wine Regions Under Extreme Conditions: Douro and Champagne as Models of Rural Sustainability and Innovation

Presenting Author: Anabela Carneiro, Faculty of Sciences, University of Porto (FCUP), Rua do Campo Alegre, s/n, 4169-007 Porto, Portugal; GreenUPorto - Sustainable Agrifood Production Research Centre & DGAOT, Faculty of Sciences, University of Porto, Campus de Vairão, Portugal

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Abstract:

The Demarcated Douro Region (Portugal) and the Champagne region (France) are two emblematic European rural territories where viticulture emerged and consolidated under extreme yet contrasting climatic conditions. Champagne is characterised by a cool climate that constraints grape maturation, resulting in low sugar content and very high acidity, while the Douro faces a hot and dry Mediterranean climate marked by surplus maturation, high sugar accumulation and recurrent hydric stress. Despite these opposing environmental constraints, both regions have evolved into globally renowned wine-producing territories and are recognised as UNESCO World Heritage cultural landscapes.

The main objective of this work is to analyse, through a comparative perspective, how long-term human adaptation transformed climatic constraints into territorial assets. The methodology is based on qualitative comparative analysis, drawing on historical sources, regulatory frameworks, landscape analysis and existing literature on viticulture, rural governance and agri-food systems.

The results show that, rather than relying primarily on technological intensification, both regions developed place-based viticultural, winemaking and ageing techniques that compensate for structural climatic imbalances. In Champagne these adaptations include chaptalization, a secondary fermentation processes and acidity management, while in the Douro they involve wine fortification combined with controlled ageing practices. These technical choices are deeply embedded in robust governance structures, regulatory systems and collective organisations that articulate product quality, territorial identity and long-term sustainability.

This study concludes that the Douro and Champagne constitute paradigmatic models of rural sustainability grounded in historical knowledge, social organisation and incremental innovation. Their development trajectories challenge dominant rural development narratives focused on standardisation and short-term efficiency, highlighting instead the importance of cultural landscapes, collective action and long-term resilience. This comparative analysis offers relevant insights for current debates on climate adaptation, rural transformation and sustainable development in European rural areas.

Keywords:

Viticulture; Rural sustainability; Climate adaptation; Wine regions; UNESCO World Heritage





Abstract 2.5

#120 - Assessing the co-occurrence of sheet and gully erosion in a wildfire-affected mountain area: A case study from Central Portugal

Presenting Author: Catarina Pinheiro, Department of Geography, University of Minho, Communication and Society Research Centre, Department of Geography, University of Minho, CEGOT (Centre of Studies on Geography and Spatial Planning), University of Porto, Portugal

Co-author: Bruno Martins, Department of Geography and Tourism, University of Coimbra, RISCOS, CEGOT (Centre of Studies on Geography and Spatial Planning), University of Coimbra, Portugal

Co-author: Adélia Nunes, Department of Geography and Tourism, University of Coimbra, RISCOS, CEGOT (Centre of Studies on Geography and Spatial Planning), University of Coimbra, Portugal

Abstract:

Soil erosion constitutes a major threat to soil resources, particularly in fire-prone landscapes. Wildfires intensify soil degradation by altering hydrological and geomorphological processes, leading to increased sediment production through both sheet and gully erosion, as well as changes in soil properties, vegetation cover and land use. This study assesses the spatial distribution and drivers of sheet and gully erosion in the Alva River basin (central Portugal), an area severely affected by the 2017 wildfires. Sheet erosion was modelled using the InVEST Sediment Delivery Ratio (SDR) model, while gully erosion was analysed through GIS-based spatial analysis. The objectives were to: (i) map post-fire sheet erosion; (ii) identify areas of spatial coincidence between sheet and gully erosion; and (iii) determine the dominant controlling factors of both processes. Estimated soil loss ranged from 0 to 848.89 t ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹, with a mean value of 1.29 t ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ across the basin. Gullies generally occur in areas of higher sediment production at the regional scale, although this relationship is less evident locally. Flow accumulation, slope and land use/land cover (shrubland and sparsely vegetated areas) were identified as key drivers of both erosion processes; however, slope exerts a stronger control on sheet erosion, whereas land use/land cover is more influential for gully development. The magnitude of sediment production, the extent of gully formation and the recurrence of wildfires highlight the urgent need for the implementation of post-fire soil erosion mitigation measures in the study area (e.g., mulching, check-dams, or reforestation).

Keywords:

sheet and gully erosion; wildfires; erosion drive factors; sediment production; Mediterranean environment.





Abstract 2.6

#121 - New Rural Landscapes? Location determinants and land use conflicts in solar power plant deployment

Presenting Author: André Alves, Centre of Geographical Studies and Associate Laboratory TERRA, Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Lisbon (Portugal)

Co-author: Eduarda Marques da Costa, Centre of Geographical Studies and Associate Laboratory TERRA, Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Lisbon (Portugal)

Co-author: Eduardo Gomes, Centre of Geographical Studies and Associate Laboratory TERRA, Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Lisbon (Portugal)

Co-author: Samuel Niza, Circular – Consultoria em Sustentabilidade (Portugal)

Abstract:

The expansion of utility-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) installations has increased land-use pressures, generating potential conflicts between renewable energy development and environmental, agricultural, and cultural values in rural areas. Previous research has primarily examined spatial determinants of solar plant siting, with limited attention to the interaction between technically suitable land and existing territorial constraints. This study addresses this gap through the integration of geospatial modelling, explainable machine learning, and cluster analysis to evaluate both the determinants of current PV locations and the constraints affecting technically suitable land.

Techno-economic and policy-related variables were identified as the most important factors, exceeding the influence of physical and market-related characteristics. Technically suitable land was further assessed in combination with a comprehensive set of territorial constraints, encompassing protected areas, agricultural and ecological reserves, forest management zones, heritage designations, residential proximity, and tourism-sensitive sites. Cluster analysis revealed the spatial interaction between suitable land and diverse territorial value systems, highlighting areas of potential conflict between renewable energy deployment and landscape, environmental, and cultural preservation.

The application of this integrated framework provides insights for spatial planning and environmental assessment, supporting evidence-based approaches to reconcile utility-scale solar development with sustainable and socially acceptable land-use policies.

Keywords:

solar PV; land-use conflicts; landscape; rural areas; machine learning.





Abstract 2.7

#139 - Evidence of Reduced Flood and Sediment Hazards in Rural Watersheds under Socio-Environmental Change

Presenting Author: Ana M. Petrović, Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijić” of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Đure Jakšića 9, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

Abstract:

This study investigates long-term temporal and spatial changes in torrential flood hazards and sediment dynamics in ungauged watersheds in southeastern Serbia over the period 1991–2023. The analysis integrates approaches to quantify watershed responses to both environmental variability and anthropogenic influences under data-scarce conditions in rural regions. Flood potential and peak discharges were assessed using the Torrential Flood Potential Index together with the Rational and Soil Conservation Service – Unit Hydrograph methods, enabling a comparative evaluation of flood hazard dynamics over time. Sediment dynamics were examined through erosion potential and modified sediment transport models to identify changes in sediment yield and transport capacity. The results reveal a consistent decline in flood potential, peak discharges, and sediment transport across the studied watersheds. These trends are primarily attributed to a decrease in the intensity of extreme precipitation events, as well as pronounced land-use changes driven by long-term depopulation. The abandonment of agricultural land and its gradual conversion into transitional woodland–shrub and forest cover have contributed to reduced surface runoff, enhanced infiltration, and lower erosion rates. Overall, the proposed methodological framework offers a transferable and robust approach for integrated flood hazard assessment and erosion management. When combined with modern techniques, it provides valuable support for risk reduction and sustainable watershed management in mountainous, data-scarce regions undergoing socio-environmental transformation.

Keywords:

torrential floods, sediment transport, ungauged watersheds





Abstract 2.8

#185 - Studying Future Imaginaries of Landscape Change in Energy Transitions: Place Attachment, Heritage and Future Storytelling

Presenting Author: Costanza Concetti, Politics and International Relations, University of Aberdeen, UK

Co-author: Paula Duffy, Geography & Environment, University of Aberdeen, UK

Co-author: Jo Vergunst, Anthropology, University of Aberdeen, UK

Co-author: David Toke, Politics and International Relations, University of Aberdeen, UK

Abstract:

As ground-mounted solar deployment in the UK increases, rural landscapes are undergoing transformation. These changes intersect with multiple crises facing rural Britain (Woods, 2025) and raise fundamental questions about rural spatial justice and communities' capacity to shape their futures. The transformations become central to competing narratives about 'rural futures' (Philip et al., 2024): for proponents of these deployments, the use of 'low-quality' land for green energy production symbolises a turn from inefficient land management to 'smart' ways of living the rural and contributes to planetary rural geographies where rural spaces serve emerging functions in addressing global crises (Wang et al., 2025). While for opposers of ground-mounted solar, these landscape changes deprive the rural of its fundamental characteristics and communities 'right to the rural'. These and other iterations of such narratives contribute to the politics of the UK energy transition at large, but especially shape the ways in which communities living nearby proposed sites of solar deployment imagine rural planning. In this paper, we present our methodology to study how lay individuals and communities living in the North East of England experience and envision rural landscape change in the process of planning for ground-mounted solar. We detail how we capture how communities frame the stories of their attachment (Altman and Low 1992, Devine-Wright 2011) to rural landscapes and how solar deployment features in their imaginations of the future. We present reflections on the use of participatory mapping in focus group settings to allow research participants to reflect on their landscapes past, current and future as well as on the use of pre-mortem storytelling to explicitize how lay individuals think about energy futures. In doing so we respond to Woods' (2025) observation of a collective failure of imagination in rural planning.

Keywords:

Energy Futures, Landscape Change, Place Attachment, Storytelling





Abstract 2.9

#193 - Species-rich hay meadows Under Pressure: Structural Change, Climate Stress, and Conservation Outcomes

Presenting Author: Leonie Ratzke, Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institute, Braunschweig, Germany

Co-author: Rajina Bajacharya, Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institute, Braunschweig, Germany

Co-author: Norbert Röder, Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institute, Braunschweig, Germany

Co-author: Nicolas Schoof, Landesanstalt für Umwelt Baden-Württemberg, Karlsruhe, Germany

Abstract:

Species-rich hay meadows (EU Habitats Directive 6510/6520) are among Europe's most biodiversity-rich agroecosystems. In Germany, their degree of conservation (DoC) continues to deteriorate despite the Habitats Directive's non-deterioration obligation, prompting pressure to strengthen conservation. Yet the mechanisms driving deterioration are not fully understood. Beyond intensification and nutrient enrichment, an increasingly important mechanism may be underuse: delayed, reduced, or abandoned management that allows the spread of competitive grasses.

We examine how structural incentives, climate stress, and conservation instruments jointly relate to species-rich hay meadows' DoC in Baden-Württemberg (Germany), a national hotspot of remaining hay meadow biodiversity. We link expert-based habitat assessments from 2010–2022 to (i) site, soil, topography, landscape, and protection variables, (ii) farm-structural characteristics and an indicator capturing a farm's economic reliance on fodder from its own species-rich hay meadows, and (iii) local weather and phenology deviations from long-term means, as well as participation in conservation schemes. To flexibly capture nonlinearities and heterogeneous associations across ecological and institutional contexts, we apply generalized random forests with spatially blocked cross-validation and summarize key patterns using accumulated local effects.

We find better outcomes where fodder from species-rich hay meadows remains economically relevant, consistent with stronger incentives for timely extensive management. Contract-based nature conservation is most strongly associated with improved outcomes where private incentives appear weakest, while climate stress, particularly earlier vegetation onset, is linked to poorer outcomes. The results underline the need for targeted, climate-adaptive conservation design in transforming rural landscapes.

Keywords:

Contract-based conservation; grassland biodiversity; climate stress; generalized random forests; heterogeneous policy





Abstract 2.10

#198 - Assessing the co-occurrence of sheet and gully erosion in a wildfire-affected mountain area: A case study from Central Portugal

Presenting Author: Bruno Martins, Department of Geography and Tourism, University of Coimbra, RISCOS, CEGOT (Centre of Studies on Geography and Spatial Planning), University of Coimbra

Co-author: Catarina Pinheiro, Department of Geography, University of Minho, Communication and Society Research Centre, Department of Geography, University of Minho, CEGOT (Centre of Studies on Geography and Spatial Planning), University of Porto, Portugal

Co-author: Adélia Nunes, Department of Geography and Tourism, University of Coimbra, RISCOS, CEGOT (Centre of Studies on Geography and Spatial Planning), University of Coimbra, Portugal

Abstract:

Mountain regions in Mediterranean environments are frequently exposed to multiple natural hazards, notably wildfires and gully erosion, whose combined impacts significantly affect land degradation and soil conservation. In this context, integrated multi-hazard assessments are essential to support effective land-use planning and disaster risk management. This study aims to produce a multi-hazard map to identify priority areas for mitigation and intervention, focusing on wildfires and gully erosion in the Alva River basin, located in the mountainous region of central Portugal. To achieve this objective, a wildfire hazard map was developed following the methodology proposed by the Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests. In parallel, a gully erosion inventory was prepared through detailed interpretation of orthophoto maps, resulting in the identification of 38 gullies. Gully erosion susceptibility was analysed using two statistical modelling approaches: the Frequency Ratio (FR) model and the Maximum Entropy (MaxEnt) method. Thirteen geo-environmental factors were considered, including topographic, hydrological, land-use and fire-related variables. Model performance was assessed using the Area Under the Curve (AUC), yielding success rates of 68.7% for the FR model and 70.4% for the MaxEnt model. The wildfire and gully erosion hazard maps were subsequently integrated to generate a multi-hazard map. Results indicate that approximately 36% of the study area is classified as having moderate hazard, while more than 50% falls within high to very high hazard classes. These findings highlight the strong exposure of the Alva River basin to wildfires and the favourable conditions for gully erosion development. The study demonstrates the relevance of multi-hazard approaches and confirms the usefulness of integrating wildfire and gully erosion hazard maps to support more effective soil conservation and land management strategies in fire-prone mountainous regions.

Keywords:

Gully erosion; wildfires; FR model; MaxEnt model; Mountains of Portugal Central.





Abstract 2.11

#238 - Net Zero Plus Injustices in Rural Landscape Transitions

Presenting Author: Martin Phillips, University of Leicester,

Abstract:

The objective of this paper is to assess the significance of injustice in Net Zero transitions in rural areas of the UK. It draws on interviews and discussions conducted as part of Land Use for Net Zero Hub, a transdisciplinary programme that seeks to support transformational land use change across the UK (<https://lunzhub.com/>), as well as research conducted on rural energy and water use for Rural England (<https://ruralengland.org/>). The paper begins by highlighting the concept of Net Zero Plus, and how it has been variously interpreted to accommodate concerns over climate adaptation as well as mitigation, nature recovery, multifunctionality, food insecurity and just transitions. It then discusses how notions of distributional, procedural and recognitional justice have been drawn into Net Zero policymaking across the four nations of the UK, before focusing on the challenges that recognitional injustice poses for Net Zero transitions in rural areas of the UK. Drawing on the results of a questionnaire, interviews and interactive discussions generated through the creative use of games and AI, attention is drawn to the significance of recognitional injustice in responses to Net Zero policies and initiatives amongst a range of rural groups, including farmers and residents, as well as to their complex relations with feelings of distributional and procedural injustice. The paper concludes by evaluating how senses of recognitional injustice connect to neoliberal and other 'scripts to the self' (Lamont, 2023) and the extent to which they hold the potential to act as barriers to the implementation of Net Zero Plus transitions with rural communities in the UK

Keywords:

Net Zero Plus, Justice, Recognition, Creative Methods





Abstract 2.12

#248 - Mineral Water within the context of Brazilian Environmental Legislation

Presenting Author: Lucio Carramillo Caetano, Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ), Brazil

Co-author: Igor Cristiano Silva, Luig Engenharia e Consultoria Ambiental Ltda, Brazil

Co-author: Carla da Silva Medeiros Capobianco, Química consultora de indústrias de Água Mineral, Brazil **Co-author:** Yan Barros Tunala, Universidade Federal Rural Do Rio De Janeiro (UFRRJ), Brazil

Co-author: Luiz Felipe da Silva Ribeiro, Universidade Federal Rural Do Rio De Janeiro (UFRRJ), Brazil

Abstract:

Mineral water management in Brazil is subordinate to Brazilian mineral resources legislation. On the other hand, the management of the use of groundwater resources is linked to legislation aimed at the environment and its management is carried out by the state governments and the Federal District. The individualized and distanced management between these two resources caused conflicts between those interested in the use of water as mineral water and in the use of water in public supply, as a component of industrialized beverages; in equipment cooling; or in agricultural use. Until the enactment of CNRH Resolution No. 76, of October 16, 2007, these conflicts had been expanded. In the state of Rio de Janeiro, there was an understanding in which, if the area of interest for the use of water as a groundwater resource was already the target of an approved research report or a mining concession for mineral water, the request for a grant for the use of the groundwater resource would be rejected or, if the right of use was already granted, This title would be canceled. Thus, in the specific case of the state of Rio de Janeiro, combining this decision with CNRH Resolution No. 76/2007, conflicts no longer exist. There are, however, different understandings in other federation units in Brazil. Some states require, even when it comes to the use of groundwater for use in a mineral water industry, that they request a grant for the use of the water resource. In this way, the conflict also ceases to exist both based on the text of resolution 76/2007 and on the decision of the state agency responsible for granting the use of water. In both cases, the use of water in Brazil will be charged either through the federal government, in the case of mineral water, or state, in the case of water as a water resource.

Keywords:

Mineral Water, Bottle Water, Environment e recursos hídricos



Abstract 2.13

#249 - Comparative Analysis between the Brazilian Forest Code and the recent Brazilian Environmental Licensing Law

Presenting Author: Yan Barros Tunala, Universidade Federal Rural Do Rio De Janeiro (UFRRJ), Brazil

Co-author: Lucio Carramillo Caetano, Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ), Brazil

Co-author: Luiz Felipe da Silva Ribeiro, Universidade Federal Rural Do Rio De Janeiro (UFRRJ), Brazil

Abstract:

Brazilian environmental legislation has its matrix in the Union. However, it allows the Federation Units to fully follow federal legislation or to develop more restrictive rules. In this context, the present work establishes a comparison between the Brazilian Forest Code (Federal Law No. 12,651/2012) that imposes general rules applicable to the entire national territory, and Federal Law No. 15,190/2025 that adapts and details the guidelines of the Forest Code to regional realities. Both share common fundamentals, such as the definition and protection of Permanent Preservation Areas (APP), Legal Reserves (RL), the mandatory Rural Environmental Registry (CAR) and the possibility of sustainable economic use of natural resources, provided that the technical and legal criteria are met. The central objective, however, remains the same, that is, balance between economic development and environmental preservation. Law No. 15,190/2025 requires a higher level of detail and imposes a modernization of environmental management instruments, which also introduces greater digitization of licensing and corrective licensing processes, clearer schedules for the Environmental Regularization Program (PRA), and allows the use of artificial intelligence and satellite monitoring. In addition, it facilitates environmental compensation mechanisms within federal conservation units. This Federal Law of 2025 allows for greater administrative agility when it allows assisted self-declaration systems and focuses on the protection of watersheds. In Brazil, in environmental matters, the most restrictive rule prevails in favor of the protection of the common good. Therefore, interested parties must observe the state requirements that expand the level of protection provided for in federal legislation and do not provide an environmental license without a prior inspection of the area, preventing registration fraud. It should be noted that even with the computerization of the system, as well as with self-declaration, this Law 15,190/2025 manages to be, at the same time, more restrictive and more efficient.

Keywords:

Environmental protection, Environmental regularization, Environmental licensing, Sustainability, Environmental governance.





Abstract 2.14

#250 - Mapping Agroecological Transitions in Wine-Growing Regions: A Systematic Review of Current Evidence and Knowledge Gaps

Presenting Author: Sofia Neto, CETRAD, UTAD, Portugal

Co-author: Carla Ferreira, CETRAD, UTAD, Portugal

Co-author: Lúvia Madureira, CETRAD, UTAD, Portugal

Co-author: Mário Santos, CITAB, UTAD, Portugal

Abstract:

Wine-growing regions worldwide face mounting pressures from climate change, input dependency (synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, fossil energy), and biodiversity loss, with significant implications for grape productivity, wine quality, and the long-term sustainability of viticultural systems. In response to these challenges, an increasing number of wine growers are adopting agroecological practices aimed at enhancing ecological resilience, reducing external inputs, and improving ecosystem services. However, despite growing interest in agroecological transitions within viticulture, current knowledge remains fragmented across disciplines, geographical context and scales of analysis. Addressing these gaps, this study intends to: (1) identify and characterize the agroecological practices adopted in viticulture; (2) analyze the drivers and barriers influencing transition processes; (3) examine the temporal dynamics and phases of change; and (4) assess how these elements vary across geographical, institutional, production contexts, and governance models. For this, a systematic literature review was conducted. A total of 638 papers were analyzed. The results reveal a heterogeneity exists across Mediterranean versus temperate regions, small-scale versus industrial operations, and organic versus integrated management systems. Four main dimensions were identified. First, practice-focused studies emphasize soil management interventions (cover crops: n=187 studies; reduced tillage: n=143), integrated pest management (n=156), water conservation (n=134), and ecological infrastructures (n=89). Second, driver analysis reveals environmental concerns and climate risk management as primary motivations (cited in 67% of studies), followed by economic/market factors (54%) and policy incentives (43%). Third, barrier research highlights financial constraints (62% of studies), technical uncertainty (58%), knowledge deficits (51%), and structural limitations related to labor and scale (47%). Fourth, governance and long-term trajectory studies remain scarce (< 15% of corpus), representing a critical knowledge gap. Evidence suggests that successful agroecological transitions require bundled interventions rather than isolated practices. The findings offer evidence-based guidance for policymakers, extension services, and practitioners navigating the complexities of viticultural transformation.

Keywords:

Agroecological transition, Sustainable agriculture, Wine-growing systems





Abstract 2.15

#252 - Comparative Analysis Of Brazilian Environmental Protection Standards: Constitutional, Criminal, And Regulatory Evolution

Presenting Author: Yan Barros Tunala, Universidade Federal Rural Do Rio De Janeiro (UFRRJ), Brazil

Co-author: Lucio Carramillo Caetano, Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ), Brazil

Co-author: Luiz Felipe da Silva Ribeiro, Universidade Federal Rural Do Rio De Janeiro (UFRRJ), Brazil

Abstract:

This work briefly describes the evolution of environmental protection legislation in Brazil, which has been undergoing a continuous process of regulatory evolution, ranging from general constitutional principles to more specific and modern legal instruments for environmental regulation and management. In this context, through bibliographic surveys, this work is a comparative analysis seeking to better explain administrative efficiency, types of sanctions, among other aspects of three fundamental milestones of the Brazilian environmental legal framework, namely: Article 225 of the 1988 Federal Constitution, Law No. 9,605/1998, which deals with environmental crimes, and Federal Law No. 15,190/2025. Article 225 establishes, as a fundamental right, an ecologically balanced environment, assigning to the State and the community the duty to preserve it for present and future generations. Meanwhile, Law No. 9,605/1998 establishes environmental crimes and defines criminal and administrative sanctions, including the liability of individuals and legal entities for all those who fail to comply with the provisions of the Brazilian Federal Constitution. Furthermore, Law No. 15,190/2025 represents an advance in environmental governance by modernizing licensing, inspection, and integrated management instruments, incorporating technological innovation—such as digital monitoring—while also seeking economic incentives and creating an expanded approach to sustainability. The analysis carried out in this work highlights a regulatory trajectory that, starting from principle-based formulation, evolves toward effective punishment, accompanied by the introduction of preventive and integrated mechanisms, strengthening the Brazilian environmental legal system and its capacity to face contemporary environmental challenges.

Keywords:

Environmental law; Federal Constitution of Brazil; Environmental Crimes Law; sustainability; environmental governance





Abstract 2.16

#258 - Evolution of Brazilian Environmental Legislation from 1988 to 1998

Presenting Author: Luiz Felipe da Silva Ribeiro, Universidade Federal Rural Do Rio De Janeiro (UFRRJ), Brazil

Co-author: Yan Barros Tunala, Universidade Federal Rural Do Rio De Janeiro (UFRRJ), Brazil

Co-author: Lucio Carramillo Caetano, Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ), Brazil

Abstract:

The objective of this study is to demonstrate the shifts in Brazilian environmental legislation between the late 1980s and the 1990s. The methodology employed was bibliographic research, emphasizing a comparative analysis between Law No. 7,661/1988—which established the National Coastal Management Plan, intergovernmental integration, Ecological-Economic Zoning (EEZ), and enforcement and control mechanisms—and Law No. 9,605/1998, which provides for criminal and administrative sanctions resulting from conduct and activities harmful to the environment, and is thus known as the Environmental Crimes Act. The comparison between these two statutes is based on three fundamental parameters: the transition from administrative to criminal liability, the evolution of the State's enforcement role, and the effectiveness of sanctions applied to legal entities in relation to territorial zoning mechanisms. Additionally, it aims to demonstrate the increasing awareness of Brazilian governments regarding environmental protection through the enactment of progressively stricter laws. Law No. 9,605/1998, enacted ten years after Law No. 7,661/1988—which served as a laboratory for national resource management policies—differs from the latter by imposing severe penalties, reflecting greater institutional maturity in natural resource management. Although both laws were partially amended by Law No. 15,190/2025, they demonstrate a growing State commitment to environmental defense between 1988 and 1998. Finally, the study reveals that the planning stage of the 1988 Constitution and the punitive nature of the 1998 Act were not independent events, but pillars for the consolidation of the 2025 Integrated Management model, which synthesizes the territorial planning of 1988 and the sanctioning rigor of 1998 with modern technological agility and economic sustainability.

Keywords:

Environmental Law; Coastal Management; Environmental Crimes; Evolution; Brazilian Legislation.



Abstract 2.17

#280 - Roles and networks of key actors in land use management: insights from case studies

Presenting Author: Danka Moravčíková, Institute of Marketing, Trade and Social Studies, Faculty of Economics and Management, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra

Co-author: Martina Hanová, Institute of Statistics, Operation Research and Mathematics, Faculty of Economics and Management, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra

Co-author: Hana Zach, Administration - Office of Project and Transfer Activities, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra

Co-author: Filip Tkáč, University Counselling and Support Centre, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra

Abstract:

Aligned with the European efforts in climate science and initiatives, the Horizon Europe project Towards Sustainable Land-use Strategies in the Context of Climate Change and Biodiversity Challenges in Europe (Europe-LAND) focuses on the integration of natural and social sciences to improve the understanding of the factors behind land-use decisions and take steps toward better land-use governance.

This contribution presents empirical evidence from eight project case studies located in different countries, and focuses on identification of key actors, assessment of their land dependence level and influence level in decision-making processes at different spatial scales and identification of within and cross-scale interactions between them. The methodology is based on implementation of agent-centred approach. We conducted semi-structured expert interviews, observation during stakeholder mirror workshops, and used content analysis, influence-dependence matrix and actor-linkages matrix to explore power relationships between key actors.

We found differences between individual case studies in the hierarchy of the actors' categories at the local, regional and national level regarding their powerfulness in decision-making processes, as well as regarding character of their strategic roles in networks and ability to influence decision-making about land-use strategies of the other subcategories of actors in the network.

Our findings suggest that better connections between different groups of actors, especially at the local level, would in some cases stimulate the emergence of new ideas and enable the mobilisation of larger resource capacities to achieve common goals. A higher number of different actors connected within the network boundaries can have a positive impact on each actor's trust in cooperation and is often necessary to help actors initiate or support collective action.

Keywords:

climate change, land-use governance, agent-centred approach





Abstract 2.18

#282 - Climate change and migration intentions in rural Southeast Europe: The moderating role of place attachment

Presenting Author: Kuhn, Lena, IAMO, Germany

Co-author: Jantsch, Antje, IAMO, Germany

Co-author: Eltazarov, Sarvarbek, IAMO, Germany

Co-author: Hermans, Kathleen, IAMO, Germany

Abstract:

This paper examines how climate dynamics and place attachment jointly shape migration intentions in Southeast Europe's temperate rural regions. We combine ~2,400 individual survey interviews collected in 2024 across Albania, Kosovo, Moldova, and Romania with high-resolution ERA5-Land indicators (1994–2023) of precipitation and temperature (long-run trends variability). Using two-level probit models with village random intercepts and country fixed effects, we estimate the probability of intending to migrate abroad. In baseline specifications, place attachment (PA) is a strong negative predictor of migration intentions, while the predictive power of our climate indicators is modest on average. Allowing climate effects to vary by PA reveals clear heterogeneity: (i) positive precipitation trends are associated with higher migration intentions at low PA, but this effect is strongly attenuated at high PA; and (ii) precipitation variability exhibits a sign flip—negative at low PA, positive at high PA—consistent with differential appraisal and coping. Temperature trend effects are weak, and temperature variability shows only a small association. Overall, climate dynamics do not uniformly raise migration intentions; rather, social rootedness conditions whether and how climate stress translates into an intention to leave.

Keywords:

Not provided





Abstract 2.19

#298 - Negotiating a Changing Sea: Ecological Uncertainty and Coastal Rural Food Practices in Latvia

Presenting Author: Janis Sabanovs, Rīga Stradiņš University, Faculty of Social Sciences

Abstract:

Coastal rural communities across Europe are increasingly confronted with ecological transformations that challenge established relationships between environment, livelihood, and everyday food practices. In the Baltic Sea region, rising ecological uncertainty—linked to warming waters, shifting species distributions, and declining traditional fish stocks—has begun to reshape everyday relations between people, sea, and food. This paper examines how climate-driven environmental change is experienced and negotiated in coastal rural communities in Latvia. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2023 and 2025 in Latvian fishing villages, the study focuses on the increasing presence of the round goby (*Neogobius melanostomus*), a non-native species whose rapid expansion reflects broader climatic and ecological transformations in the Baltic Sea. Rather than approaching climate change solely through policy or environmental indicators, the paper explores how it becomes visible in everyday practices and decisions related to food. For small-scale fishers, the species represents a form of environmental adaptation, offering a means of economic continuity under conditions of ecological instability. At the household level, however, its incorporation into everyday diets remains limited and contested. The paper argues that environmental change is not only managed through technical or economic adjustments, but is also interpreted through culturally embedded understandings of place, belonging, and ecological normality. Food practices become a key site where environmental transformation is made meaningful, resisted, or selectively accepted. By foregrounding lived experiences of ecological change, the study contributes to rural geography debates on how environmental pressures reshape everyday life, revealing the social dimensions of adaptation in coastal rural landscapes.

Keywords:

Foodscares; ecological uncertainty; coastal rural communities; human–environment relations; adaptation





Abstract 2.20

#304 - The climate policy on the periphery — it can't work when it doesn't exist

Presenting Author: Patryk Kaczmarek, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

Abstract:

Climate change is a global process, yet it varies significantly across regions. It can also become a source of competitive advantage for some regions, but it can also deepen stagnation. Peripheral rural areas are among the most vulnerable to climate change. They, moreover, must invest the most capital in climate transformation. Therefore, the study sought to identify examples of how climate policy is being implemented in peripheral rural areas.

In the first stage of the research process, strategic and planning documents from selected areas were analysed using desk research, using a previously developed analytical matrix. Individual in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with a selected group of local and regional development policymakers to deepen understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The analysis conducted during the research process revealed weaknesses in both the design and implementation of climate policy in peripheral rural areas. There are significant gaps in both the provisions and the tools for implementing climate policy. In some cases, there is no structured climate policy at all, and its implementation is merely dependent on the willingness to use available financial tools (national and European).

The lack of a structured climate policy leads to chaos and fails to strengthen resilience to climate change. Wasted resources and lost time that should have been devoted to transformation will contribute to a slower pace of socio-economic development. This will further deepen the peripheral status of rural areas.

Keywords:

rural regions, climate policy, periphery, desk research, IDI





Abstract 2.21

#307 - Slope of the terrace embankment matters?

Presenting Author: Fernando Alves, Symington Family Estates, Vinhos SA

Co-author: Joana Valente, Symington Family Estates, Vinhos SA

Abstract:

The Douro demarcated region constitutes just over 50% of the area of mountain vineyards in the world. Among the different (terraced) vineyard layouts, the former preferred wider terraces supporting two rows of vines and the currently advocated narrower single row dominates the vineyards' planting layout. The slope of these terraces, in other words, the supporting earth ramp, is a key element in these vineyards' construction. Existing bibliography on the subject is relatively scarce and there is little consensus in the definition of the ideal slope gradient for these embankments. When these modern terraces first began to be built, it was agreed that the gradient of the slope could be built with inclinations of between 175% and 200%, to support a high plant (vine) density and in this way show the commitment necessary to comply with the technical and administrative rules and regulations laid down. However, empirical observation and practical experience revealed that wine growers could not, in practice, fulfil these criteria and this led us to a reappraisal of the terraces' building techniques, including the definition of viable and workable slope (earth ramp) inclinations. A study was carried out to assess the method of calculation of the slope gradient ($n=900$), including the use of GIS supported data, and high-precision digital models that allowed continuous measurements of slope gradients. The results showed that, in fact, the earth ramps' gradients range from 90% to 110%. The resultant geometry translates into a different land usage coefficient, i.e., lower plant densities, which means less efficient land usage and, inevitably, some financial sacrifice borne by the growers. However, these numbers are in accordance with established parameters in regions with hillside vineyards, including aspects such as terrace stability. These results contribute to the proper evaluation of vineyard parcels, whilst also addressing the reality of Douro vineyards and mountain viticulture in general.

Keywords:

Douro, vineyards, steep-slope, terraces.





Abstract 2.22

#316 - Analysis of environmental effects of climate change on Rural housing with a two-level analysis model

Presenting Author: Saeed Givhechi (Ph.D.), Associate Professor, Faculty of Environment, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

Abstract:

Climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every rural region across the world. losses and damages from climate change escalate with every increment of global warming. The occurrence of severe floods in regions of the world that have less history of facing this natural phenomenon is considered to be one of the effective consequences of climate change in increasing climatological-hydrological accidents. The consequences of these floods are generally the destruction of housing and the reduction of residential quality. The case study of this research was conducted in hot and dry areas. In this research, considering the history of three major floods, the Golestan flood of March 2019, the flood of March 2019 in Khuzestan and the flood of August 2022 in Yazd, all three of which occurred in Iran, the most important consequences of these floods on rural housing have been analyzed.

The research method is based on studies of the environmental effects dimensions of flood Disasters in three specified time periods and its classification and analysis. For this purpose, a two-level analysis model has been used.

The results of this research show that the economic and environmental consequences of flash floods can be analyzed at both micro and macro levels. At the micro level, the most important economic consequence is the damage caused by flooding to rural housing, and the major environmental impact at the micro level is the spread of pollution from homes. At the macro level, the most important economic consequence is the increase in housing restoration costs and the housing being unavailable during the repair period. The major environmental consequence at the macro level is the phenomenon of debris caused by floods and its impact on the condition of settlements, which has been fully analyzed in this research.

Keywords:

Housing, Climate change crisis, Environmental changes, Rural Housing, Human settlement





Theme 3 - Social Vulnerabilities and Opportunities Underlying Rural Transformations: Communities, Cultures and Identities

Abstract 3.1

#43 - Beyond Incentives: Professional Identity, Reflexive Agency, and Resilience in Rural Healthcare

Presenting Author: Dina Bite, Riga Stradiņš University

Abstract:

According to OECD data, Latvia's healthcare system is characterised by pronounced structural inequalities, manifested in limited access to healthcare services, a reliance on out-of-pocket and private care, and the chronic under-remuneration of healthcare professionals in the public sector. These inequalities are spatially uneven and most acutely experienced in rural regions, where deficits in primary healthcare provision constitute a key social vulnerability shaping everyday life, community well-being, and the sustainability of rural places.

This paper draws on a qualitative study conducted in 2025 with medical students, residents, and early-career general practitioners (n=48, i.e., 16 students, 15 residents, 15 early-career general practitioners, 2 early-career general practitioners who had left the specialty recently) to examine how young medical professionals perceive rural general practice and their willingness to work in contexts of ongoing rural transformation (i.e., depopulation, ageing, spatial inequality as well as decline of economic and social infrastructure). Focusing on institutional support measures – such as financial incentives, housing provision, and scholarships – the study analyses how these policy instruments are interpreted by existing and prospective rural practitioners.

Findings from semi-structured interviews indicate that state-led approaches to strengthening rural healthcare resilience are experienced as largely technocratic, spatially abstract, and short-term. Participants of the study emphasise professional autonomy, place-based belonging, and community embeddedness as central to sustainable engagement with work in rural regions. This reveals a marked disconnect between policy-driven models of resilience and the relational, lived forms of resilience that young practitioners seek to enact.

Informants' intentions are characterised by high personal and professional reflexivity, efforts to reconcile private and professional life, and aspirations to actively participate in local communities. The envisioned expansion of the general practitioner's role reflects attempts to rework professional identities and social functions within rural regions. For instance, the range of healthcare services is being expanded, thereby improving their accessibility for patients. Early-career general practitioners demonstrate an alternative way of life and offer a holistic approach to healthcare, thereby challenging the established practices of primary healthcare in Latvia.

Overall, the findings suggest that resilience in rural healthcare should be understood as a socially and spatially embedded process, emerging at the intersection of institutions, identities, and place-based practices.

Keywords:

Rural healthcare; Social resilience; Rural transformation.





Abstract 3.2

#48 - Rural Place Rebranding as a Territorial Renewal Strategy: Insights from Latvia's Rural Periphery

Presenting Author: Zenija Kruzmetra, Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies,

Co-author: Ieva Jatniece, Association "Watermarks"

Co-author: Daina Aluzane, Association "Community Cooperation Network "The Islands of Selonia"

Abstract:

Rural peripheral regions increasingly face depopulation, economic marginalization, and weakened social cohesion. In this context, rural rebranding is gaining relevance as a strategic instrument that goes beyond marketing to support territorial renewal and community empowerment. This study examines rural rebranding as development strategy in the rural periphery of Latvia, focusing on the Community Cooperation Network "The Islands of Selonia."

The objective of this paper is to analyze how rebranding processes can contribute to territorial and community renewal in rural peripheral areas by strengthening local identity, cooperation, and development capacity. The research adopts a qualitative case-study approach, combining document analysis, semi-structured interviews with community leaders and network members, and participatory observation of local initiatives within "The Islands of Selonia" (2019-2024). The analytical framework integrates place branding theory with community development and collaborative governance perspectives.

The findings indicate that rural rebranding in "The Islands of Selonia" functions as a collective sense-making process rather than a purely promotional activity. The rebranding initiative has contributed to increased inter-community cooperation, enhanced visibility of local cultural and natural assets, and the emergence of shared development narratives. The results highlight the importance of bottom-up participation, network-based governance, and territorial capital in mobilizing local resources and reinforcing community resilience. However, challenges remain related to limited institutional support and long-term sustainability.

The case demonstrates that rural rebranding can serve as an effective strategic instrument for territorial and community renewal in rural peripheral regions when embedded in participatory and place-based development processes. The study underscores the need to conceptualize rebranding as a tool for empowerment and collaborative development rather than solely as a marketing mechanism.

Keywords:

Place branding, territorial renewal, community empowerment, rural periphery





Abstract 3.3

#51 - What spatial justice for ageing people with disabilities in rural areas? An approach based on social representations

Presenting Author: Franck Chignier-Riboulon, Université Clermont-Auvergne, UMR Territoires, France

Co-author: Mauricette Fournier, Université Clermont-Auvergne, UMR Territoires, France

Co-author: Meddy Escuriet, Université Clermont-Auvergne, UMR Territoires, France

Co-author: Rayyane M Bark, Université Clermont-Auvergne, UMR Territoires, France

Abstract:

Spatial justice is based on the premise that space is not a neutral framework, but a constitutive dimension of the processes that generate or perpetuate injustices. There is no single definition of spatial justice, but a set of approaches that use it as an analytical tool to understand how injustices occur, are maintained, and are transformed in and through space.

In this oral presentation, we use the spatial justice framework to analyze the situation of ageing people with disabilities in rural areas. Even when they experience a demographic revival and improve territorial attractiveness, many rural areas continue to face a decline in access to essential services and fundamental rights. This situation can lead to a form of dependency, or even confinement, for ageing people with disabilities, and contribute to their isolation.

We use the representations of access to fundamental rights as a key analytical lens to examine spatial justice in rural contexts, particularly for ageing people with disabilities. This research centers lived experience in its analysis, capturing not only the specificities of territorial service provision, but crucially, how actors perceive and experience spatial (in)justice, and how territory is conceived as a resource or a constraint in the implementation of rights. From this perspective, we conducted qualitative interviews in Saint-Sandoux (France) in November 2025, involving seniors with mental disabilities and professional caregivers.

The study reveals that Saint-Sandoux is an under-equipped territory, where the provision of essential services relies primarily on neighboring towns, whereas access to specialized or emergency care requires a trip to the cities. However, this structural deficit does not automatically translate into a perceived spatial injustice among participants. ESSMS serve as crucial actors, compensating the impacts of these structural deficiencies and improving access to basic rights and capabilities.

Keywords:

Spatial justice; Rural areas; Mental disability; Ageing; Spatial representations; Saint-Sandoux.





Abstract 3.4

#60 - Rural Movements and Parliaments in Europe as Agents of Social Innovation: Deepening Democracy and Reinventing Identities in Times of Transformation

Presenting Author: Neslihan Önder-Özen, University of Granada,

Co-author: Dr. Tobias Federwisch, Village Movement Brandenburg

Co-author: Dr. Alistair Adam-Hernández, University of Vechta (VISTRA)

Co-author: Dr. Joanna Tamar Storie, Estonian University of Life Sciences

Abstract:

Introduction:

European rural communities are undergoing transformations driven by demographic shifts, economic restructuring, and cultural change. Erosion of essential services—schools, healthcare, transport—threatens material well-being and the continuity of rural identities. In response, National and Regional Rural Movements (RMs) mobilise collective capacities for reinvention, resilience, and democratic participation. While European Rural Parliaments (ERPs) have been organised since 2013 as transnational participatory platforms, in this study they serve primarily as a source of empirical insight into the activities, perspectives, and strategies of RMs. By gathering rural actors from across Europe, ERPs offer a valuable arena in which RMs exchange experiences, build collective agendas, and strengthen democratic representation.

Objectives & Methodology:

This paper examines RMs as catalysts for social innovation, identity reinvention, and democratic renewal. The research draws on qualitative insights from eight European cases through document analysis, two focus group sessions with RM representatives, and participant observation during the 2025 ERP in Scotland. The analysis explores how RMs mobilise tangible and intangible assets—heritage, community networks, cultural practices—to counteract rural marginalisation.

Results & Discussion:

Findings show that RMs go beyond advocacy: they reconfigure identities, strengthen social cohesion, and create participatory spaces such as national and regional rural parliaments. They transform traditions into resources for innovation and resilience. Professionalisation helps RMs scale their impact, although challenges persist in sustaining engagement, securing funding without compromising autonomy, and navigating evolving rural identities shaped by migration and global influences. These dynamics highlight the interplay between vulnerability and opportunity in rural transformations.

Conclusions:

RMs exemplify the capacity of rural societies to reinvent themselves amid global pressures. Their success relies on inclusive governance, diversified financing, and communication strategies that connect local heritage with forward-looking visions.

Keywords:

rural movements, rural parliaments, social innovation, rural identity, resilience



Abstract 3.5

#91 - Feminist pathways to rural transformation: innovative practices, knowledges and ways of being

Presenting Author: Mireia Baylina, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Co-author: Montserrat Villarino, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela

Co-author: Maria Dolors Garcia-Ramon, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Co-author: Isabel Salamaña, Universitat de Girona

Co-author: Maria Josefa Mosteiro, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela

Co-author: Ana Maria Porto, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela

Abstract:

Women who innovate in rural areas through creative entrepreneurship projects in Spain represent a key agent of social, economic, and cultural transformation. Their initiatives in fields such as visual arts, textile design, contemporary crafts, bioconstruction, renewable energy, creative jewelry, gender equality, alternative education, agroecology, and high-quality artisanal food production, among others, are not limited to the creation of novel products or services. Rather, they introduce new ways of doing, thinking, and inhabiting rural territories. A central feature of these ventures is that empowerment is not a direct consequence of entrepreneurship but a prior condition that makes it possible. These women arrive in rural contexts with cultural, educational, and symbolic capital that enables them to innovate in their practices, knowledge, and ways of inhabiting rural spaces from a feminist perspective. From their positions, they promote collaborative practices, support networks, and a strong feminist and ecological consciousness.

The aim of this paper is to explore examples of feminist innovation in rural contexts in Spain through entrepreneurial practices in which women combine traditional rural knowledge with knowledge acquired through academic training and previous urban experiences, generating hybrid proposals that re-signify the rural from a contemporary and feminist perspective. A qualitative methodology based on in-depth interviews is employed. Innovation is manifested both in the sectors in which they engage and in the practices, values, and ideologies that underpin their projects. These ventures demonstrate that rural innovation is also cultural, political, and social, and that empowered women are fundamental protagonists in this process.

Keywords:

feminist innovation, rural transformation, knowledge, ways of being, Spain



Abstract 3.6

#99 - Associativism in the Rural World: The Case of the 2017 Fires in Portugal

Presenting Author: Célia Taborda, Universidade Lusófona

Abstract:

The forest fires of 2017, which severely affected the central region of Portugal, caused extensive human, material, and environmental damage in predominantly rural territories marked by depopulation, population aging, and weaknesses in forest management. In the face of the social emergency and the perception of institutional inertia, several associative movements emerged to support the victims, such as MAAVIM, AVIPIG, and AVMISP. This study aims to analyze whether the associative movements formed after the 2017 fires arose merely from community solidarity or whether they constituted a response by civil society to compensate for institutional failures of the State, thus becoming a social movement. To this end, a qualitative methodology was adopted, drawing on document analysis, the study of actions carried out by the associations, and a literature review on associativism, citizenship, and social movements. The findings indicate that these associative movements focused primarily on social support actions and bureaucratic mediation on behalf of victims, responding to the urgent needs of the affected rural communities. Although they occasionally contributed to the dissemination of information on preventive behaviors and to the public debate on the issue of fires, their action did not develop into a social movement challenging established power. It is concluded that they did not evolve into an environmental social movement; however, these associative movements represented a relevant expression of solidarity-based citizenship, with a significant impact on supporting populations during the tragedy and, subsequently, through awareness-raising campaigns on the social problems of the rural world.

Keywords:

Associativism, fires, Portugal, social movement



Abstract 3.7

#106 - Food systems and inclusive rural production: innovation niches in family farming

Presenting Author: Iván Tartaruga, CEGOT/Universidade do Porto (Portugal)

Co-author: Paulo Diniz, Universidade Federal de Campina Grande (Brazil)

Co-author: Mireya Perafán, Universidade de Brasília (Brazil)

Co-author: Mário Ávila, Universidade de Brasília (Brazil)

Abstract:

The transition to sustainable food systems can provide opportunities for the productive inclusion of vulnerable populations, especially in rural areas, and help reduce the effects of the climate crisis. This study aims to understand productive and sustainable inclusion cases in agri-food systems in rural areas and verify the role of public policies, within the scope of the research project "Inclusive Rural Production and Food Systems (PRISMA): pointing out ways to consolidate innovation niches". The experiences studied in two regions of the Brazilian Northeast are characterised as innovation niches, highlighting the generation of new technical and social solutions that lead to a transition to healthy, sustainable, and inclusive food systems. Using a qualitative and quantitative methodology, we analysed the sociotechnical configurations of the cases within the scope of transition studies and social network analysis. We studied the cases through the notions of rural productive inclusion (inclusive economic activities in rural areas) and inclusive innovation (social and technical novelties created for/by vulnerable social groups). Moreover, we utilised the geography of sustainability transitions approach to explore the relationship between sociotechnical transitions and place-based factors and conditions. The results show the importance of family farmers' cognitive and organisational capacities for promoting (inclusive) innovations and, consequently, territorial development. Thus, a significant alignment of these producers' niches can indicate initial sociotechnical conditions for a sustainable and inclusive agri-food regime. These experiences have received support from informal institutions (trust, cooperation, etc.) and, to a lesser extent, from formal institutions (laws, regulations, etc.). Likewise, we stressed the threats to these niches from conventional agri-food regimes and from new sustainability-linked regimes, such as wind energy farms (renewable energy). In conclusion, policies supporting these emerging niches must be tailored to the local socioeconomic context.

Keywords:

Rural productive inclusion; inclusive innovation; family farming; geography of sustainability transitions, agri-food systems.





Abstract 3.8

#108 - Negotiating Local Community Identity Narratives through Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Context of Administrative and Territorial Reform: The Case of historical land of Selonia

Presenting Author: Lolita Ozoliņa, Institute of Culture and Arts of the Latvian Academy of Culture

Abstract:

Rural transformations driven by administrative, territorial and regional reforms significantly reshape local communities and their identities. This paper examines the role of intangible cultural heritage communities in strengthening rural place-based identities and fostering community resilience in the context of such transformations, in the historical land of Selonia (Sēlija) in Latvia.

The research addresses social vulnerabilities emerging in rural areas following administrative-territorial reforms, particularly experiences of marginalisation, reduced participation in decision-making and weakened institutional visibility of peripheral communities. At the same time, it explores opportunities created through community-led cultural practices, networking and identity-building processes that enhance social capital and local agency. The study conceptualises rural communities as active cultural actors whose engagement with intangible cultural heritage enables them to negotiate power relations, challenge-imposed identities and articulate alternative narratives of place and belonging.

Methodologically, the research is based on a mixed-methods case study combining qualitative narrative interviews, narrative analysis and a quantitative survey of non-governmental organisations in Selonia. The analysis focuses on dominant and counter-narratives through which communities represent place identity, regional belonging and cultural distinctiveness in the context of ongoing territorial restructuring. Special attention is given to subaltern community identities and their strategies of resistance, adaptation and self-representation.

Keywords:

Intangible cultural heritage, local community, identity narratives, place-based identity



Abstract 3.9

#109 - Socio-Cultural Influences on Innovation and Technology Adoption in Family Farming

Presenting Author: George CURRY, Design & Built Environment, Curtin University, Australia

Co-author: Gina KOCZBERSKI, Design & Built Environment, Curtin University, Australia

Abstract:

Development policy makers often view family farms in the developing world as obstacles to 'real' development and 'modernisation'. This view is underpinned with an assumption that traditional practices and socio-economic values must be transformed for progress to occur. Such views overlook the well-documented evidence of experimentation and innovation among family farmers worldwide and fail to recognise the diverse social and economic values underpinning family farming. Such perspectives perpetuate the misconception that family farmers in developing countries lack agency and are incapable of determining their own best interests.

In this presentation, we investigate the role of socio-cultural factors and non-market values in adoption and innovation—an area that remains understudied. We explore adoption and innovation across multiple dimensions, including intra-family relations, the tension between modern and traditional farming practices, and the indigenous socio-economic and cultural values shaping production, consumption, and distribution.

By examining these less understood factors, like indigenous values, habits, and socio-cultural institutions, we aim to highlight their influence on social innovation and technology adoption. In doing so, we seek to underscore the adaptability and resilience of family farming systems, and their role in sustaining cultural values and practices that are central to quality of life.

Keywords:

Not provided



Abstract 3.10

#112 - A Sense of Belonging and Comfort, But with Whom? LGBTQ+ Life in the Countryside

Presenting Author: Zeevik Greenberg, Center of Rural Studies Tel-Hai College

Abstract:

Main Objective: This presentation will examine a mixed-methods study of belonging among LGBTQ+ individuals in rural and peripheral communities, investigating patterns of emotional and participatory belonging within local residential communities and vis-à-vis the broader LGBTQ+ community. Rural communities are considered conservative and outdated, with limited capacity to accept those whose identity is more complex than what is conventional and known. The arrival of new populations to rural spaces creates several challenges, including the challenge of individuals from populations LGBTQ+ who choose to reside in these areas and benefit from the life that the rural area offers

Method: Using quantitative survey data from 188 LGBTQ+ participants embedded in a larger sample of 1,478 rural residents, combined with 48 in-depth interviews, the research reveals a pattern of divergent belonging: Strong emotional identification with the LGBTQ+ community coexists with limited behavioral participation, while practical engagement centers on rural community life.

Results: Statistical analyses confirm that LGBTQ+ participants report higher emotional belonging to the LGBTQ+ community than to the rural community yet demonstrate significantly greater behavioral participation in rural activities than in LGBTQ+ activities, with large effect sizes. Exploratory person-centered analysis identifies three identity navigation profiles: Detached, Symbolic, and Integrated. Qualitative findings illuminate mechanisms underlying these patterns, including identity preservation, strategic integration, calibrated visibility, and graduated disclosure.

Conclusions: The results challenge unitary belonging models and demonstrate that divergent belonging represents sophisticated adaptation to heteropatriarchal rural structures rather than failed integration. The study's findings contribute theoretical refinements to belonging frameworks and Social Identity Theory while offering practical implications for supporting the flourishing and integration of rural LGBTQ+ individuals.

Keywords:

LGBTQ+ , Sense of Belonging, Rural Community



Abstract 3.11

#113 - “Soil Sanctified by Blood”: Land and Identity in the Narrative of the Rural Space Following the October Massacre

Presenting Author: Avi Shnider, The collage of management Israel

Abstract:

The October 7th massacre and the painful war that followed have brought numerous issues to the public agenda. This paper addresses a peripheral to military topic that is nevertheless at the heart of this conference: how war's tragic circumstances are used to revalidate rural identity and its symbolic capital.

Based on a narrative content analysis of materials presented in conventional media and on social networks, this study demonstrates how the rural sector utilized the change in public sentiment to reconstruct its symbolic capital, and how the land, and the connection to it, became a central component of this discourse.

In recent decades, the rural space has faced profound transformations and a critical public narrative that questioned its role in the 21st century, specifically regarding its continued control over extensive land resources. Following the Hamas attack on Israel's agricultural heartland, public sentiment shifted from criticism to deep empathy. The rural sector leveraged this transition to transform the long-standing critical narrative. Representatives utilized this newfound platform to promote the symbolic capital of rural life, emphasizing the enduring bond between rural space and the land in light of the tragic events.

The study concludes that in the shadow and the aftermath of the painful war, numerous profound social changes took place, one of which was the rural sphere's attempt to transform the critical perceptions held towards it.

Keywords:

Symbolic Capital, Land, Narratives, October Massacre





Abstract 3.12

#114 - An endogenous management of vernacular infrastructure of community centres as territorial capital for milieu shaping

Presenting Author: Kadri Kasemets, Institute of Humanities, Tallinn University, Estonia

Co-author: Tarmo Pikner, Institute of Humanities, Tallinn University, Estonia

Abstract:

Habits and related vernacular materiality is often treated as self-explanatory environment, when it could be more consciously integrated into the planning process. The study proposes to consider endogenous management of vernacular infrastructure of community places for local milieu shaping as territorial capital. Especially in the settlements that are grappling with aging, population loss, and economic decline, where structural centralization and the closure of public services may cause anonymization of rural societies, the territorial capital stemming from the management of vernacular infrastructures becomes significant binder in establishing dialogue between the local community and structural governance. We apply a secondary analysis to the data gathered for examining the social resilience of cultural services of local communities in three counties in rural southeastern peripheral Estonia affected by population decline, economic difficulties and structural reforms connected to centralization of services and municipal amalgamation. We re-examine the interview material, consisting of 39 qualitative thematic semi-structured interviews conducted with local micro-level community stakeholders in 18 rural village settlements and in eight rural former municipal towns. The results reveal how the management of vernacular infrastructure influences community synergy and activities that shape local milieu for territorial coherence. Community synergy is especially significant in building a dialogue and trust with the municipality particularly when ownership relations and functions of the infrastructural materialities tend to change. Discussion concerns citizen responsibility and municipality trust towards citizen governance.

Keywords:

endogenous governance, shrinking, territorial capital, vernacular infrastructure, community coherence





Abstract 3.13

#122 - Recipients or givers? Exploring the roles of older adults in informal support networks in rural Poland

Presenting Author: Ilona Matysiak, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Maria Grzegorzewska University

Abstract:

The main objective of this paper is to examine the role of older adults as both recipients and providers of informal support within family, neighbors and friends in rural communities in Poland. This approach enables a broader understanding of rural ageing, moving beyond a narrow focus on service deficits or care provision burdens, and instead highlighting the agency of older adults themselves. Older adults are rarely analyzed as a significant source of support for others, particularly in forms that extend beyond financial transfers or childcare. This study draws on 40 in-depth interviews conducted in 2024 with residents aged 65 and over from 33 villages across Poland. The interviewees vary in terms of gender, age (younger older adults, the oldest-old), education, and family situation (single-person households, living with a spouse or partner, multigenerational households). As a result of the data analysis, a typology of older adults was developed based on two key dimensions: the lower or higher level of support received, and the lower or higher level of support provided to others. As a result, four types were identified: 1) 'givers and recipients', characterized by high levels of both support provided and received; 2) 'predominant givers'; 3) 'predominant receivers'; and 4) 'marginally engaged', characterized by low levels of both support provided to and received from others. The first and second types are the most prevalent among the interviewees. In some cases, older adults run entire multigenerational households or family farms to unburden younger generations. Among key factors differentiating interviewees' inclusion in particular types are age, health, gender and individual attitudes, such as a sense of obligation towards others.

Keywords:

rural ageing, informal support, older adults, family, neighbors, friends





Abstract 3.14

#134 - Development and Quality of Life in Low-Density Rural Territories: The Case of Cinfães (Portugal)

Presenting Author: Ângela Silva, FLUP

Co-author: Pedro Chamusca, FLUP/CEGOT/CECS

Abstract:

Low-density rural territories are frequently assessed through “hard” socioeconomic indicators (population decline, ageing, purchasing power), yet these metrics may overlook lived well-being and locally valued assets. This paper examines development and quality of life in the municipality of Cinfães, a predominantly rural area in Northern Portugal, discussing how public policies and local strategies relate to residents’ opportunities and perceived well-being. A mixed-method design combines (i) secondary data (official statistics and document analysis on territorial dynamics and policy strategies), (ii) a questionnaire survey to residents (n=284), and (iii) structured interviews with local elected officials (n≈2–3). Quantitative analysis (Excel) is complemented with spatial analysis and cartographic outputs using ArcGIS Online. Findings reveal a marked misalignment between structural disadvantages (ageing, depopulation, low purchasing power) and residents’ overall positive perceptions of quality of life. Positive assessments are anchored in lower living costs, strong community ties, and the value attributed to natural and cultural resources. Local public action—often oriented to sustainability and nature-based tourism—is recognised as relevant, but perceived as insufficient to reverse entrenched demographic and economic trajectories. The results suggest that rural development evaluation should integrate subjective well-being and place-based assets alongside conventional indicators, avoiding one-dimensional diagnoses of “decline”. A combined statistical-perceptual assessment offers a more robust basis for rural policy, supporting context-sensitive interventions aimed at territorial cohesion in low-density areas.

Keywords:

low-density territories; rural development; quality of life; subjective well-being; territorial cohesion.





Abstract 3.15

#148 - Qingtian Project: Socially Engaged Art and Geographical Imagination in rural China

Presenting Author: Wantong Zhang, University of Leicester

Co-author: Pedro Chamusca, FLUP/CEGOT/CECS

Abstract:

Over the past two decades, an increasing number of Chinese artists have moved from urban centres into rural areas to initiate socially engaged art projects. Although considerable art-historical research exists on this phenomenon, few studies have offered theoretical frameworks to elucidate the relationship between socially engaged art and rural places, nor have they summarised the enduring impact on local communities following the conclusion of project cycles. Drawing on assemblage thinking, this paper examines artist Qu Yan's five-year "Qingtian Project" (2016–2020) in Qingtian Village, Shunde District, Guangdong Province. It explores how artistic practice facilitated the exchange of cultural and economic value among villagers, local government, university platforms, non-profit organisations, and local enterprises, ultimately forming a trans-local assemblage. To obtain deeper, context- and experience-driven data, this paper employed qualitative research methods. Data sources include semi-structured interviews, on-site observations, and archival analysis. This paper elucidates how a remote village, through the recoding of geographical imaginations, was reshaped into an experiential, accessible, and replicable 'Lingnan Water Town' via practices such as ancient building restoration, folk activities, and art festivals. During this period, as residents navigated the regime of power, Qingtian transformed from a dispersed entity into a structured, institutionalised, and trans-local place. Crucially, it examines how heterogeneous material and expressive components continue to assemble and generate within this small village years after the project's conclusion, through ongoing study tours and the formation of an arts district.

Keywords:

Socially engaged art, place-making, assemblage, rural revitalisation





Abstract 3.16

#149 - Culture-Led Village Revitalisation as a Chinese form of Endogenous Rural Development

Presenting Author: Yiyang Wang, Department of Cultural Geography, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen

Co-author: Frank Vanclay, Department of Cultural Geography, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen

Co-author: Philippe Hanna, Department of Spatial Planning & Environment, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen

Abstract:

Culture-Led Village Revitalisation has emerged in China as a prominent approach to addressing rural change and village decline. Drawing on the literature on Endogenous Rural Development (ERD), this paper examines how cultural resources, practices and local identities are mobilised within processes of rural transformation, and how these processes reshape community participation and local development trajectories. Methodologically, the study combines qualitative analysis of national and provincial policy documents with in-depth case studies of two villages, Nandong Art Valley in Zhejiang Province and Dahe Village in Guangdong Province, China. Through interviews, participant observation and document analysis, the paper investigates how culture-led initiatives are conceptualised in policy discourse and enacted in everyday village practices.

The findings show that Culture-Led Village Revitalisation in China takes diverse and contrasting forms. Nandong Art Valley illustrates a tourism-oriented pathway in which cultural production and heritage are mobilised primarily to support visitor economies, while Dahe Village demonstrates a community-based approach centred on everyday participation, social organisation and grassroots governance. While both pathways display important affinities with ERD principles, such as the mobilisation of local resources and place-based development, they are also shaped by specific institutional and governance conditions that influence patterns of participation, local agency and the distribution of benefits. The paper highlights both the opportunities and vulnerabilities associated with culture-led approaches in rural China, including uneven participation, dependence on external resources and tensions between cultural valorisation and social inclusion. In doing so, it contributes to broader debates on rural transformation, community dynamics and the applicability of ERD beyond its original European context.

Keywords:

Endogenous Regional Development, Culture-Led Village Revitalization, rural development, rural transformation, rural communities





Abstract 3.17

#179 - Arctic Knows: empowering Coastal, Local, and Indigenous Communities?

Presenting Author: Marco Eimermann, Department of Geography, Umeå University, Sweden

Co-author: Linda Lundmark, Department of Geography, Umeå University, Sweden

Abstract:

This presentation aims to contribute to an academic discussion and sharing of experiences on the concept of regenerative economies and what that might mean in practical terms for rural communities in the Arctic. We present a new EU Horizon 2020 project (2025-2028) aimed at empowering Coastal, Local, and Indigenous Communities (CLICs) as a basis for the discussion. The project seeks to mobilise their knowledge, including traditional ecological knowledge, to co-create regenerative economies and livelihoods in a just, inclusive, and gender-sensitive manner. It brings together CLICs, researchers, and local stakeholders (industry, businesses, civil society, policymakers) in a knowledge cocreation process. Together, they co-design and implement principles, methodologies, guidelines, frameworks, and indicators for regenerative economies and livelihoods, as well as platforms for community engagement and participation. The project includes four Pilots (in Greenland, Norway, Sweden and Finland), focusing on close-to-nature tourism, small-scale climate-resilient agriculture and climate-resilient fisheries. In this presentation, we focus on the Swedish pilot in the coastal area of the Vindelälven-Juhtatähkka Biosphere (VJB) reserve. Along the Vindel river, with the municipality of Umeå at the coast, several communities reliant on tourism as part of their livelihoods are present. The presentation includes work in progress on a quantitative report and qualitative methods (interviews and workshops).

Keywords:

Coastal close-to-nature tourism; Climate change; Embeddedness; Regenerative practices



Abstract 3.18

#186 - Communal Bakehouses - Concrete Fragments of Emancipatory or Authoritarian Ruralities?

Presenting Author: Lukas Dörrie, University of Münster

Abstract:

Just 70 years ago, communal bakehouses were the basic infrastructure for the daily supply of bread in Germany. In many villages, these historic commons are still used for various occasions throughout the year and are considered by the people as part of their rural traditions. In my research, I want to understand this fragment of a former but potentially also future rural economy. The spatialization of degrowth policies points to rural areas, mainly due to the availability of resources and situated practices (Varvarousis et al. 2024). At the same time, rural regions appear to be left-behind places, inhabited by people with often reactionary ideas. Dengler and Lang (2021) raise awareness that commons not necessarily come along with a transformational claim and that regressive politics can easily reproduce within themselves. Through communal bakehouses, I want to understand how materials, practices, and imaginaries interact and produce ruralities. I ask what concrete utopias arise at the bakehouse and what emancipatory or regressive moments they exhibit. One challenge is how I can question and record hidden latencies in addition to more or less obvious tendencies. I attempt to address this in my field research through a triangulation of participant observation, interviews, and an art-based workshop. In my presentation I want to lay out the theoretical and methodological basis of my research and share some first insights from my fieldwork.

Keywords:

Commons, Degrowth, Ideology, Arts-based Methods





Abstract 3.19

#188 - The Tensions of In-Migration and Cultural Continuity: challenging 'the way things work' in rural Scotland

Presenting Author: Jack Rendall, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Co-author: Sophie Miller, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Co-author: Ruth Wilson, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Co-author: Christina Noble, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Co-author: Margaret Currie, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen

Abstract:

As rural landscapes undergo demographic and economic shifts, the interplay between 'local' and 'global' influences creates new, often friction-filled forms of belonging. As migration introduces diverse lifestyles, religions, and cultural backgrounds, this causes cultural norms and traditions to be challenged. These challenges are present across different rural communities in Scotland as they welcome refugees, asylum seekers, as well as the ever-present attraction of the rural idyll (Wilson et al 2025). While research has been conducted on how migrants form their identities and sense of belonging, there is a lack of research on how these migrants disrupt and shape the communities in which they live (de Lima, 2011). This paper examines the paradox of community integration: where there is a drive for community resilience and empowerment from the state (Currie et al, 2023) and local desire for vibrant, innovative community involvement that competes against the unwritten cultural requirements and traditions to maintain a certain 'way' of how the community works. We explore through extensive qualitative interview data (93 semi-structured interviews across Scotland) how incomers and natives navigate these social preconditions and how a capacity for reinvention can be hampered by a fear of cultural dilution. Ultimately, this research highlights how rural societies negotiate the tensions of cultural change through the fluid, intergenerational, intercultural negotiation of what it means to belong in a rural community.

Keywords:

Rural transformation, cultural norms, in-migration, belonging, identity





Abstract 3.20

#189 - Vulnerabilities and Local Capacities for Action: Analysing Rural Transformations through the Fight Against Intimate Partner Violence in France

Presenting Author: Boisgontier Margaux, Unité Mixte de Recherche "Espaces et sociétés" (ESO) - Université de Caen Normandie France

Abstract:

Research in social and rural geography, in dialogue with rural studies and feminist scholarship on gender-based violence, has shown that intimate partner violence cannot be analysed independently of the spatial contexts in which it occurs (Little, 2017; DeKeseredy, 2015). In rural areas, distance to services, low population density and specific forms of social inter-knowledge shape both the experiences of victims and the capacity of public and voluntary actors to intervene (Agnoux & Durand, 2025). These rural configurations tend to complicate pathways out of violence by reinforcing victims' isolation, limiting access to specialised resources, and constraining professional practices in large, heterogeneous and weakly resourced territories (Sandberg, 2013). Against this backdrop, this paper examines how vulnerabilities specific to rural areas coexist with local capacities for action in response to intimate partner violence.

This contribution draws on a qualitative, multi-scalar research project conducted since 2022 in western France. The methodological framework combines two years of participant observation with public and voluntary actors involved in supporting women experiencing intimate partner violence in rural settings, along with around thirty interviews with professionals working in victim support services. This material is complemented by approximately fifty testimonies from women who experienced intimate partner violence while living in rural municipalities, as well as around ten testimonies from relatives who supported them. Together, these data make it possible to analyse both victims' lived experiences and the concrete modalities of intervention, coordination and local public action, highlighting the relevance of qualitative approaches for capturing territorially embedded vulnerabilities and practices (Savigne et al., 2024; Little, 2017).

The study adopts a comparative approach based on four contrasting rural configurations: rural areas under metropolitan influence, rural territories structured around a medium-sized city, polycentric rural areas, and sparsely populated and geographically isolated rural regions. This comparison sheds light on how territorial contexts shape differentiated responses to intimate partner violence, while avoiding any homogenisation of rural spaces (Sandberg, 2013).

The findings show that rural areas, in all their diversity, are fully engaged in addressing intimate partner violence, albeit through highly variable organisational arrangements. While spatial constraints strongly affect pathways out of violence for both victims and the actors supporting them, the study also highlights how these constraints can foster the emergence of new actors, the redefinition of local roles, and the reconfiguration of public action in rural contexts (Agnoux & Durand, 2025; DeKeseredy, 2015). Through the lens of intimate partner violence, this research thus sheds light on contemporary dynamics of rural transformation, where specific vulnerabilities coexist with capacities for adaptation and innovation.

Keywords:

French rural areas; Intimate partner violence; Informal solidarity networks; Rural social innovations; Rural transformations





Abstract 3.21

#194 - Social Spaces in Rural Communities: Mapping (Hidden) Places of Encounter

Presenting Author: Stefan Kordel, Institute of Geography, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

Co-author: Stefan Kordel, Institute of Geography, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

Abstract:

For many years, rural areas have increasingly lost important social venues and opportunities for interaction in the course of declining infrastructures of supply or culture. According to the contact hypothesis (Allport 1954), encounters that are perceived as positive can strengthen relationships within and between different groups, thereby helping to prevent social fragmentation (Putnam 2000). Physical encounters can foster a sense of trust and connectedness and may ultimately also be prerequisites for (rural) democratic life (Thrift 2005).

Encounters do not only occur in organised and institutional settings but also happen randomly and spontaneously on the street, especially in rural areas (cf. weak ties, Granovetter 1973). Additionally, meeting places do not necessarily carry positive connotations; they can sometimes reinforce prejudices and contribute to social exclusion. This underscores the importance of safe places, particularly for marginalised groups such as women, LGBTIQ*, and migrants.

Public debates on places of encounter in rural communities as well as funding policies often focus on well-established and culturally rooted places, while alternative places are sparsely considered. Building on the complexity of places of encounter and further developing a spatio-visual mapping tool tested in various research projects on the local inclusion of rural newcomers, this presentation proposes an integrative research approach. It aims to capture, map and analyse rural places of encounter across four dimensions: 1) level of institutionalisation, 2) level of intentionality, 3) level of inclusion, and 4) horizontal and vertical scale.

The place-based approach offers the opportunity to explicitly incorporate a spatial perspective in the analysis of social interactions in the rural. It goes beyond mere network analysis by capturing the socio-spatial conditions of encounters as preconditions for subsequent social dynamics. Furthermore, this approach addresses practical relevance by helping to identify and evaluate locally significant meeting places, thereby facilitating rural governance processes in the social realm.

Keywords:

Places of encounter; safe spaces; social cohesion; methodology; social rural/village development





Abstract 3.22

#196 - Choosing the Rural Periphery: Lifestyle Migration, Livelihood Strategies, and Quality of Life in the Ogasawara Islands, Japan

Presenting Author: Dr. Lidia SASAKI, Tokyo Metropolitan University

Co-author: Dr. Eranga RANAWEERAGE, Tokyo Metropolitan University

Abstract:

Japanese rural communities face rapid depopulation and socio-economic decline, and revitalization projects promoting urban-to-rural migration have had limited success.

Framed within the literature on lifestyle migration, this study examines domestic in-migrants (“new islanders”) to the Ogasawara Islands. The objectives of our study are to (1) examine migrants’ motivations for relocation; (2) clarify their reasons for choosing Ogasawara; (3) investigate challenges and opportunities for entrepreneurship and social integration; and (4) compare expectations with post-relocation realities, especially regarding quality of life.

Using qualitative methods, the study draws on fieldwork combining participant observation and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, informants, and 17 “new islanders” active in the tourism sector.

Findings align with prior research on lifestyle migrants to Japanese islands: motivations include seeking work–life balance and well-being; many pursue alternative livelihoods by combining entrepreneurial activities with side jobs for economic stability; and online networks are actively used for social and business purposes. The study’s original contributions consist in (a) analysis of the role of formal and informal (mentorship) support systems in business success and social integration, and (b) documentation of diverse experiences that vary by generation and gender.

Most relocating entrepreneurs report satisfaction with post-relocation quality of life and intend to remain on the islands. Understanding the factors behind Ogasawara’s ability to attract spontaneous migration can inform policies to stimulate migration to rural peripheries and to leverage relocating entrepreneurs’ skills and perspectives for community revitalization and socio-economic resilience.

Keywords:

Lifestyle migration, entrepreneurship, Ogasawara Islands, community socio-economic resilience





Abstract 3.23

#200 - Distrust as a regional barrier to civic participation

Presenting Author: André Knabe, Rostock Institute for Social Research and Social Practice (ROSIS)

Co-author: Annalena Ulherr, Rostock Institute for Social Research and Social Practice (ROSIS)

Co-author: Lorena Elser, Rostock Institute for Social Research and Social Practice (ROSIS)

Co-author: Judith Kiesow, Rostock Institute for Social Research and Social Practice (ROSIS)

Co-author: Melanie Rühmling, Rostock Institute for Social Research and Social Practice (ROSIS)

Abstract:

We observe the attempt to initiate a citizens' council on regional climate protection in a peripheral rural region in northeastern Germany. The project boasts a high level of technical, methodological, and personnel expertise and resources. Nevertheless, the local population is indifferent or even opposed to the council. We analyze the reasons behind the refusal to participate based on 19 problem-centered interviews.

The reasons are limited time resources (due to care work, long distances, other commitments, etc.) and the citizens regional experiences, characterized by:

1. Centralization of public infrastructure and local political participation,
2. disappearance of commercial and public spaces for social interaction,
3. disappearance of jobs in the nearby area
4. out-migration of people who lack career prospects in the region and
5. the failure of previous participatory initiatives.

Many civil and municipal institutions continue to operate, but suffer from a lack of newcomers and actors who are willing and able to take responsibility. The respondents take care of each other as a family, village, or neighborhood and do not expect any help from outside.

These experiences have resulted in a general distrust in external actors and processes that have the potential to cause change. The citizens' council suffers from a lack of trust, which can be attributed to three main issues:

1. The initiative does not originate from the region itself,
2. the subject appears too large to be considered manageable locally, and
3. there is a lack of actors with the necessary self-confidence and the social, cultural, and economic capital needed to implement these changes.

We describe distrust in participation processes as a consequence of socio-spatial disadvantages. We consider the subjective perception that participation pays off to be a privilege that is unequally distributed across regions.

Keywords:

civic participation, regional disparities, trust and distrust



Abstract 3.24

#206 - Co-developing Smart Village priorities in the Vale do Côa: mapping problems and solutions with residents

Presenting Author: Lucas Dembogurski, University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD)

Co-author: Livia Madureira, University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD)

Co-author: Aida Carvalho, Polytechnic Institute of Bragança

Co-author: Ricardo Silva Bento, University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD)

Abstract:

Introduction, Objectives and Methodology: This study reports a participatory process in the Vale do Côa, in Northern Portugal, to elicit and prioritize locally grounded problems and solution ideas that can inform implementable Smart Village agendas. We conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with local actors using snowball sampling to map lived experiences and perceptions of the territory and to derive four guiding domains, namely, sustainability and territorial management, infrastructure, mobility and connectivity, economy and entrepreneurship, and quality of life and well-being. Building on these domains, we held two sequential co-creation rounds in three rural parishes, Muxagata, Vila Nova de Foz Côa and Almendra. Round 1 (n=88) combined facilitated discussion around two 2040 population scenarios with brainstorming to identify sectoral problems and solution ideas. Round 2 (n=36) used persona-based storytelling and voting to prioritize sectors and ideas.

Results and Discussion: Through direct participation, it was possible to understand which aspects of everyday life and which local economic sectors residents perceive as needing improvement. The process enabled the mapping of key problems and the co-development of feasible solution directions proposed by residents themselves, grounded in local knowledge and constraints. Proposals were anchored in existing territorial assets, capabilities and resources, aiming to mobilize local potentialities. The outputs were synthesized into a structured framework that links problem statements to solution directions, preserving the rationale expressed by participants during discussions and voting.

Conclusions: By linking citizen-defined problems to locally grounded solution directions, the framework informs Smart Village-oriented strategies and policies that mobilize territorial assets and tackle priority constraints.

Keywords:

Smart Villages; rural governance; participatory approach





Abstract 3.25

#231 - “From Vulnerability to Agency? Women’s Grassroots Activism and the Paradoxes of Right-Wing Policies in Rural Poland”

Presenting Author: Sylwia Urbańska, Faculty of Sociology, University of Warsaw

Abstract:

One of the most significant phenomena of the past decade in Europe has been the growing strategic focus of right-wing governments and populist parties on rural areas and rural civil society organizations. In Poland, initiatives introduced by right-wing governments led in 2018 to substantial changes in the legal framework and funding mechanisms of Rural Women’s Associations (Koła Gospodyń Wiejskich, KGW) - the oldest (with a history of over 150 years), largest, and most influential grassroots social organizations bringing together women in rural areas. As a result of these reforms, KGW were granted legal personality and access to stable public funding, which triggered an unprecedented boom in women’s grassroots activism in rural Poland. Consequently, the number of registered KGW increased from approximately 3,500 organizations in 2018 to over 17,000 in 2025. This remarkable expansion followed a prolonged period of organizational stagnation and decline, linked to the precarious position of KGW during the first two decades of post-socialist transformation.

This renewed political attention to rural areas provides an important context for examining the effects of right-wing policies and institutional transformations on rural communities, as well as on gendered activist cultures and identities. Central to this analysis is the perspective of rural women activists themselves. In this presentation, I ask whether the transfer of financial resources and legal solutions introduced by conservative right-wing governments has contributed to a conservative turn and the suspension or containment of emancipatory processes among rural women and within local community cultures - or whether, paradoxically, these interventions have enabled new forms of empowerment and agency.

The analysis is based on focus group interviews conducted with 63 women activists from 23 villages located far from urban centers across Poland. The study was carried out in 2025 in seven Polish voivodeships (Urbańska, Dębska 2025).

In the presentation, I discuss: (1) the paradoxical effects of right-wing rural policies and the ambivalences of the contemporary activist boom unfolding in Polish rural communities; and (2) the specific characteristics of bottom-up emancipatory processes among rural women activists, as well as the ways in which their practices contribute to transformations of local cultures and gendered identities.

The perspectives of women living in rural areas distant from cities remain largely underrepresented in public debate and academic discourse. Rural areas are still predominantly interpreted through electoral outcomes and persistent stereotypes that portray the countryside as socially homogeneous and inherently conservative, obscuring the diversity of rural experiences and the complexity of contemporary rural social change.

Keywords:

Not provided



Abstract 3.26

#233 - Reconsidering Locality: Community Formation and Spatial Practices in a Hungarian Ecovillage

Presenting Author: Flóra Zsinka, University of Pécs

Abstract:

This paper examines the relationship between community and spatiality through the case study of a Hungarian ecovillage. The disintegration of traditional communities is often described as a consequence of modernity; however, the role of locality in the formation of communities in the twenty-first century remains contested. Advances in communication and transportation technologies have reduced the significance of geographical distance and strengthened network-based forms of social organization, while communities are increasingly formed around shared interests rather than shared place. This trend, however, does not necessarily imply a decline in the importance of locality.

Based on qualitative research methods, including interviews and participant observation, the study investigates how the physical characteristics of a Transdanubian ecovillage shape social relationships, and how residents actively contribute to the transformation of their built and natural environment. The community consists primarily of newcomers, typically from urban backgrounds, who were initially connected by a shared lifestyle aspiration and worldview rather than by attachment to place. Over time, however, the specific spatial features of the village have significantly influenced social dynamics, internal relationships, and interactions with the wider society.

The analysis demonstrates that place continues to play a crucial role in community formation. Material structures provide a sense of permanence, contribute to collective identity, and create specific conditions that shape the quality of social relations within the community.

Keywords:

Not provided



Abstract 3.27

#236 - Rural Revitalisation and the Role of the ‘Ideal Migrant’

Presenting Author: Ruth Wilson, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, UK

Co-author: Laura Hodsdon, Centre for Heritage, Culture and Society, Falmouth University, UK

Abstract:

The sustainability of rural and island communities is often framed in terms of tangible metrics such as population size, economic health, and quality of infrastructure. Less attention is paid to how shifting socio-cultural dimensions shape these places during periods of transition and crisis, yet these intangible elements—social integration, cultural heritage, and belonging—are essential for retaining residents and making life “worth living”. This paper investigates these dimensions through an interdisciplinary lens, using life history interviews and a novel ‘Photovoice+’ methodology (incorporating photos, video, and audio) across case studies in Scotland, England, Canada, and Japan. The objective is to move beyond local/incomer binaries to understand how residents perceive, value, and safeguard their (often endangered) intangible heritage in times of population change.

Findings reveal that integration in the community is frequently predicated on the construct of the “ideal migrant”. Who constitutes the ideal migrant is contingent on local, regional and national histories and politics. In Japan (Teshima), a sense of urgency regarding depopulation drives a greater acceptance of newcomers who are appreciated simply for boosting the population numbers. In the UK (Mull and Scilly), the welcome is more contested: the ideal newcomer must perform the gentle work of assimilation by learning and earning their acceptance over time. In Canada (Prince Edward Island), proximity to US political climates has strengthened local resolve to foster inclusivity across the island.

The project concludes that population policies must evolve beyond “filling empty glens” with numbers (Jedrej and Nuttall, 1996). Rather, incorporating intangible cultural markers – such as belonging, linguistic heritage, and social integration – into strategies can foster more holistic, inclusive, and resilient rural communities.

Keywords:

Ideal migrant, socio-cultural change, belonging





Abstract 3.28

#237 - Green Extractivism in the Colombian Andes: Avocado, Capital, and Campesino Differentiation

Presenting Author: Illimani Patiño Giraldo, Autonomous University of Madrid

Abstract:

This research explores how the recent expansion of avocado Hass production in Antioquia, Colombia, is transforming rural life beyond its visible economic success. While the avocado boom is often presented as an example of sustainable development and export diversification, this study approaches it as a social process that reshapes land use, labor relations, and community life in historically campesino territories. The central objective is to understand how global agro-export markets intersect with local histories of violence, small-scale farming, and post-conflict reordering to reconfigure the relations through which rural livelihoods are produced and sustained.

The research combines political economy and rural anthropology. From political economy, it draws attention to land, labor, value, and power within global value chains. From anthropology, it focuses on everyday practices, moral economies, and the meanings attached to work, land, and community. Methodologically, the study is based on qualitative fieldwork carried out through repeated visits to eastern and southwestern Antioquia. It includes participant observation in farms and packing plants, semi-structured interviews with small and medium producers, jornaleros, technicians, exporters, and certifiers, life histories, and documentary analysis. This approach allows the research to connect structural dynamics with lived experience.

The findings suggest that the avocado boom does not produce a uniform path of rural development. Instead, it generates differentiation within the campesinado. Some family producers manage to integrate into export chains, often through debt, certification, and dependence on intermediaries, while others lose autonomy or become wage workers. Certifications and sustainability standards emerge as central mechanisms of control that reorganize labor, redistribute risk, and reshape community relations. The study concludes that the avocado boom represents a new phase of agrarian extractivism: environmentally framed, market-driven, and deeply uneven in its social effects, raising questions about the future of campesino life in post-conflict Colombia.

Keywords:

Agrarian Change, Rural Labour, Global Value Chains, Green Extractivism, Moral Economy.





Abstract 3.29

#240 - Stay or Leave? Recognizing Key Challenges and Opportunities in Rural Areas in Serbia

Presenting Author: Milena Panić, Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijić” Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Co-author: Marija Drobnjaković, Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijić” Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Co-author: Vlasta Kokotović Kanazir, Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijić” Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Abstract:

Rural areas are most often framed through narratives of depopulation and overall social vulnerability. Rural change therefore cannot be understood without examining the intentions of different categories of rural population. In this study, rural residents are distinguished as lifetime stayers, immigrants, newcomers, returners and occasional stayers. The empirical research was conducted in 2024 using a standardized semi-structured questionnaire in seven municipalities located in the Šumadija and Western Serbia Region. The total sample comprised 954 respondents. The main objective was to identify migration intentions and to explore how different population groups evaluate quality of life, perceive key challenges and opportunities. The analysis was based on descriptive statistics and non-parametric statistical tests. The results indicate that the largest share of respondents do not intend to leave rural areas, an attitude that is evenly distributed across all categories of respondents. Only among younger respondents, leaving emerge as a more pronounced option, strongly associated with the availability of business and entrepreneurial opportunities. The main reasons for staying include strong family ties and secured housing conditions, particularly among lifetime stayers, as well as a slower and more peaceful pace of life, which is especially valued by returners, newcomers and occasional stayers. A large proportion of respondents are engaged in agriculture, either for subsistence or for market-oriented production, which is most evident among long-term residents. Food quality, environmental conditions and the aesthetic value of the natural landscape are rated highly and recognized as key contributors to overall quality of life. Conversely, the lack of social life and cultural events is identified as one of the main challenges, especially among lifetime stayers and younger respondents, and to a lesser extent among newcomers and occasional stayers. Overall, the findings suggest that rural areas in Serbia should be understood as places with potential for future development.

Keywords:

rural areas, migration intentions, local community, challenges and opportunities, Serbia.





Abstract 3.30

#241 - Created, initiated and maintained: Rural residents' agency in (re-)producing social infrastructure and participative practices in their villages

Presenting Author: Franziska Lengerer, Thünen-Institute of Rural Economics

Co-author: Tialda Haartsen, University of Groningen

Co-author: Annett Steinführer, Thünen-Institute of Rural Studies

Abstract:

In many rural areas, the centralisation of private and public services has led to a loss of spaces for social interaction and community engagement in villages. Against this background, we are interested in village residents' roles in shaping such spaces, thereby influencing the "becoming" of their local communities (Willet 2023, p. 585). Based on a conceptualisation of community as process driven by people through interrelations between meanings, practices, and spaces and structures (Liepins 2000), we analyse residents' agency in (re-)producing social infrastructure and participative practices.

We do so with a focus on eleven villages in a peripheralised German rural region, where we conducted 45 semi-structured interviews with residents who were diverse in terms of their age, gender and residential history. We apply a structuring content analysis to answer the following research questions: 1) In what ways have residents actively (re-)produced social infrastructure and participative practices in their local communities? 2) How do these ways of (re-)producing social infrastructure and participative practices differ between rural residents according to their residential history? 3) What are opportunities for and constraints to agency in (re-)producing social infrastructure and participative practices?

In our analysis, we identify four ways of (re-)production: 'creating social infrastructure', 'maintaining social infrastructure', 'initiating participative practices' and 'maintaining participative practices'. Comparisons between residents with different residential histories indicate that incomers were more involved in creating new social infrastructure, often without institutional embeddedness, while life-long stayers and returnees more often maintained existing social infrastructure and participative practices as members of associations and local political parties. Based on the analysis of opportunities and constraints to agency, we highlight that residents' agency is positionally distributed, reflecting varying capital compositions (Bourdieu 1984; Pinget and Pouliot 2024).

Keywords:

Rural communities, social infrastructure, participative practices, agency, residential histories



Abstract 3.31

#246 - Natural Order, Harmonious Community, and Care: Gendered Pathways to Far-Right Appropriations of Socio-Ecological Transformations in Agriculture

Presenting Author: Carla Wember, Institute for Rural Development Research

Co-author: Marie Reusch, Justus-Liebig University Gießen

Abstract:

Building on a previously published paper on far-right appropriations of the socio-ecological transformation of agriculture, this paper proposes a gender-sensitive framework for analysing the identified interpretive overlaps within rural socio-ecological change. The original study examined how authoritarian and far-right interpretations become embedded not only through explicit far-right actors, but also through ambivalences within the rural and agrarian “societal mainstream” of socio-ecological transformation in Germany. It identified three spatially inflected fields of tension—community, nature, and place—in which modernising, transformative, and authoritarian development pathways overlap. This overlap, the paper argued, is structured by three interpretive logics: (1) the assumption of an ontological given versus the recognition of social contingency, (2) the imposition of harmony versus the negotiation of difference, and (3) a personalized logic of relationship versus a structure-critical politics of society.

This paper takes these findings as a starting point and asks how these interpretive logics are gendered, and how gendered assumptions contribute to the far-right connectivity of socio-ecological imaginaries. Drawing on feminist and decolonial political ecology as well as gender-focused far-right studies, the paper argues that notions of natural order, harmonious community, and rootedness are deeply intertwined with gendered constructions of care, reproduction, embodiment, and social cohesion. These constructions can simultaneously support socio-ecological practices and enable exclusionary, heteronormative, and anti-feminist narratives characteristic of far-right ecological thought.

Conceptually, the paper develops a gender-sensitive reading of the previously identified overlaps, showing how depoliticised care relations, essentialised understandings of nature, and harmony-oriented community imaginaries may obscure power relations along gender, race, and class lines. By foregrounding gender as a central axis of analysis, the paper contributes to rural geography debates on socio-ecological transformation, political ecology, and authoritarian mobilisations, and offers a foundation for more democratically resilient and gender-just approaches to rural socio-ecological change

Keywords:

Gender, Socio-Ecological Transformation, Agriculture, Far-Right





Abstract 3.32

#256 - Libraries and Cultural Centres in Rural Territories: Physical Geography, Information Access and Education

Presenting Author: Alexandre Luis Vázquez-Rodríguez, Departamento Humanidades, Universidad da Coruña (UDC), Spain,

Abstract:

This paper examines the role of libraries and cultural centres as social infrastructures in isolated rural territories, where physical geography contributes to territorial fragmentation and limited accessibility. The analysis focuses on rural contexts characterised by mountainous landscapes, dispersed settlement patterns and structural isolation, exploring how these facilities function as spaces for information access, education and community interaction.

From a geographical perspective combining physical and human geography, the research addresses the relationship between territorial conditions, social vulnerability and access to cultural and informational resources. Particular attention is given to rural contexts in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula, such as mountainous areas of Galicia, Spain, complemented by comparative references to other rural regions.

While their impact is constrained by factors such as demographic decline, accessibility limitations and territorial dispersion, libraries and cultural centres contribute to mitigating social vulnerability in isolated rural territories by supporting educational activities, facilitating access to information and reinforcing everyday forms of social interaction.

Rather than approaching libraries and cultural centres solely as service facilities, this contribution situates them within broader discussions on rural vulnerability and territorial transformation, emphasizing their role as socially embedded infrastructures within isolated rural societies.

Keywords:

cultural centres, informal education, physical geography, rural geography, rural territories





Abstract 3.33

#260 - From Vulnerability to Agency? Women's Grassroots Activism and the Paradoxes of Right-Wing Policies in Rural Poland

Presenting Author: Dr Sylwia Urbańska, Faculty of Sociology, University of Warsaw

Abstract:

One of the most notable developments in Europe over the past decade has been the increasing strategic focus of right-wing governments and populist parties on rural areas and rural civil society. In Poland, policies introduced by right-wing governments in 2018 brought significant changes to the legal framework and funding mechanisms of Rural Women's Associations (Koła Gospodyń Wiejskich, KGW) - the oldest, largest, and most influential grassroots women's organizations in rural areas, with a history spanning over 150 years. As a result of these reforms, KGW were granted legal personality and access to stable public funding, triggering an unprecedented surge in women's grassroots activism in rural Poland. Between 2018 and 2025, the number of registered KGW grew from about 3,500 to over 17,000, following a long period of stagnation and decline linked to their precarious position during the first two decades of Poland's post-socialist transformation.

This renewed political attention to rural communities offers a crucial context for examining the effects of right-wing policies and institutional transformation on rural life, as well as on gendered activist cultures and identities. Central to this inquiry is the perspective of rural women activists themselves. The presentation asks whether the influx of financial resources and legal reforms introduced by conservative governments has led to a conservative shift and the suspension or containment of emancipatory processes among rural women and within local community cultures - or whether, paradoxically, these interventions have enabled new forms of empowerment and agency.

The analysis is based on 11 focus group interviews conducted in 2025 with 63 women activists from 23 villages located far from urban centers across seven Polish voivodeships. The presentation discusses: (1) the paradoxical effects of right-wing rural policies and the ambivalences of the contemporary activist boom unfolding in Polish rural communities; and (2) the specific characteristics of bottom-up emancipatory processes among rural women activists, as well as the ways in which their practices contribute to transformations of local cultures and gendered identities.

Keywords:

Gender, Community Activism, Identities, Empowerment, Right-Wing Policies,





Abstract 3.34

#286 - Social Spaces in Rural Communities: Mapping (Hidden) Places of Encounter

Presenting Author: Stefan Kordel, Institute of Geography, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

Co-author: Tobias Weidinger, Institute of Geography, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

Abstract:

For many years, rural areas have increasingly lost important social venues and opportunities for interaction in the course of declining infrastructures of supply or culture. According to the contact hypothesis (Allport 1954), encounters that are perceived as positive can strengthen relationships within and between different groups, thereby helping to prevent social fragmentation (Putnam 2000). Physical encounters can foster a sense of trust and connectedness and may ultimately also be prerequisites for (rural) democratic life (Thrift 2005).

Encounters do not only occur in organised and institutional settings but also happen randomly and spontaneously on the street, especially in rural areas (cf. weak ties, Granovetter 1973). Additionally, meeting places do not necessarily carry positive connotations; they can sometimes reinforce prejudices and contribute to social exclusion. This underscores the importance of safe places, particularly for marginalised groups such as women, LGBTIQ*, and migrants.

Public debates on places of encounter in rural communities as well as funding policies often focus on well-established and culturally rooted places, while alternative places are sparsely considered. Building on the complexity of places of encounter and further developing a spatio-visual mapping tool tested in various research projects on the local inclusion of rural newcomers, this presentation proposes an integrative research approach. It aims to capture, map and analyse rural places of encounter across four dimensions: 1) level of institutionalisation, 2) level of intentionality, 3) level of inclusion, and 4) horizontal and vertical scale.

The place-based approach offers the opportunity to explicitly incorporate a spatial perspective in the analysis of social interactions in the rural. It goes beyond mere network analysis by capturing the socio-spatial conditions of encounters as preconditions for subsequent social dynamics. Furthermore, this approach addresses practical relevance by helping to identify and evaluate locally significant meeting places, thereby facilitating rural governance processes in the social realm.

Keywords:

Places of encounter; safe spaces; social cohesion; methodology; social rural/village development





Abstract 3.35

#291 - Understanding intangible cultural heritage in rural Wales

Presenting Author: Elen Bonner, Bangor University

Co-author: Eifiona Thomas Lane, Bangor University

Co-author: Sean Martin, Bangor University

Co-author: Rhys Jones, Aberystwyth University

Abstract:

The United Kingdom's ratification of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2024 marks a significant policy shift, creating new expectations around the identification and support of living cultural practices. The current consultation, developed in partnership with the Welsh Government to establish a national register, has brought renewed focus to what forms of ICH exist within rural Welsh communities and how they are maintained. However, while inclusion on such a register can increase visibility and mobilise safeguarding activities, it will be selective and does not in and of itself consider how to support these practices. Within this context, our study seeks to identify examples of grassroots ICH in rural Wales, understand the processes involved in their reproduction, and identify the barriers and enablers to their maintenance. Employing a mixed method case study design with an emphasis on qualitative data, the research focuses on two rural communities experiencing language shift, one located within a higher density Welsh speaking local authority area and the other within a lower density context. The research combines a policy review, archival work, and semi-structured interviews with ICH practitioners (n=11) and stakeholders (n=5). Examples identified include local Eisteddfodau, Plygain singing, and agricultural shows. Emergent findings suggest that traditional modes of reproducing intangible cultural heritage are pressured by demographic change and globalisation, while new processes are widening access but require ongoing negotiation of authenticity. ICH practices are highly participatory, and engagement is often sustained rather than occasional, indicating that existing sustainability metrics may overlook their frequency and embeddedness. The central role of the Welsh language is also evident across activities. Overall, the study offers an evidence base to inform support for ICH in rural Wales at a time when the Welsh Government has committed to its safeguarding.

Keywords:

Intangible cultural heritage; rural; minority language





Abstract 3.36

#292 - TERRA.game: Empowering Older Adults in Rural Communities through Circular Economy Education and Participatory Digital Learning

Presenting Author: Natália Machado, SHINE 2Europe, Lda

Co-author: Carina Dantas, SHINE 2Europe, Lda, Coimbra; ICBAS, Universidade do Porto, Porto

Co-author: Luis Dias, SHINE 2Europe, Lda

Co-author: Mónica Sousa, AD ELO - Associação de Desenvolvimento Local da Bairrada e Mondego

Co-author: Mário Fidalgo, AD ELO - Associação de Desenvolvimento Local da Bairrada e Mondego

Abstract:

Rural areas in Europe face intersecting social vulnerabilities, including population ageing, limited access to education and technology, and declining traditional knowledge, which challenge the adoption of sustainable practices. TERRA.game addresses these issues by providing older adults in rural communities with an innovative, co-created educational tool, designed to raise awareness of circular economy principles while fostering social inclusion, community engagement, and digital literacy.

This initiative, funded through the EO project FUTURAL, integrates two complementary components: an Android-based educational game and a Toolkit of Community Activities, available in English and Portuguese, enabling a blended learning approach that combines online and face-to-face interactions. Older adults are actively involved in co-creation sessions, needs assessments, and pilot testing within rural working hubs in five municipalities of Portugal's Centro Region, an area characterised by an ageing population and dispersed settlements.

Preliminary results indicate high usability, engagement, and perceived relevance. Co-creation activities with 30 participants achieved over 80% positive feedback on design relevance, while pilot testing with 50 older adults demonstrated enhanced knowledge of circular economy practices, improved digital skills, and increased motivation to implement sustainable behaviours at the individual and community levels. Participants also contributed with practical, context-specific solutions for local sustainability challenges.

TERRA.game illustrates how participatory digital education can simultaneously address social vulnerabilities, support rural transformations, and promote environmentally sustainable practices. By empowering older adults to act as agents of change, the project demonstrates the potential for scalable interventions that strengthen rural communities, bridge digital divides, and foster intergenerational and community resilience.

Keywords:

Rural communities; Older adults; Circular economy education; Digital inclusion; Participatory design



Abstract 3.37

#318 - Rural Migration as a Cross-Temporal Social Structure: The Legitimacy and Intergenerational Reproduction of Rural Staying and Returning in Taiwan

Presenting Author: Chi Wei Chen, Department of Social Welfare, National Chung Cheng University, Taiwan

Co-author: Tialda Haartsen, Department of Cultural Geography, University of Groningen, the Netherlands

Abstract:

Recent studies of rural migration have increasingly shifted attention toward those who remain living in their rural home communities, drawing on life-course perspectives, the aspiration–capability framework, and sense-of-place approaches to understand staying and return migration. However, much of the existing literature conceptualizes migration primarily as a response to immediate obligations, relationships, and opportunities, paying limited attention to how migration is embedded within social structures operating across time. Taiwan, which has undergone a compressed transition toward post-industrialization and rapid urbanization over the past eighty years, provides a revealing context for advancing this discussion.

This paper examines how middle-aged adults who remained in or returned to their rural home communities reinterpret the meaning of “staying” and construct the legitimacy of this choice in contexts where leaving is widely regarded as a normative life-course pathway. It further explores how such place-based identities relate to the outmigration norms instilled in them by their parents, and if and how they transfer these reinterpretations of rural life trajectories to the next generation.

The study draws on life-history, in-depth interviews with 28 stayers and returnees born between 1970 and 1990, who were born or raised in rural Taiwan, primarily in the coastal areas of Chiayi and Yunlin counties. Data were analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach.

The findings show that, in rural contexts where out-migration is treated as the default route to success, stayers and returnees do not passively internalize narratives of failure. Instead, they actively reconstruct the meaning and legitimacy of staying through higher education, urban work experience, and sustained rural–urban or transnational connections. These practices gradually unsettle an “out-migration hegemony” that is historically grounded in myths of urban economic ascent and the stigmatization of agriculture.

Finally, this paper argues that understanding migration—whether leaving, staying, or returning—requires attention not only to cross-temporal social structures but also to the ways migration pathways are practiced and reproduced across generations.

Keywords:

Rural migration; Staying; Life course; Intergenerational; Taiwan





Abstract 3.38

#320 - Communitarianism in rural areas: the reactivation of a tradition, or a new paradigm? The case of Montalegre.

Presenting Author: Pina, Helena, (CEGOT) Faculty of Arts and Humanities University of Porto

Co-author: Samora-Arvela, André, Information Sciences, Technologies and Architecture Research Centre (ISTAR-Iscte)

Co-author: Martins, Felisbela, Centre of Studies in Geography and Spatial Planning (CEGOT)

Abstract:

While rural areas are diverse, socio-economic challenges intensify, despite constant change and the persistence of numerous potentialities. This is the case in Northern Portugal, where we encounter a heterogeneity of landscapes shaped by centuries of agro-silvo-pastoral activities.

Drawing on extensive bibliographic and statistical research combined with fieldwork, this communication examines the Municipality of Montalegre. Located in the far north of the country, this mountainous area combines traditional agricultural practices with modern ecological dynamics. Here, human occupation and a traditional agro-pastoral organization persist, enabling the sustainable use of endogenous resources. In this context, in 2018, the FAO designated Barroso, where Montalegre is located, as a "World Agricultural Heritage Site," recognizing the complexity but also the resilience of the traditional barroso agricultural system, based on a landscape where pastures, forests, and subsistence farming enable the preservation of agricultural practices that promote biodiversity, as well as holistic rural development strategies resulting from the integration between human communities and their environment.

One of the distinctive elements of this agricultural system centered on communal practices, where cooperation reigned, but also interdependence and the sharing of seasonal activities among its members, reinforcing social ties and guaranteeing the generational transmission of traditions. Thus, they valued traditional endogenous products, such as smoked meats and native breed beef. However, we find ourselves in a territory where demographic decline, inseparable from the aging of farmers, potentiates the abandonment of agroforestry and livestock farming, which facilitates environmental degradation and the loss of ancestral traditions. Given this scenario, how can we preserve and reinforce the cultural identity and social cohesion of Montalegre? Although innovations are observed, ancestral methods persist that require cooperation between farmers and local communities.

It should be noted that geographical certification and recognition of the quality of traditional endogenous products demonstrate their unique characteristics. However, this is not enough. Collective, community initiatives must be revitalized to boost the resilience and sustainability of this traditional agricultural system.

In a scenario where this mountainous agriculture suffers the effects of demographic decline and aging, social, environmental, and technological adaptations are required. This raises a critical question: can the emerging community and family cooperation, associated with traditional agriculture, enhance sustainable rural development?

Keywords:

Montalegre, World Agricultural Heritage, Communitarianism, Environmental Revitalization, Sociocultural Preservation



Theme 4 - Social and Spatial Inequalities in Rural Areas

Abstract 4.1

#42 - Do we develop thriving rural teachers? An analysis of the General Teaching Council for Scotland's Standards for Provisional Registration.

Presenting Author: William Quirke, Strathclyde Institute of Education, University of Strathclyde

Co-author: Kathryn McCrorie, Strathclyde Institute of Education, University of Strathclyde

Abstract:

In Scotland, 40% of primary schools and 18% of secondary schools are located in rural settings (Scottish Government, 2025). Despite this, most Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses are delivered by institutions based in urban areas and predominantly rely on urban schools for practicum experiences. Given that rural schools present distinct opportunities and challenges for teachers, it is important to consider whether urban-centred ITE programmes effectively prepare early career teachers who intend to work in rural contexts. This paper examines the extent to which Scotland's professional standards support the development of characteristics associated with successful rural teaching. Using a deductive thematic analysis of the General Teaching Council for Scotland's Standards for Provisional Registration, drawing on a coding framework developed from Leach and Bradbury (2024), this study evaluates how well the standards reflect the professional characteristics and attributes identified as essential for thriving in rural schools. Findings indicate that while some of these characteristics are represented within the standards, others are not fully embedded or comprehensive. Given that the purpose of ITE in Scotland is to ensure graduates meet the Standard for Provisional Registration, and that all ITE programmes are accredited against this benchmark, the research suggests that teachers completing ITE may not be fully equipped with the professional attributes and characteristics required for rural teaching. The extent to which Scottish ITE programmes cultivate the community, personal, and classroom attributes and characteristics identified by Leach and Bradbury (2024) remains an important area for further investigation.

Keywords:

Scotland, Rural, Initial Teacher Education, Professional Attributes, Teachers





Abstract 4.2

#81 - Rural Communities at a Crossroads: how much self-organisation can reasonably be expected?

Presenting Author: Lieselot Vroom, University of Groningen

Co-author: Tialda Haartsen, University of Groningen

Co-author: Jacob Dijkstra, University of Groningen

Co-author: Vincenz Frey, University of Groningen

Abstract:

This contribution discusses to which extent rural communities can live up to policy expectations in terms of delivering key services and facilities via voluntary citizen initiatives. Recent national-level policies emphasize the role of local self-reliance, but it is questionable whether rural communities can support these demands. Due to the time commitment required for many local service provision tasks, and the size of the available pool of healthy and active volunteers that is at risk because of demographic challenges (ageing, depopulation). In addition, with the dual-earner household having become nearly ubiquitous, younger generations struggle to fulfil all tasks “Big Society” asks of them. Moreover, citizen initiatives need volunteers with a social and human capital in order to be successful and sustainable, but these resourceful volunteers are not always available. With an increasing risk that rural communities fail to self-provide crucial facilities and services, the risk of undesired spatial inequality and injustice grows.

In this paper we focus specifically at energy and care initiatives, where we see a shift from governmental responsibility towards citizen-led initiatives. We conducted semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the field of rural community participation in the North-Netherlands, involving policymakers as well as volunteers. We discussed the advantages and disadvantages of citizens’ initiatives, and the division of responsibility for energy and care facilities between the government and citizens. The interviews reveal how these responsibilities cannot unthinkingly be placed with citizens. A strong collaboration between citizens and the government is needed to ensure decent energy and care facilities among rural communities, asking for an active and flexible role for the government.

Keywords:

citizen initiatives; volunteers; self-reliance; care; energy



Abstract 4.3

#97 - A just as possible energy transition in Dutch rural municipalities.

Presenting Author: Dr. Korrie Melis, Senior researcher, HAN University of Applied Sciences, Nijmegen, the Netherlands

Abstract:

The energy transition in the Netherlands is underway but faces stagnation. Households need to adopt more sustainable practices, particularly in heating and cooling. From a governmental perspective, national subsidies are available, while local municipalities inform, guide, and encourage residents to become more sustainable. Each municipality has its own goals, challenges, and approaches to managing this transition. However, beyond stagnation, it is increasingly evident that the transition is not entirely just.

This paper explores how geographical, social and spatial, characteristics can influence a just energy transition, with a specific focus on rural areas. Our research is grounded in the principles of spatial and social justice and informed by the geographies of transition. Drawing on action research in two rural municipalities and interviews with representatives from other rural municipalities, we identify key challenges related to spatial justice. Preliminary findings suggest that some rural communities may possess greater collective social capital as urban areas, and act locally in relation to the energy transition. But a nuanced image is in place, because not all rural communities have the capacities to develop f.e. collectively a windmill. For rural municipalities this can be challenging, how to manage diversity among villages and communities: some are highly active, while others show little engagement.

We conclude the paper with possible solutions for addressing these challenges and outline options for advancing a just as possible energy transition in rural municipalities.

Keywords:

energy transition, spatial justice, rural municipalities





Abstract 4.4

#104 - Different Domains, Unequal Values: Community Participation in Rural China

Presenting Author: Chengxi Liu, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen

Co-author: Tialda Haartsen, University of Groningen

Co-author: Billie de Haas, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen

Co-author: Bettina Bock, Rural Sociology Group, Wageningen University

Abstract:

Community participation has drawn significant attention in discussions concerning the improvement of the quality of life, particularly in remote rural areas. Existing studies have indicated gender differences in the domains of community participation: women tend to be more inclined towards voluntary activities, annual community events and parents' support groups. The paper aims to further explore how these different domains of participation emerge, as well as residents' perceptions and evaluations of these differences within their everyday practice. We employ a mixed-methods approach based on fieldwork conducted in Ancun village in southwestern China in 2024. Quantitative survey data ($n = 77$) are used to describe gender differences in different domains of community participation. Qualitative data were subsequently used to examine how these differences are produced, understood, and evaluated. Preliminary results revealed that women predominantly engage in voluntary and cultural activities whereas men more frequently participate in local political event concerning issues such as spatial planning. It seems to be that these differences originate from structural factors rather than personal preferences, shaped by gender roles and the division of labor rather than individual choice. Although women's participation is widespread in community activities, it is not properly counted, and it is often under-recognized and more likely to be classified as supportive roles. We advocate for greater awareness of the value inequalities that exist within participation domains in research and policy contexts.

Keywords:

Gender, Community participation, Rural, China





Abstract 4.5

#117 - Video Consultations for Rural Medical Care – Potential, Limitations and Contradictions from the Perspective of General Practitioners

Presenting Author: Tobias Mettenberger, Johann Heinrich von Thünen Institute, Thünen-Institute of Rural Studies

Abstract:

In sparsely populated rural areas, general practitioners (GPs) often have to travel long distances for treating patients at home or in nursing facilities. Patients also have to take long ways to get to the doctors' surgeries. Accordingly, the use of video consultations can help to make more efficient use of resources and to ease doctors' daily work. At the same time and particularly with regard to rural areas, literature emphasised that both doctors and patients attach great importance to close personal contact, beyond purely pragmatic considerations. Against this background, the question arises, in which regards the use of video consultations by rural GPs bears potentials and limitations, as well as contradictions.

Empirical answers are provided by a two-stage qualitative interview study conducted in rural Germany. In its first stage, 33 experts working at the interface between science and practice were asked for their assessments of the opportunities, obstacles and limitations of rural telemedicine. Results show that the added value perceived and experienced by GPs is decisive in determining whether telemedicine solutions are implemented or analogue procedures are retained.

Accordingly in a second step, in-depth case studies are currently being conducted in four rural regions, interviewing GPs about their experiences with video consultations. A particular focus lays on the question, as how far the use of telemedicine is consistent with their self-image as doctors working in a decidedly rural setting, thereby relating to the concept of socially constructed ruralities. Preliminary results show that video consultations are considered an adequate treatment format for patients who are already known. A first conclusion is that the self-conception of drawing clear boundaries between professional and private life, even as a rural doctor (e. g. through separate practice and residential locations), translates into the perception that video consultations would have little negative impact on relationships with patients.

Keywords:

Medical Supply, General Practitioners, Digitalization, Telemedicine, Ruralities





Abstract 4.6

#128 - Food Access as a Social Process: Women's Lived Experiences of Negotiating Inequalities in Rural Bihar, India

Presenting Author: Shriya Bajaj, University of Sheffield, UK

Abstract:

Nutrient-dense foods (NDFs), such as fruits, vegetables, meat, fish, eggs, and dairy, are primarily accessed through markets in rural India. Because these foods are perishable, they require frequent procurement, making physical access to food acquisition sites especially important. In food and nutrition policy debates in low-and middle-income countries, access is often framed in terms of distance, availability, affordability, and market integration. In rural India, food environments are deeply shaped by caste, yet food access is rarely examined as a social process unfolding across everyday spaces. This paper argues that access NDFs must be understood as a socially produced process in which caste and gender are tightly interlinked and operate differently across spaces, producing uneven food environments among women themselves.

Drawing on qualitative fieldwork with women from different caste locations in rural Bihar, India, this study conceptualises food access as a process unfolding across interconnected everyday spaces, the household, the journey to acquisition sites, and the market. Rather than locating inequality at a single point of access, the analysis traces how caste structures women's ability to procure food across these spaces in distinct yet overlapping ways.

Within households, caste-informed norms shape women's authority over food-related decisions, control over money, and legitimacy to travel for procurement, producing unequal capacities to negotiate gendered expectations. Beyond the household, the journey to food acquisition sites emerges as a critical space where caste is publicly enacted and experienced. Markets themselves are socially stratified spaces where caste and gender shape interactions with vendors, access to quality produce, and the ability to negotiate prices and quantities.

By understanding how caste operates across everyday spaces, this paper shows that rural food environments are fundamentally unequal. It contributes to debates on food access by positioning local social norms as central to understanding inequalities shape everyday nutrition in rural India.

Keywords:

Food access, inequality, gender, rural





Abstract 4.7

#156 - Strengthening rural healthcare through medical education - insights from the MiLaMed project in Germany

Presenting Author: Tobias Deutsch, Institute for General Practice, University of Leipzig, Germany

Co-author: Anne-Kathrin Geier, Institute for General Practice, University of Leipzig, Germany

Co-author: Stephanie Sauer, Institute for General Practice, University of Leipzig, Germany

Co-author: Thomas Frese, Institute of General Practice and Family Medicine, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany

Co-author: Markus Bleckwenn, Institute for General Practice, University of Leipzig, Germany

Abstract:

Introduction, Objectives and Methodology

Physician shortage in rural areas remains a challenge in Germany and across Europe and is closely linked to spatial inequalities, including mobility, employment opportunities and infrastructure. Funded by the German Federal Ministry of Health, the MiLaMed pilot project was implemented at two German medical faculties (Leipzig and Halle-Wittenberg). The project aimed to encourage medical students to consider future rural practice by introducing a longitudinal rural healthcare curriculum integrated into compulsory and compulsory elective courses. Four rural model regions (counties) were actively involved by establishing local networks of training providers (general practices, specialist practices, hospitals) offering practical placements. If necessary, students received financial and organizational support.

Following a one-year conceptual phase, MiLaMed was tested over a two-year period and evaluated in collaboration with an external institute. Participation in courses and placements was documented. Online surveys of all medical students at both universities were conducted at baseline and after four semesters. Individual courses and practical placements were evaluated separately.

Results and Discussion

During the two-year test phase, MiLaMed became widely known among students and received positive evaluations. In total, 437 practical placements were completed in the four model regions, most of them in general practice and rural emergency care, often in better public-transport-accessible locations. Participation in rural placements positively influenced students' motivation to consider future rural practice. Both students and participating physicians expressed strong support for continuing the programme. The findings highlight the relevance of educational interventions as part of broader strategies addressing spatial inequalities and access to healthcare in rural areas.

Conclusion

The MiLaMed concept is suitable for increasing student engagement with rural healthcare and strengthening the attractiveness of rural practice. The results underline the potential contribution of medical education to addressing rural physician shortage and offer opportunities for interdisciplinary dialogue between health sciences and rural geography.

Keywords:

rural healthcare, spatial inequalities, medical education, rural education, health policy





Abstract 4.8

#160 - Reflections on policy and practice: rural ageing in Slovenia

Presenting Author: Irma Potocnik Slavic, Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, Universtiy of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Co-author: Spela Gustin, not affiliated, Slovenia

Abstract:

Paper examines how rural development mechanism addresses and impacts rural ageing and rural communities in Slovenia where the share of population aged 65+ exceeds 20%, and population ageing index has increasing tendency (from 131,7 in year 2019, and is projected to reach 200 in year 2033; EUROPOP2018, SORS 2023). Slovenian rural areas are on average ageing faster than (sub)urban areas. Paper focuses on LEADER/CLLD (community-led local development) as a rural development mechanism which addresses the rural ageing issues (in local development strategies) in rural localities (37 local action groups/LAGs at sub-regional level) by implementing projects. Two thirds of Slovenian LAGs have less favourable demographic structure in relation to national average. Two research questions were elaborated: (1) In what way has the above-mentioned rural development mechanism been supporting rural elderly towards high quality of life in Slovenian rural localities? (2) Which barriers and gaps identified by rural elderly and relevant stakeholders could be bridged with better delivery of LEADER/CLLD in Slovenia? First, paper focuses on detailed quantitative analysis of partnerships in the implemented LEADER/CLLD projects (in total 1550) over the programming period 2014-2020: the usage of R program enabled visualization (using dplyr, igraph, ArcMap) of indicative networks within 37 LAGs. Second, selected 14 LAGs participated in qualitative analysis (interviews with LEADER/CLLD lead partners, formal and non-formal organizations of rural elderly, municipalities) which revealed the significance, sustainability, institutionalization and visibility of long-lasting programs over project orientation of LEADER/CLLD mechanism. Thirdly, visibility of programs, projects or initiatives associated with rural ageing was identified on field using ArcGIS collective mapping which exposed the uneven distribution of infrastructure, activities and projects related to rural ageing. Results indicate the limitations of LEADER/CLLD mechanism when addressing the issues of rural ageing (modest social recognizability, lack of finance, limited knowledge on ageing, etc.).

Keywords:

Rural ageing, LEADER/CLLD, ageing in place, Slovenia





Abstract 4.9

#162 - Emergent Media Narratives on Land Conflicts in a Global Biocultural Diversity Hotspot

Presenting Author: Alberto Anticoli, Institute of Geographical Sciences, Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Co-author: Jonathan von Below, Instituto de Biología Subtropical, IBS-CONICET, Facultad de Ciencias Forestales, Universidad Nacional de Misiones, Eldorado, Argentina

Co-author: Ana Alice Eleuterio, Instituto Latino-Americano de Arte, Cultura e Historia - ILAACH. Universidade Federal da Integração Latino-Americana, Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil

Co-author: Enrico Di Minin, Department of Geosciences and Geography, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Co-author: María Piquer-Rodríguez, Institute of Geographical Sciences, Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Abstract:

Land conflicts (LCs) represent major challenges in regions where limited resources are contested by diverse actors. The triple frontier of the bio-culturally diverse Alto Paraná Atlantic Forests (APAF, between Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay) ecoregion concentrates some of the most intense LCs in South America. These conflicts arise from profound historical inequalities, exacerbated by the accelerating expansion of agro-forestry. Effective monitoring and analysis of LCs demand diverse data sources capable of capturing the most recent developments in remote and underreported areas. Yet existing literature is constrained by limited access to timely, localized information, creating a significant knowledge gap that this research addresses through an innovative method. Using a mixed-methods approach, we web-scraped online news from the APAF and conducted a thematic analysis of the LC media narratives and actors' sentiments. Results validation was achieved through a local experts' survey. Findings reveal distinct national narrative patterns. In Brazil, media narratives emphasize "legal coloniality" and structural violence against indigenous claims of land. This highlights institutional processes that systematically delay or deny land demarcation. In Argentina, media narratives highlight neo-extractivist policies that commodify land resources while marginalizing communities, justifying forestry expansion through intensive production models. Paraguayan media narratives focus on patterns of land monopolization, socioeconomic inequality, and "agrarian authoritarianism" driven by agribusiness expansion and institutional weaknesses. Overall, national narratives position the APAF as a transnational border zone where government-community conflicts and neoliberal extractivism intensify demands for social-environmental justice and territorial autonomy. This study highlights the utility of online news for examining LCs narratives and sentiments, particularly in complex regions where official data is thin. Future research should leverage automated data collection and analysis for timely conflict monitoring to inform decision-making in biocultural regions.

Keywords:

Atlantic Forest, triple frontier, online news, thematic analysis, territorial disputes.





Abstract 4.10

#164 - Just energy transition in rural areas: a comparative perspective from Poland and Scotland

Presenting Author: Agata Lewandowska, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Doctoral School of Social Sciences

Co-author: Prof. Justyna Chodkowska-Miszczuk, University of Silesia in Katowice, Institute of Social and Economic Geography and Spatial Management

Co-author: Dr Piotr Niewiadomski, University of Aberdeen, School of Geosciences, Department of Geography and Environment

Abstract:

Rural areas have a key role in today's energy transition. They are often sites of resource extraction or renewable energy deployment, and yet they also face numerous social, economic, and environmental challenges. This paper examines how the idea of a just energy transition can be understood and implemented in rural contexts, with particular attention to spatial and social justice.

The research is based on a multi-method design combining desk research, analysis of policy and planning documents, and qualitative fieldwork. Empirical material comes from semi-structured interviews with local and regional authorities, non-governmental organisations, and community leaders conducted in two rural regions with strong fossil fuel legacies: Aberdeenshire in north-east Scotland and Eastern Wielkopolska in Poland. Both regions are currently undergoing profound socio-economic restructuring linked to the decline of oil, gas, and coal, yet they operate within different institutional and policy frameworks.

Preliminary findings point to a variety of challenges across both cases, including budgetary limitations, complex administrative procedures, employment uncertainty, infrastructural inequalities, and limited local gains from renewable energy investments. At the same time, the study shows how local governance arrangements, leadership, and participatory practices shape how transitions are experienced and contested at the local level. Differences between the two regions underline the role of historical trajectories and multi-level governance structures in influencing transition pathways.

The paper argues that achieving a just energy transition in rural areas requires moving beyond a narrow focus on energy systems towards a wider, place-based strategy that confronts social inequalities, strengthens local resilience, and meaningfully includes rural communities in the decision-making process.

Keywords:

Just energy transition, rural areas, social justice, Poland, Scotland





Abstract 4.11

#165 - Gendered Experiences of Gender Equality in Icelandic Rural Communities

Presenting Author: Dr. Gréta Bergrún Jóhannesdóttir, Bifröst University, Iceland

Abstract:

Perceptions of gender equality and attitudes toward equality-related issues vary across Icelandic society. Although Iceland ranks highly internationally in terms of gender equality, significant challenges and disparities remain. In March 2025, the Research Centre for Regional and Local Government at Bifröst Universityt conducted a nationwide survey based on a random sample of respondents, examining perceptions of the relative status of men and women within local communities, participation in volunteer work, and the distribution of responsibility for the third shift (emotional and cognitive labour) within households.

The findings suggest that there is a clear gender difference in these perceptions. Women are more likely to perceive men as holding a significantly stronger position in society, whereas men tend to view the status of men and women as more equal. Similar gendered patterns emerge in assessments of the division of the third shift, with women more frequently reporting that they shoulder a greater share of this work, while men are more inclined to perceive the division as equal.

Communities were further categorized by population size. The results to be presented at the conference will analyze gendered experiences of equality in relation to community size, age, and other contextual factors that appear to shape perceptions of gender equality in Icelandic local contexts.

Keywords:

Gender equality, rural Iceland, perceptions of equality





Abstract 4.12

#191 - Rethinking Rural Inequalities: Civic Engagement as a Lens for Place-Sensitive Justice

Presenting Author: Anna Erhard, Cultural Geography, University of Bamberg, Germany

Abstract:

Rural areas are increasingly characterized by demographic change, unequal provision of services, and persistent territorial inequalities, making issues of social inclusion and justice central to sustainable rural development. Civic engagement is often understood as an important resource for strengthening local resilience. However, less attention is paid to how engagement itself is embedded in local justice relations and can reproduce or challenge existing inequalities. This paper aims to further develop debates on social and spatial inequalities by refining the concept of place-sensitive justice based on everyday practices of civic engagement in rural areas.

Conceptually, the article builds on Nancy Fraser's three-dimensional framework of justice, focusing on the dimensions of representation and recognition and deliberately excluding the dimension of redistribution. Empirically, the study follows a mixed-methods design combining a standardized survey ($n = 227$) in 20 selected rural communities with data from 20 qualitative interviews and participatory workshops with local actors in four communities, capturing structural patterns of engagement, subjective motives for action, everyday practices, and local interpretations of engagement processes.

The results reveal key justice-related challenges within rural engagement landscapes, including gender-specific participation patterns, unequal visibility of engagement practices, differing motivational structures, and the special role of so-called first movers. These findings point to underlying regimes of inequality that shape who is actually represented when local development issues are negotiated and whose engagement is recognized.

The talk concludes by arguing that place-sensitive justice reveals the cultural-symbolic and political dimensions of social inequality in rural areas. Civic engagement is thus understood not primarily as an instrument of local governance or development, but as an empirical approach or a lens to analyzing inclusion, exclusion, and social justice in the context of sustainable and resilient rural development.

Keywords:

spatial justice, place-sensitive justice, rural engagement, recognition, representation





Abstract 4.13

#192 - Reflecting on rural mobility cultures: practices and policies in rural Germany

Presenting Author: Tobias Weidinger, Institute of Geography, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

Co-author: Stefan Kordel, Institute of Geography, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

Abstract:

This presentation adopts a phenomenological perspective to examine rural mobility cultures in Germany, emphasising local residents' life-worlds and agency amidst recent infrastructural developments and mobility policies. Regarding the latter, recent compromises implemented consider both the needs of urban population (represented by the reduction of public transport costs through the 'Germany Ticket' in 2023) and rural specificities, such as measures promoting on-demand and autonomous transport or increasing commuter allowances. Nevertheless, rural mobility practices remain predominantly car-dependent, with limited public transportation options outside tourist regions, resulting in captive ridership among residents who lack private vehicles.

Through qualitative interviews with elderly residents and labour migrants who either have no access to a car or have lost it, our research explores how mobility is experienced, negotiated, and resisted from an intercultural perspective.

Findings reveal that elderly residents often lack familiarity with public transport, relying instead on informal lifts from kin and neighbours, while expressing a desire to age in place and avoid institutional care settings. Immigrants frequently depend on social networks at the workplace and attempt to live close to these networks to minimise mobility needs, yet they long for driving licenses and personal car ownership. In light of a 'mobility imperative' (Farrugia 2016), both groups aim to establish or maintain a certain degree of individual mobility. They demonstrate agency in accessing essential services and social participation—through alternative transport, outreach/delivery services, and social support—despite structural limitations and physical and geographical conditions.

The study underscores the importance of viewing rural mobility not solely as a matter of infrastructure but as a complex interplay of life-worlds, culturally established practices, and individual agency. Recognising these perspectives challenges urban-centric notions of mobility in policymaking and highlights the need for more inclusive, culturally sensitive approaches that respect local residents' desires and capabilities to navigate their rural environments.

Keywords:

Accessibility; everyday mobility; life-worlds; agency; Germany





Abstract 4.14

#232 - Crisis or crises? Rural housing issues in Germany

Presenting Author: Annett Steinführer, Thünen Institute of Rural Studies, Braunschweig, and University of Rostock

Abstract:

Housing reattracts attention. Many households of different social groups and life phases are affected by unaffordable, inaccessible and lacking housing not only in city regions and their hinterlands, but also in touristified, economically prosperous or gentrified rural regions. The both quantitative and qualitative aspects related to unsuccessful housing search, to overcrowded or substandard housing and to lock-in effects are called 'housing question' (first Engels 1872) or 'housing crisis'. However, also vacant buildings and flats in demographically and shrinking regions as well as underused owner-occupied homes both signal and hide relevant housing issues in social and material terms.

In my paper, I will discuss which housing problems exactly are to be found in rural areas in Germany and whether an overall labelling as 'crisis' is justified – or whether such an umbrella term rather masks the specificities and knottiness of the underlying causes. I will use both primary interview and secondary register data to differentiate housing issues along dimensions like social class, tenure, length of residence, region, settlement type and housing typology. Not least, in Germany East-West differentiations still deserve thorough attention as the persistence of the housing fabric as well as distinct governance models impact on distinct housing practices and housing issues. My spatial focus will be on rural small towns.

Keywords:

Housing, socio-spatial inequalities, small towns, governance





Abstract 4.15

#243 - How Does Peripherality Shape Rurality? Insights From Serbia

Presenting Author: Marija Drobnjaković, Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijić”, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, Serbia

Co-author: Annett Steinführer, Johann Heinrich von Thünen Institute, Institute of Rural Studies, Braunschweig, Germany

Co-author: Vlasta Kokotović Kanazir, Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijić”, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, Serbia

Co-author: Milena Panić, Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijić”, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, Serbia

Abstract:

Rurality has multiple forms and meanings and strives for a comprehensive understanding. It has been introduced in a novel settlement typology in Serbia based on Eurostat methodology, which highlights the rural varieties (boroughs and big villages, sparsely populated and mostly abandoned settlements). This paper aims to explore the linkages between the degree proposed by settlements typology and peripherality. The peripherality has been observed as a complex index built on accessibility to public services and economic opportunities that induce a rural change. It deals with the analysis of accessibility-related spatial distribution to represent how identified rural types correspond to the degree of peripherality. Spatial accessibility evaluations are based on raster GIS network analysis of travel time distance to municipal and nearest regional centers within the road network. The peripherality assessment incorporates an economic dimension based on workers' daily mobility as an indicator of job accessibility.

The most accessible rural settlements are boroughs and big villages. They represent the sublocal centers and vital traffic rural nodes, which affects higher accessibility to services and job opportunities in municipal (14.7 min) and regional centers (71 min), and induces higher workers' mobility (22.5%). The mostly abandoned settlements recorded the lowest accessibility to basic (27 min) and tertiary services (93 min). The remoteness of these settlements, associated with low workers' daily mobility (17.1%), reflects a high rurality degree. Somewhat more favorable accessibility can be observed in sparsely populated settlements, distancing from the municipal center with 18 min and 73 min from the regional center. Accessibility and demographic dynamics of these settlements affect higher workers' daily mobility (20%).

The remoteness leads to a depleted population structure and economy and increases on the urban-rural scale. The peripherality assesment provides a roadmap for understanding the rurality and interplay between geographical and socio-economic dynamics and drawing the necessary policy interventions.

Keywords:

Rurality; peripherality; accessibility; settlement; Serbia.





Abstract 4.16

#247 - How to fight loneliness... Women's organisations in rural areas in Poland as actors supporting local communities tackled by loneliness

Presenting Author: Katarzyna Dębska, University of Warsaw, Faculty of Sociology

Abstract:

This study examines how rural housekeepers' circles (koła gospodyń wiejskich, KGW) address loneliness and social isolation in Polish villages. Following a 2018 law guaranteeing stable financing for one KGW per village, Poland experienced rapid growth in registered organizations, creating new capacity to tackle emerging rural challenges.

KGWs and other women's organisations operating in rural areas serve multiple functions: organizing communities, facilitating expert knowledge transfer, and mobilizing local action. As depopulation and rising loneliness reshape rural Poland, these women-led organizations increasingly focus on identifying and preventing the social, psychological, and health consequences of isolation. Integrating local communities often involves overcoming differences and learning to cooperate. During the presentation, I will discuss how these organizations define loneliness as a rural problem, identify at-risk individuals, and implement prevention strategies within their communities.

The analysis draws on focus group interviews with 63 women engaged in local activism across 23 villages in seven voivodeships, all located far from urban centers. FGIs were allowed to ensure a flow of direct communication between women engaged in social activities in local areas, stimulating discussion and resulting in the sharing of experiences and the generation of new knowledge. The research was carried out in seven Polish voivodeships in 2025, and the results were published in the report 'Lokalne rewolucje. Mieszkanki wsi w działaniu' (Urbańska & Dębska, 2025).

Keywords:

Rural housekeepers' circles, women's organisations in rural areas, inequalities, unintended consequences, agency





Abstract 4.17

#253 - Approaches to climate-friendly living in rural areas: evidence of two Austrian municipalities

Presenting Author: Sigrid Kroismayr, WU, Vienna

Abstract:

'TRANSREAL – Transformative Realism for Effective Climate Action' (2021-2024) was a transdisciplinary research project to initiate transformative climate actions in two rural areas in Austria – a prosperous and an economically less developed region. In each region we worked together with two rural municipalities which serve as case studies: St. Johann in Tyrol and Pöllau in Styria whose climate-relevant problem areas are analysed. The fast-growing St. Johann in Tirol is characterised by intensive private and commercial land use, while in Pöllau lack of working places, high commuting rates and dependence on cars is a major problem.

Based on the environmental and climate measures documented on the municipalities' websites, it is shown that St. Johann i. T. is pursuing a green growth path based on technical solutions, while in Pöllau natural resources are at the centre of the relevant measures. These different approaches are also reflected in the proposals made by the participants of workshops, which were organised to initiate climate-friendly living initiatives.

The talk will highlight the different conditions in rural areas and their specific challenges, which have so far received too little attention in research.

Keywords:

Not provided





Abstract 4.18

#257 - A next level of rural facility decline in the Netherlands?

Presenting Author: Tialda Haartsen, University of Groningen, The Netherlands

Co-author: Anne Mombarg, University of Groningen, The Netherlands

Abstract:

Already for decades, rural facilities and services are under pressure, caused by a mix of developments such as increased economies of scale, higher mobility, different consumer behavior, and ageing and declining rural populations. Recent debates on rural discontent, peripheralization, and rural inhabitants and regions perceiving that 'they don't matter' have revived the attention for the vulnerabilities of rural facilities and services. Also in the relatively densely populated Netherlands, the importance of rural facilities and the risk of their disappearance is back on the agenda.

This paper presents the first results of a quantitative analysis of changes in facilities in the North of the Netherlands in the past decade. We primarily focus on basic social services such as education (schools, childcare), healthcare (hospitals, general practitioners, other healthcare institutions, ambulances), safety (police, fire brigades), recreation (sports fields, playgrounds, cultural centers, swimming pools), culture (libraries, museums), and community centers. Because we recognize that commercial facilities also play a role in the quality of life in villages, we also include supermarkets, ATMs, and restaurants in the analyses. Preliminary results show that after the first wave of facility decline in villages below 1,000 inhabitants in the 1980s, a next level of facility decline is currently taking place in villages between 1,000 and 2,000 inhabitants. These villages often function as service centers for the smaller villages surrounding them, that lack facilities. The paper also discusses changes in the way the Dutch local, regional and national governments try to deal with this, e.g. if a different financial strategy is needed that also includes appreciation of the social function of amenities and the way in which facilities and services in rural communities are interrelated and support each other.

Keywords:

Rural amenities, rural proofing, spatial (in)equalities, quality of life





Abstract 4.19

#294 - Rural-urban inequalities and the attainment of socioeconomic status. Are rural inhabitants disadvantaged?

Presenting Author: Josef Bernard, Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences

Co-author: Matej Martinák, Faculty of Sciences, Charles University

Abstract:

Although urbanization has reduced some social differences between cities and rural areas, substantial social inequalities between these spaces persist, reflected in the differing social status of rural and urban residents. Across most European countries, people living in rural areas are, on average, less educated than urban populations, are more likely to be employed in manual occupations, and have lower incomes. Despite the persistence of these disparities, surprisingly little scholarly attention has been paid to the mechanisms through which rural-urban social inequalities emerge and are reproduced. Existing research often attributes status differences primarily to selective migration to cities. From a social justice perspective, however, it is crucial to examine whether additional processes contribute to the socioeconomic disadvantage of rural residents. It is important to assess whether individuals growing up in rural and urban areas face equal opportunities throughout the course of socioeconomic status attainment, including both education and career progression. The paper addresses these questions by examining whether children raised in rural areas achieve levels of education comparable to their urban peers and whether rural residents attain similar career positions to those living in cities, or whether rural residence itself constitutes a structural disadvantage. We also investigate how these patterns evolve over time. The analysis draws on linked Czech census microdata, enabling us to trace the educational and occupational trajectories of multiple birth cohorts. This longitudinal perspective allows us to compare status attainment processes among rural and urban residents in Czechia and to assess how rural-urban inequalities have developed across successive generations. We show that status attainment rural-urban differences are drawn primarily by compositional factors in the parental cohort, thus reproducing social inequalities into further generations.

Keywords:

Rural-urban inequalities, status attainment, Czechia





Theme 5 - The Role of Creative Villages in the Sustainability of Rural Territories

Abstract 5.1

#21 - Creativity and Resilience in Small Australian Towns: Case Studies of Rural Music Festivals as Strategies for Revival and Regeneration

Presenting Author: Shane Hennessy, Curtin University

Co-author: Roy Jones, Curtin University

Co-author: Shaphan Cox, Curtin, University

Co-author: Graham Seal, Curtin University

Abstract:

In most developed countries, small, local centres serving rural regions have experienced population and functional decline as rural employment has become increasingly mechanised and as rural dwellers have become increasingly mobile. Small towns in rural Australia are also increasingly vulnerable to the environmental challenges of droughts, floods and bushfires. In response to these pressures numerous Australian small towns have sought remedies to at least slow, if not reverse, their losses of people and services and to maintain community consciousness which, ideally, permits the local retention of a degree of social capital and resilience. One innovative strategy has been the organisation of, usually annual, events which, it is hoped, bring in an injection of finance to tide businesses over for a year and provide the local communities with an incentive to work together on a single project. Creative events, such as music festivals, have proved to be popular options for this purpose and both the Anglo-Celtic folk traditions of the first European settlers and American country music styles acknowledge rural traditions and environments. The study described here sought to understand the local impacts of eight music-related festivals in the rural areas of four Australian states. The settlements selected were all small (from under 100 to a little over 1,000 inhabitants), had all experienced decline and were generally at more than easy 'day trip' distances from major cities. The festivals were studied over a four-year period and both local residents/organisers and attendees were surveyed and interviewed. While the amount of financial benefit and the ensuing level of enhancement of social capital and resilience varied slightly from centre to centre, there was general agreement that the festivals had a positive and enduring impact on all these localities. Indeed, all but one of the events survived the COVID pandemic and several have also endured natural disasters.

Keywords:

rural decline; social capital; innovation; sustainability





Abstract 5.2

#54 - From local resources to a regional tourism product: Smart village and networking as a tool for strengthening rural resilience and sustainable development

Presenting Author: Magdalena Szczepańska, Faculty of Human Geography and Planning, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland

Abstract:

This study examines innovative pathways for activating rural areas characterised by limited cultural heritage resources, through the application of a village networking approach, using the Skape commune as a case study. The research is embedded in the field of rural geography and addresses contemporary challenges related to rural resilience, spatial transformation and local development. The main objective is to assess the development potential of the commune within the framework of the Network of the Most Interesting Villages, while integrating selected elements of the Thematic Village concept, with the aim of creating a place-based and networked regional tourism product.

The methodology combines a spatial and functional diagnosis with an analysis of local resources at the village level, enabling the identification of settlements that constitute the structural basis for networking. To support this process, a simplified and original method for the valorisation of local resources was developed, drawing on established rural development models and adapted to local conditions.

Survey results indicate that the villages of the Skape commune are not perceived particularly positively by residents, reflecting broader challenges related to rural identity, attractiveness and socio-spatial cohesion. However, in-depth spatial analyses and participatory workshops focusing on the perception of rural space, local assets and community aspirations allowed for the identification of villages with the highest development potential, as well as key governance and capacity-building challenges faced by local authorities and inhabitants.

The study culminates in the formulation of a networking-based development vision for the Skape commune, oriented towards strengthening rural resilience, enhancing spatial and social attractiveness, and supporting sustainable and innovative development trajectories. By fostering cooperation between villages and mobilising endogenous resources, the proposed approach contributes to rethinking rural development strategies in areas with limited heritage assets.

Keywords:

Not provided





Theme 6 - Impact of Tourism, Heritage and Creative Economies on Rural Areas

Abstract 6.1

#27 - Tourism gentrification of agro-food products : the case study of Corsica

Presenting Author: Caroline Tafani, Full professor at the University of Corsica – UMR CNRS 6240 LISA

Abstract:

Corsica is a high spot of tourism in the Mediterranean basin. Welcoming 3 million tourists for 350 000 inhabitants, the tourism pressure is high, and even higher during the summer period that gather the 2/3 of the visitors. Tourists are coming for the climate and the white-sandy beaches among all and then, for the cultural identity which is relatively well preserved. In that search for identity products, local gastronomy and agro-food products are endorsed. The tourism consumption of local agro-food products is high, bought in speciality shops, supermarkets, directly on farms or in restaurants. The producers are used to sell to the tourism sector and agriculture is oriented towards the tourism demand which tends to consolidate the agricultural incomes. But, that tourism demand raises the regional prices of local agro-food products to a level where consumption is no longer possible for local people : that tourism gentrification affects the capacity of local people to buy and consume local specialities which are at the heart of their identity and heritage. Beyond this context and the tourism pressure, we examine the new ways to sell local agro-food products of quality to the local people through short food supply chains. Which contributes to build a sustainability framework in the context of reclaiming local food by the local people. Indeed we present some local initiatives illustrating this phenomenon.

Keywords:

agro-food products, gentrification, tourism, Corsica





Abstract 6.2

#77 - The contribution of pilgrimage routes to heritage enhancement and rural development

Presenting Author: Andreas Voth, RWTH Aachen University, Department of Geography

Abstract:

The growing interest in hiking and cultural routes across Europe is being driven by both supply and demand, offering new perspectives for peripheral rural areas. The increasingly dense network of revitalised historic pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela also forms part of this trend. Since the beginning of the 21st century, tourism on pilgrimage routes has grown significantly. Some sections on the main route, the Camino Francés, are beginning to show signs of overcrowding. In particular, pilgrims who have already been to Santiago are now opting for alternative routes. The strong growth in the number of experienced pilgrims is generating a demand for quieter and authentic routes, even further away from Santiago. More and more pilgrimage routes are being restored, raising expectations for opportunities through sustainable and conscious tourism in rural areas. The research question focuses on the potential contributions of reviving historical pilgrimage routes to preserving and promoting natural and cultural heritage and fostering rural development. In order to gain knowledge about potential benefits of pilgrimage tourism for rural communities, several methods were combined in empirical studies conducted on the Camino Mozárabe in Andalusia (interviews with local stakeholders, surveys of pilgrims and residents, mapping in villages along the route between Almería and Granada), complemented by an evaluation of the literature, websites and travellers' blogs. The results reveal that a pilgrimage route can provide incentives to improve infrastructure, ensure the provision of services, favour local identity and image diffusion, increase appreciation and the awareness of the need to protect and enhance heritage, as well as greater commitment, participation and cooperation of local stakeholders. Thus, an influence on the improvement of living conditions in rural areas is expected. A pilgrimage route connects small rural communities with the rest of the world and favours cohesion at local, regional and European level.

Keywords:

Ways of St. James, conscious tourism, local heritage, rural areas





Abstract 6.3

#82 - Performing Rurality: Youth (cultures) in peripheral rural areas between hegemonic reproduction and subversive transformation

Presenting Author: Franziska Imhoff, Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt

Abstract:

Young people are often positioned as either absent from, or marginal to, rural futures. In this research, I seek to challenge such assumptions by examining how young people actively constitute rurality in peripheral rural areas. Based on ethnographic research conducted in three districts of the Bavaria–Saxony–Thuringia border region, I approach rurality not as a fixed spatial or cultural condition, but as a performative social formation produced through everyday practices. Conceptually, my study draws on Dörflichkeit (village-ness) as an analytical lens to capture the affective, relational, and embodied dimensions of rural social life. Methodologically, it is grounded in long-term ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation, interviews, field diaries, visual methods, and the analysis of local public representations.

Focusing on young people's everyday practices, the analysis traces how rurality is enacted through affective self- and group-identification, hegemonic patterns of reciprocity and care, and ritualized performances such as village traditions and festivities. These practices contribute to the stabilization of dominant forms of rurality by reaffirming belonging, responsibility, and continuity within established village structures. At the same time, they remain deeply ambivalent. While reproducing normative expectations and exclusionary boundaries, they also generate moments of instability, negotiation, and subversive re-articulations of Dörflichkeit (village-ness).

In this research, I argue that the ambivalent lifeworlds of rural youth are best understood as situated between attachment to and distancing from the village, rather than through binaries of rural decline or idyll. A performative perspective on rurality highlights young people's agency and offers important insights for rethinking rural governance and institutional frameworks in peripheral regions.

Keywords:

Rurality, Youth, Heritage, Community, Performativity





Abstract 6.4

#147 - Second homes as more than leisure: Artists' work and relational place-making

Presenting Author: Johan Jansson, Department of Human Geography - Uppsala University

Co-author: Dominic Power, Department of Human Geography – Stockholm University

Co-author: Andreas Back, Department of geography – Umeå University

Abstract:

Contemporary working lives are spatially fragmented. Due to increased mobility and possibilities of remote work new workspaces are utilized creating alternatives to traditional geographies of work. In this development, second homes have come to constitute additional and relevant places for work – not least in Sweden where a relatively high proportion of the population has access to second homes.

The study focuses on how artists having access to or own a second home and how they use it in their artistic activities. Artists are a type of workforce that often works under precarious conditions and traditionally, and for creative reasons, have employed unorthodox workspaces. This paper adopts a relational perspective on artists' work in second homes and presents results from an in-depth interview study with Swedish artists working in various locations (involving second homes).

The paper primarily focuses on three dimensions related to artists and second homes. The first dimension scrutinizes the conditions for creating art and how second homes play a role in artistic creativity and production. The second dimension deals with placemaking and the impact that the artists' activities have on the place where the second home is located. In addition, the paper also contributes to the understanding of overlapping processes that connect place of the second homes (periphery) and the (often) more central places where their permanent residences are located.

The paper aims to go beyond a strict core/periphery understanding of spatially fragmented working lives. It contributes with a spatial perspective on the relationship between the location of artists' second homes and their permanent residences. To nuance debates about the (negative) effects that second homes have on a place/region it highlights deep-rooted relationships to places other than 'home'.

Keywords:

Cultural and creative industries, second homes, workspace, place-making



Abstract 6.5

#154 - Tourism-induced Gentrification in a Rural Setting: The Case of Svetvinčenat (Croatia)

Presenting Author: Teodor Macan, Department of Geography, Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb, Croatia

Abstract:

Since the term 'gentrification' was coined in the 1960s, its meaning has expanded from representing the transformation of working-class neighbourhoods by local middle- and upper-classes to a broader understanding as a spatial expression of inequality and a power struggle over urban space producing various forms of displacement. Within this evolving debate, research since the mid-2000s has increasingly emphasised the role of tourism in driving spatial transformations, including the conversion of housing and land, real estate investment, housing unaffordability and the displacement of local populations.

Building on this literature, this research explores the relationship between tourism development and gentrification in an unconventional, rural context. It focuses on the Municipality of Svetvinčenat in Croatia, a small rural area where tourism has emerged since the 2000s as the key driver of spatial transformations. The primary aim is to investigate how tourism development can induce and intensify gentrification processes, particularly through land use change and real estate market restructuring. Methodologically, the research primarily draws on orthophotogrammetric imagery, land registry and cadastre data to document settlement expansion and shifts in housing use and ownership, complemented by other relevant and available sources.

The analysis shows that since 2011 the number of houses in the study area has increased at an unprecedented rate, driven primarily by tourism accommodation and second homes largely owned by non-local investors. Alongside new construction, a significant share of the existing housing stock has been converted for tourism use. Settlement-level analysis indicates that these changes are largely driven by investors acquiring land from local owners, who capitalise on unused properties at inflated prices. Interpreted through the rent-gap theory, these dynamics suggest a strong potential for exclusionary displacement resulting from an inflated real estate market that increasingly restricts access to housing for local and new prospective residents. As housing is increasingly perceived not as 'shelter' but as an 'investment opportunity', critical questions emerge regarding the Municipality's long-term development, especially given its long-standing demographic challenges of population ageing and emigration.

Keywords:

tourism gentrification, rural gentrification, rent-gap theory, commodification of space, Croatia





Abstract 6.6

#158 - Development and Symbiosis of Integrated Beverage Tourism in the Suwa Region, Nagano Prefecture, Japan

Presenting Author: Ryo Iizuka, Teikyo University

Co-author: Eranga Ranaweera, Tokyo Metropolitan University

Co-author: Toshio Kikuchi, Tokyo Metropolitan University

Abstract:

Food tourism, which views local food culture as a tourism resource, is practised worldwide. Relatedly, beverage tourism is directed at the enjoyment of alcoholic beverages such as wine and beer. In addition to providing a revenue source in rural areas, beverage tourism revitalises them by connecting local resources based on alcohol-making and consumer culture. It also contributes to establishing a sustainable food system and fostering creativity in the local rural community. In some areas, the style of existing beverage tourism is changing with the development of alternative alcohol production, which has become a new tourism resource. This study examines the development of integrated beverage tourism destinations, in which Japanese sake, craft beer and wine are tourism resources, through a case study in the Suwa region, Nagano Prefecture. Beverage tourism in this region has centred on traditional sake brewing promoted by various actors involved in activities ranging from brewing to consumption. We apply both quantitative and qualitative approaches to describe beverage tourism in this region. Our findings reveal the role that integrated beverage tourism development has played in fostering rural community creativity and rurality by reconstructing sustainable food systems in and beyond the region. Furthermore, the Suwa region's beverage tourism space has evolved, becoming geographically differentiated by areas in the region that have their own styles of consumption and rurality, each with unique important tourism resources. Therefore, the food system of integrated beverage tourism in the Suwa region contributes to the formation of creative communities and the preservation of ruralities.

Keywords:

Beverage tourism, traditional brewing, creative community, rurality, Suwa region





Abstract 6.7

#166 - Are living arts festivals local events ? The challenges of festival's local involvement in French rural areas.

Presenting Author: Sixtine Leroux, EHESS, Géographie-cités ; Lyon II University, LER (Laboratory of rural studies)

Abstract:

While studying living arts festivals in French rural areas, I noticed that these events greatly enhanced their local involvement. On 22 November 2025, the emerging northern Mayenne festival L'Arbre Bavard even decided to list "local ties" as the project's fourth value. Between this cultural event and the living arts festival Scènes Sauvages in the Vosges mountains, a common ideal emerges: creating a locally-based event made with and for the locals. I therefore would like to examine in this presentation to what extent festivals take the local scale into account when organising their event? My analysis is based on data from my questionnaire survey of festival-goers, supported by interviews with local volunteers and political actors, and my personal observations. Results show that there is a discrepancy between festivals' claims and attempts to be locally rooted and how they are realising the event. What audience are festivals really seeking to attract? A local audience to support their stated goal, or a broader audience more in line with their ambitions for greatness and need for subsidies? Indeed, these cultural events are aiming to have a wider impact on a regional — or even national — scale to ensure their financial health and longevity. Beyond the question of the audience, festivals' discourses on their local involvement often clash with the projects actually implemented. This tension is reinforced by the high cost implied by local involvement, which can be difficult in the current French context of cultural budget cuts. In conclusion, festivals are caught between a somewhat declared attachment to the rural community and their reliance on other regions.

Keywords:

Living arts festivals – local involvement - rural areas





Abstract 6.8

#207 - WWOOF as a Mechanism Supporting Agroecology and Social Capital in Rural Poland: A Critical Study

Presenting Author: Barbara Maćkiewicz, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Abstract:

Over the past fifty years, the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) initiative has grown from a grassroots idea promoting sustainable living and organic agriculture into a globally recognised movement fostering environmentally conscious communities. Today, nearly 6,000 host farms worldwide provide learning environments where participants can engage with organic food production, environmentally responsible farming techniques, and rural cultural practices. As a form of voluntary tourism, WWOOF connects individuals who share ecological and ethical values, serving both as a support system for farm operators and as an experiential platform for visitors seeking to understand sustainable food cultivation through hands-on participation.

This article analyses the contribution of Polish WWOOF farms to the ongoing transition toward more sustainable agricultural models. Drawing on semi-structured and in-depth interviews with WWOOF hosts, the research investigates the extent to which these farms embody and disseminate principles of organic production, as well as their role in fostering environmental awareness within rural Poland. To broaden the analytical perspective, supplementary interviews were conducted with representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection—responsible for certifying and monitoring organic farms—and the head of the Polish Association for Sustainable Agriculture, an organisation promoting environmental stewardship among farmers. The study seeks to illuminate the key motivations driving agricultural producers to adopt practices aligned with ecological, social, and economic sustainability objectives.

Keywords:

WWOOF, sustainable agriculture, agroecological transition, volunteer farming, Poland





Abstract 6.9

#270 - From Tea Monoculture to Rural Tourism: Variegated Ruralities and Livelihood Transformations in Turkey's Çamlıhemşin District

Presenting Author: Ali Mert Ipek, School of Environment, Education and Development (SEED), University of Manchester

Abstract:

This paper examines how rural tourism reshapes livelihoods, attachments, and claims to land in Çamlıhemşin district, Turkey's Eastern Black Sea region. Drawing on recent scholarship on the ruralization framework, it challenges urban-centric narratives that treat rurality as a diminishing remainder by demonstrating how rural life persists in multiple, heterogeneous forms (simultaneously agrarian and post-agrarian, local and translocal). The study aims to bring tourism, largely absent from ruralization debates, into this framework, while extending discussions to a distinct geographical setting where tourism intersects with a long-established tea economy and decades of rural–urban mobility. The research adopts a qualitative case study design employing ethnographic methods, with data collected through participant observation and forty-two open-ended interviews with tea producers, guesthouse operators, returnees, and tourism workers during extended fieldwork in 2025. The findings reveal that tea cultivation, introduced through top-down state policy in the postwar era with developmentalist motivations, produced variegated ruralities: while villages closer to the coast could sustain livelihoods through tea, settlements deeper in the valley developed translocal strategies combining cultivation with urban migration. These strategies have maintained village properties and kinship networks across distance, creating the material preconditions for tourism. As tea income declined after neoliberal reforms in the 2000s and the state reoriented regional development toward rural tourism, these inherited assets became activatable. Tourism now enables rural persistence through three mechanisms: converting mansions and highland cottages into rent-bearing properties, generating local employment beyond agriculture, and symbolically revaluing rural life. These mechanisms facilitate both in-situ livelihood diversification for those who stayed and permanent return migration for those who had left for cities. The paper concludes that tourism-driven ruralization represents a distinct mode whereby rural life persists not despite deagrarianisation but through the re-functioning of rural materiality around tourism, layered onto rather than replacing older rural–urban relations.

Keywords:

tourism; ruralization; livelihood diversification; return migration; agrarian change





Abstract 6.10

#285 - Food Artisan Entrepreneurs in shrinking rural areas of Spain: Between place constraints and survival strategies

Presenting Author: Néstor Vercher Savall, University of Valencia

Co-author: Pilar Pau Cruzans, University of Valencia

Co-author: Jaime Escribano Pizarro, University of Valencia

Abstract:

Food artisan entrepreneurship is often seen as a promising activity for rural development as it combines heritage, place-based quality and local resource valorisation. Yet in many parts of rural Spain these businesses operate in territories that are losing population, where markets shrink, services concentrate in larger nodes, and the local economic “ecosystem” gradually loses volume. This paper examines the viability of food artisan entrepreneurship in such depopulating contexts, asking how a shrinking territorial environment shapes the constraints faced by small craft producers and limits their capacity to consolidate and grow. It brings an entrepreneurship lens to artisanal food production and uses the notion of survival-oriented continuity to interpret why upgrading trajectories are difficult in declining rural areas. Empirically, the study uses qualitative methods and draws on a case study in Alto Palancia (inner Castellón, Valencia region), based on 19 semi-structured interviews with food artisans and local actors (municipalities, tourism offices and the LEADER Local Action Group). Findings reveal mutually reinforcing pressures undermining viability such as fragile succession and limited specialised training, chronic time poverty and weak strategic use of digital tools, low levels of collective organisation and declining participation in fairs and associations, and disproportionate administrative and regulatory burdens that make grants and quality certifications costly to access. These pressures are intensified by thin and seasonal demand, demand leakage towards supermarkets and county hubs, uneven accessibility, and erosion of local supply ecosystems; together with food-sector pressures such as global competition and increasing climate-related volatility. The absence of meta-organisations, brokerage capacity and shared infrastructures further reduces the feasibility of upgrading and scaling value, pushing many firms towards survival rather than growth. The paper concludes with practical priorities for entrepreneurs and points to the importance of more adaptive support and institutional fit in depopulating rural settings.

Keywords:

craft; depopulation; rural entrepreneurship; rural policy; Alto Palancia (Castellón)





Abstract 6.11

#297 - Mosaic Fest: a creative tourism project based on Roman heritage in cross-border rural areas.

Presenting Author: Humberto Figueiredo, CEGOT-UC/MosaicoLab

Co-author: Claudete Moreira, CEGOT/FLUC

Co-author: Jorge C. S. Cardoso, Univ. Coimbra, CISUC/LASI, DEI

Abstract:

Introduction

Between 2021 and 2023, the Mosaic Fest connected several classified archaeological sites from the Roman period located in border territories between the regions of Central Portugal and Castile and León in Spain. As part of the CenCyL Community initiative, the cross-border editions were supported by CCDR Centro and the Junta de Castilla y León.

Objectives and Methodology

Focusing on low-density areas undergoing progressive depopulation, the CenCyL editions of the Mosaic Fest sought to create reasons for visiting and staying temporarily in small villages, through creative activities associated with the Roman mosaic heritage found in the archaeological sites linked to them.

In collaboration with local and regional authorities, twenty-eight Mosaic workshops were offered to three hundred and ten participants. The creative activities were disseminated through the project site and Facebook and institutional sites, also promoting open and creative public engagement through a Mosaic Editor for smartphone and tablet, offering communication at local, regional and national level in both languages.

Results and discussion

The various actions gave visibility to a new topic and deepened the communities' relationship with it. The number of visitants was increased and new publics were created and the feedback was highly positive. Furthermore, the different local communities recognized the benefits of the project, which was disseminated through platforms from CenCyL Community and Portuguese and Spanish entities, together with regional newspapers. The project was also promoted at "Bienal AR&PA".

Conclusions

The participants' engagement showed the interest of the project and the relevance of its objectives, proving its potential to be implemented in a larger scale.

Keywords:

Creative Tourism; Cultural Heritage; Territorial Development.



Abstract 6.12

#300 - Green Infrastructure and Tourism Diversification in Coastal-Rural Territories: A Participatory Model for Regional Resilience in Mediterranean Regions

Presenting Author: André Samora-Arvela, Information Sciences, Technologies and Architecture Research Centre (ISTAR-Iscte)

Co-author: Jorge Ferreira, Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences (CICS.NOVA)

Co-author: Helena Pina, Centre of Studies in Geography and Spatial Planning (CEGOT)

Abstract:

The Algarve region, southern Portugal, particularly the municipalities of Silves, Albufeira, and Loulé, faces considerable vulnerability due to its heavy reliance on sun and beach tourism, which is increasingly threatened by climate change impacts, notably sea-level rise, coastal erosion, and reduced precipitation. This research addresses the critical need to enhance regional resilience through tourism-recreational diversification based on green infrastructure enhancement across distinct landscape units.

The methodological framework employed a participatory approach integrating multiple stakeholder perspectives to construct a comprehensive tourism and recreation diversification model. Questionnaire surveys were conducted with tourists (N=400), residents (N=400), experts (N=3), institutional stakeholders (N=7), and tour operators (N=15) to assess preferences for alternative tourism activities and perceived enhancement potential. The aggregation of these responses established the Total Enhancement Potential for each touristic and recreational activity. Subsequently, suitability maps were developed through multicriteria evaluation, combining this potential with biophysical ecological sensitivity factors, yielding the Territorial Enhancement Potential for the activities in each landscape unit. This approach identified optimal areas for tourism-recreational valorisation whilst assuming urban expansion containment.

Aggregating the response levels from residents, institutional stakeholders, and tour operators regarding the identification of green infrastructure capacities within the scope of climate change mitigation and adaptation, it is possible to define a high priority to be given to territorial qualification and tourism promotion relating to the delineation of pedestrian routes, tourism diversification through investment in Nature Tourism and Cultural and Landscape Touring, tourism valorisation of local products, revitalisation of their production, safeguarding of vernacular architecture and Landscape identity, renewable energies use (solar, photovoltaic, wind, amongst others) and waste recycling, and delineation of cycle paths, with reasonable priority concerning the remaining tourism-recreational activities. Golf development encountered marked expert rejection.

Broad consensus emerged recognising green infrastructure's adaptive and mitigative capacities and tourism-recreational diversification as constitutive of regional resilience.

Keywords:

Green Infrastructure; Tourism diversification; Regional resilience; Climate change adaptation; Participatory planning



Abstract 6.13

#303 - Wine Tourism in Poland: From a Niche Phenomenon to an Emerging Component of the National Tourism Market

Presenting Author: Ewa Kacprzak , Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Abstract:

Over the past three decades, Poland has witnessed a significant revival of viticulture and winemaking, with particularly dynamic growth following the country's inclusion in the European Union's winegrowing Zone A in 2005. Despite unfavourable climatic conditions traditionally associated with this zone, the Polish wine sector has expanded rapidly and has become increasingly visible within the national tourism offer. This study aims to examine whether the development of wine tourism in Poland constitutes a short-lived phenomenon or a sustainable trend embedded in long-term transformations of the domestic tourism market. The research analyses the dynamics of vineyard development, identifies key factors that facilitate and constrain the growth of wine tourism, and assesses the current stage of wine tourism development. The empirical component is based on qualitative interviews conducted with vineyard owners and stakeholders involved in viticulture development in selected Polish wine regions. The findings indicate that Polish viticulture and winemaking are gradually losing their niche character, while wine tourism is gaining prominence and expanding in scope. Vineyards typically offer a diversified portfolio of services, including wine tastings, guided vineyard tours, workshops, themed events, and direct sales. The increasing number of wine routes and the establishment of the Polish Wine Tourism Cluster in 2024 further signal the sector's institutional consolidation. Key barriers include seasonality, limited production scale, and low international recognition of Polish wines. In contrast, enabling factors include climate change, growing demand for culinary and local tourism, and improvements in wine quality. Overall, the study suggests that wine tourism in Poland has the potential to become a stable component of the national tourism landscape if existing challenges are effectively addressed.

Keywords:

wine Tourism, viticulture, wine production, Poland





Abstract 6.14

#314 - The contribution of artisans to the development of Creative Tourism in less urbanized territories: the case of Barcelos, a UNESCO Creative City

Presenting Author: Cátia Faria, Lab2PT, PhD Student, University of Minho

Co-author: Paula Remoaldo, Lab2PT, University of Minho

Co-author: Juliana Alves, Lab2PT, University of Minho

Co-author: Hélder Lopes, Lab2PT, University of Minho

Abstract:

Creative Tourism has increasingly established itself as a relevant strategy for promoting sustainable development in rural and less urbanised territories, by valuing local know-how, cultural practices, and intangible heritage. In this context, artisans play a central role, particularly in territories recognised for their creative and cultural capital, such as the municipality of Barcelos, designated as a UNESCO Creative City in the field of Crafts and Folk Art since 2017.

The aim of this study is to analyse the contribution of artisans to the development of Creative Tourism in less urbanised and peripheral areas of the municipality of Barcelos. It seeks to understand how creative tourism activities developed in artisans' ateliers—often located in their own homes, outside the urban centre—contribute to the valorisation of craftsmanship, the transmission of knowledge, and the sustainability of rural territories.

The research adopts a qualitative approach, using a focus group methodology. Data were collected through three meetings of a consultative council composed by artisans from different areas of crafts and folk art, enabling the sharing of experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to the development of Creative Tourism activities and to crafts and folk art more broadly.

The results show that artisans play a fundamental role in creating authentic creative tourism experiences rooted in the territory and in local cultural identity. These practices contribute to attracting visitors to less urbanised areas, stimulate the local economy, and promote the safeguarding and intergenerational transmission of traditional crafts.

It was concluded that artisans are key actors in the development of Creative Tourism and in the promotion of rural sustainability, reinforcing the role of creative villages and areas as drivers of territorial cohesion and cultural preservation.

Keywords:

Creative Tourism; Artisans; Rural Territories; Barcelos; UNESCO Creative City.





Abstract 6.15

#317 - Rural landscapes and pilgrims' well-being on the Central Portuguese Way of St. James

Presenting Author: Leida Tavares da Costa, University of Minho, Lab2PT, Guimarães, Portugal

Co-author: Paula Remoaldo, Lab2PT, University of Minho, Lab2PT, Guimarães, Portugal

Co-author: Hélder Lopes, University of Minho, Lab2PT, Guimarães, Portugal

Co-author: Vítor Ribeiro, University of Minho, Lab2PT, Guimarães, Portugal

Abstract:

The diversity of landscapes along the Central Portuguese Way of St. James is an essential component of the pilgrims' experience and can shape their physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being, particularly where rural, agricultural, forest, and riverine environments predominate. Although research on health and nature highlights the restorative role of contact with green and blue spaces in stress recovery, there is still little evidence on how the sequential landscape typologies along long-distance routes relate to perceived changes in well-being. This research aims to analyze how the distinct landscape types identified along the Central Portuguese Way (historical-cultural, rural, and riverine landscapes) are associated with the feelings of relax, tranquility, and inner peace reported by pilgrims, framing the route as a rural territorial system where landscape, heritage, and low-density settlements co-produce the pilgrimage experience. An interdisciplinary perspective was adopted, integrating rural geography (landscape and territorial changes), environmental psychology (restoration and stress relief), and spirituality (meaning-making and inner experience). Methodologically, the study is based on structured fieldwork, supported by direct observation. Landscape units are recorded along successive sections of the route, with georeferenced notes on landscape characteristics and elements relevant to comfort and use (e.g., availability of shade, benches for rest, viewpoints, heritage elements, and riverbank conditions). All observations were organized and visualized using ArcGIS, allowing for a sequential representation of landscape typologies and the identification of critical segments where rural environments and cultural elements are most likely to provide restorative experiences.

The results include: (i) a typological map of landscape sequences along the route; (ii) the identification of rural/river and forest segments as essential "restorative corridors," associated with a sense of calm and stress relief; and (iii) practical management recommendations, such as prioritizing shaded sections, rest infrastructure, heritage interpretation, and conservation of riverbanks in high-value rural sections. The results can contribute to the debates in rural geography on landscape as a territorial resource and provides applied guidance for the management of the Way and slow tourism policies, along with environmental conservation.

Keywords:

Central Portuguese Way of St. James; Rural Geography; Landscape Typologies; GIS Mapping; Pilgrims' Well-being.





Abstract 6.16

#319 - Agricultural Shows: connecting people, place and emotions

Presenting Author: Caroline Westwood, Sheffield Hallam University

Abstract:

Introduction:

Agricultural shows are significant cultural events, particularly for rural communities, offering a platform to showcase livestock, technology, and innovations. Despite their importance, these events remain underexplored, especially in terms of attendees' emotional connections. This research aims to address this gap by exploring the role of emotions, nostalgia, and the significance of space and place in agricultural show experiences.

Objectives:

1. To investigate the emotional experiences of attendees at agricultural shows.
2. To explore the impact of space and place on these emotional connections.
3. To assess the role of nostalgia and reminiscence in shaping attendees' memories and feelings.

Methodology:

This research employs semi-structured interviews with 10 participants who have extensive experience attending agricultural shows across multiple years. Data was analysed using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to the emotional significance of space, place, and historical connections.

Results and Discussion:

Preliminary findings reveal strong emotional attachments linked to the space and people present at agricultural shows, regardless of geographic location. Many participants emphasized nostalgic connections, reflecting on the historical significance of the events. These emotional bonds are reinforced through the communal nature of the shows, where attendees share knowledge, practices, and social interactions, contributing to a sense of identity and community.

Conclusions:

Agricultural shows foster deep emotional connections, shaped by space, place, and historical ties. The findings suggest that despite their temporary nature, these events play a significant role in maintaining rural identities and strengthening community ties. Future research should explore these emotional dynamics in greater depth to further understand their impact on both individuals and rural societies.

Keywords:

Agricultural shows, emotions, space, community





Abstract 6.17

#324 - Unheard Voices? Women's Challenges and Policy Gaps in Peripheral Labour Markets in CEE

Presenting Author: Mariia Rastvorova, Department of Geography and Regional Science, University of Graz

Co-author: Joern Harfst, Department of Geography and Regional Science, University of Graz

Co-author: Simone Kocher, Department of Geography and Regional Science, University of Graz

Abstract:

Industrial production in small and medium-sized towns in peripheral locations remains an important and distinctive feature of Central and Eastern Europe (OECD, 2023). Its economic base demands specific occupational profiles, resulting in narrow labour markets (Harfst et al., 2024). As part of the “group at risk of exclusion”, women are more likely to work part-time, occupy lower-paid positions (ILOSTAT, 2023; McKinsey & Company, 2021), and bear the burden of unpaid care work (Christensen et al., 2016). Additionally, patriarchal structures, which are particularly evident in industrial and rural communities, foster and reproduce these inequalities. Policies often fail to effectively address these issues due to the absence of dedicated employment strategies, insufficient vertical policy integration, and the lack of a comprehensive place-based approach.

This contribution aims to raise awareness about the specific challenges women face in industrial (and other) peripheral settings in CEE countries. It seeks to enhance understanding of a group that is typically underrepresented in academic debates on economic transformations, despite often being among the most affected. The presentation draws on preliminary results from the INTERREG Danube WIN project (Improving the Position of Women in the Labour Markets of Peripheral Industrial Regions), co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Keywords:

industrial regions; female labour; periphery; policies; groups at risk, gender equality



Abstract 6.18

#325 - Bridging Culture and Tourism: Participatory Approach and Integrated Strategies for Territorial Development in Low-Density European Regions

Presenting Author: Claudete Oliveira Moreira, University of Coimbra, CEGOT, Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Co-author: Luis Silveira, University of Coimbra, CEGOT, Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Co-author: Rui Ferreira, University of Coimbra, CEGOT, Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Co-author: Mansour Ghanian, University of Coimbra, CEGOT, Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Co-author: Paulo Carvalho, University of Coimbra, CEGOT, Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Abstract:

The transformation of cultural and natural heritage into sustainable tourism products represents an opportunity for the development of the European territory, particularly for rural inland areas, which face several common challenges, including depopulation and ageing, weak coordination among cultural and tourism key agents, and imbalances between rural and urban areas. RELIGHT project - Regional Lighthouses for Promoting Sustainable Tourism Through Culture, a Interreg SUDOE project, proposes the activation of regional nodes that serve as lighthouses for the development and experimentation of a systemic collaboration methodology that reinforces the value of the cultural and natural heritage of the inland European rural areas. This paper presents the outcomes of a transnational co-creation process to develop a strategic framework to support the integration of the cultural and tourism sectors across seven European territories: 1. Campoo (SPAIN), 2. Vale do C6a (PORTUGAL), 3. Gironde - Entre-Deux-Mers, 4. Lot - Aveyron, 5. Canal du Midi, 6. Communauté de Communes Sud-Hérault, and 7. Lozère (FRANCE). Methodologically, the study adopts a participatory approach grounded in stakeholder engagement through facilitated co-creation workshops involving public authorities, local private actors, and civil society organizations related to culture and tourism. These processes enabled the collective identification of key challenges, opportunities, and strategic priorities, and supported the translation of stakeholder inputs into a structured and operational framework. The resulting framework is articulated around six interrelated strategic pillars: governance, coordination, and networking; communication, marketing, and territorial positioning; integration of culture and tourism; accessibility, mobility, and territorial balance; resources, skills, and knowledge systems; and community engagement and audience development. Each pillar is supported by a targeted set of measures designed to enhance institutional coordination, foster integrated cultural-tourism products, improve accessibility, strengthen stakeholder capacities, and promote inclusive participation. The paper highlights the role of co-creation as both a methodological and governance instrument, enabling the alignment of heterogeneous actors and the co-production of context-sensitive strategies. It further demonstrates how the systematization and refinement of participatory outputs can contribute to the development of coherent and implementable strategic frameworks. This contribution provides methodological insights into participatory territorial governance and offers practical implications for the design of integrated cultural and tourism strategies in multi-actor and transnational contexts.

Keywords:

Stakeholder engagement, Co-creation, Place-based development, Territorial governance, Natural and Cultural heritage, Cultural tourism



Theme 7 - Governance and Planning in Rural Areas

Abstract 7.1

#41 - Trash houses and dead meat statistics: A continuum perspective on second homes and abandoned rural housing

Presenting Author: Andreas Back, Umeå University

Co-author: Gijsbert Hoogendoorn, University of Johannesburg

Abstract:

Research on second homes has recognised the fluidity of dwelling uses along a continuum from permanent homes to second homes. The literature has primarily focused on how this fluidity may cause friction between permanent and temporary users, particularly in competitive housing markets, tourism-intensive areas, or regions facing restrictive land-use planning. However, the relationship between second-home tourism and abandoned housing remains underexplored, especially in declining rural housing markets. In Sweden, dwellings without permanent residents are statistically categorised as second homes, meaning that abandoned houses are routinely and inaccurately treated as leisure properties in official statistics. Using qualitative data from interviews with municipal planners and other key stakeholders, our paper investigates this statistical mismatch.

The findings reveal that official statistics obscure the real extent and nature of abandoned rural housing by classifying unused or deteriorating dwellings as second homes. Interview data highlight how this misclassification complicates planning and rural development, and how second-home tourism intersects with patterns of dwelling use, disuse and abandonment. The chapter contributes to existing literature by extending second-home research toward a broader continuum of dwelling use and demonstrating how temporary dwelling practices play a role in rural geographies affected by demographic and economic decline.

Recognising second homes as part of a wider continuum of dwelling use helps reveal the nuanced transitions between permanent use, intermittent use and abandonment. Understanding this continuum is essential for developing a more accurate understanding and effective planning responses in rural housing markets.

Keywords:

abandoned housing; vacant housing; rural housing; dwelling use; second homes



Abstract 7.2

#52 - Conceptualizing a Multiple-Helix Framework for Rural Innovation and Governance: Intermediary Organisations as Catalysts for Transformation

Presenting Author: Dr. Alistair Adam-Hernández, University of Vechta (VISTRA)

Abstract:

Rural governance and planning face persistent challenges of demographic decline, institutional gaps, and sustainability transitions. Existing helix models (triple, quadruple, quintuple) provide structured approaches to multi-stakeholder collaboration but often fail to capture the dynamic, place-based realities of rural territories, where unusual actors become instrumental partners in innovation processes (Adam-Hernández et al., 2025). This paper introduces a conceptual framework for a multiple-helix approach to rural innovation and governance, positioning intermediary organisations as pivotal actors in fostering territorial transformative capacity.

The study applies Deductive Qualitative Analysis (DQA) (Fife & Gossner, 2024), integrating deductive and inductive reasoning to develop and operationalize theory. Through research question formulation, guiding theory selection, and construct operationalization, the framework synthesizes insights from sustainability transitions (Loorbach et al., 2017), transformative capacity theory (Wolfram, 2016), and agentic processes in regional development (Grillitsch & Sotarauta, 2020), contextualized for rural governance. Initial empirical grounding draws on intermediary organisations from the EU Interreg North Sea project SIRR, spanning Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and France.

The resulting framework comprises eight sensitizing constructs defining the roles, functions, and interrelations of intermediary organisations as multi-stakeholder platforms and hubs for rural governance and development. Illustrative cases include the Sotenäs Centre of Symbiosis (Sweden), fostering industrial symbiosis and circular economy networks, and the Stenvad Mosebrug Association (Denmark), revitalizing rural heritage through social innovation. These cases show how intermediaries link actors, resources, and visions to disrupt unsustainable socio-technical configurations and create momentum for change. Empirical insights reveal that successful governance hinges on recognizing place-specific constraints, fostering inclusive decision-making, and enabling continuous knowledge exchange across scales.

This contribution offers a structured yet flexible lens for analysing, designing, and practicing territorial governance that enhances rural resilience. Future research will refine the model through subsequent DQA steps, enabling its application in diverse rural contexts.

Keywords:

multiple-helix approach; intermediary organisations; rural governance; sustainability transitions; rural development





Abstract 7.3

#64 - Knowledge-brokering in UK rural policy delivery: LEADER and Beyond

Presenting Author: Neslihan Önder-Özen, University of Granada

Co-author: Gary Bosworth, Northumbria University

Abstract:

The end of the LEADER programme in 2020 following Brexit marked a major institutional rupture in rural development policy in the UK. Alongside Covid-19, government change, and increasing devolution, this rupture raises critical questions about what has happened to the knowledge and experience generated during LEADER implementation. Focusing on the aftermath of the UK's LEADER programme, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with people who had key roles in LEADER policy delivery are used to investigate if and how their collective knowledge and experiences continue to influence rural policy, or fade into institutional history.

The study examines LEADER implementation beyond simple success-failure metrics by linking community capacity with knowledge brokerage literatures. It treats community capacity as a key factor determining the scope of knowledge brokerage and mobilisation within and beyond Local Action Groups. Findings reveal how combinations of personal, organisational and relational capacities can create, adapt, apply, and transfer knowledge to address local needs and inform wider policy. Participants' reflections identify social processes and relationships acting both as the tools and conduits for knowledge brokering and as the enabling conditions for knowledge mobilisation. This was particularly insightful for understanding LEADER's longer-term effects where the legacy of local empowerment within rural development processes is now at risk under the UK's urban-centric approach to regional devolution.

The social processes and relationships developed through the LEADER programme facilitated knowledge brokerage at the micro-level, knowledge sharing between rural regions and a greater collective voice at the macro-level. The loss of these features of rural governance in the UK serve as an important reminder to the rest of the EU that the strengths of the LEADER programme transcend the funding impact and should be measured in terms of local capacity-building and extra-local connections that ensure rural needs are visible and influential among higher tiers of policy-making.

Keywords:

LEADER/CLLD, knowledge brokering, community capacity, UK, added value





Abstract 7.4

#65 - Tackling rural challenges by unravelling the regional policy mix

Presenting Author: Dr. Peter Meister Broekema, Hanze University of Applied Sciences

Abstract:

Rural regions are facing specific challenges, such as demographic ones. For example, younger people often move towards more urban regions, which results in an older and dwindling population, which could lead to less facilities and broad prosperity.

These challenges ask for specific sets of policies focused on various aspects at different governmental levels. This idea, recently called the 'policy mix' originated in monetary policies, but has also been applied to social innovations, such as community led initiatives (Rogge & Stadler, 2023). However, defining the policy mix ex ante has proven to be really difficult, due to lack of data and methodological hurdles in for instance understanding potential impact of combinations of policies (Sewerin, 2020).

Our research is opening the black box of this so called policy mix by automatically downloading and analysing all policies from different levels in a given region by our own developed digital application. In our presentation we will use the insights from this analysis and compare this with data on broad regional development, based on economical, social and living environment indicators that have been collected in the PREMIUM_EU project and is publicly available in an online dashboard.

First preliminary results show that (rural) regions that score high on broad regional development, often have more policies that focus on the above mentioned community led initiatives or citizen participation. This finding suggests that if regions are already highly developed, citizen participation is an important factor in improving wellbeing in the region. On the other hand it could also suggest that less developed regions need to reach a certain 'facilities' or 'policies' threshold before citizen participation is of sufficient added value for regional development. We will present the findings from our meta-analysis and provide input for regions that are redeveloping their specific multi-level policy mix.

Keywords:

Regional policy, multi-level governance, impact, regional development





Abstract 7.5

#71 - Municipal Resilience Governance: Strategies and Challenges in the MCR2030 Campaign

Presenting Author: Luís Ferreira, Instituto Superior de Educação e Ciências de Lisboa (ISEC Lisboa)

Co-author: Ana Paula Oliveira, Instituto Superior de Educação e Ciências de Lisboa (ISEC Lisboa)

Abstract:

This research explores the Making Cities Resilient 2030 campaign across 17 Portuguese municipalities to understand how local governance integrates disaster risk reduction. The study analyzes municipal practices regarding risk diagnosis, community engagement, and institutional challenges. Methodologically, the research adopted a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews with municipal representatives, utilizing categorical analysis and QSR NVivo13 software to identify emerging governance patterns. Results indicate that while most municipalities rely on traditional Municipal Emergency and Civil Protection Plans for risk identification, a disparity exists between those using innovative tools, such as Geographic Information Systems and multidisciplinary teams, and those dependent on outdated documentation. A significant finding is the lack of standardized monitoring; while one municipality uses an advanced scorecard with 150 indicators, a substantial proportion of municipalities lack formal metrics to evaluate policy efficacy. Regarding engagement, strategies are bifurcated into institutional planning and community education. Successful initiatives include "Senior Academies" for civil protection and school-based "Protection Civil Clubs", though implementation is often hindered by technical and human resource scarcity. The analysis of challenges reveals that securing political commitment and navigating the technical complexity of the UNDRR platforms are major hurdles. Furthermore, funding for resilience remains precarious, as most initiatives are financed through general municipal budgets without specific allocations, and access to external funds like Portugal 2030 is often restricted by bureaucratic complexity. In conclusion, municipal resilience in Portugal is characterized by heterogeneous initiatives and a general lack of systematic monitoring. The research suggests that for Rio Maior and similar municipalities, the path forward requires a participatory diagnosis of vulnerabilities, the integration of resilience into existing spatial planning, and the fostering of inter-municipal cooperation networks to share best practices. Ultimately, the transition from reactive civil protection to proactive resilience depends on institutionalizing these policies and ensuring long-term political and financial sustainability.

Keywords:

MCR2030 Campaign, Municipal Resilience, Risk Diagnosis, Local Governance, Civil Protection





Abstract 7.6

#102 - Irrigation systems and water governance in rural Morocco: local practices, institutional challenges, and innovation perspectives in Tassaout Aval

Presenting Author: Jamila BENHASSI, PHD student, Cadi Ayyad University, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Laboratory for studies in Resources, Mobility and Attractiveness (LERMA), Marrakech, Morocco

Co-author: Ahlam TAOUSSI, PHD student, Cadi Ayyad University, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Laboratory for studies in Resources, Mobility and Attractiveness (LERMA), Marrakech, Morocco

Co-author: Mohammed Boukherouk, Associate Professor, Cadi Ayyad University, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Laboratory for studies in Resources, Mobility and Attractiveness (LERMA), Marrakech, Morocco

Co-author: Mohammed EL AKLAA, Professor, Cadi Ayyad University, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Laboratory for studies in Resources, Mobility and Attractiveness (LERMA), Marrakech, Morocco

Abstract:

Irrigation remains a cornerstone of agricultural production and rural livelihoods in Morocco, particularly in semi-arid regions where water scarcity increasingly challenges rural sustainability. Over recent decades, public policies have promoted the modernization of irrigation systems through centralized planning, institutional reforms, and large-scale hydraulic infrastructure. Despite these efforts, significant disparities persist between formal water governance frameworks and the everyday realities of rural territories.

This paper examines irrigation systems and water governance in the rural area of Tassaout Aval, analysing how local practices interact with institutional arrangements under conditions of environmental and socio-economic constraint. The study adopts a qualitative and territorial approach, based on field surveys, questionnaires administered to farmers, analysis of local agricultural dynamics, and rainfall data. Rather than focusing on technical performance, the research emphasizes governance mechanisms, social organization, and adaptive practices.

The results reveal fragmented governance, limited coordination among institutional actors, and unequal access to water resources across the study area. In response to these challenges, farmers have developed a range of locally driven adaptive practices, including collective wells, informal water-sharing arrangements, and hybrid irrigation systems combining traditional gravity irrigation with individual pumping. These practices represent forms of social and institutional innovation rooted in local knowledge and necessity rather than formal technological change.

The paper argues that such bottom-up innovations highlight both the resilience of rural communities and the limitations of top-down irrigation planning. Recognizing and integrating these local dynamics into water governance strategies is essential for promoting more inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable rural development in Morocco.

Keywords:

Water governance ; Irrigation systems ; Rural innovation ; Local practices ; Morocco





Abstract 7.7

#103 - Beyond “Company + Farmers”: Multi-Actor Governance and Territorial Development in China’s Livestock Contracting Regime

Presenting Author: Dongmiao Hu, Jilin University

Abstract:

Contract livestock production in China is increasingly organized through corporate-led contracting systems that extend beyond a bilateral “company + farmers” relationship. These systems operate as territorially embedded, multi-actor governance regimes in which agribusiness firms coordinate with producers, village and township authorities, local financing arrangements, and technical-service networks to organize production, manage uncertainty, and steer rural development outcomes. Adopting a comparative case design within a single corporate-centered production system, the study contrasts two contracting modalities—(1) “company + smallholders” and (2) scaled “company + farms” and/or clustered production arrangements—to examine how differences in institutional design translate into uneven socio-spatial effects. The analysis draws on materials accessible through the author’s position in a leading Chinese agribusiness, including internal program documents and implementation guidelines, standard operating and biosecurity protocols, contract templates and settlement rules, operational records, and interviews/observations with managers, technicians, contracted producers, and relevant local actors.

The paper specifies the instruments through which governance is enacted at the territorial level: standardized inputs and technical practices; codified performance metrics and compliance procedures; digitalized monitoring and reporting; and the intermediation of credit, quasi-insurance arrangements, and infrastructural investment via local state platforms. These instruments shape entry and exclusion, redistribute enforcement capacities, and reallocate disease, price, and environmental-compliance risks across actors. Corporate-led contracting thus produces ambivalent territorial development effects. While it can facilitate infrastructural upgrading, employment generation, and technical diffusion, it also generates differentiated incorporation, reinforces information and bargaining asymmetries, and shifts volatility and compliance burdens downstream—reconfiguring rural stratification and deepening local dependence on corporate-centered production systems. The study contributes a governance-and-planning perspective to rural geography debates on agri-food transformations and uneven rural development

Keywords:

rural governance; territorial development; contract livestock farming; agribusiness–local state relations; risk allocation





Abstract 7.8

#107 - Rural participatory governance during an ongoing crisis

Presenting Author: Justin Richardson, Hanze University of Applied Sciences

Abstract:

The small village of Krewerd, along with large parts of the province of Groningen in the Netherlands, has been affected by induced earthquakes resulting from decades of gas extraction. These induced earthquakes have led to an ongoing slowly developing disaster. This small rural community (roughly forty households) is currently undergoing an extensive and unprecedented transformation to reinforce and strengthen its housing stock. While many areas in the province are part of centrally coordinated fortification policies, Krewerd follows a citizen-led approach: the entire village is being redeveloped from the bottom up.

This process offers valuable insights into the importance of involving residents in policies for hazard mitigation, recovery and resilience. It demonstrates how participatory approaches can shape community cohesion, trust, and long-term resilience and moreover health. At the same time, the project sheds light on the complex and sometimes fragile dynamics that emerge when citizens are invited to take on roles beyond those traditionally assigned to them—dynamics that, if not carefully managed, may also complicate decision-making processes.

We present the results from empirical and practice-based research in the rural village of Krewerd, based on interviews, observations and quantitative data collected at multiple timepoints over 6 years.

The results show how large-scale spatial and community changes, due to an ongoing crisis, can impact citizens in a very broad sense and how solving these problems can become very complex. We found varying outcomes for the community, depending on where in the recovery process one is. The case of Krewerd contributes to rural geography debates on participatory governance by illustrating both the empowering and destabilizing effects of transferring responsibilities to residents in crisis-driven spatial transformations. These findings underline the need for carefully designed participatory frameworks that acknowledge both the potential and the limits of citizen-led governance in rural areas facing long-term crises.

Keywords:

Participatory governance, bottom-up initiatives, long-term crises, community resilience





Abstract 7.9

#118 - A Shift in Spatial Planning toward Strategic Participatory Visioning for the Energy Transition

Presenting Author: Božana Vrhovac, ETH Zürich

Abstract:

Recent research shows that public participation in local renewable energy planning in Europe usually takes place at a late stage and only rarely during the strategic needs assessment phase. Participation is often limited to one-way information or efforts to gain acceptance for predefined projects, rather than open discussion about project design and long-term spatial development.

This study aims to support the energy transition by developing a regional participatory visioning approach based on social learning. The approach examines whether opening discussions on spatial and energy development in a more holistic and strategic way can help create more socially acceptable spatial energy futures.

To test this approach, the study applies a field-experimental intervention research design in two Swiss regions. The design combines repeated qualitative and quantitative surveys with systematic process observation. An A-B-A design (measurement-intervention-measurement) is used to assess whether the participatory visioning intervention influences participants' attitudes toward renewable energy development and related behaviors.

The visions are developed using a mixed-method approach that combines elements of Geodesign and the Three Horizons Framework. In the long term, the study aims to show that early-stage participatory visioning can complement or partly replace project- and site-based participation and help prevent undesirable regional development pathways. The results from the visioning process and the survey will be presented at the Rural Geo 2026 Conference.

Keywords:

Vision, Strategic planning, Participation, Renewable energies, Future





Abstract 7.10

#119 - Local governance: outside perspectives about openness and functionality of governance arrangements

Presenting Author: Kim Pollermann, Thünen Institute (Institute of rural studies)

Co-author: Lynn-Livia Fynn, Thünen Institute (Institute of rural studies)

Abstract:

Effective planning must anticipate and respond to complex challenges for rural development. Community-led initiatives like LEADER include bottom-up decision-making, which should foster legitimacy and mobilisation of local actors. To analyse this form of decision-making at local level it is useful to structure this as a local governance arrangement.

A local governance arrangement can be seen as structures and processes for the cooperation of public, private and civil society organizations. The core element of these arrangements within LEADER are the Local Action Groups (LAG), which decides about project funding and are supported by an LAG management.

It is a well-established evaluation practice to ask the participants of such governance arrangements how they assess the functionality of their LEADER structures. However, for some research aspects like the openness, an external view might be more appropriate. Thus, the main objective of this contribution is to put non-participants into focus and to examine their estimations about possibilities for participation and the legitimacy of decision-making within LEADER processes.

The methodological approach relies on an online survey carried out in eight LEADER regions across four different federal states in Germany. "Non-participants" were defined as persons who are neither members of the decision-making body nor beneficiaries of the LEADER projects. Respondents come from municipalities as well as from different associations of the civil society. Altogether the analysis contains answers of 520 respondents. These investigations are part of the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes (RDP).

The results show positive estimations about the legitimacy of the governance arrangements, whereby in the perspectives of non-participants, the public actors attributed a clearly greater influence than non-public actors. Regarding the openness of participation there are mostly positive assessments with some differences between LAG members and the non-participants.

Conclusion: Altogether LEADER is able to give opportunities for participation to different groups of actors.

Keywords:

Local governance, LEADER, rural development, external perspectives, participation





Abstract 7.11

#135 - The municipalities of Galera and Gor (Spain). Study cases of strategies tackling depopulation at the local level

Presenting Author: Francisco Navarro-Valverde, University of Granada

Co-author: Miguel Ángel García-Arias, University of Almería

Co-author: Eugenio Cejudo-García, University of Granada

Co-author: Jesús Cárcelos-Domene, University of Granada

Co-author: José Antonio Cañete-Pérez, University of Granada

Abstract:

In recent years, from COVID-19 until now, some municipalities have adopted various measures, from a bottom-up approach, to address depopulation. Those are the cases of Galera and Gor, both in the province of Granada, Spain. Both municipalities are experiencing a recovery in their population.

This research aims to understand the activities undertaken by these municipalities' communities and town councils to address demographic decline.

As sources, quantitative and qualitative data have been used. Official statistics about the movement of inhabitants and the total population of both municipalities. Twelve semi-structured interviews with key actors: majors, entrepreneurs, directors of the schools, newcomers, beneficiaries of these measures, among others. Also, reports, studies, and guides to promote the settlement of new inhabitants.

Main findings note the maintenance of the inhabitants, thanks to: extralocal factors, such as the high prices of homes in urban areas, the installation of elderly people and online workers, the settlement of mostly female care-workers for elderly people; local factors, such as the low prices of homes, the attractiveness of rural lifestyle, family and social ties, and recently, the positive effects of local measures such as the incentives to enroll children in the schools, the support to public and private services, the search for jobs or homes, or the promotion of these municipalities in the web and social media.

There is a mix of strategies, measures, and actions from different institutions at different levels, but with more knowledge of local inhabitants from those implemented by local governments, and also having more success in those implemented by local institutions and having the participation and involvement of the communities.

Navarro-Valverde, F. A., Capote-Lama, A., Porcel-Rodríguez, L., & Cejudo-García, E. (2025). Propuestas para afrontar la despoblación desde lo local y la relevancia de los mecanismos de desarrollo neo-endógeno: el caso de Andalucía (España). *Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles*, (103).

Keywords:

depopulation, local governance, municipalities, local planning



Abstract 7.12

#137 - Governing Co-Creation in Rural Living Labs: Designing Accountability and Learning Mechanisms for Inclusive Territorial Governance

Presenting Author: Emili C. Santos, Centre for Transdisciplinary Development Studies (CETRAD), University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD)

Co-author: Lúvia Madureira, Centre for Transdisciplinary Development Studies (CETRAD), University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD)

Co-author: Anderson Galvão, Centre for Transdisciplinary Development Studies (CETRAD), University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD)

Co-author: Carmem Leal, Centre for Transdisciplinary Development Studies (CETRAD), University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD)

Abstract:

Governance in rural areas increasingly relies on participatory and community-led approaches to address complex and uncertain development challenges. While co-creation has become widely adopted in rural innovation initiatives, its governance dimension often remains implicit or weakly structured. This paper argues that co-creation should be understood not only as a participatory method, but as a mechanism of governance that organises decision-making, distributes responsibilities, and produces legitimacy in multi-actor rural contexts.

The objective of this paper is to conceptualise co-creation as a mechanism of rural governance and to operationalise this perspective through an evaluation framework and assessment instruments that support accountability, learning, and inclusive decision-making in rural Living Labs. The paper presents a governance-oriented framework developed within the Horizon Europe project LivingSoiLL, structured around three analytical dimensions—feasibility, viability, and meaningfulness—capturing institutional conditions, stakeholder engagement, and perceived value of the co-creation process.

To translate governance principles into practice, the framework is complemented by structured assessment instruments focused on accountability and learning outcomes, enabling transparency, reflexive monitoring, and adaptive decision-making. Methodologically, the paper draws on the design and initial implementation of this framework across five rural Living Labs located in different European countries, characterised by diverse institutional settings and territorial challenges.

The paper contributes to debates on rural governance by demonstrating how co-creation can be governed through explicit mechanisms that enhance inclusion, legitimacy, and adaptive capacity. It offers a transferable governance model for rural development initiatives seeking to strengthen resilience and coordination in contexts of demographic, environmental, and socio-economic change.

Keywords:

Rural governance; co-creation; Living Labs; accountability; adaptive governance





Abstract 7.13

#143 - "Left Behind Places" in Germany? On the role of austerity policies and peripheralization processes in the Western Palatinate region

Presenting Author: Tim Leibert, Mobilities and Migration research group, Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Leipzig (Germany)

Abstract:

In the context of the electoral successes of populist parties in Germany and Europe, there has been a notable increase in media, political, and academic interest in rural areas in recent years. A widely cited and researched thesis posits that the inhabitants of "left-behind regions" express at the ballot box their dissatisfaction with the perceived neglect of their home region by federal and state politics, unfavorable economic prospects, the exodus of young people, and deficits in local infrastructure. The notion that there is a correlation between the social, economic, and demographic situation or development of a (rural) region, the local mood, and voting behavior is not only discussed in the German context, but also in a very similar form throughout the global North under the heading "left behind places".

The present study posits that the concept of peripheralization offers a more nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to regions becoming "left behind" or remaining in a state of economic and social lag. Of particular pertinence in this context are the processes of migration, disconnection from infrastructure and innovation dynamics, dependence on transfer payments, subsidies, and external decisions, as well as stigmatization. A thorough examination of statistical data reveals that Germany is currently experiencing significant challenges related to migration, dependency, and disconnection. Specifically, there are two regions that are particularly affected: first, old industrialized cities with pronounced social problems and low economic dynamism; and second, rural areas with an unfavorable socio-economic situation and a strong impact from demographic change.

At the local and regional levels, a combination of factors, including austerity policies, budget consolidation programs, reliance on subsidy programs, and economic structural weakness, can contribute to the marginalization of a region. In this qualitative case study, we examine how local decision-makers in the spatial planning region of Western Palatinate in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate—a traditionally structurally weak region with highly indebted municipalities—perceive the prevailing conditions and how they address economic weakness and constrained budgets. This observation underscores the perceived limitations in the scope of action and decision-making capacity of the municipalities. It is imperative to acknowledge that the elevated level of municipal debt is attributable to inherent structural factors. Local and regional stakeholders criticize austerity measures imposed on indebted municipalities by the state for failing to take into account the specific characteristics and problems of the region, and voice fears that austerity policies will lead to a decline in quality of life is causing frustration and discontent among those responsible in politics and administration as well as the general population. This discontent is further compounded by the perception that rural regions are being "overlooked" by federal and state governments. In the context of this intricate scenario, economic development schemes assume a pivotal function in the formulation of strategic plans, particularly within the domain of digitization. Furthermore, there is evidence of increased inter-municipal cooperation. In summary, the theoretical considerations and the results of the case study analysis demonstrate that "de-peripherization" does not fail due to a lack of ideas and commitment at the local level. Rather, it is due to a lack of decision-making capacity and adequate financial resources for municipalities.

Keywords:

Not provided



Abstract 7.14

#172 - Diversity of agency of de-peripheralisation processes: evidence from rural Czechia

Presenting Author: Vladan Hruška, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, Department of Geography

Co-author: Petr Jíra, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, Department of Geography

Abstract:

Peripheralisation is increasingly conceptualised as a relational and practice-based process shaped by everyday actions of local actors rather than solely by structural disadvantages. This paper focuses on the role of agency in shaping rural trajectories and examines how different forms of agency contribute to processes of de-peripheralisation.

The main objective is to identify and typologise varieties of local agency through which peripheral characteristics are mitigated or reworked, often without explicit strategic coordination. The study draws on field research conducted in rural municipalities in the rather peripheral Ústí nad Labem Region (Czechia). The municipalities were selected using a combination of statistical indicators and regional narratives identifying places perceived as “successful” or “good to live in”.

The analysis reveals multiple, co-existing forms of de-peripheralising agency operating at different levels and degrees of organisation. These include e.g. individual agency embodied in strong local leadership, mass individual agency emerging from everyday practices of residents, agency on the organisation level dominated by municipal administrations, and collectively organised civic agency rooted in local initiatives. The paper argues that rural de-peripheralisation may be initiated and carried out by local governments, civil society actors, or various combinations of both, with these mixes taking multiple and context-specific forms. Rather than being the outcome of deliberate strategic management, de-peripheralisation in rural contexts often emerges from heterogeneous and weakly coordinated forms of agency. Recognising this plurality of agencies calls for a shift in rural governance research towards everyday, informal and collective practices shaping peripheral rural spaces.

Keywords:

peripheralisation; agency; de-peripheralisation; rural development; Czechia





Abstract 7.15

#173 - A fair land rent? The landowners' actions to influence the local implementation of the French tenure regulation

Presenting Author: Adrien Baysse-Lainé, CNRS, Pacte Social Sciences Research Centre

Co-author: Line Haza, Univ. Grenoble Alpes, Pacte Social Sciences Research Centre

Co-author: Claire Aragau, Paris School of Urbanism, Lab'Urba Research Centre

Co-author: Maylis Desrousseaux, Paris School of Urbanism, Lab'Urba Research Centre

Abstract:

France has the most regulated farmland markets in Europe, with a tenure regulation extremely in favor of leaseholders, including a rent cap system. Growing bypassing practices of this legal framework fuel socio-political debates on its update, e.g. with the aim of giving landowners more freedom in managing their land.

Contrarily to the rest of Europe, landowners are not a common research object in France: there is a lack of knowledge on how they organize to maintain their position and land rent, in this original regulatory context. Beyond the national framing, the concrete implementation of the regulation is made by provincial committees gathering representatives of lease farmers, landowners, and public administration. This presentation questions how landowners use this lever to try to locally restore balance with leaseholders.

The argumentation builds on 4 datasets: 221 provincial decrees precising among others the local rent cap levels; a 105-questions questionnaire sent to the 99 provincial administrations in charge; 6 provincial case studies based on 47 semi-structured interviews with members of the committees and farmland assessment professionals; and the litigation claims made against the decrees.

The institutional representation of landowners is twofold, one organization being very close to the main leaseholders' union, while the other focuses on land rent optimization and resorts to litigation claims. In each province, public administrations issue a different scale to assess farmland quality and determine the appropriate rent level, even if this is mostly used only when leaseholders contest the rent level. Last, the spatial distribution of the rent cap levels shows that the balance of power is in favor of the landowners only in some irrigated Mediterranean zones, and to a lesser extent in the highly-fertile plains of the northern Paris Basin.

Keywords:

Farmland quality, Farmland rental market, France, Governance of agriculture, Landowners union.





Abstract 7.16

#182 - Planning and governing estate villages in England and Hungary with specific focus on housing

Presenting Author: György MIKLE, ELTE Centre for Economic and Regional Studies

Abstract:

The paper aims to shed light on the role of national and local-scale regulations and the role of different public and private actors in shaping local processes in estate villages in two different national settings: England and Hungary. A specific attention is paid to the impact on housing. Estate villages were built by large agricultural estates. While some of them are still owned and managed by one actor (landed families, agricultural companies or public charities), others were sold off and the role of local governments became essential in regulating local processes. As the very first European Affordable Housing Plan is being created, local scale and evidence-based studies can provide feedback for policymakers on the role of different geographical contexts in forming access to housing.

The presentation is based on a critical analysis of policy measures, quantitative data analysis and interviews. Regulations taken into account are either directly related to housing, or focusing on other sectors but still have an impact on housing. Through quantitative data analysis, the past and present social and housing processes are studied. As the paper aims to show, estate villages in England and Hungary are facing different challenges, and, as a consequence, local stakeholders follow different strategies to tackle these issues. However, many English and Hungarian estate villages are still under the influence of one actor. In many parts of England, the countryside has been affected by rural gentrification and limited access to affordable housing. Policies restricting construction works in order to protect the landscape play a key part in this. Main challenges for estate villages in England include protection of architectural heritage and regulating short-term accommodation. On the other hand, Hungarian estate villages are usually located in non-housing zones (outskirts) of municipalities, which results in specific housing regulations and a lack of public services.

Keywords:

Rural planning; Rural governance; Housing





Abstract 7.17

#217 - Fiscal Intelligence and Forest Equalization: A New Governance Model for Resilience and Environmental Justice in Rural Areas

Presenting Author: Ricardo Almendra, GeoAtributo

Co-author: Andreia Mota, Geotaributo

Co-author: Domingos Lopes, Utad

Abstract:

The financing and resilience of rural space in Portugal, specifically focusing on forest and semi-natural areas, have been historically conditioned by a public policy framework focused on production subsidies, which have proven insufficient to guarantee active and multifunctional forest management. Consequently, this traditional model failed to adequately recognize and remunerate the vast portfolio of public services that forest ecosystems provide, contributing to a landscape that is more vulnerable and less resilient.

In response to this impasse, this article proposes a public policy reform based on a "Portfolio of Intelligent Mechanisms". A key component is the "Financing Framework by Services," which transforms financing into a fair payment for a service rendered. This framework articulates remuneration with the ecological function and the beneficiary, proposing direct remuneration from the city for resilience services in Peri-urban Areas (via a fraction of IMI property tax) and the compensation of global services in Global Function Areas (remote zones) through Payments for Ecosystem Services (PSE) and carbon markets

Furthermore, the element that completes the portfolio is "Fiscal Intelligence as a Planning Instrument," acting on Optimized Production Areas. This "Pigouvian tax" mechanism aims to internalize the negative externality of fire risk through "Responsibility for Management" (fiscal aggravation for lack of active management) and the taxation of potential income to ensure Fiscal Justice. The generated tax revenues finance "Forest Equalization," a territorial solidarity mechanism crucial for supporting the management of conservation areas. While conceptually solid, the model requires overcoming challenges such as creating a robust cadastral and monitoring information system to ensure equity and effectiveness. Ultimately, this thesis is presented as a blueprint for a circular, self-financed system that aligns private incentives with the public objective of territorial resilience

Keywords:

Rural Resilience, Ecosystem Services, Public Policy Reform,



Abstract 7.18

#220 - Governing Innovation in Rural Regions: The Case of Lusatia (Germany)

Presenting Author: Leonie Liemich, University of Applied Sciences Zittau/Görlitz, TRAWOS-Institut

Abstract:

Rural, structurally disadvantaged regions face the challenge of combining economic structural change with social participation, regional resilience and long-term sustainability in the course of socio-ecological transformations. In rural contexts, institutional density and civil society resources are often limited, which means that regional governance arrangements play a central role in shaping effective transformation pathways. Against this backdrop, this article examines which governance structures are necessary in regional innovation ecosystems in order to develop technological and social innovations in a targeted manner. The empirical reference point is the L&T innovation alliance within the federal WIR! programme in Lusatia.

Theoretically, the article ties in with approaches to regional governance that analyse collective action problems under conditions of interdependence, and refines these with the concept of regional governance arrangements. These are understood as temporary, formally and informally anchored, conflict-laden and power-asymmetrical forms of coordination in which different actors negotiate regional development goals. The focus is on the question of how concrete arrangements structure, enable or limit innovation paths without presupposing normative preferences for certain modes of governance

The case study shows that the programmatically broad understanding of innovation – addressing technological and social innovations equally – is distorted in practice: technology dominates, while governance and evaluation logics limit transformation paths and social and gender-related innovations often remain marginalised. At the same time, the analysis identifies key areas for correction: the targeted diversification of steering committees, the adaptation of evaluation and selection criteria, the strengthening of intermediary roles, and cross-sectoral and cross-regional learning processes. These measures show that transformation governance not only enables innovation, but must also deal reflexively with power asymmetries, different forms of knowledge and social objectives.

Keywords:

rural governance; socio-technical innovation; structural transformation; Germany





Abstract 7.19

#223 - Charting the Landscape of Conflict in Rural Europe: Socio-Environmental Disputes, Governance, and Sustainability Transitions

Presenting Author: Eirini Skrimizea, Harokopio University of Athens, Greece

Co-author: Valentino Marini Govigli, University of Bologna, Italy

Co-author: Agnieszka Nowak-Olejnik, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland

Co-author: Marcin Rechciński, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland

Co-author: Federico Tonegatti, University of Bologna, Italy

Abstract:

Rural regions across Europe are undergoing profound socio-ecological transitions driven by socio-economic and cultural shifts, technological change, and environmental and climate policies. These so-called rural transitions frequently give rise to socio-environmental conflicts - including human-wildlife interactions, disputes over pesticide use and land claims, and debates over the allocation or misuse of ecosystem services such as renewable energy, recreation, and water. While sustainability science and rural studies have extensively examined rural development, land-use change, and socio-ecological transformations, conflict has received comparatively limited and fragmented attention, often subsumed under notions such as “trade-offs,” “tensions”, or “challenges”. This contribution aims to systematically examine how socio-environmental conflict is conceptualised, studied, and addressed in the context of rural transitions in Europe, with particular attention to implications for rural governance and planning. The analysis is based on a systematic and thematic review of interdisciplinary literature spanning sustainability science, rural studies, political ecology, environmental governance, conservation and land-use and land-change research. Drawing on a dataset of almost 400 peer-reviewed publications, the review provides an overview of the breadth and diversity of socio-environmental conflicts addressed in the rural sustainability literature in Europe. It reveals recurring patterns in the domains where conflict is studied, the conceptual vocabularies used to frame it, and the methodological approaches mobilised, while also pointing to uneven attention to power relations, justice claims, and contested knowledge systems, as well as limited engagement with transdisciplinary – and potentially transformative – research approaches. Building on these insights, the paper advances a conflict-sensitive rural studies research agenda that conceptualizes conflict as a generative lens for understanding sustainability transitions rather than as a governance failure. By mapping patterns and gaps in existing research, it outlines directions for future work on conflict and rural governance in Europe.

Keywords:

Socio-environmental conflict, sustainability transitions, environmental governance, transdisciplinarity





Abstract 7.20

#244 - Institutional Weakness in Transnational Forest Governance: Comparative Insights from the Alto Paraná Atlantic Forest

Presenting Author: Mijailoff, Julián Daniel, Modelling Human-Environmental Interactions Group, Institute of Geography, Freie Universität Berlin

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Abstract:

Introduction: Over the last decades, different formal institutions have emerged in the Southern Cone at multiple levels of governance, aiming to curb deforestation, regulate forest use, or promote conservation and restoration. However, their effectiveness has varied considerably leading to patterns of institutional weakness, i.e. gaps between statutory goals and real-world institutional impacts. **Objectives and Methodology:** Grounded in new institutionalism and land system science, this study critically examines the formal institutions shaping forest governance through the lens of institutional weakness, using the transnational Alto Paraná Atlantic Forest ecoregion across Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay as a comparative setting. Methodologically, the study combines systematic content analysis with expert interviews to identify key formal forest institutions (legal frameworks, policy documents, and international agreements) and their statutory goals. Mixed quali-quantitative indicators were then developed to operationalise and measure core dimensions of institutional weakness: insignificance, noncompliance, and instability. **Results and Discussion:** Preliminary results indicate that despite ambitious and non-trivial statutory goals (e.g., halting large-scale deforestation or promoting extensive forest restoration), structural institutional weakness persists. This weakness stems primarily from institutional design (e.g. “window dressing institutions”), uneven state-driven enforcement and limited state capacity, particularly in remote rural areas far from political-administrative centres, and institutional instability. These dynamics generate significant gaps between formal policy objectives and observed rural land-use outcomes, with notable variation across governance scales and countries. **Conclusions:** The analysis contributes to ongoing debates in land system science by providing empirical evidence and analytical tools to better understand institutional performance in transnational forest governance, and identifies key areas for policy intervention. Moreover, it seeks to contribute to empirical institutional research by proposing a replicable analytical framework for assessing institutional weakness across different socio-environmental contexts. Future research will explore informal institutions embedded in rural communities and the institutional interplays between formal and informal governance arrangements.

Keywords:

Forest Governance; Transnational Governance; Formal Institutions; Institutional Weakness; Alto Paraná Atlantic Forest





Abstract 7.21

#254 - Determinantes Da Inclusão Socioprofissional De Vítimas De Violência Doméstica: Uma Análise Multinível Com Estudos De Caso Em Portugal

Presenting Author: Pedro Joaquim Pereira Azevedo, CETRAD, Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, UTAD - Vila Real ORCID iD 0009-0008-4709-5664

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Abstract:

The socio-professional inclusion of victims of domestic violence is a complex challenge that operates on multiple levels – individual, institutional and territorial. This article presents an innovative methodological proposal to study this phenomenon through a multilevel approach, focusing on the case study of the Intermunicipal Community (CIM) of Tâmega and Sousa and its UNIDAS Network. Based on a theoretical review that links domestic violence, socioeconomic inequalities and network governance, a qualitative research design is proposed that combines documentary analysis, contextual data and semi-structured interviews with victims and professionals. The detailed methodology includes recruitment strategies, data collection instruments adapted to the three levels of analysis, rigorous ethical procedures and a thematic analysis plan with triangulation. The proposal contributes to methodological advances in the study of domestic violence by operationalising the multilevel perspective in an integrated approach, offering a replicable model for future research in different territorial contexts. The potential theoretical and practical contributions are discussed, as well as the anticipated ethical and methodological challenges.

This work is supported by national funds, through the FCT – Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology under the project UID/4011/2025.

Keywords:

domestic violence, socio-professional inclusion, multilevel methodology, case study, territorial policies, Portugal





Abstract 7.22

#261 - Rural Community Planning: A Consultative and Participatory Methodology for Decision-Making

Presenting Author: Dr. Shane O'Sullivan, Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands-Midwest

Abstract:

Introduction

Community plans are used by rural development organisations and policymakers to inform decision-making. They provide an evidence-based approach to the allocation of social, cultural, and economic resources, enabling efficient and effective service delivery, especially to marginalised groups and individuals in disadvantaged locations.

Objectives and Methodology

Community planning promotes a partnership approach that encourages the active participation of civil and voluntary groups, statutory agencies, industry (including social entrepreneurs), education and training bodies, and residents. Together, these stakeholders form a consensual list of actions and priorities, representing the community's needs, to be implemented within a specified timeframe. This paper aims to address debates surrounding community planning, including the necessity for consultative evidence-informed planning to identify and assess community needs; the definition of what counts as a need; methods to research needs; and the process of selecting competing needs. To explore these issues, the paper provides personal reflections from community planning projects pursued in rural Ireland.

Results and Discussion

The case studies examined have been facilitated and funded by different actors, but all share a central focus on incorporating the community in the planning process. Prominent examples include Local Development Strategies (facilitated by LAGs / LDCs), Town Centre First Planning (facilitated by local authorities), and the Uibh Ráthach Action Plan (facilitated by Údarás na Gaeltachta - statutory agency). These examples illustrate the diversity of approaches within community planning and the varying levels of stakeholder engagement achieved across projects.

Conclusion

Overall, community planning serves as a participatory and inclusive framework for rural development. By engaging diverse stakeholders and incorporating evidence-based strategies, it supports more equitable decision-making and ensures that development initiatives reflect the genuine needs and priorities of local communities.

Keywords:

Community Planning; Consultation; Strategic Planning; Informed Decision Making



Abstract 7.23

#262 - Integrating indigenous knowledge and climate smart agricultural technologies – critical reflections on the impact of collaboration in rural Malawi

Presenting Author: Adwoa Serwaa Ofori, University College Dublin

Co-author: Karen Keaveney, University College Dublin

Co-author: Miriam Kalanda-Joshua, University of Malawi

Abstract:

Vulnerability of agriculture to climate change persists in much of rural Africa. This is a significant problem given that agriculture is the source of livelihood for many rural farmers who are primarily small-scale subsistence farmers. Such vulnerability impacts food security. Even though there is the development and promotion of climate smart agricultural practices, adoption by rural farmers can be low due to their lack of involvement in the process. On the other hand, there is limited recognition of indigenous/ traditional and local knowledge and practices. However, many rural smallholder farmers have acquired such knowledge and practices on agriculture through their forefathers as well as through active engagement with their natural environment. This paper emerges from an ongoing project on integrating indigenous and traditional knowledge with climate smart agricultural technologies for sustainable food production in Malawi. The study examines the nature and the impact of collaboration between various stakeholders regarding blending the indigenous/ traditional with the climate smart in three rural Malawian communities. 141 interviews and 6 focus group discussions were undertaken across three rural communities. 35 high-level interviews were undertaken with experts and government officials at national and district level. Experimental farms were established using indigenous and modern/non-indigenous crops and methods to gather data. Results highlighted that increased collaboration, relationship-building and trust between communities and district level agricultural extension and crops officials positively impacted not only the integration of the indigenous/traditional with the climate smart but also food production, income generation and behavioural change.

Keywords:

collaboration, stakeholders, rural, indigenous knowledge.



Abstract 7.24

#266 - Multi-level cases of community-led land tenure and governance initiatives in rural Scotland

Presenting Author: Naomi Beingessner, The James Hutton Institute

Co-author: Lorna Pate, Scotland's Rural College

Co-author: James Glendinning, Scotland's Rural College

Co-author: Carey Doyle, Scotland's Rural College

Co-author: Fiona Bender, The James Hutton Institute

Abstract:

The Scottish Government will introduce a Rural Delivery Plan in 2026 that includes measures supporting a wellbeing economy, addressing climate change and depopulation, and delivering more housing, and relates to other government objectives such as community empowerment and landownership diversity. Our research explores how alternative models of land tenure and governance address these policy goals and local needs, and what factors contribute to or impede their success. Data from twenty-four qualitative, semi-structured interviews in four case studies of innovative community-led land-based initiatives in rural Scotland are supplemented by associated grey literature. The cases show the potential benefits of bottom-up initiatives supported by relationships across multiple governance levels and geographies, but also the additional complexity of policy interactions between and across those levels. We employ Iles and Montenegro de Wit's (2014) concept of relational scale in analysis to understand the spatial, temporal, and social connections among processes within and across different levels of the initiatives' networks. Contributors to success include social capital, relationships of peer learning and support, community engagement, and operational supports. Barriers relate to finance, culture, capacity, lack of infrastructure, and regulatory burdens. Significantly, innovative community initiatives are hindered by one-size-fits-all policies that may not be joined up within and between levels and across geographies. Greater efforts towards policy coherence, supporting capacity building and providing reliable operational funding could assist with the sustainability of these initiatives and their transferability to other localities. Relational scale can help with a better understanding of the dynamics at play in complex networks and assist with building and sustaining relationships across multiple levels.

Iles A and Montenegro de Wit M (2014). Sovereignty at What Scale? An Inquiry into Multiple Dimensions of Food Sovereignty. *Globalizations*, 1-17, doi: 10.1080/14747731.2014.957587

Keywords:

governance, land tenure, community-led initiatives, relational scale





Abstract 7.25

#279 - Recycling Intentions versus Practice: A Mixed-Methods Analysis Using Reverse Vending Machines

Presenting Author: Maria Eduarda Fernandes, Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, School of Technology and Management and CARME, Campus 2, Morro do Lena, Alto do Vieiro, 2411-901 Leiria, Portugal

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Co-author: João Maurício C., CARME - School of Technology and Management

Abstract:

Recycling performance, particularly for municipal solid waste, remains below European Union targets, with Portugal ranking among the lowest-performing countries. Improving recycling rates requires more efficient waste management systems and changes in consumer behaviour. Reverse vending machines (RVM) have emerged as a solution, as they operate through incentive-based schemes that can improve recycling efficiency while encouraging citizens to return empty packages.

This study explores the intention-behaviour gap in recycling practices, addressing the paradox whereby individuals frequently report high levels of recycling engagement despite persistently low recycling rates performance.

We use a mixed-methods approach to examine the intention-behaviour gap by contrasting self-reported intentions from a national online survey grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour with behavioural microdata from a laboratory based RVM trial. Rather than comparing individuals or groups, the two datasets are used to study different dimensions of the same people-environment phenomenon, including real usage patterns and responses to incentives.

Results shows that respondents largely perceive themselves as frequent recyclers and express strong interest in using RVMs. However, behavioural data reveal uneven adoption and show that actual use is strongly driven by incentives, highlighting a clear disconnection between declared behaviour and real engagement.

These findings suggest that incentive-based recycling schemes can play an important role in increasing recycling rates. However, their effectiveness is likely to depend on more targeted and individualized approaches that account for behavioural differences, rather than assuming uniform levels of citizen competence.

Keywords:

waste management, recycling, behaviour, reverse vending machines, incentives



Abstract 7.26

#295 - Integrating Text Mining into the Evaluation of Business Subsidies in the Rural Development Programme

Presenting Author: Olli Lehtonen, University of Eastern Finland

Co-author: Max Strandén, University of Eastern Finland

Abstract:

The Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland is a key funding instrument for strengthening the economic and social vitality of rural areas. The need to assess the programme's effectiveness has become increasingly important, as external pressure to reduce funding has grown significantly in recent years. This study examines the 2014–2022 period, during which approximately 452 million euros of business funding was allocated.

The aim of the study is to enhance the program's impact assessment by enriching traditional statistical indicator data with information extracted from publicly available project descriptions of business subsidies. Methodologically, the study combines statistical impact evaluation methods, such as matching, with text mining. The underlying assumption is that the qualitative content of project descriptions provides more precise and action oriented information on how funding is allocated than indicator data alone - for example, whether the funding is directed towards production expansion, energy efficiency improvements, or other development measures.

The results show that the current indicator data do not sufficiently distinguish the allocation or outputs of business funding. This makes it difficult to explain the development of supported firms and weakens the reliability of impact assessment. The use of text mining enables the systematic structuring of project descriptions and provides more accurate information on the investments implemented with the funding. This, in turn, allows for a better understanding of the actual mechanisms through which business funding generates effects - an important contribution when the future level of funding is being examined and potentially reconsidered.

Keywords:

Rural Development Programme, Mainland Finland, Business funding, Impact assessment, Text mining





Abstract 7.27

#305 - Successful villages: can public policies and instruments revitalise villages

Presenting Author: José Manuel Rocha, Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto

Co-author: José Rio Fernandes, Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto

Abstract:

Rural areas are synonymous with low population density, isolated neighbouring territories, social exclusion, agricultural abandonment and an ageing population, among other characteristics, and this degenerative transformation is currently becoming more pronounced.

The phenomenon of rural depopulation has accompanied industrial growth. Industry, which is essentially concentrated in cities, began to attract younger people, while rural areas struggled to resist population loss. In addition, the economic crises of the 1960s and 1970s also contributed to the intensification of rural exodus, alongside an increase in emigration, not only in these regions but across Portugal and Spain as a whole.

This study aims to analyse successful cases of rural development. We question how success can be assessed: solely from the perspective of population growth, or whether population decline itself may also constitute a factor of success.

We analyse three villages in Northern Portugal and Galicia, taking into account different demographic perspectives. These include villages that have become uninhabited, others that have experienced demographic growth, and others that have stagnated; nevertheless, all of them represent cases of success.

To achieve these objectives, we introduce a methodological analysis based on interviews with local leaders, an examination of demographic and economic rates, and an analysis of increased demand.

In summary, not all villages need to be “Disneyfied” in order to succeed. Villages can continue to thrive without relying on tourism as a defining variable. Therefore, all the perspectives addressed can be considered forms of success, provided that each is observed within its own context and key moment.

Keywords:

Rural development; success; Northern Portugal; Galicia; public policies





Abstract 7.28

#312 - The challenges facing the CAP for the period 2028-2034

Presenting Author: Jean-François HULOT, Independent Consultant on Sustainable Agriculture

Abstract:

This research is based on the European Commission's proposals for the CAP, which were unveiled in July 2025 as part of the presentation of the future budgetary framework for the period 2028-2034.

Its objectives are to identify the challenges facing European agriculture and the expected impacts on agricultural economy and the governance of rural areas in the EU.

These agricultural issues can be broken down into several areas, in particular:

- 1) The EU budget, as any budgetary cutbacks would result in a decline in agricultural income. This could not be offset by price increases or recourse to national funding.
- 2) The environmental impact of agricultural production. A relaxation of standards would lead to increasing deterioration of the natural environment (soil, biodiversity, water, air), which would be detrimental to productivity and therefore to food security. Tightening standards would meet with opposition from farmers and pose a risk of loss of competitiveness.
- 3) The consistency of national strategic plans so that the CAP contributes to the economic convergence between the 27 Member States and to greater cohesion of rural areas in the EU.
- 4) Trade, as the EU has every interest in opening up agricultural markets, to enhance its position of agricultural and food products exporter. However, analysis of added value reveals significant variations between rural production areas, depending on the profiles of locally determined agricultural specialisations.
- 5) Innovation, to quickly integrate new on-farm solutions. For example, biocontrol has the potential to replace chemical pesticides with more natural solutions, provided that significant investment is made in research.

In conclusion, research and innovation are paving the way for the future of agriculture and rural areas in Europe, as they should both improve productivity and better protect the environment.

Keywords:

Policy, Agriculture, European Union, Rural Development, Innovation.





Abstract 7.29

#321 - Insights into Tourism Governance in the Municipality of Fafe, Portugal.

Presenting Author: José Luís Braga, Instituto Europeu de Estudos Superiores

Co-author: Lúcia Alves, Instituto Europeu de Estudos Superiores

Co-author: Paula Novais, Instituto Europeu de Estudos Superiores

Abstract:

Good governance is essential for the sustainable development of tourist destinations. Therefore, to ensure the destination's development is both integrated and realistic, it is necessary to involve all stakeholders, including tourists and local communities, to promote the implementation of policies that respect resources, particularly endogenous ones, and the destination's fundamental characteristics. This study aims to raise awareness of the Municipality of Fafe's tourism policy and the role of the non-profit organisation, the Associação de Monte Longo Serras de Fafe. The association's mission is to promote tourism in the municipality. Founded in 2018, the association unites some of the most significant tourism providers in Fafe. A qualitative approach was used for this case study. Five semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data: with the head of Fafe's tourism and culture division; the owner of Casa do Penedo; the director of Hotel Fafense; and finally, two technicians tasked with events and culture management in Fafe. The results will be explained through thematic analysis, emphasising the constraints and opportunities that influence tourism in Fafe, as well as any external factors that could affect the municipality's future tourism planning. The destination has indeed experienced significant difficulties in planning tourism effectively, maintaining synergies between all stakeholders, and overcoming a lack of vision that has hindered the region's tourism development.

Keywords:

Fafe, Tourism, Partnerships, Tourism Planning, Local Tourism



Theme 8 - Rural-Urban Dynamics

Abstract 8.1

#50 - Re-attracting young adult leavers: Understanding the design and organisation of rural return initiatives

Presenting Author: Tineke Reitsma, University of Groningen, Faculty of Spatial Sciences

Co-author: Tialda Haartsen, University of Groningen, Faculty of Spatial Sciences

Co-author: Bettina Bock, University of Groningen, Faculty of Spatial Sciences

Co-author: Femke Cnossen, University of Groningen, Faculty of Spatial Sciences

Abstract:

Many rural areas experience the out-migration of young adults to urban areas, who leave in search of education, labour market opportunities, or the wish to experience life elsewhere. In response, rural areas are increasingly exploring strategies to strengthen local vitality, including return initiatives. These are initiatives that aim to re-attract young adult leavers to their place of origin. Drawing on in-depth interviews with policymakers involved in such initiatives, this study examines how return initiatives are designed, implemented, and organised. We focus on organisational structures, thematic priorities (e.g. employment, housing, culture, place attachment), the presence and frequency of organised activities, and the broader institutional and geographical context in which these initiatives operate. Preliminary findings indicate that initiatives face substantial challenges in reaching and engaging their target group, as well as in ensuring continuity over time. These challenges are often linked to a lack of long-term policy vision, organisational instability (e.g. staff turnover), changes in/discontinuation of funding structures, and dependency on external actors. By advancing the understanding of the design and implementation of return initiatives, this research provides insights into how rural depopulation strategies are developed and governed. The findings offer important policy implications for rural areas seeking to counteract the effects of young adult out-migration.

Keywords:

Repopulation initiatives, rural return migration, young adults, migration policy





Abstract 8.2

#78 - Satoyama as Third Places: Promoting Sustainable Interactions Between Urban and Rural Areas

Presenting Author: Eranga Ranaweera, Tokyo Metropolitan University

Co-author: Ryo Iizuka, Teikyo University

Co-author: Toshio Kikuchi, Tokyo Metropolitan University

Abstract:

Satoyama, Japan's traditional rural landscapes, have long been maintained by local communities for agriculture, forestry, and daily livelihoods. They exemplify a balance between human activity and nature, supporting biodiversity, ecosystem services, and the preservation of cultural heritage. In recent decades, many Satoyama areas have declined due to depopulation, aging populations, and urban expansion. Despite these pressures, Satoyama is widely recognized for its multifunctional role in promoting sustainable rural-urban interactions.

Importantly, urban residents are increasingly drawn to these landscapes not only for personal leisure but also for social engagement with other visitors and local communities, highlighting Satoyama's evolving role within contemporary urban-rural dynamics. These social functions closely align with the concept of the "third place," which emphasizes informal gathering spaces that foster social ties, meaningful interactions, and a sense of belonging beyond home and workplace. The concept of the third place is widely recognized for its contribution to the well-being and quality of life of urban residents and is increasingly applied to rural and peri-urban contexts for its role in facilitating connections between urban and rural areas.

This study examines how Satoyama landscapes function as "third places" that foster connections between urban and rural communities, using a case study from the Tokyo Metropolitan suburbs. Eight third-place characteristics were identified: open and inclusive space, social equalizer, conservation-based interaction, welcoming and accessible, community anchors, unobtrusive environment, engaging atmosphere, and a home away from home. These characteristics support social interaction, community engagement through conservation based activities, highlighting Satoyama's potential as an active bridge between urban and rural life.

Keywords:

Satoyama, third place, rural-urban interactions, Tokyo Metropolitan Area, rural landscape



Abstract 8.3

#90 - Peri-Urban Transformations Across Central Europe: Comparative Insights from Hungary and Its Neighbors

Presenting Author: Ádám Szalai, ELTE Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Institute for Regional Studies; Kecskemét, Hungary

Co-author: József Lennert, ELTE Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Institute for Regional Studies, Kecskemét, Hungary

Co-author: Gábor László Vasárus, ELTE Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Institute for Regional Studies; Kecskemét, Hungary

Co-author: András Donát Kovács, ELTE Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Institute for Regional Studies; Kecskemét, Hungary

Abstract:

Densely populated fringe zones on the outskirts of Central and Eastern European cities—such as garden areas, vinehills and resort zones—have become key sites of spatial transformation since the post-socialist transition. In Hungary, these heterogeneous peri-urban territories attract diverse migration flows, including suburbanisation within city boundaries, economically motivated mobility, and employment-related migration from remote rural regions. As a result, strong social polarisation and highly fragmented land-use changes have emerged, ranging from rapid urban development to landscape degradation.

Because these processes unfold at a micro scale, often varying parcel by parcel or even within a single street, statistical data and remote sensing alone offer limited insight. To overcome these constraints, our research incorporates systematic field data collection. However, traditional paper-based field surveys pose practical challenges, such as coordinating field teams, inconsistent survey practices between case study areas, and the high visibility of surveyors—an important issue in zones with a large share of legally non-compliant properties. These irregularities reflect both planning deficiencies and deepening social inequalities.

Our methodology therefore centres on mobile-based fieldwork using the QField application, enabling efficient, standardised and discreet parcel-level data collection. This approach supports the creation of a detailed georeferenced database capable of capturing the complex and mixed-use transformations characteristic of peri-urban landscapes. While primarily designed for quantitative mapping, the fieldwork unexpectedly yielded qualitative insights as well, arising from spontaneous interactions with local residents.

The study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of peripheral urban transformations and demonstrates the value of integrated digital field methods in analysing rapidly changing fringe areas.

This research is conducted within the FK 146486 project (“An inexhaustible resource? Garden zones, vinehills and resort areas in the squeeze of urban development”), funded by the National Research, Development, and Innovation Fund under the FK_23 grant programme.

Keywords:

urban–rural fringe, urban sprawl, settlement–environmental changes, differentiation in the outskirts



Abstract 8.4

#116 - A Village in Hubei as a Lens on Family-Based Migration and the Roles of Rural Areas in China

Presenting Author: Zhang Chen, UMR Territoires, Clermont Auvergne University, France

Co-author: Franck Chignier-Riboulon, UMR Territoires, Clermont Auvergne University, France

Abstract:

Since the 1980s, large-scale rural–urban migration has transformed rural communities in central China. Main challenges include population ageing, the prevalence of left-behind children, and increasing rural hollowing-out. These demographic and social transformations have become obstacles to rural development and sustainability. Rather than proposing immediate policy solutions, this study seeks to understand the structural mechanisms underlying these challenges.

While migration is often framed as a pathway to social mobility, less attention has been paid to how it reorganizes the functional roles of rural areas over time. As working-age adults leave for cities and older generations remain in villages, rural areas host those who do not directly participate in urban labour markets. This raises a critical question: how does family-based migration reshape the position of rural areas within the rural–urban structure, and what roles do villages come to play in sustaining long-term mobility?

Drawing on in-depth interviews and fieldwork with 31 families in Village G in Anlu, Hubei (2022–2023), this paper examines how sustained out-migration has been organised through intergenerational divisions of labour. This paper shows that the village has functioned as a flexible support base across different stages of mobility. In the early phase, it provided subsistence security that enabled risk-taking in urban employment. As migrants gradually established themselves in cities, the village became central to childrearing and educational support. In later stages, it re-emerged as a space of eldercare and as a site to which unsuccessful migrants could return. Rather than eliminating rural–urban inequality, family-based migration redistributes the costs of social reproduction and the risks of mobility to rural areas. These processes demonstrate that rural ageing, left-behind children, and hollowing-out are not merely unintended consequences of migration, but are structurally linked to a family-based system that reallocates the costs of social reproduction and the risks of mobility to rural communities.

Keywords:

Rural-urban migration, family-based division of labour, social reproduction, rural-urban inequality





Abstract 8.5

#131 - Rural–Urban Dynamics at the Peri-Urban Fringe: Governance Mismatches and Coordination Pathways in Northwestern Portugal

Presenting Author: Beatriz Pinto, UM/CECS

Co-author: Pedro Chamusca, FLUP/CEGOT/CECS

Co-author: Beatriz Martins, FLUP

Co-author: José Rio Fernandes, FLUP/CEGOT

Abstract:

Rural–urban dynamics increasingly unfold within peri-urban belts where commuting, service use, and land-use change connect cities to rural hinterlands. These functional interdependencies often outpace governance arrangements that remain sectoral and municipally bounded or considered with rural v urban perspectives. This paper examines how planning and governance shape rural–urban dynamics in the Braga–Guimarães–Vila Nova de Famalicão area outside the main cities (NW Portugal). We combine policy-instrument mapping across scales, documentary analysis, and stakeholder interviews, coded to identify coordination mechanisms, conflicts, and implementation bottlenecks affecting mobility, services, housing, and land management across the rural–urban gradient. Results show a persistent mismatch between functional and institutional geographies. Daily flows reveal strong cross-municipal dependencies for employment, health and education, while planning competences and transport provision remain unevenly distributed with a strong attachment to the municipal level. Intermunicipal structures partially bridge this gap, yet coordination is frequently “project-driven”, responding to funding opportunities rather than to long-term territorial needs and scale efficiency. Interview evidence indicates that peri-urban/rural parishes are often treated as residual spaces in sectoral policies. In the case of mobility strategies focus on urban cores, whereas rural service provision is addressed through minimal coverage rather than integrated accessibility. This produces differentiated outcomes as peri-urban areas accumulate pressures (housing demand and land conversion), while adjacent rural areas experience selective disconnection (limited transport reliability and service concentration). Strengthening rural–urban governance requires stable intermunicipal coordination, shared service-planning standards, and instruments that explicitly target interface territories where rural and urban dynamics co-produce inequalities and sustainability challenges.

Keywords:

rural–urban dynamics; peri-urban governance; intermunicipal coordination; planning mismatch; Portugal.





Abstract 8.6

#132 - Everyday Rural–Urban Interdependencies and Lived Accessibility: Evidence from Peri-Urban and Rural Parishes in Northwestern Portugal

Presenting Author: Beatriz Martins, FLUP

Co-author: Pedro Chamusca, FLUP/CEGOT/CECS

Co-author: Beatriz Pinto, UM/CECS

Co-author: José Rio Fernandes, FLUP/CEGOT

Abstract:

Rural–urban dynamics are increasingly experienced through everyday accessibility: how people navigate dispersed services, commute to jobs, and manage care responsibilities across the peri-urban/rural interface. This paper analyses lived accessibility in parishes located in the in-between cities space of the Portugal Northwestern, focusing on how mobility options, settlement dispersion and service centralization shape interdependencies between towns and surrounding rural areas. The study draws on segmented focus groups (by age and household roles), a complementary survey, and a comparative coding framework to capture routine trip chains, perceived barriers and coping strategies. Results reveal a consistent pattern of multi-sited everyday life: residents combine rural residence with urban service dependence, including healthcare, secondary education, administrative services and specialized retail. Car reliance emerges as the dominant connector of rural–urban interdependence, but with uneven burdens. People who attempt to rely on non-car options face additional constraints where public transport is unreliable, cycle lanes are perceived as unsafe and pedestrian infrastructure is lacking, translating rural–urban integration into unequal time and cost burdens, especially for older residents and low-income groups. Care-related trips amplify these effects, producing complex mobility chains that concentrate pressure on a small number of urban nodes. Importantly, inequalities are not simply “urban vs rural”: peri-urban areas display internal differentiation, where proximity to main corridors reduces friction, while more dispersed parishes experience practical “distance” despite geographic closeness. The combined qualitative–quantitative evidence points to a feedback loop: service concentration increases car dependence, which in turn legitimizes further service consolidation. Lived accessibility provides a robust lens to diagnose rural–urban dynamics and to design interface-sensitive interventions that couple mobility transition goals with territorial equity.

Keywords:

rural–urban interdependencies; lived accessibility; car dependence; service centralization; socio-spatial inequality.





Abstract 8.7

#175 - The nonlinear impact of educational urbanization on rural aging in China: Evidence from spatial spillover and mediating mechanisms

Presenting Author: Yuanzhi Guo, Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, CAS, China

Abstract:

In the broader context of urban-rural transformation, educational urbanization is profoundly reshaping the demographic structure of China's rural areas. Based on provincial-level panel data from China covering the period of 1995-2023, this study employs a combination of instrumental variables, spatial Durbin model, and mediation effect model to examine the causal effects of educational urbanization on rural aging, along with its spatial spillover effects and transmission mechanisms. The results show that educational urbanization exerts a significant positive effect on local rural aging, a conclusion that remains valid after a series of robustness tests and after addressing endogeneity issues. Meanwhile, educational urbanization exhibits significant negative spatial spillover effects, meaning that local educational urbanization alleviates rural aging in neighboring areas. This reveals that the restructuring of intergenerational division of labor within rural families to cope with cross-regional schooling is an important micro-level foundation shaping the spatial pattern of rural aging. Mechanism analysis indicates that population migration, particularly the relocation of school-age individuals and the accompanying migration of caregivers, serves as a key mediating pathway through which educational urbanization influences rural aging. Heterogeneity analysis further demonstrates that these effects are more pronounced in primary school settings and in developing provinces. This study provides new theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence for understanding the complex interplay among public service allocation, household decision-making, and demographic structural change.

Keywords:

Educational urbanization; rural aging; population migration; spatial spillover effects; mediation effect





Abstract 8.8

#190 - Agroecological Initiatives in Seville: Territorial Laboratories of Socio-Ecological Innovation

Presenting Author: Barbara Maćkiewicz, Adam Mickiewicz University (Poznań, Poland)

Co-author: Raúl Puente-Asuero, University of Seville (Spain)

Abstract:

Agroecological initiatives are increasingly relevant to Europe's peri-urban and rural territories as responses to the environmental, socioeconomic, and food-related challenges arising from urbanisation, the climate crisis, and the globalisation of agri-food systems. In the Seville area, with its long-standing agrarian tradition and strong urban pressure on fertile agricultural land, such initiatives constitute key strategies for territorial regeneration, food sovereignty, and reconfiguring rural-urban relations. The study's main objective is to assess the potential of agroecological initiatives as tools for transitioning toward more sustainable and resilient agrarian systems in the Seville area. More specifically, it aims to identify their socioeconomic, environmental, and territorial contributions, alongside the synergies and conflicts that arise with other land uses and local actors. The study begins by identifying their typological diversity of Seville's agroecological initiatives (professional farms, community gardens, training projects, consumer cooperatives, and short food supply chains), their territorial distribution, and their integration into agricultural, urban, and environmental policies. It also examines the main opportunities and constraints they face, such as access to land, economic viability, generational renewal, and existing regulatory frameworks. The methodology combines a qualitative and exploratory approach based on documentary analysis, mapping agroecological initiatives, semi-structured interviews with project promoters and institutional stakeholders, and fieldwork in different peri-urban and rural spaces. Preliminary results show that these initiatives contribute to agricultural land conservation, economic diversification, creating local social networks, and promoting agroecological practices. However, they are constrained by the lack of specific regulatory frameworks, weak integration into territorial planning, and persistent urban pressure on peri-urban spaces. In conclusion, the case of Seville highlights the role of agroecological initiatives as territorial laboratories of socio-ecological innovation in Mediterranean peri-urban contexts. Their analysis contributes to rural geography by demonstrating both their transformative potential and the need to move toward more integrated, coherent, and participatory models of governance and planning that can be transferred to other European contexts.

Keywords:

agroecology, peri-urban areas, sustainable food systems, territorial planning





Abstract 8.9

#215 - Rural-urban relations: the socio-cultural effect of rural museums

Presenting Author: Charlotte Oosterhuis, University of Groningen

Co-author: Tialda Haartsen, University of Groningen

Co-author: Koen Salemink, University of Groningen

Abstract:

This paper discusses the role that rural museums play in rural-urban socio-cultural relations. During the last century, processes like modernisation, globalisation and increased mobility have brought a change to rural-urban relations. Food and other products are more often sold at national or international markets instead of at a regional scale. Consumers can buy products from global markets sometimes even easier than regional products. Next to this, many people live further away from their work and commute longer distances than they did before. They might have their social network and activities taking place further away from where they live. Rural areas have faced challenges regarding the disappearance of facilities. These facilities did not only have a practical function, but also served as meeting places. This has brought a change in community life. Hence, it is relevant to explore if and how socio-cultural amenities may take over such social community roles and if they can strengthen rural-urban relations. This paper focuses on rural museums.

This presentation will discuss the potential roles that rural museums play in strengthening socio-cultural connections between rural and urban areas at a regional level. It focuses on which stories the rural museums tell, where visitors of the museums come from, what motivates them to go to these museums and whether their visit might influence their perception of the region. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach and takes place in the Netherlands.

Keywords:

Rural-urban relations; socio-cultural relations; rural museums; the Netherlands





Abstract 8.10

#228 - From Brain Drain to Mobility Circuits: Youth mobility and rural resilience through intermediary spaces in four European regions

Presenting Author: Dimitris Manoukas, Research Fellow, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DAStU), Politecnico di Milano, PhD Candidate on Youth Policies and CCIs, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences of Athens

Abstract:

Across Europe, rural and peripheral regions are approaching a demographic and economic tipping point as young people and skilled workers relocate toward metropolitan labour markets. The consequences are cumulative: labour shortages, weakened service provision, reduced civic capacity, and erosion of the “everyday infrastructures” that make smaller places viable. Yet in an EU context of free movement, mobility can also become a developmental resource when regions build institutions that enable return and circular mobility, multi-local livelihoods, and hybrid/remote work. This paper examines intermediary organisations (coworking spaces, innovation hubs, and hybrid youth and community centres) arguing that they function as under-recognised mobility infrastructures that broker skills, networks, mentoring, and administrative pathways, while cultivating belonging and recognition.

Research Questions: How do intermediary spaces in peripheral and “left behind” regions influence young people’s mobility decisions (staying, leaving, returning, and circulating), and through which policy and practice mechanisms can they convert youth mobility into long-term regional resilience? Two sub-questions guide the analysis: (1) which forms of mobility (outmigration, return, circular mobility, and “virtual mobility” via remote work and trans-local networks) are enabled or constrained; and (2) how proactive versus reactive youth-policy logics shape the mobility–development relationship across regions.

Methodology: A comparative, multi-sited qualitative design analyses four cases: FUNDECYT-PCTEx (Badajoz/Extremadura, Spain), Institut for (X) (Aarhus, Denmark), Southill Hub (Limerick, Ireland), and MakeHub (Licata, Sicily, Italy). Data comprise 56 semi-structured interviews, 12 focus groups, and 18 episodes of participant and non-participant observation.

The paper proposes a comparative typology of intermediary spaces (regional innovation interface (Extremadura), cultural-production commons (Aarhus), hybrid employability-and-care hub (Limerick), and administrative-entrepreneurship mediator (Licata)) and links each to actionable policy levers (brokerage capacity, decentralised service delivery, hybrid-work infrastructures, and cultural/civic participation pathways). Mechanism-oriented comparison yields a typology of intermediary spaces and identifies actionable policy levers and indicators for resilient-region toolkits.

Keywords:

youth policies; collaborative spaces; hybridity; peripheral development; NEETS;



Abstract 8.11

#259 - Moving to the “Countryside”: Images of Rural Areas in Residential Mobilities between Urban and Rural Spaces

Presenting Author: Aura Moldovan, Thünen Institute of Rural Studies, Braunschweig, Germany

Co-author: Tialda Haartsen, University of Groningen

Abstract:

German rural areas have been characterized for many years by out-migration. However, since the mid-2010s, migration patterns have been undergoing a complex and multifaceted transformation process, with rural areas registering positive net migration rates. This change has often been interpreted in public discourse as a “new appeal of the countryside” or as rural areas becoming new “places of longing”. While the wish to reside in a rural area can certainly play a role in urban-rural migration, residential mobility decisions are much more complex and contingent, driven by a multitude of both structural factors and personal preferences.

The aim of this contribution is twofold: Firstly, I present the various motivations for residential mobility towards rural areas, including not only ‘rational’ triggers (such as life course events, and job opportunities), but also personal preferences and values (such as biographical experiences, subjective perceptions, normative beliefs, and social embeddedness), as well as structural conditions (such as housing cost and availability). Secondly, I pursue subjective understandings of rural living that internal migrants voice when deciding to move to of a rural area, by looking at the images and expectations of “rural living” that people draw on when making their residential location decision, and contrasting these to “the urban”.

The contribution is based on findings from a large research project investigating residential location decisions in urban and rural areas in Germany. Specifically, it builds on a large population survey (n=3,600) conducted in 2020. Besides classical item batteries, respondents have been asked to answer open questions about their reasons for moving, staying, and moving aspirations. Results show the lingering prominence of images of “rural idyll” as well as normative beliefs regarding “good living”, but also highlight the increasing difficulties of accessing affordable housing.

Keywords:

Not provided





Abstract 8.12

#290 - “Newcomers” activity in the opinion of rural residents - on the example of Polish villages

Presenting Author: Bański Jerzy, Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization, Polish Academy of Sciences

Abstract:

Main objective. Newcomers from the city, both those who decide to permanently settle in the countryside and those who temporarily visit the countryside as owners of second homes, constitute an important social, cultural and economic potential that has a positive impact on the broadly understood life of the countryside. The condition for using this potential is, above all, intensive contacts between newcomers and village residents. The aim of the study is to identify the impact of people migrating from cities on the community and rural space, with particular emphasis on the opinions on this subject expressed by permanent village residents.

Methodology. The research was carried out in 18 villages from different regions of Poland. The first stage consisted in questionnaire surveys conducted with permanent village residents and newcomers (363 surveys), while in the second stage – in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 representatives of the local community and 33 newcomers. The obtained results became the basis for a deeper analysis and discussion referring to the research presented in the world literature.

Results and conclusions. Generally, it can be concluded that urban newcomers, when organizing their lives in the countryside, are more active and initiate contacts with villagers more often than the other way around. The goal of these contacts is to obtain information useful for furnishing or maintaining properties and for day-to-day operations in the countryside. Among the useful information, renovation and construction services and local food products occupy a special place. The transfer of knowledge and information between newcomers and rural residents contributes to local development, the activation of residents and broadly understood cultural changes.

Keywords:

Newcomers, rural residents, knowledge transfer, social activity, Poland.





Abstract 8.13

#296 - Demographic patterns of rural and urban ageing in Portugal and Germany

Presenting Author: Doris Schmied, Department of Geography, University of Bayreuth/Germany

Co-author: Fantina Tedim, Centre of Studies in Geography and Spatial Planning, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Porto

Abstract:

With median ages of 46.6 and 45.3 respectively, and 24,5% and 23,2% of their populations aged over 65 in 2024 (according to World Population Prospects, 2024), Portugal and Germany are among the 'oldest' countries in Europe. Although there has been a rapid increase in the number of case studies on many aspects of older people's lives (e.g., on health, transport and mobility, quality of life issues), the broader underlying demographic aspects of ageing have received surprisingly little attention. Nevertheless, a thorough analysis of geographic variability and patterns is essential to understand the socioeconomic consequences and develop locally adapted planning and practical measures.

The paper therefore uses available statistical databases to illustrate the following topics: How fast is the ageing process, and how variable is it? How sedentary or mobile are the elderly? What gender differences exist? How do centrality and peripherality, and the degree of rurality, influence spatial variability? What other factors (such as amenity migration, remigration, suburbanisation) come into play? What are the consequences of different ageing processes and contexts for the elderly?

The comparative study of the two countries facilitates a more precise identification of patterns, trends and unique factors in their respective contexts. Portugal and Germany are ageing in different ways: Portugal's population is ageing more rapidly and consistently. Geographically, it is primarily the mountainous and peripheral areas in the interior that are ageing the fastest. Germany has been ageing somewhat more slowly (not least due to the short-term rejuvenating effect of the immigration waves of asylum seekers in 2015/16 and Ukrainian war refugees since 2022). However, this has had hardly any influence on the regions in Eastern Germany suffering from a sustained, long-term emigration of young people after reunification, a temporary collapse in birth rates during the 1990s, and a low rate of international immigration.

Keywords:

Germany, Population ageing, Portugal, Rural areas, Urban areas





Abstract 8.14

#301 - RECOVERING MEMORY, CULTURE AND HERITAGE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SEROPÉDICA/RJ: RECORDS OF SERICULTURE AND MAPPING OF MULBERRY TREES

Co-author: Regina Cohen Barros, UFRRJ/Brazil

Co-author: Andrea Carmo Sampaio, UFRRJ/Brazil

Co-author: Camila Cristhina Gonçalves Rodrigues, UFRRJ/Brazil

Co-author: Luan de Souza Sampaio Rodrigues, UFRRJ/Brazil

Abstract:

The project “Recording and mapping of mulberry trees in Seropédica” is a research project aimed at the continued production of a Story Map for the recovery of memory, culture and heritage, as part of a movement of territorial resistance, place revalorisation, the (re)creation of collective identities and the strengthening of bonds of belonging. Seropédica is a municipality located in the Metropolitan Region of the State of Rio de Janeiro, marked by intense socio-spatial tensions related to an accelerated rural-urban transition process. The importance of this research lies in the municipality’s past as a pioneer in the establishment of sericulture in Brazil, an activity involving the rearing of silkworms, whose caterpillar stage feeds exclusively on mulberry leaves. The materials and methods employed are mainly historical research (bibliographic and documentary), cartographic and iconographic research, and oral testimonies, together with fieldwork for the identification and geo-referenced location of the records needed to understand spatial dynamics and to build the Story Map, used as a narrative and interactive resource enabling wide dissemination on social media. In terms of results, the work has already enabled the construction of a timeline marking land use in the municipality since the early nineteenth century, when sericulture was first introduced. Records indicate an initial planting of 120,000 mulberry trees, mostly white mulberries. Through this research, it has been possible to identify and locate various mulberry plantings, in a slow process that requires further investigation and fieldwork across the municipality’s land, which is undergoing intense socio-spatial change. This is compounded by gaps, lapses in information and contradictions within and between records and documents, which makes recovering this history a challenging task, with a recurring erasure of memory being observed, the recovery and dissemination of which constitute an important means of revalorising the place and local identities.

Keywords:

Seropédica; Memory; Mulberry trees; Sericulture



Abstract 8.15

#306 - Leveraging Cultural Heritage for the Regeneration of Derelict sites in Rural Slovenia

Presenting Author: Barbara Lampič, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts

Co-author: Lea Rebernik, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts

Abstract:

This study investigates the dynamics of revitalization and adaptive reuse of derelict areas containing immovable cultural heritage in Slovenia. It highlights differences in the representation of cultural heritage on derelict sites located in urbanized areas versus rural settings, with particular attention to the latest regeneration processes and already revitalized sites.

The Slovenian national brownfield database was established in 2017 and, in 2025, included a total of 1,008 brownfields (derelict sites) covering 2,950 hectares. The database is currently managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning, while the data are periodically updated by the Department of Geography at the University of Ljubljana in collaboration with all Slovenian municipalities and through continuous field verification. Derelict sites are predominantly concentrated in the hinterlands of regional centers and along major transport routes, though a significant proportion is also situated in rural areas.

Our analysis indicates that cultural heritage is present on approximately 25% of all derelict sites (around 250 locations). Using the A-B-C model to identify potential for regeneration we analyzed differences in development potential between derelict sites in urban and in rural areas.

An important part of the study also includes revitalized sites and the characteristics of those whose adaptive reuse is based on cultural heritage. Among already revitalized sites (379 locations), where activities were reestablished between 2017 and 2025, cultural heritage was recognized as a potential driver for regeneration and revitalization in approximately 20% of cases. Drawing on long-term research, process monitoring, and in-depth knowledge of local conditions, we present established approaches to renovation that leverage cultural heritage as a key resource.

Keywords:

Circular land management, Adaptive reuse, Cultural heritage, brownfield database, Slovenia





Abstract 8.16

#308 - Postpandemic counterurban migrations in Poland – a mixed-method approach.

Presenting Author: Karol Korczyński, University of Wrocław

Abstract:

Counterurbanisation, understood as migration from cities to rural areas beyond the commuting hinterland, has been largely unexplored in CEE countries. This research gap has become even more noticeable in recent years, as the COVID-19 pandemic have sparked increased interest in counterurbanisation research in many countries.

The aim of the presentation is to show the dynamics of counterurban migration in Poland after 2020 in comparison with previous years and other major internal migration flows. The most popular destination areas and the significance of the pandemic in individual housing decisions will also be characterised.

The research is based on an analysis of matrices of registered inter-municipal migrations. Population flows from the country's largest cities to peripheral areas were examined using a delimitation based on temporal accessibility and functional criteria. The significance of the pandemic for individual decisions was examined on the basis of over forty semi-structured interviews.

After 2020, an increase in the number of counterurban migrations was observed. However, all migrations down the settlement hierarchy have increased. The highest values continued to be attributed to suburbanisation. Counterurbanisation remained a minor flow, accounting for about 4% of total internal migration. The decline in migration was most pronounced in the largest cities in Poland, where the net-migration rate fell to negative values. The most popular destinations in peripheral areas were those characterised by high natural amenities or developed manufacturing sector. The significance of the pandemic for individual housing decisions has been clearly identified, although its nature varied greatly. Namely, the pandemic could be both a slowing and accelerating factor, or even a direct cause of the decision to migrate from a large city to the periphery.

Keywords:

counterurbanisation, Poland, COVID-19 pandemic





Theme 9 - Changes in Rural Areas Facing the Complexity of New Challenges

Abstract 9.1

#33 - Governing the Complexity of Strawberry Food Loss in Peripheral Rural Finland

Presenting Author: Oswald Sydd, UEF (University of Eastern Finland)

Abstract:

Strawberry food loss in Finland exposes how ambitions for “zero-loss agriculture” intersect with the everyday vulnerabilities of peripheral rural economies. Strawberries navigate a narrow “loss corridor” from field to intake, facing challenges including unpredictable weather patterns, stringent quality standards, labour shortages, and elongated transport routes that heighten risk and significantly affect value distribution. Food loss materialises not as an isolated on-farm failure but as an outcome of a complex network of interconnected decisions embedded in contracts, infrastructure, logistics schedules, certification regimes, and the dynamics of seasonal migrant labour.

Insights from farmers, pickers, processors, and organisations reveal the complex dynamics surrounding food loss: who bears the cost of downgraded berries, who can negotiate exceptions to rigid standards, and who remains structurally voiceless in policy design. Producers in remote areas respond with situated innovations such as cold storage, harvesting synchronisation, or the smooth redirection of surplus into side flows. Yet these practices rarely appear in national and EU policy architectures that prioritise standardisation, volume, and auditability.

Governing strawberry food loss in peripheral Finland ultimately becomes a test of whether multi-scalar policies can recognise relational complexity, uneven power, and peripherality while still aligning with wider Farm to Fork and the Green Deal ambitions. Zero-loss agriculture gains credibility only when contracts, infrastructure, labour regimes, and supporting instruments are reconfigured to align with the risks of rural production rather than shifting them onto the exposed actors. The Finnish strawberry sector serves as a pivotal case for rethinking how inclusive, forward-looking, and adaptive frameworks in rural areas can redistribute risks and opportunities across spatially stretched agri-food chains.

Keywords:

Food loss, zero-loss agriculture, sustainable strawberry production, Farm to Fork, Finland.





Abstract 9.2

#38 - Green Care Farms in Rural Areas as a Form of Entrepreneurship for an Ageing Population

Presenting Author: Wioletta Knapik, Faculty of Agriculture and Economics, Observatory of Development and Cultural Heritage of Regions of the Hugo Kołłątaj University of Agriculture in Krakow, Poland

Co-author: Katarzyna Zajda, Department of Rural and Urban Studies and Sociology of Social Change, University of Lodz, Centre of Social Innovation of the University of Lodz, Poland

Abstract:

Introduction: Care farms are a response to the demographic challenges posed by an ageing population.

They have been present in rural areas of Western Europe for 30 years. In Poland, however, this idea has only been implemented for several years, and there remains a lack of legal regulation regarding their establishment and operation. The authors will present the emerging concept of green care farms in the context of concepts from other EU countries. Using the social capital of rural areas, these farms create the basis for a new model of care for the elderly.

Objectives:

The presented analyses aim to answer the following research questions:

1. What are rural communities' attitudes towards green care farms in the context of an ageing population and rural family structures?
2. What conditions enable cooperation between local governments and non-governmental organisations to establish green care farms, considering social capital resources?
3. How do regional activities related to setting up green care farms influence the methods for obtaining public funds for their creation and operation?

Methodology: The research was conducted in 2025 as part of the project Care farms in rural development in the face of demographic challenges (GROWiD), project no: 1/381773/17/NCBR/2018). A multiple-case study approach was employed in deliberately selected regions of Poland. Research methods included participant observation and unstructured interviews conducted with owners of care farms and entrepreneurs who declared their intention to undertake this type of activity. The study investigated the conditions necessary for establishing and financing green care farms, rural communities' attitudes towards multisectoral cooperation, and their perceptions of green care farms.

Results and Discussion:

1. Green care farms are regarded as an opportunity for ageing populations; however, rural family structures play a crucial role in the willingness of older adults to engage with such services.
2. Cooperation between local governments and non-governmental organisations is crucial for establishing green care farms.
3. Different methods for obtaining public funds for establishing and operating green care farms are being explored.

The discussion will focus on best practices in green care farms in Europe and the experiences of pilot care farms that were established on a trial basis with EU funding.

Conclusions: Farmers and entrepreneurs, with the support of NGOs and drawing on European experiences, are experimenting with various initiatives to establish care farms. However, the further development of green care farms in rural areas of Poland is hindered by the absence of systemic solutions underpinned by specific legislation, such as the Care Farms Act, and by the lack of cooperation between local governments and NGOs. There is a significant social need for such farms, which varies according to rural family structures.

Keywords:

Social challenges, green care farms, rural areas, Poland.



Abstract 9.3

#45 - Fishing in Portugal: Sustainability and European Regulation

Presenting Author: Diogo Fernandes Sousa, Instituto Politécnico Jean Piaget de Vila Nova de Gaia

Abstract:

The study analyses the evolution of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and its structural and regulatory impact on the fisheries sector in Portugal, highlighting the strategic importance of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The aim is to examine the trajectory of the CFP, from its origins in the Treaty of Rome to contemporary challenges. The methodology is based on a documentary and historical analysis of the main reforms and their impact on the Portuguese fleet and economy.

The results reveal that Portugal's integration into the EEC in 1986 forced a rigorous adaptation to a system of Total Allowable Catches (TACs) and quotas, resulting in a reduction in fleet capacity and a loss of autonomy in the negotiation of external agreements.

Successive CFP reforms transformed an initially market-oriented policy into a management model focused on Maximum Sustainable Yield and the protection of ecosystems. In the national context, this transition manifested itself in the modernization of infrastructure and the growth of aquaculture, but also in the critical ageing of the sector's workforce.

It can be concluded that the CFP is a driving force for the conservation of fishery resources, although its implementation in Portugal has entailed high social and economic costs. The future management of Portuguese maritime space requires a balance between ecological protection and economic viability, using instruments such as MAR 2030 to ensure generational renewal and technological innovation in the sector.

Keywords:

Common Fisheries Policy; Fisheries Sustainability; Exclusive Economic Zone; Fishing Quotas



Abstract 9.4

#67 - Land Use and Land Cover Changes as Indicators of Rural Transformation in the Post-Mining Landscape of the “Adamów” Lignite Mine, Central Poland

Presenting Author: Marta Nalej, Faculty of Geographical Sciences University of Lodz

Co-author: Joanna Petera-Zganiacz, Faculty of Geographical Sciences University of Lodz

Co-author: Danuta Dzieduszyńska, Faculty of Geographical Sciences University of Lodz

Co-author: Ewa Szafrńska, Faculty of Geographical Sciences University of Lodz

Abstract:

The study analyses transformation processes in rural areas affected by open-pit lignite mining, treating changes in land use and land cover (LULC) as a key empirical indicator of long-term spatial restructuring. The objective is to examine how anthropogenic landforms created by open-pit mining structurally condition post-mining land use patterns and shape contemporary rural space. The case study focusses on the area of the “Adamów” Lignite Mine near Turek in the lowland area of Central Poland, where the cessation of mining activities and the reclamation have resulted in a permanent reconfiguration of the terrain morphology. The research is based on the analysis of CORINE Land Cover data from 1990–2018, Database of Topographic Object, orthophotomaps, and Landsat and Sentinel satellite imagery, combined with the identification of key anthropogenic landforms, including anthropogenic plains, hills shaped from dumps, and artificial reservoirs. The methodological framework combines GIS-based spatial analysis, multi-temporal LULC change detection, and remote sensing interpretation. Changes in land use and land cover structure were quantified using analyses of class area and proportion as well as land cover diversity indices. Spatial overlay analysis was additionally applied to assess the relationships between anthropogenic landforms and contemporary land use patterns.

The analysis reveals substantial changes in the structure of land cover and land use, characterised by a spatially differentiated distribution of LULC classes closely linked to the type and morphology of anthropogenic landforms. Reclaimed agricultural land, grasslands, areas of forest succession and water bodies form a post-mining landscape, in which contemporary land use and land cover patterns are strongly constrained by terrain morphology and environmental conditions. The observed LULC configuration indicates that post-mining rural transformation does not result solely from the assumptions of reclamation or geomorphological change, but is part of broader processes of transformation that affect rural space.

The study concludes that LULC analysis provides a robust empirical framework to understand rural transformation in post-mining regions. Anthropogenic landforms play a decisive role in the formation of long-term land use structures, positioning LULC as a key indicator of spatial restructuring in rural areas affected by extractive industries.

Keywords:

Land use/land cover (LULC), anthropogenic landforms; landscape transformation; post-exploitation environment; rural areas.





Abstract 9.5

#69 - The creative economy of the 2nd rurality: Low-density areas (LDA), from information and knowledge technologies (IKT) to collective territorial intelligence (CTI)

Presenting Author: Maria das Mercês Cabrita de Mendonça Covas, CINTURS - Universidade do Algarve

Co-author: António Manuel Alhinho Covas, CINTURS - Universidade do Algarve

Abstract:

As they age and lose population, low-density areas (LDA)) are increasingly forced to resort to intelligence, imagination and innovation, that is, to the creative economy of the territories. Today, we have more information and knowledge technologies (IKT) on peripheral and remote areas and intelligent geographic information systems (IGIS) that allow us to manage these territories with a minimum of collective territorial intelligence (CTI). Henceforth, the territorial development of LDA is no longer so much a question of allocating existing resources, but rather of the operational organisation of the existing flow of information and knowledge and, above all, of the careful assembly of appropriate hyperlinks between online and offline communities that apply this flow of information and knowledge in a concerted and rigorous manner on the ground. In this text, we address three essential topics of the creative economy of the 2nd rurality, namely, the socio-structural conditions of LDA (I), the formation of intelligent and creative communities (ICC) and the ICC method (II), and the three paths of the creative economy of the 2nd rurality (III). We conclude with some general and final notes.

Keywords:

Created Economy, 2nd rurality, low-density areas, creative and smart communities.





Abstract 9.6

#74 - "Dialogue is part of who we are": Communal symbolic capital in Israeli rural communities

Presenting Author: Naama Zohar, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Abstract:

Israeli rural communities have mostly been established as agricultural cooperatives, planned to achieve national and communal goals, on state lands. Transformations over the years have weakened the cooperatives and reduced communal cohesion, while urban-rural dynamics in Israel have been infused with tensions due to political debate about resource distribution as well as the growing shortage of housing in the country. The October 2023 war created a new surge of debate around these strenuous dynamics, while rural communities in peripheral locations were attacked or evacuated for prolonged periods.

The current research explores the efforts of rural communities to maintain some of their unique characteristics and lifestyle in face of the shift in political power and the constantly changing economics and policies. A key feature of their resilience is local leadership, which is based on a council and multiple sub-committees, all relying on volunteers from the community. The research is based on in-depth interviews with members of local leadership.

The research offers the concept of "communal symbolic capital" to describe the values, identity and immaterial assets that serve both as a communal adhesive and as a mechanism that creates symbolic boundaries. Symbolic capital has been used in the past in rural studies, particularly in the context of branding rural regions based on their unique qualities. The perspective of communal symbolic capital may be useful in analyzing other rural communities around the globe their survival over time, generations, and challenges.

Keywords:

Rural communities; Communal symbolic capital; Urban-rural relations; Communal resilience.





Abstract 9.7

#75 - Articulating Aquavoltaics in Coastal Taiwan: Local Knowledge and the Adaptation of Sociotechnical Systems

Presenting Author: De-Jung CHEN, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan

Abstract:

In the global push for net-zero emissions, the rapid expansion of solar photovoltaics (PV) has intensified the demand for land. In land-scarce Taiwan, this has accelerated the development of aquavoltaics—a multifunctional model integrating solar energy with aquaculture. While promising, this transition places significant development pressure on rural areas, challenging traditional livelihoods and changing coastal landscapes.

Since the policy of aquavoltaics launch in 2019, aquavoltaics projects have actively reshaped Taiwan's coastal villages. Adopting a Science, Technology, and Society (STS) perspective, this study examines the articulation of aquavoltaics within these communities, focusing on the compatibility between PV infrastructure and aquaculture practices. We conceptualize compatibility as a dynamic process of both technical integration and social negotiation.

Central to this process are the aquaculture producers, who act as managers of these new sociotechnical systems. This study highlights how producers negotiate site design and adapt their local knowledge to manage the convergence of energy and aquaculture production. Understanding these adaptation strategies is crucial for assessing the viability of aquavoltaics and the future resilience of rural industries.

Methodologically, this research relies on qualitative interviews to capture the practical experiences and adaptations of fishermen. This is complemented by an analysis of patents, academic literature, and government reports to map the systemic integration of knowledge between the energy and aquaculture sectors.

Keywords:

aquavoltaics, coastal rural, renewable energy, rural transition, aquaculture





Abstract 9.8

#123 - Walking where I will over mountain and hill: resurgence of ‘right to roam’ in England and Wales

Presenting Author: Dr Keith Halfacree, Department of Geography, Swansea University, Singleton Park, Swansea SA2 8PP, UK

Co-author: António Manuel Alhinho Covas, CINTURS - Universidade do Algarve

Abstract:

Campaigning for greater general public access to the countryside – typically termed a ‘right to roam’ – has had a longstanding political presence in the UK but especially in England and Wales in reflection of more open access laws in Scotland. Brewing just before the COVID-19 pandemic but given a major boost by the high profile of a desired rural during it, we are now in a period of resurgent interest and campaigning around this issue. In particular, again with echoes of the past, artists and musicians are featuring prominently here, not least reflecting the often considerable inspiration they obtain from the land and nature, expressed clearly in the influential music podcast Folk on Foot that is helmed by broadcaster and former BBC executive Matthew Bannister. This paper introduces this resurgence and some of its main players, notably folk musicians Jim Ghedi and Johnny Campbell and writer and illustrator Nick Hayes. Particular attention is given to Campbell’s recent walking of England’s Pennine Way long-distance footpath, where his daily walking and nightly performances were strongly entangled with radical rural messages, both from himself and from others he invited to support him. The paper ends by asking where this resurgence is likely to go next, especially in terms of how much it goes further than right to roam access issues to engage with rural (land) ownership questions.

Keywords:

radical rural; walking; access; creativity; folk music





Abstract 9.9

#129 - Rural revitalization in the context of rural depopulation: Challenges, opportunities and responses

Presenting Author: Yurui Li, Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences. Beijing, 100101, China

Abstract:

Rural depopulation is increasingly acknowledged as an inherent phase of urbanization and has emerged as a global phenomenon with profound implications for rural development. However, a comprehensive methodology to effectively mitigate this issue remains underdeveloped. As the world's largest developing country, China faces heightened urgency in addressing rural depopulation due to its rapid urbanization, vast rural population, and predominantly smallholder-based agricultural system. Between 2000 and 2020, China's rural population declined by 25.55 %, leading to significant challenges, including stagnant agricultural growth, underutilized land resources, an aging rural population, and cultural heritage erosion. Conversely, rural depopulation presents potential opportunities, including reduced environmental pressures and mitigated human-land conflicts. Here, this study develops a systematic theoretical framework for revitalizing depopulated villages, grounded in dissipative structure theory and supported by empirical case studies and international comparisons. It further proposes targeted strategies for China, including the identification of depopulated villages, institutional reforms to enhance urban-rural factor mobility, adaptive infrastructure development, incentives for the return of rural elites, and industrial revitalization to promote sustainable rural development. This study could help to offer practical pathways for depopulated rural areas to achieve long-term revitalization.

Keywords:

Rural depopulation; Challenges and opportunities; Rural regional system; Dissipative structure theory; Rural revitalization





Abstract 9.10

#138 - Gendered social networks of knowledge, work and emotional support in extensive livestock management communities of Catalan Pyrenees (NE of Spain).

Presenting Author: Christina Prell - Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen

Co-author: Federica Ravera – Department of Geography, University of Girona

Abstract:

In recent decades, traditional Pyrenean societies have been subjected to major socioeconomic and environmental changes that have radically modified the mountain landscapes and the models of family farming and community organization. Specifically, from an economy of extensive livestock management and self-consumption mountain orchards, the Pyrenean society have radically changed towards a tertiary economy under a model of touristic development. In addition, the ecosystem services such landscapes provide are under threats, worsed by global environmental changes. Moreover, the masculinization and aging processes aggravate the progressive loss of traditional knowledge and practices for managing mountain landscapes. However, as part of anti-austerity reaction to the 2008 crisis, newcomers and new institutions, such as the School of Shepherds and the informal networks of women shepherdesses, bring innovative projects and counteract such marginalizing and detrimental process of loss. The aim of this work is to critically analyze the current and shifting knowledge networks and how origins, education, age and gender may influence carrying differential traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) exchange. Under an ecofeminist lens, we also discuss the emotional and cooperative networks patterns and their relevance in supporting communities networks and relational ties.

Keywords:

Not provided





Abstract 9.11

#140 - Student engagement in research as a strategy for sustainable and innovative rural development

Presenting Author: Charlotte Hidding, MSc, Hanze University of Applied Sciences

Abstract:

The East Groningen region (Northern part of the Netherlands) has a relative high level of unemployment, poor health and lower educational level in the Netherlands for decades. In addition, this region has also been characterised by population decline.

To tackle these complex challenges, our research group Living Environment in Transition developed and implemented a rural Living Lab in this region in 2017. In this Living Lab, called EDRiT, students co-create solutions that contribute to tackling these complex challenges together with stakeholders from enterprises, municipalities, higher education and citizens (quadruple helix). The underlying idea of this rural living lab is that students who often reside in larger cities get acquainted with rural challenges and see the potential of rural regions as well.

The last couple of years, EDRiT developed over 200 research projects by students focusing on the field of transition-related challenges, including demographic transition and population decline. Through collaboration with the quadruple helix partners, practical knowledge is developed, and the region is connected to the Hanze University of Applied Sciences.

Besides that, EDRiT was the coordinator of the so-called CV Boost that helped people to improve their CV, like developing presentation or social media skills. This has resulted in several participants who took part in the CV Boost project actually finding a job and remaining in the region.

EDRiT was also core partner in the ERASMUS funded KiNESIS project, where a large coalition of quadruple helix partners from Italy, Spain, Estonia, the Netherlands and Germany shared best practices and experiences on rural development in regions with population decline. In addition, the partners in KiNESIS also coordinated numerous internships from students in partner countries.

In this session we will show the impact of our ongoing living lab, and the methodology and hands-on approach of EDRiT.

Keywords:

Multidisciplinary research - student engagement – innovative regional development- East Groningen





Abstract 9.12

#161 - (In)security in rural areas in the context of depopulation: evidence and challenges. Spain 2016-2024

Presenting Author: Francisco Antonio Navarro Valverde, Universidad de Granada

Co-author: Eugenio Cejudo García, Universidad de Granada

Co-author: José Antonio Cañete Pérez, Universidad de Granada

Co-author: Alberto Capote Lama, Universidad de Granada

Abstract:

There is a belief that rural areas are safe, idyllic places where criminal activity is scarce or nonexistent; crime, as demonstrated by the existing literature, is associated with the urban world (Ceccato, V., & Abraham, J., 2022). The progressive abandonment of rural areas leads to gentrification, vacant homes, and a reduced presence of security forces, fostering the growth of illicit activities and heightening residents' and newcomers' perceptions of insecurity. Our preliminary research proposes a territorialised analysis of crime, recognising it as an expression of diverse socio-territorial processes.

Data from the Ministry of the Interior's quarterly reports between 2016 and 2024 are used. These data are offered at the municipal level, according to crime type, but only for municipalities with 20,000 or more inhabitants. Rural areas are included through the methodological category of municipalities with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants, a threshold we use to differentiate between rural and urban areas based on the source. Absolute and relative values—rates per 1,000 inhabitants, percentages for each crime type—are used across five functional crime categories.

The results show: a 17% increase in the average national crime rate during the analyzed period; an uneven and widespread increase across provinces, although not directly related to population growth; the types of crime in which rural values are higher than urban values are those related to violence against people, sexual freedom, and drug trafficking; the intensity between rural and urban crime varies by territory, although no clear spatial pattern is observed.

Abraham, J., & Ceccato, V. (2022). Crime and safety in rural areas: A systematic review of the English-language literature 1980–2020. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 94, 250–273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2022.05.010>.

Keywords:

conflict, crime, type of crime, rural/urban.



Abstract 9.13

#176 - The development of landscape monitoring methodology. A case from Slovenia.

Presenting Author: Nadja Penko Seidl, University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical faculty, Department of Landscape architecture

Abstract:

Monitoring pressures that affect landscapes and monitoring changes are among the objectives of the European Landscape Convention. In practice, landscape monitoring is often reduced to a few qualitative indicators within environmental assessments, such as "landscape quality" and "perceptive value". Whereas spatial development and environmental monitoring are well established in Slovenia, these frameworks do not fully encompass the complex character of landscapes, which comprise both physical and perceptual aspects.

The objective of the presented research is to establish a landscape monitoring framework that enables periodic monitoring of the landscape's condition and serves as a source of information for the preparation of the Spatial Development Report. An overview of landscape monitoring frameworks shows that, to embrace the holistic character of landscape, several quantitative and qualitative indicators that monitor diverse landscape characteristics need to be developed.

The proposed methodology is based on three aspects of the landscape: its structure, its function and its meaning. The assessment of the landscape will be based on three types of indicators: data-based indicators, which enable quantitative and objective assessment of the whole territory; expert-based indicators, which bring together the knowledge on natural and cultural characteristics of the landscape and its holistic interpretation; and indicators based on public perception of the landscape and processes that change it.

Since the research is still in progress, the presentation will focus on the conceptual and methodological challenges of landscape monitoring illustrated using a proposed methodological framework.

Keywords:

Landscape monitoring, indicators, landscape structure, landscape function, landscape meaning





Abstract 9.14

#180 - Delivering Futures: Stakeholder Visions for Rural Scotland

Presenting Author: Paula Duffy, Geography & Environment, School of Geosciences, University of Aberdeen

Co-author: Lorna Philip, Geography & Environment, School of Geosciences, University of Aberdeen

Abstract:

Research Question(s)

How do stakeholder visions articulated through Scotland's Rural Delivery Plan consultation process reconcile competing demands for demographic sustainability, climate transition, and community resilience? And what do these reveal about pathways toward spatially just rural futures? And the efficacy of policy in supporting that using whole systems approaches?

Scotland's Rural Delivery Plan (RDP) emerges at a critical moment when rural communities face intersecting pressures including demographic ageing and out-migration, climate crisis imperatives reshaping land use, and an erosion of community infrastructure following austerity. These challenges resonate across rural Europe, yet Scotland's post-devolution policy landscape and post-Brexit context create distinctive opportunities for rural policy innovation. This paper examines how stakeholders, politicians and other decision makers envision rural futures. Informed by debates around rural spatial justice (Woods, 2005) and mission-led governance (Glass and Shucksmith, 2025) and debates around rural transformations (Philip et al, 204), our analysis is focused upon materials associated with the Scottish Rural Delivery Plan, elucidating contested pathways towards securing sustainable, resilient rural Scotland. Using consultation materials and responses, cross-party ministerial working group minutes, media reports and other relevant documentary sources such as political party manifestos for the May 2026 Scottish Parliament elections our analysis explores how different actors conceptualise rural Scotland's future trajectory. We focus on how these conceptualisations address challenges around demographic sustainability, climate adaptation, and the capacity of rural communities to shape their own futures within national policy priorities. The research attends particularly to how stakeholders frame opportunities and constraints for achieving spatially just rural development. It considers what visions of 'just' rural futures emerge through the Rural Development Plan process and how these align or diverge from existing policy frameworks. Findings contribute to debates domestically and across Europe about moving beyond crisis and resilience narratives toward frameworks that recognise rural agency, diversity, and the need for place-sensitive policies that avoid sacrificing rural livelihoods to urban-centric transition priorities and facilitate planetary rural futures

Keywords:

Rural Delivery Plan, spatial justice, mission-led governance, sustainability transitions, community resilience, Scotland, rural futures





Abstract 9.15

#184 - Living with Change in Ireland's Uplands: Land, Livelihoods and Rural Futures

Presenting Author: Will Hayes, Geography Department, Royal Holloway University of London

Abstract:

Introduction, Objectives and Methodology

Ireland's upland landscapes are undergoing rapid and uneven change, shaped by shifts in agricultural policy, rural demographics, and land management practices. Drawing on qualitative research with upland farmers in Ireland's southwest, this paper examines how everyday decisions around grazing, burning, and land management are being reshaped, and what this means for the future of rural Ireland. The study is based on in-depth semi-structured interviews and landscape-based discussions with farmers and other land managers.

Results and Discussion

Findings highlight widespread experiences of land abandonment, declining labour availability, and changing ecological conditions. While agri-environmental schemes aim to deliver environmental benefits, many farmers describe tensions between policy expectations and the practical realities of managing marginal upland land. These tensions are contributing to significant landscape transformations, including increased scrub cover, altered biodiversity dynamics (both positive and negative), and growing concerns around wildfire risk. Environmental change is shown to be closely intertwined with social processes such as ageing farming populations, erosion of local land-use knowledge, and weakened local governance structures.

Conclusions

The paper argues that upland change cannot be understood through ecological or policy lenses alone, but must be situated within broader questions of social and environmental justice. By foregrounding farmers' perspectives, the research reflects on how current approaches to upland management may shape future rural livelihoods, ecological resilience, and the sustainability of Ireland's upland communities.

Keywords:

Uplands; abandonment; fire; grazing; policy





Abstract 9.16

#201 - Dynamics of change in tropical subsistence communities – insights from swidden agriculture in Northeast India and Southeast Mexico

Presenting Author: Lea Sophia Schröder, Research Unit Sustainability and Climate Risks, University of Hamburg

Co-author: Benjamin Poschlod, Research Unit Sustainability and Climate Risks, University of Hamburg

Co-author: Santiago López-Ridaaura, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT)

Co-author: Jelle Van Loon, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT)

Abstract:

Securing nutritious food, livelihoods, cultural identities, and agrobiodiversity, the role of smallholder production for rural communities and landscapes in the tropics cannot be overestimated. This is particularly true for swidden agriculture, a traditional subsistence farming system deeply rooted in the cultural life of indigenous, tropical communities, that has undergone profound change over recent decades. We applied mixed-methods to analyze these changes for swidden communities in Northeast India and Southeast Mexico. Based on qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, a farm survey, and secondary data we show, at the example of swidden agriculture, how smallholder cultivation systems are being transformed by population dynamics, climate change, and continuing globalization. In contrast to previous research, we show that increasing and decreasing intensities of swidden agriculture coexist, even at regional scales. While forest conservation programs and expansion of commodity production tend to increase land scarcity and hence cultivation intensities, rising rural-urban migration and off-farm income opportunities, along with environmental change have resulted in declining production intensities. We could not find any evidence that population growth influenced swidden cultivation; instead, our findings show that climate change has affected swidden systems in multiple ways. While rising temperatures increasingly challenge manual fieldwork carried out by an aging farmer population, shifts in the rainy season - manifesting as reduced or delayed precipitation - have intensified crop losses and workloads across swidden contexts, ultimately contributing to declining farmer motivation and participation. The decline and aging of subsistence farmers along with rising off-farm livelihoods and migration are transforming rural lifestyles and spaces. As a consequence, traditional rural identities and community life are being contested and need to be renegotiated. Through highlighting transformation pathways of swidden communities from two different regions, this study shows how regional and global change manifest in tropical subsistence economies, opening up new opportunities and lines of conflict.

Keywords:

Subsistence cultivation, swidden agriculture, climate change, rural livelihoods, migration





Abstract 9.17

#219 - A new framework for analyzing rural socio-environmental conflicts: Insights from landscape transitions in Poland

Presenting Author: Anton Van Rompaey, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, KU Leuven, Belgium

Co-author: Jonathan de Samblanx, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, KU Leuven, Belgium

Co-author: Piotr Szubert, Institute of Geography and Spatial Management, Jagiellonian University, Poland

Co-author: Dominik Kaim, Institute of Geography and Spatial Management, Jagiellonian University, Poland

Co-author: Jacek Kozak, Institute of Geography and Spatial Management, Jagiellonian University, Poland

Abstract:

Socio-environmental conflicts in rural areas have traditionally been conceptualized as a “fight for land,” where agricultural production, environmental protection, and suburban expansion compete over limited spatial resources. This model has been widely applied in regions experiencing strong demographic or economic growth, where different land uses overlap and generate tensions. However, in many parts of Europe today, especially in peripheral and post-socialist regions, this framework is becoming less adequate. Processes such as farmland abandonment, demographic decline, and structural socio-economic transformations are reshaping rural landscapes in ways that are not well captured by the notion of direct competition for land. Instead, new forms of conflict are emerging that stem from the underutilization, rewilding, or uneven development of rural territories.

Therefore, this paper proposes a novel typology of rural landscape transitions that seeks to move beyond the conventional conflict model. The typology is constructed around three fundamental variables: (1) the evolution of forest cover, (2) the evolution of built-up areas, and (3) the evolution of population numbers. Each variable is assessed at the municipal scale for the period 1970–2025, using a simple binary classification of increase versus decrease. When combined, these three dimensions generate eight possible transition types, each representing a distinct trajectory of rural change.

The second step of the analysis links these transition types to characteristic socio-environmental conflicts. For instance, municipalities with increasing forest cover but declining population may encounter disputes around land stewardship, biodiversity management, or cultural heritage preservation. Conversely, areas experiencing suburban expansion alongside agricultural decline may face urban-wildlife conflicts that didn’t exist before. The proposed “transition-conflict matrix” provides a systematic framework for identifying, comparing, and anticipating such patterns across European rural regions.

The paper illustrates the applicability of this framework through an in-depth examination of Poland. The Polish countryside presents a particularly rich laboratory for analysis, given its diverse landscapes and the rapid transformations that have occurred since the political and economic transition of the early 1990s and, more recently, integration into the European Union. By situating local dynamics within broader European trends, the study highlights how rural change is shaped not only by competition over scarce resources but also by processes of abandonment, marginalization, and uneven development.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the rethinking of socio-environmental conflicts in rural Europe. By providing a typology that captures both growth-related and decline-related trajectories, the paper offers a conceptual and practical tool for policymakers, planners, and scholars interested in anticipating emerging conflicts and designing more context-sensitive rural development strategies.

Keywords:

Not provided





Abstract 9.18

#226 - When the Landscape Has Not Yet Changed: Anticipation, Solastalgia and Place Attachment in Rural Planning

Presenting Author: Chantal van der Sluis, University of Groningen & Hanze University of Applied Sciences **Co-author:** Hiska Ubels, Hanze University of Applied Sciences

Co-author: Bettina Bock, University of Groningen

Co-author: Elles Bulder, Hanze University of Applied Sciences

Abstract:

Across Europe, rural landscapes are increasingly subject to large-scale transformation plans related to energy transitions, environmental policies and spatial restructuring. Research on solastalgia – understood as feelings of loss, anxiety and emotional disruption tied to irreversible spatial changes - and emotional responses to landscape change has predominantly focused on contexts where physical transformations have already taken place. This paper shifts the focus to an earlier stage, examining how solastalgie experiences can emerge during the planning phase of a large scale intended rural transformation, when future scenarios, visualisations and proposed interventions reshape how residents relate to a place.

The paper draws on a case study of a large-scale industrial port expansion in a rural region in the Northern Netherlands, the Oostpolder, where residents are confronted with plans that envision substantial changes to their familiar living environment, while the physical landscape itself, for now, remains largely unchanged. Using survey data, the analysis explores feelings of loss, distress and emotional disruption in relation to place attachment, anticipated environmental change and experiences with participation processes. Particular attention is paid to differences between social groups and to residents' perceived influence over decision-making.

By empirically grounding solastalgia already in the planning phase of rural transformations, this paper contributes to debates on rural change by highlighting consequences of anticipation and uncertainty on the emotional connection to a place. It argues that planning is not a neutral or purely technical process, but a critical moment in which emotional distress and vulnerability are already induced, with important implications for participation, governance and rural resilience.

Keywords:

solastalgia; planning phase; place attachment; rural change; anticipation





Abstract 9.19

#239 - Family Farming Facing the Challenge of Alleviating Depopulation in Low-Density Areas

Presenting Author: Luís Moreno, IGOT-ULisboa

Abstract:

Family farming (FF), which is dominant worldwide, has diverse characteristics but with territorial specificities, involving considerable contrasts in Europe and Portugal. In these cases, in terms of commercial and self-consumption aspects, as well as mixed situations, they involve responses to family (economic and other), community and territorial needs of different types, in a manner that is more or less dependent on national and European public policies. It is its diversity and widespread occupation of space that explains the multiple attention it receives, depending on societal, economic and environmental interests, which is reflected in relevant political and governance processes, as several studies have shown.

However, there is a lack of studies focusing on the necessary distinction between low-density areas (LDA) and others with more advantageous conditions, in terms of the role of FF in the greater or lesser continuity of human occupation of space, calling for specific attention in terms of multidisciplinary analysis and public policy.

In the case of mainland Portugal, we present a study which, although exploratory, draws on a combination of official statistical data on (farm) sole holders, results from the AFAVEL project (completed in 2021) and recent institutional documentation, with the aim of illustrating and discussing the conditions for remaining in or abandoning FF, relating to the sustainable human occupation of LDA. The analysis of statistical, documentary and primary source data on abandonment and reasons for continuing agricultural activity after 2009 highlights the specific nature of LDA in terms of particular needs and challenges for public intervention.

The conclusions point to the importance of continuing and strengthening instruments for integrated territorial enhancement and promoting the resilience of the FF, given the influence of the activities involved in mitigating depopulation processes and generating cohesive forces, but also in sustaining the conditions for environmental qualification and a plural socio-economy.

Keywords:

Family Farming; Depopulation; Low Density Areas; Plural Socio-economy





Abstract 9.20

#271 - Articulating Aquavoltaics in Coastal Taiwan: Local Knowledge and the Adaptation of Sociotechnical Systems

Presenting Author: Dr. De-Jung CHEN, National Sun Yat-sen University

Abstract:

In the global push for net-zero emissions, the rapid expansion of solar photovoltaics (PV) has intensified the demand for land. In land-scarce Taiwan, this has accelerated the development of aquavoltaics—a multifunctional model integrating solar energy with aquaculture. While promising, this transition places significant development pressure on rural areas, challenging traditional livelihoods and changing coastal landscapes.

Since the policy of aquavoltaics launch in 2019, aquavoltaics projects have actively reshaped Taiwan's coastal villages. Adopting a Science, Technology, and Society (STS) perspective, this study examines the articulation of aquavoltaics within these communities, focusing on the compatibility between PV infrastructure and aquaculture practices. We conceptualize compatibility as a dynamic process of both technical integration and social negotiation.

Central to this process are the aquaculture producers, who act as managers of these new sociotechnical systems. This study highlights how producers negotiate site design and adapt their local knowledge to manage the convergence of energy and aquaculture production. Understanding these adaptation strategies is crucial for assessing the viability of aquavoltaics and the future resilience of rural industries.

Methodologically, this research relies on qualitative interviews to capture the practical experiences and adaptations of fishermen. This is complemented by an analysis of patents, academic literature, and government reports to map the systemic integration of knowledge between the energy and aquaculture sectors.

Keywords:

aquavoltaics, coastal rural, renewable energy, rural transition, aquaculture





Abstract 9.21

#283 - Changes in rural areas: analyzing the trajectories of fragile rural spaces

Presenting Author: Fournier Loïc, Doctorant – University Toulouse Jean-Jaurès, LISST (UMR 5193), Dynamiques rurales

Abstract:

Defining vulnerable areas is not an easy task, given the political and scientific implications underlying certain denominations. In line with previous research on decline, we adopt the term 'shrinking', because it emphasizes the temporal process of decline. At the community level, territorial cohesion policies exist and are primarily aimed at rural areas (EAFRD, Teltow resolution). However, these policies, which focus on remedial measures, do not really address the causes of the problems affecting rural areas. In order to understand the processes that lead to territorial divisions, it is essential to engage in a longitudinal reflection on the processes of fragility in rural areas. If my work focuses specifically on French rural spaces, its methodology can be reproduced for other European rural areas.

This presentation will therefore be an opportunity to explain the value of a quantitative approach to French rural areas by analyzing their trajectories in order to identify the processes that contribute to their vulnerability. We will thus explain the value of a sequential analysis of vulnerability criteria, through which I will be able to present the first results of my research, which demonstrates the plurality of growth and decline trajectories in French rural areas. In addition, we will affirm the heuristic value for quantitative geographers of engaging with the field through a qualitative approach in order to compare local revitalization policies with the variables identified as drivers of territorial trajectories. We will therefore question the pertinence of an approach that aims to revitalize rural areas through small towns, an approach that often results in the omission of issues specific to rural areas in all their diversity.

Keywords:

Rural area - Shrinking – Sequence Analysis – Small cities





Abstract 9.22

#323 - The consequences of poorly designed population data collection

Presenting Author: Fiona Haslam McKenzie, University of Western Australia

Abstract:

For the decades 1970-2000, the population statistics for regional populations in Australia were in decline impacted by neoliberal government policies, disproportionate investment in city infrastructure and services, and an emphasis on scale with the application of smart technologies, usually in city settings. Since the early 2000s however, with little change in policies, the regional population trend has begun to reverse, escalating during and after COVID 19. There are numerous reasons for this, including a burgeoning high-value mining sector, large and sophisticated agricultural enterprises, increasingly large cities, and during COVID, a desire to escape urban settings and engage in nature and smaller communities. Many who moved from cities are choosing to remain in regional settings arguing improved financial and physical wellbeing. However the growth trends are patchy, with lifestyle migrants moving to aesthetically attractive sea- and tree-change locations, while another large cohort are those in the mining, or mining support services sectors, usually locating to remote locations, and farming communities experiencing considerable growth due to improved global markets. Furthermore, SME businesses are re-locating to regional communities with reliable transport networks, escaping logistics bottlenecks in cities. Consequently, key services are inadequate in regional settings. Governments have been loath to change their policies, partly because their population data is collected at a macro scale, arguing that regional population continues to grow but declines as a share of national population. Researchers are now being employed to demonstrate to key decision-makers that more nuanced data collection would more accurately reflect the pressures in high growth, high value regional locations and that more prescient investment would have a net benefit for the broader Australian economy, particularly in productivity growth, which has been in overall decline for more than a decade.

Keywords:

Population change; data collection; productivity; prescient public investment



Theme 10 - Digital Transition, Innovation and Rural Infrastructures

Abstract 10.1

#26 - SmartStores in rural regions of Germany—qualitative studies on new forms of food supply operations

Presenting Author: Ulrich Jürgens, University of Kiel - Germany, Department of Geography

Abstract:

Recently, digitization in retail beyond e-commerce has triggered innovative advances. Phygital environments are emerging in which the physical spaces of a traditional store merge with technical and digital applications to create a “hybrid customer journey.” A prime example of this is the development of autonomous stores and vending machines, which are expanding in number in rural regions of Germany and opening up new opportunities for providing basic supplies to the population in peripheral areas. This gives rise to opportunities and risks,

- a) Whether this store format will find lasting acceptance and loyalty among customers.
- b) Whether the store format, which is often operated as a cooperative model, will find social acceptance at the governance level of a rural community.
- c) What problems mayors face at the government level in attracting providers of autonomous stores.

The data collection is based on 25 expert interviews with mayors, planners, politicians, and entrepreneurs, as well as 13 focus group discussions with 60 local citizens in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany's northernmost state. The interviews were conducted between August and December 2025 in 15 rural communities that have experience with so-called smartstores or have focused their plans on opening a smartstore to secure their local food supply.

Experience to date shows that, in contrast to earlier village shops with sometimes limited loyalty to the village shopkeeper, limited opening hours, and small product ranges, new forms of flexible and spontaneous shopping have become established. 24/7 opening hours and accelerated checkout through technical and cashless solutions are perceived positively across generations. The cooperative approach of these stores leads to the village store being seen as a project worthy of community protection. These experiences are already being observed by other rural communities and may lead to the reestablishment of village shops, some of which have not existed for decades.

Keywords:

Smartstores, village shops, technological innovation, cooperative shops, consumer acceptance





Abstract 10.2

#28 - Social Innovation and Digital Transition in Smart Villages in Poland.

Presenting Author: Katarzyna Zajda, Department of Rural and Urban Studies and Sociology of Social Change, University of Lodz, Center of Social Innovation of the University of Lodz

Co-author: Wioletta Knapik, Faculty of Agriculture and Economics, Hugo Kołłątaj University of Agriculture in Krakow, Observatory of Development and Cultural Heritage of Regions of the Hugo Kołłątaj University of Agriculture in Krakow

Abstract:

Introduction: The concept of social innovation (SI) has become a significant influence in shaping policymaking discourses. SI and the increased use of digital technologies to meet the needs of rural residents have become a key element of the Smart Village (SV) concept, which is being implemented across the EU. This concept aims to contribute to, among other things, reducing the scale of rural depopulation and addressing areas of social exclusion.

Objectives:

The analyses presented in this study aim to answer the following research questions:

1. What social problems did the SV concepts address?
3. Were SIs incorporated into these concepts, and if so, what kind?
3. Did the concepts envisage the use of digital technologies? If so, what kind?
4. What are the barriers to implementing the SV concept in post-socialist Poland?

Methodology: This research was conducted in 2024–2025 using a multiple case study approach. Participant observation and unstructured interviews were employed as research techniques. The concept development process was observed during workshops conducted by local action groups (LAGs) in seven Polish regions (these organizations are responsible for implementing SVs in the 2023–2027 period). A total of 30 unstructured interviews were conducted with LAG leaders and workshop participants.

Results and Discussion:

The analysis of the collected material revealed that:

1. The primary goal of the SV concept was to reduce social exclusion among rural youth and to activate seniors socially.
2. The SV concepts encompassed the creation of grassroots, local SI without considering the mechanisms for scaling them.
3. The SV concepts made little provision for the use of digital technologies.
4. Barriers to implementing the SV concept include deficits in the social capital of rural residents, in the human resources of rural NGO leaders, and in the financial resources that LAGs can allocate to implement the developed concepts.

The discussion will address the problem of creating SVs in post-socialist countries such as Poland, in the context of the social capital resources of rural residents, their attitudes toward AI, and the use of digital technologies.

Conclusions: Numerous barriers to the implementation of SVs limit their potential to provide long-term innovative solutions to the problems faced by rural residents with the use of digital technology.

Keywords:

Social innovation, Digital Transition, Smart Village, post socialist country, Poland.





Abstract 10.3

#70 - Mapping Agricultural Digitalisation in the European Union

Presenting Author: Delgado-Serrano, M.M. Agricultural Economics, Universidad de Córdoba (Spain)

Co-author: Hurtado, A.R. Agricultural Economics, Universidad de Córdoba (Spain)

Abstract:

The transformation of European agri-food systems in response to climate, environmental, and market pressures requires integrated approaches that bridge technological, institutional, and social domains. Digitalisation is a critical enabler of such systemic change, offering new tools for resource efficiency, knowledge exchange, monitoring, and adaptive management. This research addresses the gap between digitalisation's potential and its uneven realisation across Europe, analysing how policies, institutions, and structural conditions affect digitalisation in agriculture.

The research has been developed in the framework of the Horizon Europe CODECS project and explored how EU and national policy environments shape agricultural digitalisation and influence farmers' capacity to adopt digital technologies. It investigates how institutional settings, governance coherence, and policy instruments (particularly within the CAP Strategic Plans) enable or constrain digital transitions. The central questions are: What policy mechanisms support or hinder agricultural digitalisation? How do governance arrangements and institutional capacities affect the development of conducive digital ecosystems?

The study analyses the policy environments influencing agricultural digitalisation across 15 EU Member States and three candidate countries. Methodologically, we used a mixed qualitative and comparative approach that combined existing datasets, policy document analysis, a review of EU-funded projects, and semi-structured interviews with 101 experts from 18 EU countries and institutions. This approach enabled the mapping of policy environments, the identification of governance patterns, and cross-country comparison of how structural factors, institutional arrangements, and policy frameworks impact digitalisation in agriculture and rural areas.

Results showed that digitalisation is not an isolated technological process but a cross-cutting driver in agri-food systems, shaped by policy frameworks, farm structures, advisory networks, and data infrastructures. Persistent gaps in coordination, connectivity, skills, affordability, and data trust limit its collective benefits. Where governance mechanisms foster stability and legal certainty, as well as collaboration across ministries, sectors, and knowledge and innovation systems, digitalisation contributes more effectively to economic viability, ecological performance, and social inclusion. The CAP also provides a fundamental but under-realised opportunity to align digital and sustainability transitions. The research provides a cross-country comparative analysis of variables that more strongly influence digitalisation uptake, such as a country's overall digital readiness, farm size, and farmer age. As a final outcome of the different qualitative and quantitative analyses undertaken, we clustered EU countries into four categories based on their performance in agriculture digitalisation uptake: frontrunners, advanced performers, growing performers, and early-stage performers.

This research has been funded by the EC in the framework of Horizon Europe CODECS project (Grant Agreement n. 101060179).

Keywords:

Digital adoption, digitalisation policies, governance, digital transition





Abstract 10.4

#100 - Rural functions and digital transition: lessons from western England

Presenting Author: Daniel Keech, Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire, United Kingdom

Co-author: Katarina Kubinakova, Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire, United Kingdom

Co-author: Aimee Morse, Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire, United Kingdom

Co-author: Demelza Jones, Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire, United Kingdom

Abstract:

Progress towards sustainable transitions must balance urgency of emerging problems with inclusive governance that respects local diversity. In rural areas this can be especially difficult: municipal budgets are limited, economic policy favours urban-anchored growth clusters, and villages can experience 'digital divide'. Furthermore, understandings of rural functions vary and can seem narrow, including structural (population density) and land economy (farming and forestry). More complex, urban-rural synergies emerge, not least through digital transition, which promises links to trade and jobs and facilitates access to social infrastructures, e.g. on-line medical consultations or personal banking. Consequently, rural digital transition can (i) help rural settlements function, and (ii) underpin the mutuality between towns and countryside.

Since 2022, the EC-Horizon project RUSTIK has applied a Living Lab methodology to explore how rural data can inform rural transition policies. We offer critical reflections on digital transition from the LL in Gloucestershire (England) which has:

- developed an AI 'smart dashboard' for rapid analysis of rural datasets
- 'rural-proofed' the county digital strategy with local stakeholders
- augmented research capacity of municipal and voluntary sector allies.

Yet, such locally co-produced rural activities face entrenched challenges which impede progress towards spatial equalities, including an atomised third sector; a weak rural public sector in flux, digital innovation framed within a shrinking agricultural sector; and digital inclusion efforts focused on the social margins.

Some contexts are English – remote rurality is rare; others are widely familiar: uneven connectivity, cultural ambivalence about on-line safety plus preference for face-to-face social contact, and a policy stance of 'digital by default'.

In presenting these experiences, we aim to share lessons for other rural areas hoping to positively rearticulate their functional roles.

Keywords:

local governance, rural functions, digital transition, 'digital by default'





Abstract 10.5

#101 - Adoption of New Technologies by Agricultural SMEs in Rural Areas: The Case of the Tassaout Valley, Morocco

Presenting Author: Ahlam Taoussi, PHD student, Cadi Ayyad University, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Laboratory for studies in Resources, Mobility and Attractiveness (LERMA), Marrakech, Morocco

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Co-author: Mohamed El Aklaa, Professor, Cadi Ayyad University, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Laboratory for studies in Resources, Mobility and Attractiveness (LERMA), Marrakech, Morocco

Abstract:

Agricultural SMEs play a crucial role in the rural economy of Morocco, particularly in areas such as the Tassaout Valley, where agriculture is the primary source of income. In recent years, new technologies—both digital tools and agricultural innovations—have emerged as important drivers for enhancing productivity, competitiveness, and sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises. This study aims to examine the adoption of new technologies by agricultural SMEs in the rural areas of the Tassaout Valley, highlighting both the benefits and challenges of this transition.

A qualitative research approach was adopted, combining semi-structured interviews with SME owners, questionnaires assessing technology usage, and direct field observations. The sample included 8 agricultural SMEs across rural communes of the Tassaout Valley. The study found that SMEs commonly adopt digital tools such as smartphones, weather applications, and social media for marketing and communication, alongside agricultural technologies including drip irrigation, soil monitoring, and basic farm management systems.

The results indicate that technology adoption contributes to improved water management, better market access, increased productivity, and enhanced resilience to climatic variability. However, challenges such as limited internet access, lack of technical training, and high costs of technology hinder broader adoption. The study concludes that targeted support, including capacity-building programs and improved digital infrastructure, is essential for maximizing the benefits of technology for agricultural SMEs in rural Morocco.

Keywords:

Agricultural SMEs, Technology Adoption, Rural Development, Digital Tools, Smart Agriculture





Abstract 10.6

#146 - In the 'shadow' of the 'donut': Local digital infrastructure and telework decisions in establishments

Presenting Author: Torben Dall Schmidt, Institute for Employment Relations and Labour, Helmut Schmidt University, Hamburg, Germany

Co-author: Wenzel Matiaske, Institute for Employment Relations and Labour, Helmut Schmidt University, Hamburg, Germany

Co-author: Martina Maas, Institute for Employment Relations and Labour, Helmut Schmidt University, Hamburg, Germany

Abstract:

The literature has discussed opportunities to pursue telework in the context of a work-from-home revolution. It points to a 'donut' effect, whereby remote working leads to the transformation of urban areas. While this transformation of urban areas is a consequence, it reveals less about more remote areas. However, an important recent contribution argues for a 'shadow' effect on smaller cities. The work-from-home revolution does not counter spatial divergence in development patterns. This raises the question of whether any relevant policy instruments could help alleviate this situation in rural areas. Using German SOEP-LEE2 establishment data, we examine whether establishments' decisions to implement teleworking are related to local investments in digital infrastructure in terms of local fixed-line broadband coverage, in their locations, with a particular focus on rural areas. Results show that such investments do relate to the decisions of establishments in more remote areas to use telework from home for connections of 200 Mbps or more. Also, it does point to an inverse relationship between coverage in an area of such connections and the speed of the connection. Given the use of telework from home is a precursor to achieving the improvements in job matching and sorting to possibly counter a 'shadow' effect, this point to important policy tools building digital infrastructure in securing rural transformation.

Keywords:

Telework from home, 'Donut' and 'Shadow' Effects, Digital Infrastructure, Rural Areas, SOEP-LEE2 establishment data





Abstract 10.7

#155 - Regional Smart Specialization Strategy (RIS3) and Territorial Cohesion: a Systematic Review of the Literature

Presenting Author: Livia Madureira, Centre for Transdisciplinary Development Studies (CETRAD) Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro University (UTAD)

Co-author: Maria João Pessoa, Centre for Transdisciplinary Development Studies (CETRAD) Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro University (UTAD)

Abstract:

Innovation policy is one of the European Union (EU) tools for regions to achieve territorial cohesion through investments that promote competitive advantages. Ten years after the start of the first wave of Regional Smart Specialization Strategies (RIS3) in the 2014–2020 period, these remain a necessary condition for regions to access EU funds from the territorial cohesion fund in the 2021–2027 cycle. The framework of projects in these strategies represents a criterion of admissibility and merit in the Investment Priorities. With the objective to explore the contributions of Smart Specialization in the context of integrating locally based innovation policies for territorial cohesion, specific objectives include identifying current realities in the field of knowledge and research on RIS3, their relationship with sociodemographic changes, and their contribution to territorial cohesion, considering their territorial implications. The methodology proposed to operationalize this research led to a systematic review as it is a rigorous and structured methodology to identify, evaluate, and synthesize all relevant evidence on a specific research question. The expected results include the identification of factors that enhance the adaptation of RIS3 to territorial specificities, the degree of involvement of local actors and integration with the Regional Innovation System. With this work is expected to identify the driving forces behind the dynamics generated by RIS3, adapted to the territories and integrated into the Regional Innovation System, and, more generally, their contribution to sustainable socioeconomic development and territorial cohesion. It is important to continue the cohesion policy, considering the persistence of regional disparities in the EU as mentioned in the 9th Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion of 2024.

Keywords:

Regional Smart Specialization Strategy (RIS3); Territorial Cohesion; Innovation; Placed-based policies.





Abstract 10.8

#174 - Digital use and spatial justice in rural areas

Presenting Author: Nabilla Dina Adharina, Institut Teknologi Bandung

Co-author: Fikri Zul Fahmi, Institut Teknologi Bandung

Co-author: Koen Salemink, University of Groningen

Abstract:

Spatial justice discourse has expanded beyond urban areas to include rural areas. Important discussion has brought the role of digital technology to pursue spatial justice in rural areas. As digital technology becomes increasingly integrated into the everyday lives of rural communities, the role of digital technology in promoting spatial justice in rural areas becomes increasingly relevant. However, the study assumes that the interplay between digital technology and spatial justice is not straightforward and requires further study. This study posits that social impact mediators, as well as structural factors are part of locally specific context shaping the dynamic relationship between digital technology, society, and space. These elements interact and manifest uniquely in each locale, causing digitalization patterns vary significantly, especially in rural areas of the Global South. This study aims to investigate how local contexts in rural areas influence the utilization of digital technology to achieve spatial justice. It examines the interplay between digital technology and spatial justice by considering structural factors and impact mediators, with a focus on Cangkingan Village, Indonesia. Originally designated by the government as an underdeveloped village, Cangkingan has been classified as a developed village following the implementation of digital village initiatives in 2019. These initiatives sought to promote the use of digital technology in public administration, community development, and public service delivery. Employing quantitative approach, this study utilized path analysis on data collected through questionnaire survey. This study found that the use of digital technology to advance spatial justice is not uniformly practiced by rural communities; rather, such utilization tends to be undertaken by individuals possessing higher class and status. The finding suggests that the local context determines the relationship between digital technology use and meaningful participation in efforts to achieve spatial justice in rural areas.

Keywords:

Rural digitalization, spatial justice, local context, mediators, structural factors





Abstract 10.9

#181 - The Use Of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles For Agricultural Area Inspections

Presenting Author: Bruno Leitão, CCDR NORTE

Co-author: Bela Azevedo, CCDR NORTE

Co-author: José Maria Lima, CCDR NORTE

Co-author: José Vieira, CCDR NORTE

Co-author: Agostinho Amorim, CCDR NORTE

Abstract:

The use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) has grown exponentially, taking on an increasingly important role across various fields, both military and civilian. This growth is driven by technological advances that provide greater autonomy, precision, and integration with geographic information systems, making UAVs valuable tools for optimizing processes and supporting data-driven decision-making.

In the agricultural sector, these devices have also become widely used, carrying out tasks that go far beyond simple observation. In aerial monitoring, UAVs allow real-time tracking of crop conditions, identifying areas with water stress or the presence of pests or diseases. This information can then be used to optimize the application of production factors, contributing to precision agriculture. Additionally, UAVs are used for precision spraying—reducing waste and environmental impacts—and even for transporting small loads, streamlining processes and reducing operational costs.

Since 2025, the Northern Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDR Norte) has been using UAVs to perform on-site physical verifications and agricultural area inspections, guided by three objectives: a) confirming crop types; b) measuring areas; c) monitoring crops (multispectral).

In this context, this work aims to evaluate the efficiency of using UAVs in the inspection of agricultural areas—particularly permanent crops—from the perspective of equipment accuracy compared to the usual use of GPS, as well as potential time savings. Without any intention of statistical representativeness, several area inspections were carried out using a UAV in locations previously inspected by GPS, comparing the time spent and the areas measured by both methods across different sizes and topographies, supporting the proper use of these devices to achieve the best results.

Keywords:

PEPAC, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, Surface Control





Abstract 10.10

#227 - Catalysing entrepreneurial ecosystems and talent attraction: rural incubators and the “right to stay”

Presenting Author: Dimitris Manoukas, Research Fellow, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DAStU), Politecnico di Milano, PhD Candidate on Youth Policies and CCIs, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences of Athens

Co-author: Ilaria Mariotti, Associate Professor of Urban and Regional Economics, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DAStU), Politecnico di Milano

Abstract:

Across the EU, rural innovation is increasingly positioned as a lever for reducing territorial disparities. Youth policy discussions add the “right to stay”, emphasizing that opportunities should not require out-migration. Rural incubators are promoted as innovation infrastructures, but evidence on their contribution to talent attraction and retention in peripheral regions remains limited. The above political and theoretical context gives rise to the following research question:

“To what extent, and through which mechanisms, do rural and peripheral incubators act as catalysts of talent-led regional development, encompassing attraction and retention of human capital, the promotion of quality employment and innovation opportunities, and the enabling of young people’s “right to stay”?”

Objectives: We investigate to what extent, and through which mechanisms, rural incubators catalyse talent-led regional development. We focus on mentoring and skills formation, network brokerage and signalling, access to finance, and knowledge spillovers, and evaluate how these translate into start-up performance, quality employment, and decisions to stay, return or relocate. We also examine enabling conditions: institutional quality, multilevel political support, and partnerships with universities, public agencies, and urban–rural innovation networks.

Methodology: To answer this question, this paper develops a structured literature review of case studies and, for a few cases (Ireland, Italy, Spain), adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis (e.g., start-up performance, employment, and demographic/talent flows, where available) with qualitative interviews and document analysis. Finally, the intersection between individual-level outcomes (careers, skills and decisions to stay or return) and ecosystem-level outcomes (network density and quality, start-up survival and embeddedness) will be analysed.

As a concluding discussion, the analysis of the cases will allow us to extract design principles and enabling conditions to guide Cohesion Policy on when and how incubators act as catalysts within regional entrepreneurial ecosystems, supporting talent-led regional development.

Keywords:

Rural incubators; talent attraction and retention; entrepreneurial ecosystems; right to stay; urban–rural innovation networks



Abstract 10.11

#234 - Assembling Digital Ecosystems in Rural Scotland: Innovation and Resilience on Small and Diversified Farms.

Presenting Author: Leanne Townsend, James Hutton Institute

Co-author: Niamh Mahon, James Hutton Institute

Co-author: Tim Pittaway, James Hutton Institute

Co-author: Christina Noble, James Hutton Institute

Abstract:

As part of the Horizon Europe-funded project CODECS (“Maximising the Co-benefits of Agricultural Digitalisation through Conducive Digital Ecosystems”), this paper examines digital transition as a spatially embedded and uneven process within rural territories. Focusing on small-scale and diversified farms in the Speyside region of North-East Scotland, the research investigates how digital practices are shaped by rural infrastructures as well as place- and practice-based relations, and how these processes contribute to rural innovation and resilience.

The paper draws on qualitative research conducted through a Living Lab approach, including participatory workshops, demonstration events, and engagement with a Scottish demonstration farm. This multi-actor participatory methodology enables the examination of everyday digital practices and knowledge exchange among farmers and other rural stakeholders.

The results challenge dominant policy narratives that portray small farms as digitally marginal due to limited scale and capital. Findings show that small-scale farms actively assemble digital ecosystems that are both locally appropriate and farm-specific, combining online platforms, social media, and small-scale technologies such as weather stations, CCTV systems, and livestock monitoring tools. These technologies support production, market access, agritourism, and community engagement, extending rural connectivity beyond physical infrastructure alone. However, persistent digital divides remain evident as uneven broadband provision, variable digital skills and perceived (social and economic) costs continue to shape differentiated capacities to benefit from digitalisation across rural space.

The paper concludes that digital transition in rural areas is best understood as a territorial and relational process rather than a uniform technological shift. It argues that Living Labs have the potential to act as socio-technical infrastructures that can mitigate digital inequalities, supporting peer-to-peer learning and the co-production of locally appropriate solutions. These insights contribute to rural geographical debates on infrastructure, innovation, and resilient rural development.

Keywords:

Digitalisation; small-scale farms; innovation; rural infrastructures; place-based practices





Abstract 10.12

#235 - Innovation in Rural Peripheral Areas: Immigrants as Flows of Human Capital

Presenting Author: Madalena Fonseca, Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto, Portugal

Abstract:

This paper examines how immigrants contribute to innovation and revitalization in Europe's rural peripheries. Traditionally viewed as peripheral or declining, rural territories are increasingly shaped by new mobilities and flows of human capital. Traditionally regarded as declining or static, these territories are increasingly shaped by new mobilities and flows of human capital. The study identifies recent migrant inflows into peripheral regions and connects them with earlier observations on counter-flows of students and young professionals moving from central to rural areas. Together, these movements illustrate how mobility—international or internal—can produce social creativity and local adaptation in spaces often seen as marginal. Far from being passive hosts, rural areas emerge as experimental communities where migration acts as a driver of economic and social innovation, challenging conventional narratives of peripherality.

Keywords:

rural innovation, international migration, Portugal, regional development, social integration.





Abstract 10.13

#264 - Living Architecture for Rural Resilience: Vernacular Wisdom, AI, and Robotics in Symbiotic Habitats

Presenting Author: Mauro Costa Couceiro, ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa / ISTAR-IUL

Co-author: Carina Vieira de Oliveira, Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação da Universidade de Coimbra

Abstract:

We are looking at the fractured landscapes of Europe—from the abandoned interior of the South to the devastated territories requiring reconstruction in Ukraine—and the scenario is often worrying. It is not merely about social disconnection; it is the sheer vulnerability of these places to external shocks, be they climate-driven wildfires or the ravages of conflict. In response, our work suggests a shift toward what we call "Symbiotic Habitats"—living architectures where the building envelope itself serves as a primary layer of protection.

The goal is to blend the wisdom of vernacular construction with the capabilities of Industry 5.0. By combining Artificial Intelligence and generative design with minimally processed local materials -think of biomass, rubble, or wood derivatives - and using robotics, we are trying to develop adaptive structures. These are not passive shelters; the "green envelopes" function as active shields. It appears that this living skin can offer intrinsic resilience, protecting inhabitants from thermal extremes and environmental hazards. Through our ongoing projects, we have been working on a framework where robotic fabrication helps optimize these endogenous resources. This approach may reduce our environmental footprint while providing a rapid, autonomous building method that seems particularly relevant for post-conflict recovery zones.

But building is only half the journey. We also employ Extended Reality (XR) tools to bring communities into the process. The hope is that by allowing residents to visualize and "play" with these sustainable structures before a single brick (of compressed earth) is laid, we can foster a genuine sense of inclusion and safety.

Initial work with our prototypes suggests that bio-integrated designs might be quite effective in mitigating risks, creating structures that are "alive" and evolve alongside their environment. Our hypothesis is that this technological mix offers a scalable path for "Smart Villages," transforming vulnerable spots into hubs of experimentation. By using advanced yet accessible tools to reconnect people with nature, we hope to contribute to rural communities—whether rebuilding or revitalizing—that are resilient, healthy, and self-sufficient.

Keywords:

Symbiotic Habitats; AI and Robotics; Post-Conflict Reconstruction; Green Envelopes; Rural Resilience





Abstract 10.14

#289 - Smart rural governance: barriers, drivers and enabling conditions

Presenting Author: Janne Sinerma, European Association for Innovation in Local Development (AEIDL)

Co-author: María Alonso-Roldán, European Association for Innovation in Local Development (AEIDL)

Co-author: Serafin Pazos-Vidal, European Association for Innovation in Local Development (AEIDL)

Abstract:

Rural areas are increasingly positioned at the intersection of digital transition, innovation, and infrastructure development, as they face accelerating socio-economic change, environmental pressures, and evolving governance frameworks. Within the European Union, these dynamics are closely linked to broader policy priorities related to resilience, sustainability, and territorial cohesion. This paper examines how participatory, research-informed approaches can support the formulation of EU-level policy recommendations that enhance the capacity of rural territories to navigate digital transformation and infrastructural change. The central objective is to explore mechanisms that improve the relevance, legitimacy, and uptake of research-based knowledge in policy processes addressing rural development.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative and participatory research design that combines structured policy analysis with multi-actor engagement. Empirical material and analytical insights are drawn from two Horizon Europe projects (RURACTIVE and FUTURAL) both focus on strengthening rural innovation, adaptive capacity, and long-term resilience through place-based and governance-oriented approaches. Research findings are synthesised to identify policy-relevant insights related to rural innovation ecosystems, digital transition, and enabling governance frameworks. These insights are subsequently examined and refined through a series of participatory workshops involving stakeholders from multiple governance levels and sectoral backgrounds. The workshops function as spaces for dialogue, validation, and mutual learning, facilitating the integration of diverse forms of knowledge and perspectives.

The findings indicate that participatory co-creation processes, as promoted in RURACTIVE and FUTURAL, contribute to stronger alignment between EU policy objectives and rural realities, reinforcing adaptive capacity and resilience in the context of digital and infrastructural transitions. By fostering structured interaction between research, policy, and practice, the approach supports more context-sensitive and implementable, and future-oriented policy orientations. The paper concludes that participatory translation of research into EU-level policy recommendations constitutes a valuable pathway for advancing resilient, innovative, and sustainable rural development in the context of ongoing digital transition.

Keywords:

EU policies, Rural innovation, Sustainable transitions, Multi-level governance, Place-based Approaches





Abstract 10.15

#299 - Bridging the digital divide in rural areas through co-creation: evidence from the GUARDIANS project

Presenting Author: Ângela Freitas, SHINE 2Europe, Lda., Coimbra; CEGOT, Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra

Co-author: Natália Machado, SHINE 2Europe, Lda.

Co-author: Carina Dantas, SHINE 2Europe, Lda., Coimbra; ICBAS, Universidade do Porto, Porto

Co-author: Emilio Terenes, CTIC Centro Tecnológico, Gijón, Asturias

Co-author: Inés Dintén, CTIC Centro Tecnológico, Gijón, Asturias

Abstract:

In the context of accelerating digital transition, small and medium-sized farms (SMFs) – as key guardians of rural territories - face a persistent digital divide shaped by uneven access to infrastructures, knowledge, and institutional support that limits their capacity to respond to environmental change, sustainability requirements and agri-environmental EU policies. One of the ways to address the digital gap and increase the adoption of technologies by SMFs is to involve these stakeholders in different stages of the process, following a co-creation methodology.

The GUARDIANS project, an EU-funded initiative, addresses this gap by fostering inclusive, human-centric digital innovation that strengthens farmers' digital maturity and long-term resilience. This work presents the co-creation methodological framework developed within GUARDIANS to support the acceptance and uptake of digital technologies among farmers. Implemented across five European countries and six pilot sites, the approach engages farming cooperatives as key governance actors, connecting SMFs operating in diverse environmental, climatic, and socio-economic contexts. It will examine how a participatory and multi-actor approach can contribute to reduce the digital divide by aligning digital innovation with farmers' real contexts, needs, and sustainability challenges in rural areas.

Methodologically, the framework integrated stakeholder mapping to capture place-based needs, regulatory environments, and socio-ethical implications of digitalisation, involving farmers, cooperatives, technology providers and policy and innovation actors. A Farmer Engagement and Acceptance Package, developed as a practical toolkit, structured co-design, ideation, farm preparation (mentoring and deployment), and digital uptake assessment. The methodology was operationalised through three Social Innovation sessions and 17 local workshops across all pilot sites, engaging 353 participants, including technology providers, cooperatives, and farmers.

Results show that co-creation strengthened the future adoption of digital solutions by identifying context-specific requirements and implementation pathways for the nine digital solutions being developed. The approach enhanced farmers' acceptance and fostered trust and ownership, highlighting the role of participatory governance and cooperatives in supporting place-based digital transition and informing future rural innovation and policy frameworks.

Keywords:

Digital divide, Small and Medium-sized Farms, Co-creation, Social Innovation, Territorial sustainability



Theme 11 - New Theory and Methods in Rural Research

Abstract 11.1

#85 - New paradigm and rural regeneration

Presenting Author: Valérie Jousseau. Institut de Géographie et d'Aménagement de l'Université de Nantes (IGARUN) – FRANCE; . Equipe de recherche CNRS 6590 – ESO Espace géographie et Société.

Abstract:

The communication I wish to present is the outcome of a long period of observation of rural territories, combined with extensive engagement with the relevant scholarly literature.

My central question is the following: as we move beyond the paradigm of thermo-industrial modernity, what role might rurality play in the world to come?

Thermo-industrial modernity has led to the marginalization of rural areas and to the dismantling of peasant agriculture. The exit from the thermo-industrial era is closely linked to the digital revolution. At present, two distinct futures are crystallizing.

The first trajectory points toward a hyper-modern future, driven by the capitalist powers of the modern era seeking to preserve their dominance. In this scenario, digital technologies serve primarily as instruments of control. This future can be summarized by the metaphor: “the world is like a computer, and humans are merely one of its bio-technical components.” Within this framework, rural areas have no future, nor does agriculture. This vision of the future is becoming increasingly dystopian. Crises follow one another, collapse is underway, and a growing number of people no longer believe in this path.

The second trajectory involves the invention of a new society outside the cognitive frameworks of thermo-industrial modernity. It advocates a “landing” within the ecological limits of the Earth system. The guiding metaphor here is that “the world is like a fragile oasis or a modern-day Noah’s Ark.” In this perspective, digital technologies serve relationships rather than control. Under these conditions, rural spaces hold significant potential for participation and regeneration. Rural territories are the places where, quietly and often invisibly, this alternative is being constructed : industrial resilience, mobilization of agrarian memories, housing, care, vernacular building knowledge, community, low-tech, etc.

We are therefore faced with two paths. The first is the intensified continuation of modernity, driven to its materialist and totalitarian abyss. Such a fall is all the more painful because modernity has carried our most powerful collective dream: the promise of an easy and carefree human life. The second path leads toward complete uncertainty—the construction of a new collective project without a predefined plan, without leaders, and without money. Both paths are difficult.

Keywords:

Post-thermo-industrial transition, Rural regeneration, Paradigms, Collective imaginaries





Abstract 11.2

#98 - Exploring the role of action research; a new method in strengthening rural viability

Presenting Author: Korrie Melis, Hanze Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen, the Netherlands, The Netherlands

Co-author: Elles Bulder, Hanze Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen, the Netherlands, The Netherlands

Abstract:

Recent research and policy analyses have highlighted persistent and, in some cases, widening inequalities in opportunities between regions in the Netherlands. Especially more urban regions do get more attention. An inventory of research and educational agendas within the socio-spatial domain at universities of applied sciences, also reveals a predominant focus on urban contexts, particularly cities and neighborhoods. Consequently, rural areas remain relatively underexplored. This paper therefore argues that there is substantial scope for action research in rural regions, , particularly in relation to strengthening rural viability.

Research groups at universities of applied sciences are characterized by a practice-oriented research paradigm, with a strong emphasis on applied rather than theoretical inquiry. Action research constitutes a central methodological approach here. This paper presents the findings of an exploratory study examining the ways in which action research can contribute to the development of viable rural environments. This because one of the underlying processes of action research is empowerment of individuals and communities. To this end, two case studies from the Netherlands are analyzed: the Innovatiewerkplaats Eems Dollard Regio in Transitie (EDRiT) and the Just Prepare Living Lab Gemert-Bakel.

The findings indicate that, in light of the cumulative and interrelated challenges confronting rural regions and communities across the European Union, action research conducted by universities of applied sciences holds considerable potential for addressing rural issues while simultaneously contributing to the enhancement of rural viability. This potential is further reinforced when research projects are developed through co-creation with local stakeholders, including municipal authorities and citizen-led initiatives, thereby ensuring that knowledge production is collaborative and contextually embedded.

Keywords:

action research, viability, practice-oriented





Abstract 11.3

#115 - Participatory Action Research as instrument for Bridging Experience and Expertise in Context-Sensitive Rural Planning

Presenting Author: Hiska Ubels, PhD, Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen, Netherlands

Abstract:

This study examines Participatory Action Research (PAR) as both a research approach and a planning instrument in a long-term spatial restructuring program in a rural town in the Northern Netherlands, aimed at enhancing socio-spatial liveability through neighbourhood redevelopment. The central challenge was achieving meaningful, inclusive planning outcomes by integrating residents' lived, experiential knowledge with multidisciplinary professional expertise. This in order to generate richer and more innovative outcomes and to ensure the legitimacy of decisions, particularly as planning outcomes directly shape residents' daily living environments.

In consultation with the municipality a multi-method PAR design was employed, combining resident-led photovoice walks with participatory observation of institutional planning deliberations. Complementary methods included exploratory walking interviews with the professional actors active in the neighbourhood, informal conversations with residents, and participation in municipality-led expert advisory groups. Photovoice and informal engagement enabled residents to articulate concerns, ideas, and experiential knowledge, while expert insights and institutional deliberations were incorporated to align lived experiences with policy rationales. This approach allowed PAR to function as a practical planning instrument that fosters co-production of knowledge, inclusivity, and decision-making that is both effective and legitimate.

Findings show that the researcher acted as a knowledge broker, bridging between residents and involved professional actors which contributed to creative and context-sensitive planning outcomes. Photovoice and informal interactions stimulated constructive dialogue, enhanced resident engagement and awareness of their living environment, and promoted their public-oriented perspectives. The researcher's independence was pivotal in building trust and connecting everyday life with institutional processes.

The study concludes that methodologically embedded PAR can generate robust, inclusive, and contextually valid contributions to rural socio-spatial planning. Integrating local experiential knowledge with professional expertise, using PAR as both a research and planning instrument, supports richer, more creative, and legitimate outcomes that directly impact residents' daily lives.

Keywords:

Participatory Action Research (PAR)- rural liveability- context sensitive planning-resident engagement-knowledge co-production





Abstract 11.4

#133 - A Methodological Framework to Prioritise Mountain Villages for Rural Revitalisation: Evidence from Aboboreira, Marão and Montemuro (NW Portugal)

Presenting Author: José Rio Fernandes, FLUP/CEGOT

Co-author: Pedro Chamusca, FLUP/CEGOT/CECS

Co-author: Ângela Silva, FLUP

Abstract:

Mountain villages in ultra-peripheral, very low-density rural areas face persistent depopulation and ageing, raising the question of how to define selective, place-based investments with maximum territorial impact. This paper presents a replicable methodology—developed in the “Aldeias com Futuro” pilot (2014–2015)—to identify villages with higher revitalisation potential and to support strategic policy options. The approach follows a successive approximation design with three phases. (i) Pre-selection filters all villages in the three mountain ranges using altitude (>600 m), excentricity (>10 km from municipal seat), and population (>50 residents), excluding settlements failing at least two criteria. (ii) Selection combines statistical data and intensive fieldwork: resident interviews; inventory and georeferencing of resources; land tenure/use mapping (cultivation, grazing, forestry, fallow); and detailed assessment of infrastructures and collective facilities. Two complementary selection exercises are applied: a normalised composite index using all collected variables, and a “key-criteria” screening (11 indicators) covering society, territory, economy and environment. (iii) Pilot study operationalises three development scenarios (“wait and see”, “prepare for depopulation”, “act to develop”) and a multi-dimensional value system (social, environmental, economic), scored on a four-level scale to align interventions with local assets. The methodology differentiates village profiles across ranges and highlights how scenario choice should be driven by the village value system, improving transparency and comparability in rural investment decisions. We conclude that a structured, mixed-method and spatially explicit protocol can strengthen evidence-informed prioritisation of politic decision and policies options for mountain villages, balancing efficiency with territorial equity and supporting integrated rural revitalisation strategies.

Keywords:

mountain villages; rural revitalisation; multi-criteria selection; scenario-based planning; Portugal.



Abstract 11.5

#141 - Operationalising Landscape in Participatory Rural Greening: A Participatory Action Research Approach in the Northern Netherlands

Presenting Author: Mark Sekuur, University of Groningen & Hanze University of Applied Sciences

Co-author: Hiska Ubels, Hanze University of Applied Sciences

Co-author: Theo Spek, University of Groningen

Co-author: Elles Bulder, Hanze University of Applied Sciences

Abstract:

Recent debates in rural development suggest a growing interest in integrating landscape-based knowledge into participatory decision-making. This study contributes to this discussion by examining how landscape—understood as the interplay between human actions, natural processes, and soil systems—can be systematically incorporated into citizen participation processes aimed at greening rural areas.

Although landscape-inclusive rural development is increasingly promoted in policy and practice, there is limited methodological understanding of how it can be meaningfully embedded in participatory decision-making and how such processes can be designed. Consequently, landscape-based knowledge often remains implicit, fragmented, or subordinate within participatory initiatives. This study addresses this gap by developing empirically grounded insights into landscape-inclusive participatory approaches. It is based on case studies in rural areas of the Northern Netherlands and it offers a transferable methodological approach for embedding landscape in participatory rural planning.

The research adopts Participatory Action Research (PAR) as its core methodology, given its capacity to support empowerment through iterative, reflexive, and interactive research and design cycles. The quintuple helix framework is used as a theoretical lens, conceptualising the natural environment as an active stakeholder alongside other actors. This is operationalised through a hybrid research design that combines qualitative participatory methods with landscape-based data, expert knowledge, and proxy representations of landscape dynamics in multi-stakeholder planning settings.

Preliminary findings indicate that the explicit integration of landscape-based knowledge leads to clearer and more coherent rural greening strategies. It improves decision-making by aligning sectoral perspectives, clarifying shared problem definitions, and making trade-offs between land use, ecological processes, and local priorities explicit. Through iterative PAR cycles of co-creation, reflection, and intervention, shared landscape knowledge is used to structure dialogue and decision-making, and fostering cross-stakeholder learning. This demonstrates PAR's value not only as a research method but also as an innovative governance approach for landscape-inclusive rural development.

Keywords:

Participatory Action Research; Quintuple Helix, Landscape-inclusive participation; Place-specific mechanisms





Abstract 11.6

#150 - Capturing rich qualitative data to enhance the understanding of emotions experienced in a community owned woodland, Alford, Scotland UK.

Presenting Author: Claire Hardy, James Hutton Institute

Co-author: Raynae Dumpfrey, James Hutton Institute

Co-author: Sharon Flanigan, James Hutton Institute

Co-author: Leanne Townsend, James Hutton Institute

Abstract:

This novel method has been developed to capture a rich narrative of emotions from participants during a visit to a community owned rural woodland. The emotional mapping method has been re-designed to collect qualitative data from visitors during an in-person visit to the woodland to provide data that can support future Nature-based solution (NBS) co-development. The novel approach gives insight into key affordances for humans and non-humans in the woodland. The rich map generated provides guidance for co-developing new NBS using place based attachment and identifying key areas to be conserved. Emotional mapping has been used in urban spaces to link GIS maps to peoples experiences, stimulating discourse between citizens and municipalities that own and manage a space. The data captured is often a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data gathered using a survey, that collects limited qualitative context around responses. Here we explore a Living Lab from the COEVOLVERS Horizon Europe project, community owned woodland in Scotland, currently managed by a Trust that seeks to foster enhanced stewardship. Currently the method has been used in a pilot study gathering reflections from residents (n=6) and visiting international researchers (n=15) during an in-person participatory walk. Participants were asked to record emotions at sites identified by community members as significant. The reflections were, gathered and analysed to produce a rich emotional map of areas that elicit emotions. The method will be further trailed by inviting community members to participate with data collection. The results show a connection to nature and identify areas of affordances that can be further enhanced by positive stewardship. The method identifies a novel approach engaged stewardship of the woodland creating a resilient rural space future proofed for climate change and extreme weather events.

Keywords:

Affordances; stewardship; emotional mapping; Nature-based solutions; emotional mapping





Abstract 11.7

#152 - The role of more-than-human approaches for rural municipal planning- Operationalising Actor-Network Theory (ANT) in local water management in Cornillon-de-Trièves/ France

Presenting Author: Julia Grosinger, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Abstract:

The global political, climate, and ecological crises profoundly affect rural water governance by reshaping human and more-than-human relations. Extreme weather events, disruptions of the web of life, and shifting frameworks of local social-ecological management transform how water is governed within these territories.

Local contextualised strategies that extend local planning to more- than human constellations of relationships can counter these long- and short term social and ecological challenges. Relational approaches, such as Actor-Network Theory (ANT) by the philosopher Bruno Latour allow ontologically to expand the water governance to non-human entities. We focus on Cornillon-en-Trieves, (~170 inhabitants), a mountainous commune in the French Alps where water dynamics are shaped by high elevation, seasonal variability und fragmented water governance.

In collaboration with the French artistic research collective S-composition, we contribute to an exploratory methodology incorporating affect-based elements to identify and map non-human actors in local water management. This transdisciplinary approach relies on citizen-led interviews (N=50) to probe personal concerns around water governance. First, participants identify diverse more-than-human actors and entities, then analyse and structure the resulting “web of water” in collective workshops. Second, results are communicated via community mapping (e.g., collage techniques) and guided walks using varied tools. Third, we evaluate the approach’s suitability based on its tangible impacts, such as shifts in water governance.

Our research develops an adaptive methodological framework that broadens the perspective for rural municipalities to integrate aspects such as social inter- and intragenerational justice, interspecies solidarity and social-ecological long-term resilience into local planning. More-than-human ontologies can correct participatory approaches’ frequent bias toward immediate social issues at the expense of long-term ecological concerns. Furthermore, we analyse to what extent this approach can co-create territorialised knowledge and unravel subtle sensibilities.

Keywords:

Actor-network theory, rural water governance, transdisciplinary approaches, affect theory





Abstract 11.8

#177 - When Rural Spain Becomes Visible: Media Coverage, Spatial Narratives and Depopulation (1996–2024)

Presenting Author: Jaume Pla-Bañuls, University of Valencia

Co-author: Javier Esparcia Pérez, University of Valencia

Abstract:

Rural depopulation is a widespread phenomenon across most developed countries and is particularly pronounced in southern European countries such as Portugal, Spain and Italy. Demographic decline entails structural consequences that intensify over time, generating self-reinforcing dynamics that are difficult to reverse and leading to a progressive loss of territorial visibility. In Spain, a series of cultural, media and institutional milestones have contributed to the incorporation of depopulation into the public and political agenda, particularly through the written press. Parting from Communication Geography's theory, which conceives the media as key actors in the symbolic production of territories and in the spatial construction of public problems, it is essential to analyse not only when media attention increases, but also how rural areas are represented during periods of heightened visibility. In this context, the present study examines whether media coverage addresses key structural dimensions of rural areas (such as basic services, housing, mobility or the environment) and how these dimensions are articulated across space and time. Methodologically, the study combines manual and automated classification through a semi-supervised training model applied to a corpus of 11.423 press articles published between 1996 and 2024 in regional newspapers across Spain. Quantitative and content analyses show that there are significant differences in their spatial and temporal treatment, with uneven attention paid to certain dimensions depending on periods of increased media coverage. A complementary qualitative analysis reveals that, alongside a faithful representation of the structural problems affecting rural areas, a narrative partially linked to the rural idyll imaginary persists. Overall, the findings highlight the need to incorporate innovative theoretical and methodological approaches to analyse a phenomenon with a long academic tradition, underscoring the value of Communication Geography in understanding how rural territories are constructed through the media and how this construction shapes both academic debate and political action.

Keywords:

Depopulation; media coverage; Communication Geography; Spain.





Abstract 11.9

#204 - What's new in the research on new entrants in agriculture?

Presenting Author: Sara Mikolič, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Geography

Abstract:

Since 2015, research on new entrants in agriculture has expanded rapidly, reflecting growing concerns over generational renewal, structural change, and innovation in agri-food systems. This study aims to analyse the state of the art in research on new entrants in agriculture through a combined bibliometric and systematic literature review. The analysis covers 180 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025, retrieved from the Web of Science database and spanning a wide range of subject areas, including agricultural economics, geography, sociology, environmental science, etc.

Bibliometric analysis reveals a clear post-2015 increase in publication intensity and identifies key journals, disciplinary clusters, and evolving research themes. The systematic review allows for a deeper qualitative synthesis of the literature. The results identify several dominant theoretical and conceptual approaches: 1) structural perspectives on agricultural transformation; 2) succession- and farm life-course-oriented frameworks; 3) entrepreneurship-based approaches; and 4) concepts on farmer identity and social representations of agriculture. At the same time, the analysis highlights persistent conceptual ambiguity in defining who is a new entrant, with terms such as new entrant, newcomer, new farmer, beginning farmer, and young farmer often used interchangeably. The review further synthesises how entry models (e.g. succession-based, non-familial, hybrid) and business models (e.g. conventional, diversified, alternative agri-food networks) of new entrants are conceptualised across the literature.

The field is characterized by a strong prevalence of applied and policy-oriented studies. Many contributions lack a clearly articulated theoretical framework and instead draw implicitly on the broader literature on generational renewal in agriculture, often combining multiple conceptual perspectives. Methodologically, literature is dominated by cross-sectional quantitative analyses and qualitative case studies, while comparative analyses of different types of new entrants, longitudinal approaches, and explicit examinations of enabling environments remain scarce.

Keywords:

New entrants in agriculture; Generational renewal; Agriculture; Systematic literature review; Bibliometrics





Abstract 11.10

#211 - Who Enables Change? Beyond bottom-up to multi-level governance in rural living labs

Presenting Author: Margaret Currie, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Co-author: Ruth Wilson, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Co-author: Christina Noble, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Co-author: Jack Rendall, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Co-author: Sophie Miller, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Abstract:

Living labs are increasingly being applied as a method in rural research. Definitions of living labs vary but they all share commonalities such as co-creation, multi-level stakeholder involvement, and spaces for innovation (see EnoLL, 2025). They allow researchers the potential to facilitate as well as observe change in rural communities. While increasingly oriented toward co-production and multi-actor networks, these approaches remain fundamentally neo-endogenous in that they prioritise bottom-up agency by encouraging communities to architect solutions to their own localised challenges. This has limitations similar to observations about community resilience made by Mackinnon and Derickson (2012) in that it assumes that communities are empowered to make such changes which may advantage some places to the detriment of others. In this paper, we consider a novel application of living labs to suit a more nexogeneous (Bock, 2015) approach which assumes that living labs should be enacted at all levels of governance to enable as well as to empower communities. We present how such an approach fits with and adds to relevant and contemporary concepts such as resilience, multi-actor approaches, co-production and theory of change. In this paper, we present a typology of how living labs have been implemented in the past. We then outline our own approach, drawing on our experiences in eight living labs across rural Scotland. Finally, we discuss the potential for this novel application of living labs to move rural geography research agendas forward.

Keywords:

Method, rural, living labs, multi-governance, typology





Abstract 11.11

#212 - Negotiating the Everyday Ethics of Rural Living Labs: Participation, Power and Practice

Presenting Author: Ruth Wilson, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Co-author: Christina Noble, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Co-author: Margaret Currie, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Co-author: Jack Rendall, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Co-author: Sophie Miller, Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Department, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland

Abstract:

Living labs are increasingly considered an effective approach to addressing the complex, interlinked challenges facing rural areas, empowering communities through an ethos of participation and co-creation (Zavratnik et al. 2019). However, while they aim to foster resilience and innovation, living labs often operate within – and produce – intricate social landscapes where the power dynamics between researchers, participants and stakeholders are often opaque and require careful negotiation (Bravaglieri et al. 2025).

This paper explores the “everyday ethics” of rural living labs, moving beyond formal institutional ethical standards to examine micro-negotiations of consent, participation, data ownership and impact in rural settings (Hayfield 2022). It addresses the tension between top-down research agendas and the bottom-up decision-making essential for genuine community ownership and legitimacy, seeking to understand how researchers and practitioners navigate known and unknown inequalities when implementing research methods in communities with sometimes fragile infrastructures and small populations.

Drawing on the experiences of a team of researchers who have been running eight living labs across rural Scotland over four years, the paper offers qualitative insights into the negotiated processes that occur when research models and agendas meet local cultures. The paper argues that, for rural living labs to be truly inclusive and sustainable, a paradigm shift is needed. Understandings of research ethics must transcend formal protocols to encompass a reflexive awareness and sensitive negotiation of the dynamics of rural communities, including the transformative changes introduced by the research process itself.

Keywords:

Living labs, ethics, reflexive practice, community participation





Abstract 11.12

#214 - How do we get there? Using Visual Ethnography to study Perceptions and Lived Experiences of Accessibility

Presenting Author: Suzan Christiaanse, Economic Geography, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen

Abstract:

Accessibility of education, health care, sports, cultural and transport services remains a pressing issue in rural regions across Europe. While policy frameworks often relate the value of facilities and services to proximity and objective measures of accessibility, residents lived experiences are more complex. In the Netherlands rural residents with access to a car report few functional barriers, but people with mobility limitations face growing challenges due to reduced public transport and the closure of facilities and services. Moreover, local facilities do not only hold functional value but also social, symbolic, and cultural significance as “third places” where community life takes place. Psychological mechanisms such as loss aversion and place attachment contribute to strong emotional responses when facilities or services close, intertwining accessibility concerns with broader narratives of attachment, identity, community, wellbeing and regional decline. These dimensions are, however, insufficiently represented in current accessibility metrics. This study aims to clarify how subjective perceptions of accessibility are shaped by lived experiences, by doing visual ethnographic research in the North of the Netherlands. We focus on people with mobility limitations in rural areas, and will question experiences of loss but also discuss what could constitute potential improvement of accessibility. We will also organize co-creative workshops with policy makers to discuss findings and shift the policy agenda. The overall project is akin to ‘design ethnography’ which is a “blended practice” that is inherently collaborative and interdisciplinary (Pink et al., 2022). We would like to discuss the focus and preliminary findings of this two-year study.

Keywords:

Visual Ethnography; Design Ethnography; rural services; perceived accessibility; mobility inequality





Abstract 11.13

#230 - Critical reflections on public policy engagement: approaches to co-design in rural place-based research

Presenting Author: Karen Keaveney, University College Dublin

Co-author: Adwoa Serwaa Ofori, University College Dublin

Abstract:

Rural geography has a tradition of place-based, locality studies, underlined by particularly strong linkages with policy and policy-makers for rural development. Very often rural researchers and policy makers have strong relationships and networks of policy and practice, which on the surface is positive and exemplifies engagement. However, these close relationship can often hide the micro-politics and power dynamics at play nationally and locally (McAreavey, 2006; Shih et al, 2020). This paper emerges from a recently completed research project on participatory democracy in rural Ireland. The study examined how rural citizens can engage with digital data to understand where they live, and how they can contribute to local decision-making. The paper explores methodologies for engagement, from the starting point of developing a project proposal to the end point of establishing evidence for policy. The project took a multiscale approach by working with communities and agencies in a local case study area, strengthening this with support from national and international policy bodies. The paper will critically explore the set of methodologies used to ensure community voices were heard, and to facilitate peer learning, exchange and co-design. The paper is presented as a case study of methods to approach place-based research, and will critically reflect on the realities of a multi-actor approach in a setting that could be construed as 'cosy' but with inherent tension and power relations.

Keywords:

Policy; rural politics; co-design; participative methods; power relations.





Abstract 11.14

#302 - A Multispectral Image Analysis Approach For Yield Estimation Of Traditional Cereals To Help Save The Circus Pygargus

Presenting Author: Bruno Leitão, CCNR NORTE

Co-author: Bela Azevedo, CCNR NORTE

Co-author: Rita Costa, INIAV

Co-author: Nuno Pinheiro, INIAV

Co-author: Cláudio Paredes, ESA-IPVC

Co-author: João Lopes, CCNR NORTE

Co-author: Célia Gradíssimo, CCNR NORTE

Abstract:

The Montagu's harrier (*Circus pygargus*), also known as the Eurasian harrier, is a bird that nests on the ground in open areas, and its population is currently undergoing a marked decline. In this context, the LIFE SOS Pygargus project (<https://www.sospygargus.pt/>), co-funded by the European Union's LIFE Programme, brings together conservationists, scientists, farmers, and public and private entities with the goal of preventing the extinction of the Montagu's harrier.

As one of the main objectives of this project is to promote an increase in cereal-growing areas and the use of cereal and forage varieties that are more compatible with the ecological needs of this species, its partners carried out trials during the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 agricultural seasons to evaluate traditional varieties of cereal species - oats, soft wheat, rye, and triticale. These trials took place at the CCNR Norte Innovation Hub, located at Quinta do Valongo in Mirandela, with the aim of identifying the species/varieties best suited to the reproductive cycle of the Montagu's harrier, those most adapted to the region's climatic conditions, more resistant to diseases, and therefore more productive and with higher nutritional value.

The present work results from the spatio-temporal monitoring of micro and macro plot trials of these traditional cereal varieties during the 2025/2026 agricultural season, from germination to harvest, using a drone equipped with a multispectral camera. The aim was to monitor vegetation development indicators - NDVI, GNDVI, and NDRE - and relate them to the productivity (kg/ha) of each variety and species.

The results obtained help support the quality and productivity indicators recorded in field trials and contribute to establishing regional models that enable the use of rapid information-collection methods to support farmers in choosing varieties which, at the same time, promote the conservation of the Montagu's harrier in its habitat.

Keywords:

Yield Estimation, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, Traditional Cereals, Multispectral Image, *Circus pygargus*



Theme 12 - Sustainable Development Goals and Synergies for Rural Areas

Abstract 12.1

#30 - Mountain agriculture is a vital socio-ecological resource for sustainable development

Presenting Author: Douglas Bardsley, School of Society and Culture, Adelaide University

Abstract:

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, along with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15: Life on Land aim to ensure that 30% of the world's terrestrial area is conserved by 2030. Much of the heavy lifting to implement this global target will fall to upland regions, many of which are the poorest regions of the planet and are already experiencing rapid rural depopulation and agricultural decline. The paper critically examines how rural mountain communities are engaging with those sustainability goals to retain or develop traditional agro-ecosystems.

Objectives and Methodology

The author's socio-ecological research applying a range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies in the Swiss Alps; Eastern Anatolia, Turkey; the Himalaya, Nepal; the Sumatran uplands, Indonesia; and the Musgrave and Mt Lofty Ranges in Australia is reviewed. All of the studies suggest that vital resources could be lost if natural systems are promoted or regenerate naturally to simply replace traditional upland socio-ecosystems.

Results and Discussion

Mountain agricultural systems are experiencing waves of decline. Agrarian transitions are particularly rapid in mountainous rural communities that struggle to compete with other areas that have natural advantages of scale, proximity and ease of production. Socio-ecological analytical tools are used to describe the challenges of meeting SGDs 1: No poverty; 2: Zero Hunger; 8: Decent work and economic growth; 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, 13: Climate Action and other elements of SGD 15 if unique forms of rural development are not promoted around the globe to regenerate mountain agro-ecosystems.

Conclusions

The loss of diverse mountain agro-ecosystems is an under-recognised problem because much of the socio-ecological complexity that remains across the globe is regenerated with upland agrobiodiversity, local experimentation in ecological resilience, and renewal of rural socio-cultural complexity.

Keywords:

mountain, upland, rural, agriculture, agrarian transition





Abstract 12.2

#55 - More-Than-Human Framework in Urban and Rural Food Markets

Presenting Author: Stanislavs Šeiko, Baltic Studies Centre

Abstract:

Urban and rural food markets are usually understood purely as economic spaces, yet they also function as multispecies contact zones where humans and non-human animals, such as rats or birds, coexist. These animals are typically framed as biosecurity risks or pests, managed through removal rather than through any ethical consideration. Existing nature-based solutions in market management tend to remain anthropocentric, prioritising human interests while excluding other species from the design process. This study, framed as participatory action research, asks how food system science might be broadened to incorporate a non-anthropocentric perspective and the potential transformation of everyday interactions between market vendors and synanthropic species.

Methodologically, the research treats food markets as “more-than-human” assemblages requiring tailored tools to capture multispecies relations, structured across three phases. In diagnostic phase narratives from territory lab of FOSSNET project were used to map where human-animal coexistence at markets becomes problematic. A participatory phase involved students from European universities, under the FORTHEM mobility programme in Latvia, who applied the Theory of Change framework to develop guidelines moving beyond simple exclusion of animals, benefiting from an outsider perspective relatively free of local politics. Finally, an expert review phase saw Baltic Studies Centre researchers, selected for expertise in food systems and transdisciplinary research, validate the guidelines by acting as animal advocates.

The findings indicate that food markets are sites of complex, context-dependent cohabitation rather than purely human economic spaces, and that current exclusionary practices could be reworked to treat synanthropic animals as enriching rather than threatening. Advancing this more-than-human approach depends on human advocates who interpret animals' ecological roles and welfare needs, granting them indirect agency in governance debates around hygiene and infrastructure. The participatory, transdisciplinary design is identified as central to the study's validity, positioning markets as testing grounds for more reflexive, ethical governance.

Keywords:

food systems, nature-based solutions, food markets, more-than-human, synanthropic animals



Abstract 12.3

#76 - Rewilding, commoditization and anti-speciesism : the post-neolithic convergence that challenges the agroecological perspective

Presenting Author: Yvon Le Caro, Université Rennes 2 / Espaces et sociétés (CNRS)

Abstract:

Since the Neolithic revolution (12,000 BP), farmers have had a recognized role: feeding the population. The modernization of agriculture has reinforced this role of feeding a global population that has grown tenfold and become urbanized. Since the 1970s agroecology is gradually taking shape as a credible alternative, offering a postmodern perspective on food, landscapes, and life.

Few see the head-on collision that is about to overturn this debate. Based on a review of international literature, weak signals identified by the author over the past 15 years, and a 2026 online questionnaire survey of 100 agroecological farms in France, this paper highlights the upheaval caused by the emergence of forces that challenge the Neolithic contract and deny agriculture (whether peasant, modern, or agroecological) its legitimacy to feed people.

Three schools of thought and action share this denial:

- By accepting food as a commodity, **commoditization** entrusts speculators with the task of making food available, farmers becoming suppliers of raw materials.
- Criticizing agriculture for taking up space that should be left to wilderness, opposing land-sparing to land-sharing, **rewilding** disqualifies agricultural space.
- Denying the legitimacy of all forms of animal husbandry, **anti-speciesism** and its vegan adherents condemn mixed crop/husbandry farming, driver of many sustainable agricultural systems.

These three trends are ideologically rooted in the United Kingdom and then in the United States, and are currently being driven around the world by forces (urban, 'white', capitalist) that are objectively converging towards what we call **post-Neolithism**.

Agroecology is severely undermined by these post-neolithic approaches. Its production structures are ill-suited to speculative price fluctuations. Its semi-natural spaces are the first targets for renaturation. And without livestock farming, it is difficult to conceive of sustainable agronomy. Thus, peasantry, agribusiness and agroecology have to put their differences aside and come together to rebuild the legitimacy of agriculture.

Keywords:

Land sparing, food commoditization, anti-speciesism, post-neolithism, farm postmodernity





Abstract 12.4

#144 - Synergies between Water, Energy and Sustainable Development Goals in Rural Agrotourism: A Collaborative Case Study

Presenting Author: Cristina Sousa Coutinho Calheiros, CIIMAR/CIMAR LA, Interdisciplinary Centre of Marine and Environmental Research, University of Porto, Terminal de Cruzeiros do Porto de Leixões

Abstract:

Water management is one of the major challenges of the 21st century and a key priority within the United Nations 2030 Agenda, particularly for small and medium-scale agricultural systems that are highly vulnerable to climate change. In rural contexts, these challenges are amplified in agrotourism activities, where ensuring water quality for human consumption and agricultural use is essential, alongside the need for energy sustainability through renewable sources.

This paper presents a collaborative research and innovation project developed between higher education institutions and an agrotourism entity, highlighting synergies among multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A case study from a rural agrotourism unit in northern Portugal is examined through field monitoring, water quality sampling, and technical performance assessment, supported by quantitative analysis of physicochemical parameters and system efficiency. A circular, biotechnology-based approach for the treatment and reuse of domestic and winery wastewater was implemented. This nature-based system enables effective water treatment and reuse, contributing to integrated water resource management, reduced primary water consumption, and improved environmental performance. Floating wetland islands were also installed in a stormwater pond to promote local biodiversity, being assessed biodiversity indexes.

In parallel, renewable energy solutions were adopted, including photovoltaic solar panels and a small-scale hydropower system integrated into a restored traditional water mill. Results were evaluated through operational performance indicators. The project demonstrates how place-based collaborative initiatives can generate environmental, economic, and social benefits, fostering SDG synergies related to clean water, affordable and clean energy, climate action, and sustainable rural development. Community involvement played a central role in disseminating good practices and reinforcing territorial cohesion.

Keywords:

Rural agrotourism; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Integrated water management; Nature-based solutions; Collaborative projects





Abstract 12.5

#208 - Agriculture and sustainability in Brazil: Challenges and perspectives from distinct realities

Presenting Author: Leandro Dias de Oliveira, Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

Co-author: Victor Tinoco Souza, Ministry of Agrarian Development and Family Farming of Brazil

Co-author: Norma da Silva Rocha Maciel, Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

Co-author: Erick Ribeiro Magalhães Portes, Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

Abstract:

Terms such as sustainable development and sustainability, celebrated through international frameworks such as Our Common Future (1987), Agenda 21 (1992) and Agenda 2030, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, as well as UN conferences including Rio-92 and Rio+20, remain conceptually imprecise and difficult to measure. Despite this, they are widely applied across diverse contexts, with subjects, actions, methods and results that differ greatly from one another.

Sustainable agriculture reflects these same tensions. It is typically defined as agricultural production oriented toward long term environmental stewardship, seeking to conserve natural resources and biodiversity while minimizing impacts on soil and water. In Brazil, however, the adoption of sustainability practices is shaped by stark inequalities in farm size, producers' social conditions and the structure of agricultural subsidies. These disparities make it essential to examine how sustainability has been interpreted and operationalized within the agricultural sector.

To address this, the study analyzes three contrasting cases. The first concerns corporate agricultural sustainability, represented by Ambev, a Brazilian multinational within the Anheuser Busch InBev group and the largest beer producer. Because its supply chain relies on agricultural inputs such as barley, rice and guaraná, the company has pursued decarbonization initiatives, regenerative agriculture programs and farmer training efforts. The second case focuses on sustainable family farming, rooted in small scale production of staple foods such as beans, corn, cassava and fruit. This model supports national food security and is tied to social equity goals, including poverty reduction, inequality and mitigation of out migration. The third case examines agroecological production among traditional peoples, grounded in ancestral knowledge and characterized by diversified cropping systems, integrated plant animal management and practices embedded within tropical ecosystems.

By comparing three contexts, the study aims to clarify how sustainability discourse and practice take shape in Brazilian agriculture and to contribute to debates about models that are environmentally sound, grounded and capable of promoting equitable development.

Keywords:

Sustainable agriculture, sustainability discourse, Brazilian agriculture, agroecology, family farming





Abstract 12.6

#213 - Different Contexts, Shared Struggles: A Comparative Analysis of Barriers Facing Women in Agriculture across the Global North and South

Presenting Author: Cynthia Olumba, Cranfield University

Co-author: Hannah Budge, The James Hutton Institute

Abstract:

Women are vital for food security, rural livelihoods, and climate resilience, yet persistent gender inequalities continue to constrain their opportunities and agency. Despite growing research on gender biases in agriculture, few studies offer cross-regional comparative insights, limiting understanding of how structural barriers intersect with context-specific challenges and restricting the transfer of lessons across diverse settings. This study addresses this gap by examining the barriers faced by women farmers in two contrasting contexts: the Scottish Islands (Global North) and Southeast Nigeria (Global South). Data were collected through interviews and focus groups with women farmers and analysed using thematic analysis. Findings reveal both shared and context-specific challenges. Across contexts, women face discriminatory gender norms, the dual burden of agricultural and domestic work, and systemic biases in access to key resources including land and credit. However, these barriers manifest differently. Findings from Southeast Nigeria show that patriarchal inheritance systems leave women reliant on revocable, negotiated land access through husbands, while cultural norms reinforce dependence. Women also encounter stereotypes portraying them as unreliable borrowers and tenants. In the Scottish Islands, entrenched patriarchal succession practices and systemic bias in land rental markets limit women's land access, and assumptions about who "belongs" in farming undermine women-focused training programmes. A context-specific barrier in the Global South setting is the prevalence of low-mechanisation farming, which disproportionately limit women's participation and productivity. The study identifies actionable pathways to address these barriers, offering insights for policies and interventions that promote women's empowerment, enhance agricultural productivity, and support sustainable rural development.

Keywords:

Gendered barriers, farming, Nigeria, United Kingdom, women





Abstract 12.7

#229 - The potential of local products in climate action. The case of rural tourist destinations

Presenting Author: Xosé A. Armesto López, Department of Geography. University of Barcelona

Co-author: M. Belén Gómez Martín, Department of Geography. University of Barcelona

Co-author: Martí Cors Iglesias, Department of Geography. University of Barcelona

Abstract:

The western Catalan Pyrenees, like other European mountain areas, suffered a transformation by both endogenous factors (depopulation, changes in land use, the shift towards a service-based economy, etc.) and exogenous factors (geopolitical circumstances, climate change, etc.). In this context, local or regionally sourced foods have emerged as drivers of endogenous development, fulfilling various functions (environmental, economic, social, and cultural). All of those points of view are important not only to define rural mountain areas but also to evaluate the state of preservation or the risk of socio-environmental resilience in a context of global change.

To achieve a part of the complexity of understanding rural mountain areas this proposal intends to explore the relationship between climate change beliefs and decarbonisation opinions and actions of restaurateurs regarding this subject. This study explored restaurateurs' perceptions of local products in relation to the decarbonisation processes of their businesses by identifying these dimensions (environmental, economic, social and cultural). To reach this goal, the authors employed a qualitative approach, using in-depth interviews with a selection of restaurateurs considered key informants.

The research findings reflect the participants' impressions regarding the decarbonisation options used in their businesses, the barriers they identified to decarbonizing the sector, and the opportunities they recognized. The analysis also revealed different considerations in some items depending on the type of establishment (Bars, Restaurants and Hotel-Restaurants) and allowed for the calibration of the weight that local products have and can have as a partial tool in the fight against climate crisis.

Keywords:

Local food, rural tourism, climate action.





Abstract 12.8

#293 - Facilitating local community research partnerships through sustainability focussed governance and local partnership : addressing diverse challenges of rural wellbeing and social inclusion

Presenting Author: Dr Eifiona Thomas Lane, Prifysgol Bangor University, Wales

Co-author: Dr Owain Lewis, Together Forward and Aber Ubi

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Abstract:

This participatory study explores the processes and outcomes of supporting co-produced community research in a range of villages and towns in rural Wales and documents the challenges of organising limited capacity for inclusive voluntary action and community resilience building.

Within the unique context for sustainable development that has been legally established by Welsh Government in the Future Wellbeing Goals (FWG), this paper shares original findings from a range of community research projects facilitated by the Local Policy and Innovation Partnership Cymru Wledig / Rural Wales £5M project. Collaboration between community partners, academic and key thematic partners following two funding rounds, the second competitive, established internal funding for specific rural towns and villages to address local challenges such as community spaces and youth inclusion, rural transport, food growing and access are described. The 11 funded communities are all located in scenic areas such as Eryri and Arfodir Penfro National Parks, and Pen Llyn Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, all of which, whilst not recognised for lived experiences of poverty, experience narrow seasonal casualised employment. Seasonal low pay tourism and youth outmigration is common across these communities exacerbated by housing insecurity due to short term holiday lets and high housing prices. Livelihoods in several of the case study communities are impacted by current and future agricultural change and rising energy costs and in some traditional farming areas growing trends of mental ill-health.

This presentation presents findings from a range of participatory case studies and maps these projects focussed on addressing some of the local challenges across the desired FWG policy outcomes. This enables the synergies between local community scale research outcomes and Wales's sustainability policy to be investigated using qualitative place based analysis

Using information from stakeholders involved, the research also reflects on the success (or otherwise), of knowledge sharing and academic mentoring that aims to support these communities in self-organising research capacity and skills as a means to empower promote wellbeing and local resilience.

Keywords:

community research, rural sustainability, local partnership, Welsh Governance.





Abstract 12.9

#315 - RuSTIC: A Social-Ecological Model for Localizing the SDGs in Rural Areas

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Abstract:

This communication draws on doctoral research that reconceptualizes social innovation through a Human Ecology perspective to support the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in low-density rural areas. Focusing on mainland Portugal, the study addresses contexts marked by demographic ageing, depopulation, structural fragilities, and limited opportunities for young people, using rural youth entrepreneurship - particularly the institutional framework of the Young Rural Entrepreneur statute (JER) - as an analytical entry point to examine broader dynamics of sustainable rural development and territorial cohesion.

The research argues that effective SDG localization requires understanding rural territories as complex socioecological systems, in which progress toward sustainability emerges from collective learning and the reconfiguration of relationships between actors, institutions, and ecological contexts. Within this framework, the study introduces the action-oriented concept of knowledge commoning as an ecology of practices that supports the production of situated knowledge, the management of power asymmetries, and the strengthening of collective capabilities to pursue integrated and context-sensitive sustainability transitions.

Methodologically, the study adopts a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design (QUAL-QUANT) grounded in abductive and participatory logic. The qualitative phase comprised 46 semi-structured interviews with young people, researchers, associations, and governmental actors, informing the development of the RuSTIC model (Rural Socioecological Transformative Innovation Capabilities), structured around six dimensions and thirty sub-dimensions of territorial capabilities. The model was then applied and tested in 9 focus groups using the Left-Behind Territories Game. The quantitative phase focused on the participatory construction and validation of an exploratory RuSTIC scale and a synthetic index.

The findings show that advancing the SDGs in rural areas depends on synergies between territorial capabilities and place-based public policies. This research contributes an original analytical and methodological framework to support territorially grounded diagnosis, participatory deliberation, and the design of just, resilient, and sustainable rural development pathways.

Keywords:

Human Ecology, Knowledge Commoning, Rural Social Innovation, Sustainable Development Goals, Territorial Capabilities

