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**Session K Spatial Planning in Cities and Regions**

*Kii Territorial Competitiveness and Cohesion: Development Opportunities in Different Types of Rural Areas.*

**Dispelling Stylised Fallacies and Turning Diversity into Strength:  
An Introduction to the EDORA Project.**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The aim of the ESPON EDORA (European Development Opportunities in Rural Areas) project is to develop a systematic view of the socio-economic changes, development challenges, and opportunities facing diverse types of rural areas in Europe, and to formulate an appropriate policy rationale which will support them in realising their potential.*

*The first step was to review and “catalogue” - from the academic literature - a range of socio-economic changes which are affecting rural Europe, together with proposed explanations. Inevitably such a review was illustrative, rather than comprehensive. However it provided sufficient material to allow a suite of three “Meta-Narratives” of rural change to be formulated. These are: an Agri-Centric narrative, an Urban-Rural narrative, and a narrative of Global Competition. It is important to stress that these overarching “bundles” of social and economic changes are not assumed to have driven increasing uniformity, rather it is believed they have played a role in the increasing differentiation of rural areas.*

*Without underestimating such diversity, or the role it may play in regional development, it is a precondition for spatial (regional) analysis to be able to benchmark regions in a variety of ways. The next step was therefore to develop a suite of three classifications of “non-urban” NUTS 3 regions within the ESPON space which allow us to orientate each area according to its rurality/accessibility, its economic structure, and level of economic performance. This serves as a framework for analysis of the current situation, scenarios of the future, and policy recommendations, within the EDORA project.*

*This paper presents the conceptual framework, the typologies and some of the findings in terms of the current situation in the non-urban regions of Europe. Future perspectives and a rationale for appropriate policy form the subject of a second paper in this conference session.*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the less desirable consequences of globalisation is the increasing uniformity of urban and regional environments. For example, city-scapes retaining vernacular architectural styles all too often become “living museums” resisting a tide of increasingly standardised shop fronts, anonymous commercial office developments, kit-built houses and mass produced street furniture. Less tangible aspects of regional culture, such as minority languages and dialects, or place-specific traditional communal activities, are also under threat.

This oft-lamented increasing uniformity is in marked contrast with the view advanced by number of rural development theorists; that current trends are leading to *increasing* diversity in rural areas. The following quotations illustrate this:

*“...Apparently similar areas demonstrate quite different characteristics in terms of key indicators, like net migration, commuting, deprivation, new enterprise formation, the degree of social cohesion or fragmentation, and so on... the character and complexity of rural uneven development has shifted profoundly.”*  
Marsden 1999

*“...while all rural localities are touched by global networks and global flows in some way, the intensity of the connections forged, the extent of change effected to the locality, and the degree of manifestation of characteristics of the global countryside, all vary considerably. Globalization, it appears, is more significant in remaking some rural places than others. This differential geography in part reflects structural factors that moderate the exposure of rural communities to global networks and processes...”* Woods 2007

There is a “post-modern” thread through recent literature on rural and regional development which stresses the need to acknowledge diversity, and to accommodate it in policy design. This has often been associated with a preference for interpretation, based on qualitative methods and idiographic approaches, rather than the pursuit of positivist explanation and generalisation derived from quantitative analysis. This of course reflects a broader paradigm shift in the social sciences generally.

In parallel, in the literature relating to policy design and implementation, there has been a move away from “equalisation” (of regional incomes, quality of life, etc) towards an ethos of endogenous development enabling each region to fulfil its potential. This line of thinking has supported the argument that it is in the very diversity of rural areas that much of their potential for development lies. The sub-title of DG Regio’s 2008 Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion (EC 2008); “Turning Diversity into Strength” is totemic of this view.

Two questions seem to follow from this sequence of ideas:

- (i) Is there a continuing role for generalisation in rural development research, and rural policy design? If so what is it, and how can researchers ensure that their generalisations are “useful” in a policy context?
- (ii) If rural areas are moving towards increasing diversity (this assumption has not been tested, and of course it would be very difficult to establish objectively), what was/were the previous, more uniform state(s), from which they are now moving away?

These two questions are closely related, and it will perhaps be appropriate to address them both at once through some comments on the role of “stereotypes<sup>1</sup>” in rural development research and policy.

The rural development policy literature is populated by stereotypes, some being more or less representative and accurate and others being anachronistic “stylised fallacies” (Hodge, 2004). All too often these are not so much “evidence-based” generalisations as anachronistic stereotypes. They are sometimes perpetuated by powerful interest groups.

Such rural stereotypes have often been quite negative, and have included, for example:

- The *agrarian countryside*, in which the role of land-based industries is overestimated at the expense of other forms of economic activity which are of greater and increasing importance to socio-economic development.
- The “*rural exodus*”: characterised by out-migration and demographic ageing. This ignores the fact that many rural areas show in-migration, population increase and relatively young age structures.
- Rural “*dependency culture*” – an attachment to policy supports and compensation for disadvantage as the main policy option. In reality many rural areas, even remote ones, show evidence of dynamism, innovation and growth.
- Rural *labour markets* are commonly associated with *segmentation*, in which a dominant “secondary” component, characterised by low levels of human capital, insecurity, low activity rates (especially for females), disguised unemployment, and high levels of self-employment. All of these characteristics are certainly present in some (but by no means all) rural areas.
- Similarly, rural areas are often perceived as characterised by *barriers to entrepreneurship*, whilst the impacts of *globalisation processes are believed to be predominantly negative* (whilst they are positive for many large cities).

Clearly rural change is an extremely complex and nuanced phenomenon; the more that policy makers can understand of the details of the local experience, and that more policy can accommodate the full range of regional differences, the more effective it will be. Therefore it is not desirable that one set of “stylised fallacies” be replaced by generalisations which, although they are closer to contemporary realities, introduce a new set of inflexibilities.

Whilst recent policy design and implementation has attempted to incorporate a degree of flexibility to meet local circumstances (menu-based approaches, neo-endogenous paradigms and so on), it is apparent that the debate concerning policy options for “non-urban” Europe cannot be sustained by a phenomenological approach alone; broad generalisations have an important role to play. It is therefore very important that the debate begins to move away from anachronistic stereotypes, and is informed by generalisations which are soundly based upon up-to-date evidence. The EDORA project has a role to play in the long-overdue task of refreshing the images of different kinds of rurality which underlie policy design and implementation. It is hoped that the conceptual phase of the project may make a contribution to development of more appropriate “stylised facts” and meta-narratives of change. In addition, although subject to a range of limitations in terms of available data, and weaknesses associated with the regional framework, such generalisations may (at least in part) be given a tangible geographical manifestation in the typologies and “analysis framework” presented in this paper.

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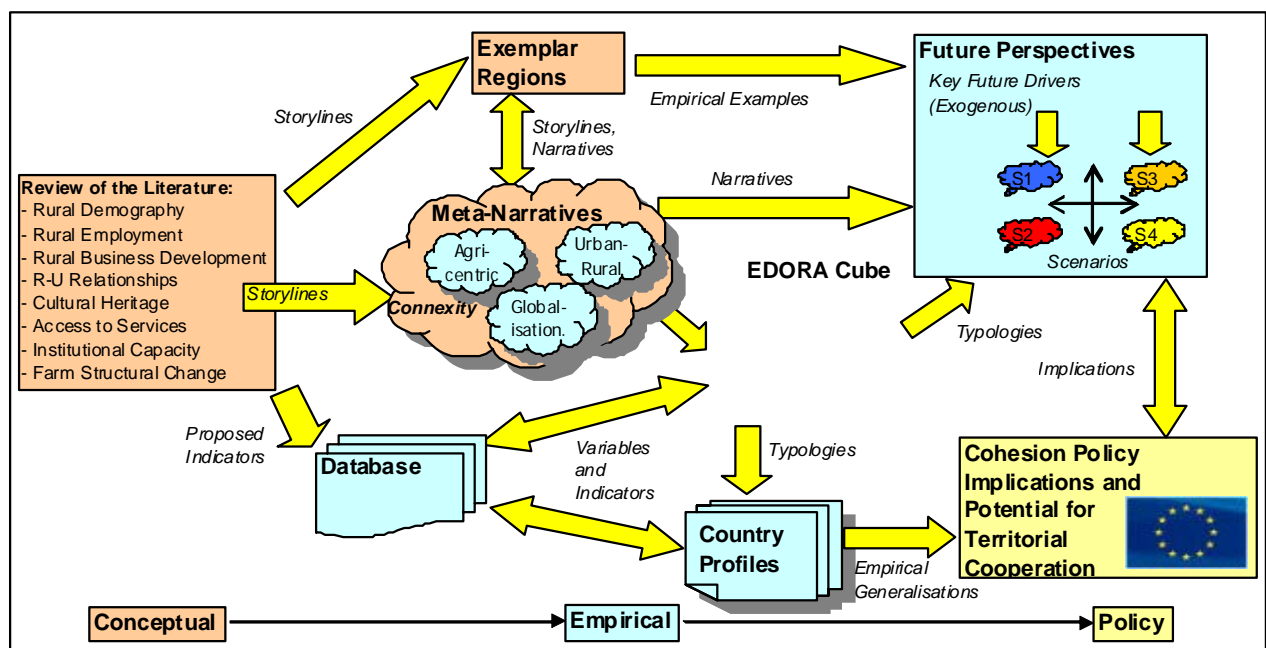
<sup>1</sup> Although, strictly, speaking the word “stereotype” is normally applied to people or groups, we use it here in the sense of an “oversimplified standardized image or idea” of rural areas or rural change.

## 2. THE EDORA PROJECT

The over-arching aim of the EDORA project (as set out in the technical specification) is a better understanding of the development opportunities and challenges facing rural areas in Europe, to support targeted policy development, relating (*inter alia*) to job creation and social change. In particular, insights should support the practical implementation of spatial development principles which have evolved out of the Fifth Cohesion Report, and the Territorial Cohesion Green Paper. Three key issues are;

- the need to better understand patterns of differentiation, between different kinds of rural area,
- the nature of the different opportunities for development which each of them faces, and,
- the way in which such opportunities depend upon, and may be strengthened by, interaction between rural and urban areas.

Addressing these issues requires a research approach which fully reflects recent conceptual advances, and constructs hypotheses derived from contemporary interpretations of the process of rural change in the full range of European rural environments. At the same time it requires a comprehensive utilisation of available data sources, so that robust and empirically valid findings can form a firm foundation for policy recommendations.



**Figure 1: The Structure of the EDORA Project**

The broad structure of the project is presented in Figure 1. In order to avoid picking up the conventional rural development bias towards land-based industries, - which is difficult to avoid both because of the balance of scientific literature, and associated data availability, - a deliberate strategy of deduction, rather than induction, has been strictly adhered to.

The first phase of the project was therefore a review of the conceptual literature, advised by the project specification's guidance towards activities outside agriculture and forestry. This took the form of nine thematic reviews, each of which generated a separate working paper.

These thematic reviews revealed a large number of “story lines” of rural change, including both well-known ones, such as urbanisation and counter-urbanisation, demographic ageing, structural shifts in the economy away from primary activities towards secondary and tertiary ones, the increasing difficulties associated with provision of services to rural consumers, and a number of less well-known ones. The findings of the nine thematic reviews were subsequently synthesised into three principal “meta-narratives” of rural change. These were defined as (i) an Agri-centric narrative, (ii) an Urban-Rural narrative, and (iii) a narrative of Global Competition. At a more generalised level an overarching theme of increasing “Connexity” was shown to be very much in evidence, across all nine themes. In order to explore these findings within specific regional contexts the conceptual phase of the project was completed by exploring recent changes in twelve carefully selected “Exemplar Regions”.

Having established a balanced conceptual framework, the second phase of the project concentrated upon furnishing an empirical evidence base. Fundamental to this phase was the creation of a regional database, containing both raw data from secondary sources, and derived indicators. Another core activity was the development of an “analysis framework” composed of three discrete regional typologies, distinguishing groups of regions in terms of their rurality/accessibility, their economic structure, and their socio-economic performance. These three dimensions form a helpful standard basis for cross-tabulation, and are collectively referred to as the “EDORA cube”. This analysis framework was subsequently used to structure statistical profiles for 31 countries within the ESPON space. The empirical phase of the project was completed by a qualitative Expert Foresight exercise. This built upon both the conceptual phase and the preceding empirical analysis, but considering the likely impacts of key exogenous drivers (climate change and trends in economic governance) which, over the next two decades, are anticipated to superimpose radical shifts upon the ongoing incremental change established in the meta-narratives.

The final phase of the project (which is still ongoing at the time this paper is written) explores the policy implications of the findings (both conceptual and empirical). These findings relate to Cohesion policy generally, and more specifically to the third research question posed by the specification, i.e. the potential to design policy which strengthens the economy and society of rural areas through various forms of urban-rural interaction.

In responding to the project specification’s emphasis upon development opportunities for different kinds of rural areas the EDORA approach has sought to balance due regard for regional specificities against the need for appropriate generalisations to replace outdated stereotypes. It has also highlighted the fact that local potential is often defined by regional capacities and “soft factors” which determine the ability to respond to increasingly ubiquitous opportunities. The focus is therefore often upon the determinants of that regional capacity to respond, rather than upon establishing a list of specific activities which show promise for growth in rural areas. The latter would inevitably be partial, and would risk becoming rapidly out of date.

### 3. THE THEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW AND SYNTHESIS.

This task comprised reviews of the recent conceptual and empirical literature relating to nine separate aspects of rural change:

- (a): Rural demography
- (b): Rural employment
- (c): Rural business development
- (d): Rural-Urban relationships
- (e): Cultural heritage
- (f): Access to services of general interest
- (g): Institutional capacity
- (h): Climate change
- (i): Farm structural change

The key findings may be summarised as follows:

#### *i. Economic Processes:*

An important “story line” in this context is structural change, the process of diversification away from the traditional focus upon primary or land-based industries, towards a New Rural Economy (NRE) in which secondary and tertiary activities are the main drivers. The NRE has developed more fully in accessible rural areas, and is closely associated with the demographic process of “counter-urbanisation”, and with centrifugal dispersion of economic activity, from cities and towns, into the countryside.

A second “story line”, which has affected both accessible and more remote rural areas, concerns the commodification of countryside and environmental public goods, and the rise of “multifunctionality” both within traditional activities such as farming and forestry, and newer activities, especially recreation and tourism. This complex and incremental structural shift is captured by the term “Consumption Countryside”.

A third characteristic vector of rural change relates specifically to farming, where there is an increasing polarisation between large-scale, highly mechanised, commercial, “Para Productivist” development paths on the one hand, and small-scale, often part-time, multifunctional “Peri-Productivist” strategies on the other. In some regions of the NMS12 semi-subsistence agriculture presents a rather specific and “narrower” variant of the second option.

These three components of rural economic change interact with each other and with different regional contexts, to produce an almost infinite variety of outcomes. Regional context varies not only in terms of “hard” aspects, such as physical environment, resources, settlement pattern, accessibility and infrastructure, but also “soft” factors, such as human and social capital, business networks, “institutional thickness”, and governance. This “development milieu” is both extremely influential and much more difficult to quantify, assess, or to reinforce by means of policy intervention.

#### *ii. Social Processes*

The key social process in contemporary rural change is migration. However it represents not a single “story line”, but three: (a) the “rural exodus” which (selectively) drains human capital out of remote rural areas, in favour of urban and accessible rural locations; (b) the flow of economic migrants from the poorer regions of the NMS12 towards both rural and urban

regions of the EU15; and (c) “counter-urbanisation” movements from cities and towns into accessible rural areas. The social and economic impacts of the first of these upon the origin regions are predominantly negative. The other two kinds of flow result in a complex balance of positive and negative effects upon rural regions.

These three migration story lines are intimately connected to the issue of demographic ageing which in turn interacts strongly with aspects of economic development, exacerbating “depletion” effects in some regions and strengthening capacity for diversification and innovation in others.

A third very important issue which should be mentioned under the heading of “Social Processes” relates to the provision of Services of General Interest (SGI). The shift away from a “welfare state” ethos towards neo-liberal and “New Public Management” approaches has interacted with the effects of migration, demographic ageing, and “regional enlargement” to highlight a number of critical policy questions in recent years. The circularity of causal links between the provision of SGI and other social and economic processes of rural change renders the former a prominent driver in processes of “cumulative causation”, whether “vicious” or “virtuous”.

Structural change in the rural economy is associated with changes in the character and configuration of rural social capital which are linked in complex ways to rural governance. This renewal of social capital has many and varied impacts upon the capacity of rural areas to respond to new opportunities for development.

### *iii. Policy Processes*

In the policy arena the focus of the review is understandably less upon “story lines” of change than upon different kinds of regional contexts. However, some of the key processes of change are; “regional enlargement”, the “hollowing out” of the Welfare State, the increasing importance of the Third Sector, “multi-level governance” models, partnership approaches, and the use of fixed-term projects as a vehicle for implementation. This nexus of changes in governance, loosely linked to what the OECD has described as the “New Rural Paradigm”, are leading to the emergence of what may be termed the “Project State”. The balance between benefits and perverse impacts varies, but two things are clear: that comparative analysis is extremely difficult due to differences in institutional heritage; and that institutional capacity is very difficult to construct through exogenous policy interventions.

### *iv. Environmental Processes*

The EDORA thematic reviews have not specifically focused upon the wide-ranging and important topic of environmental change, but have included a number of socio-economic implications.

More specifically, one of the thematic reviews considered the narrower issue of climate change and its rural development impacts. This points to a broad N-S divide in Europe in terms of the likely impact of climate change on rural economic activities, and on agriculture in particular. In the northern Member States the main negative impact of increased variability, is anticipated to be offset by higher average temperatures which will effectively broaden the farming system options for most rural areas. In the South and East rising temperatures and reductions in precipitation will effectively narrow the options for agriculture, and increase the risk of environmental degradation, with knock-on effects in terms of tourism and leisure activities. In the latter the institutional capacity to deliver mitigation or adaptation strategies is also generally less developed.

At present climate change research tells us more about likely direct environmental impacts, rather than the complex indirect socio-economic consequences. It also tends to have a rather large-scale focus - the likely regional or local impacts are not well understood as yet.

In very broad terms, it is probably safe to assume that climate change impacts will be more substantial in regions where agriculture and other primary activities are still relatively important, and in those regions where “Consumption Countryside” activities are strongly developed. Regions where the structural shift towards a diversified NRE has proceeded further are likely to be less seriously affected. Indeed judicious diversification would be one means to reduce the anticipated impact of climate change.

v. *Urban-Rural Relations*

This theme is touched upon in a wide variety of contexts and there is a wealth of relevant material, both conceptual and empirical. At the same time, however that material is very disparate and the task of drawing it together into a coherent “narrative” which could form the basis for perspectives of the future or a policy approach are exceptionally challenging, because:

- Urban areas and rural hinterlands overlap and interlink in a complex system of economic and social interactions, (commuting, service provision patterns, leisure and recreation linkages etc).
- Many rural areas have as many links to distant regions across Europe or the rest of the world as they do to adjacent urban areas. Indeed one of the key conclusions from the business networks literature is that such linkages are the key to the successful development of NRE activities.
- Administrative boundaries have variable relationships to urban and rural areas, creating complex issues in terms of policy design, and often providing no separate institutional advocacy relating to rural needs and potential.
- Urban and rural areas, and their associated governance structures, are more likely to see themselves as competing for scarce resources than co-operating for the benefit of rural areas.

vi. *Meta-Narratives and Regional Contexts.*

Woven through the nine thematic reviews is the “leitmotif” of *Connexity*; the increasing interconnectedness of all aspects of rural economic and social activity, which means that “relational reach” and “organisational space” are increasingly important as determinants of regional performance and cohesion, at the expense of the traditional role of Euclidean distance.

Within this overarching theme three “meta-narratives” of contemporary rural change serve as heuristic devices, assisting understanding of the complexity and variety of individual development paths. These are:

The *Agri-Centric* meta-narrative, which draws together various “post-modernisation” or “post-productivist” concepts and strategies, such as “multifunctionality”, “commodification”, or “ecological modernisation”, which all stress the fact that agriculture and farming communities are increasingly concerned with a broader range of objectives than maximising output of food and fibre. Again, the notion of para- and peri-productivism are fundamental to this meta-narrative.

The *Urban-Rural* meta-narrative draws together various story lines relating to migration, rural-urban relationships, access to SGI, agglomeration (or its absence), and highlights the

cumulative causation process which drives the differentiation of, and disparities between, accessible and remote/sparsely populated rural regions.

The meta-narrative of *Global Competition* emphasises implications of increasing connectivity and global trade liberalisation, in terms of the spatial segmentation of labour markets and the associated structural change of European rural areas. This points to strategies which depend upon the “knowledge economy” (supported by ICT infrastructure and good education provision), the role of the creative class, an emphasis upon quality, place marketing, niche markets and so on.

The overarching theme of increasing connectivity, and the three meta-narratives, are largely “exogenous”; common vectors of change, which act upon all rural regions within the ESPON space. As such they are often part of an interactive web of socio-economic changes and trends which are global in scope and impact, and are not easy to change by policy intervention. The observed increase in regional diversity across rural Europe can therefore best be explained by differences in the local environment upon which these forces of change operate. They are also the key to appropriate forms of intervention for cohesion policy.

Important aspects of local environments include “hard” factors, such as raw material resources, landscape, physical infrastructure and buildings, and “soft” aspects, such as the skills and capacities of the local workforce, its entrepreneurial culture and innovativeness, characteristics of business networks, the quality of local institutions and governance, and so on. The role of these different “assets” has been recognised within a practical development policy context, leading to the promotion of “asset based” local development approaches. This has been associated, in a variety of policy contexts, with a conceptual framework based upon 7 forms of capital (financial, built, social, human, natural, cultural, and political). More recently Camagni (2008) has provided a deeper theoretical perspective by exploring the concept of “territorial capital”.

#### **4. MACRO-SCALE PATTERNS OF RURAL DIFFERENTIATION.**

The meta-narratives are a form of generalisation about common “ensembles” of processes of change. They are neither exhaustive or inclusive of all the ways in which individual regions experience change. Neither is it possible to associate one meta-narrative with one particular type of region. All three, (and others which we have not described) may be at work, to some extent, in any individual region.

The Territorial Cohesion principle of “turning diversity into strength” seems to point towards an ideographical approach, but generalisations are nevertheless extremely useful, and it is important that some of the outdated stereotypes (stylised fallacies) about rural areas which seem to lie behind conventional rural development policy are updated or superseded. This is the rationale for the EDORA regional typologies.

##### *The EDORA Cube*

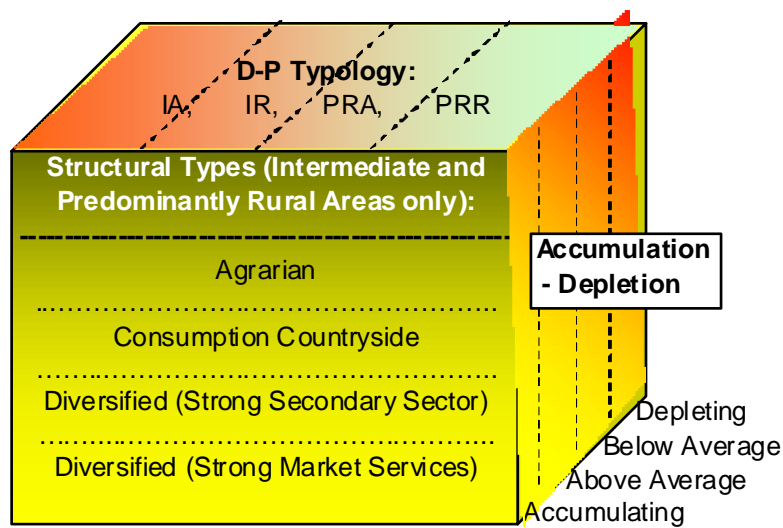
A single typology cannot easily encompass the salient aspects of differentiation of rural regions. The EDORA analytical framework (the “EDORA cube”) therefore comprises three typologies, which if not technically orthogonal to each other are certainly distinct dimensions of variation which are best considered separately. These are:

(i) *Rurality/accessibility*. This typology relates to the Urban-Rural meta-narrative, and was developed from the OECD typology by Lewis Dijkstra and Hugo Poelman at DG Regio. Four

types of (non-urban) regions were distinguished, Intermediate Accessible, Intermediate Remote, Predominantly Rural Accessible, and Predominantly Rural Remote.

(ii) *Economic Restructuring*. This typology relates to both the Agri-Centric and Global Competition meta-narratives, and was developed from 13 indicators, using a multi-criteria, disaggregative approach. Again four types of non-urban regions were distinguished: Agrarian, Consumption Countryside, Diversified (with strong secondary sector) and Diversified (with strong market services sector).

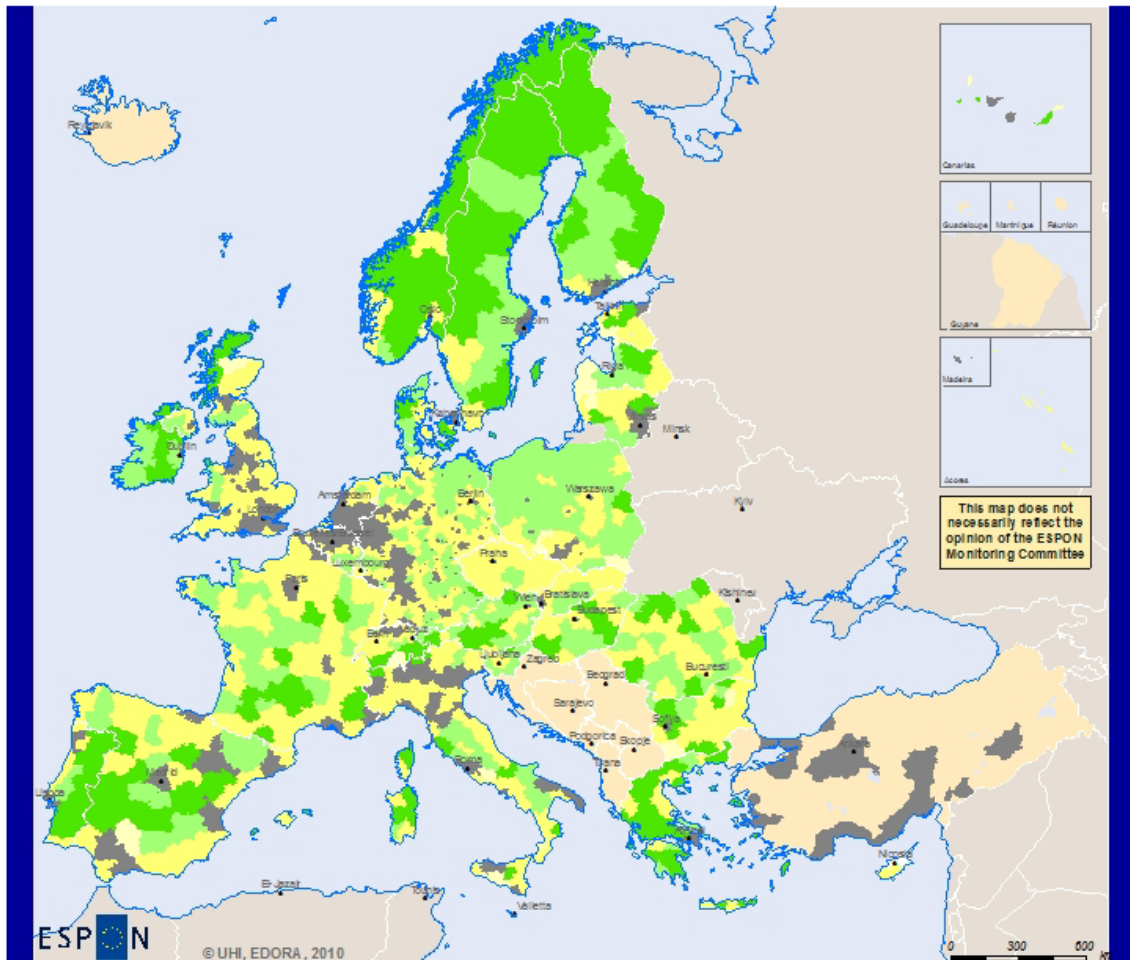
(iii) *Performance*. This typology places regions on a continuum between “accumulation” and “depletion”, and derives its rationale mainly from the urban-rural meta-narrative. It is based upon a synthetic index of performance, incorporating 5 indicators. The four types of region (accumulating, above average, below average, depleting) are defined by the mean and standard deviation of the index.




**Figure 2: The EDORA Cube – a 3 dimensional framework for analysis**

Note: IA = Intermediate Accessible, IR = Intermediate Remote  
PRA= Predominantly Rural Accessible PRR = Predominantly Rural Remote







The ability of the Structural typology to differentiate between groups of non-urban regions, in terms of their socio-economic performance, was assessed through statistical analysis. In general terms the results showed that the structural typology enhances our ability to distinguish between non-urban regions in terms of their performance. A similar analysis was employed to explore the possibility of combining the first two typologies into a single classification. The results suggested that a higher level of discrimination may be achieved by retaining two separate typologies.



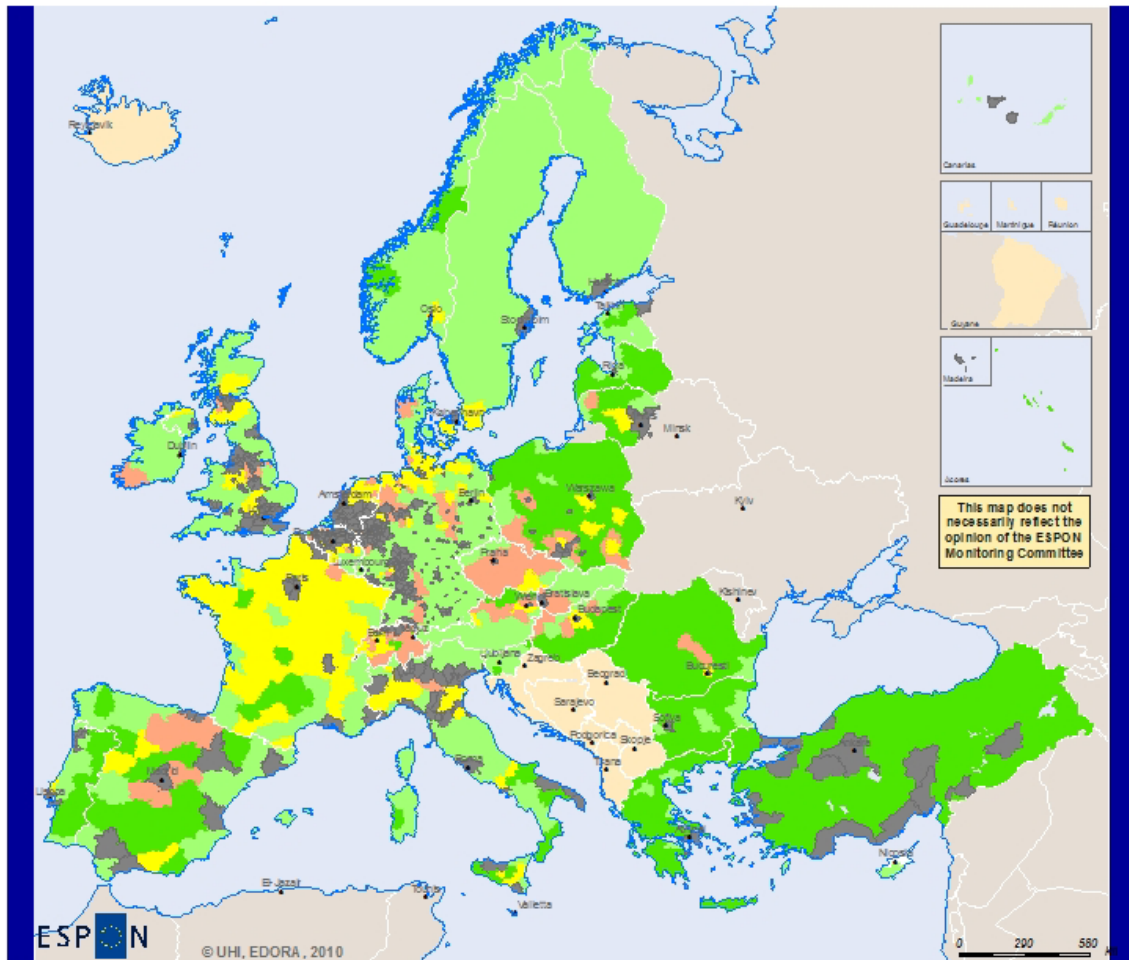

 FUNDING BY THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND  
 NUTS 3 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT


Regional level: NUTS 3  
 Source: EDORA Database, 2010  
 Origin of data: Eurostat REG IO Database, and other sources, various years (centred on 2006).  
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## Urban-Rural Types (NUTS 3 Regions)

-  No Data
-  Predominantly Urban
-  Intermediate Close to a City
-  Intermediate Remote
-  Predominantly Rural Close to a City
-  Predominantly Remote


**Map 1: The Dijkstra-Poelman Urban-Rural Typology**




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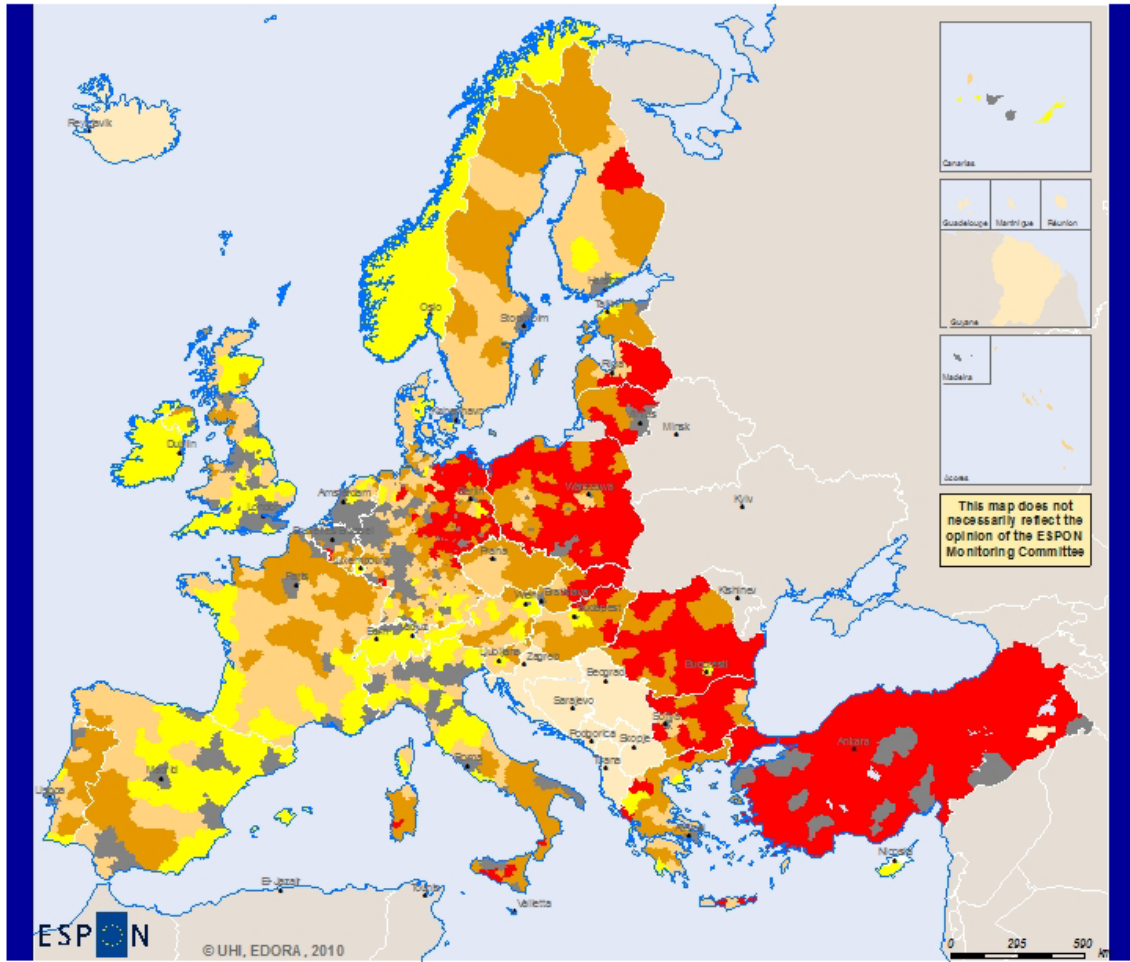
Regional level: NUTS 3  
 Source: EDORA Database, 2010  
 Origin of data: Eurostat REGIO Database, and other sources, various years (centred on 2008).  
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## Structural Types (Intermediate and Predominantly Rural NUTS 3 Regions)

-  No Data
-  PU Regions
-  Agrarian
-  Consumption Countryside
-  Diversified (Strong Secondary Sector)
-  Diversified (Strong Private Services Sector)

Note: A simplified classification procedure was necessary in CH and TR, due to missing data. However it is anticipated that acquisition of a wider range of indicators would not materially change the outcome.

**Map 2: The Structural Typology**




 FUNDOPOLICY UNIT  
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Regional level: NUTS 3  
 Source: EDORA Database, 2010  
 Origin of data: Eurostat REGIO Database, and other sources, various years (centred on 2006).  
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### Performance (A-D) Types (Intermediate and Predominantly Rural NUTS 3 Regions)

- No Data
- PU Regions
- Depleting
- Below Average
- Above Average
- Accumulating

Note: The type allocation to TR and CH is based upon a reduced set of indicators, and should not be considered fully comparable with the typology for the EU27.

**Map 3: The Performance Typology**

An analysis of the typology maps, together with cross-tabulation analysis, provided a useful “triangulation” of European rural regions. The principal findings were:

- Regions in which the primary sector plays a major role in the local economy are mainly concentrated in an arc stretching around the eastern and southern edges of the EU27.
- The rest of the European space is characterised by a patchwork of three types of rural area, Consumption Countryside, Diversified (Secondary) and Diversified (Private Services). Of these the last seems to be to some extent associated with the most accessible areas.
- Broadly speaking there is a tendency for the Agrarian regions to be relatively low performers, showing many of the characteristics of the process of socio-economic “Depletion”. The Diversified (Secondary) regions also tend to be relatively poor performers, no doubt in part because of the role played in their economy of declining manufacturing industries.
- The Consumption Countryside regions and the Diversified (Private Services) group are both high performers, and likely to continue to “accumulate” in the immediate future.

These are very simple, broad-brush generalisations, which, of course, cannot “do justice” to the wealth of local variation in rural areas across the ESPON space, or to the infinite number of possible combinations of drivers, opportunities and constraints. Nevertheless within the context of the debate about the future of European (cohesion) policy for rural areas, it would seem that the four Structural Types may be more useful as stereotypes than the prevalent, but outdated, association of rural exclusively with Agrarian rural economies, or even with the Consumption Countryside. The rather different needs and potentials associated with Diversified rural economies (whether strong in secondary activities or private services) would seem to deserve far more attention in the context of the policy debate than they have heretofore received.

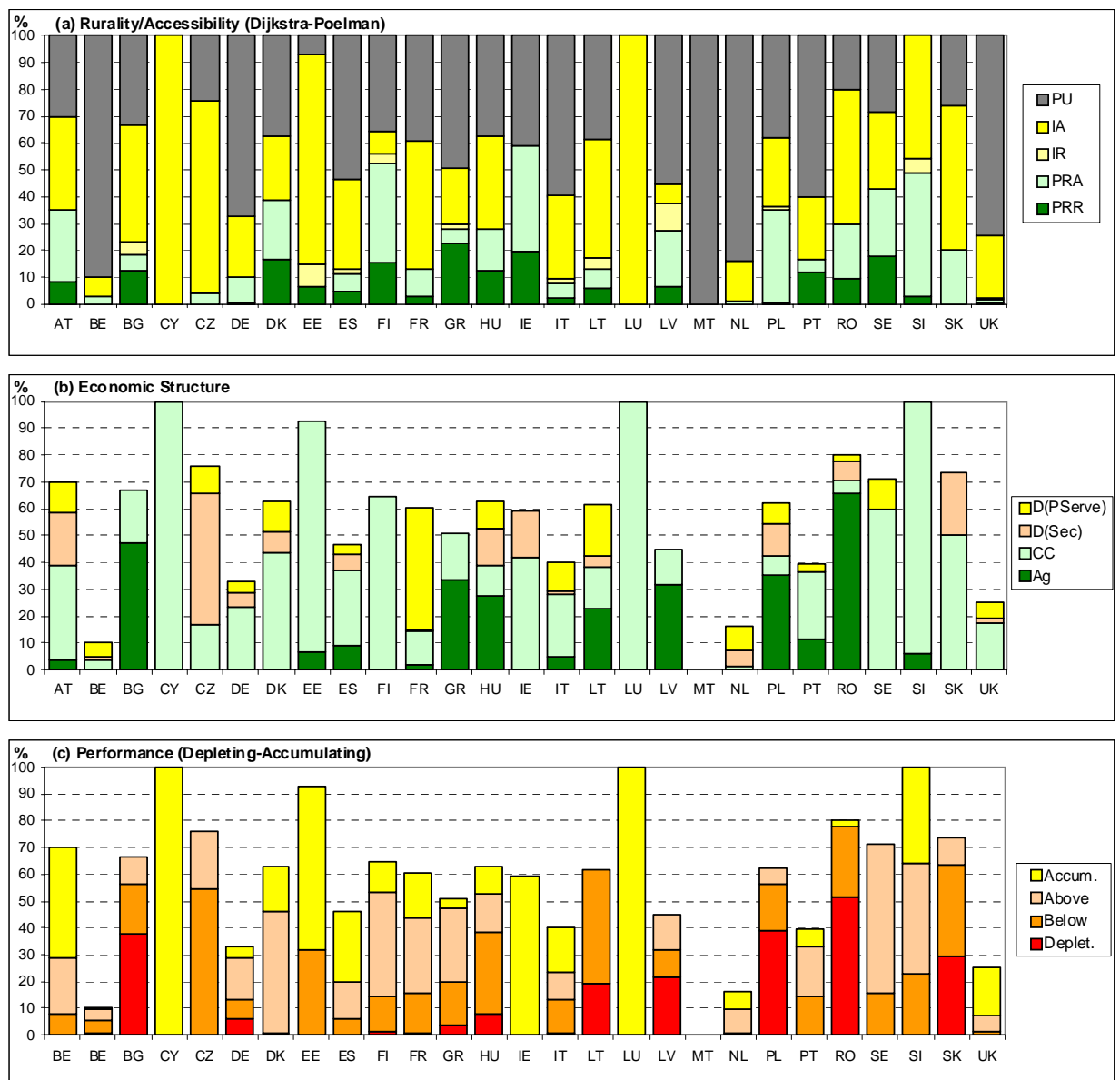
#### *The Country Profiles Reports*

The goal of the Country Profiles is to produce “pen-pictures” of rural areas, at national and “meta region” (groups of countries) levels, based on the three typologies, together with other socio-economic indicators, and enriched with the “local knowledge” of partners. This is important, since national and regional boundaries are important “filters”, or structuring elements, through which the policy community may more easily relate to the new picture of rural Europe presented by the EDORA cube.

This work is reported in a working paper, and also in a set of 31 individual country reports. In the final report this substantial body of material is presented in the form of a brief description of the methodology, followed by some examples of the findings, highlighting the capacity of this analysis to convey a clearer view of the socio-economic characteristics of European “non-urban” regions at the beginning of the twenty-first century. These illustrate both the individuality of MS and the existence of macro-scale (meta-regional) patterns.

Within the confines of this brief summary it is hoped to provide a taste of the richness of WP25 and the individual Country Profile reports, by presenting a small selection of broad comparative “pictures”, first at country level, and then combining countries into a selection of “macro regions”. For more specific and detailed information readers are encouraged to consult these two sources.

### (a) Country-level Comparisons



**Figure 3: Distribution of Regional GDP (PPS) by Typology Class and MS (EU27 only<sup>2</sup>)**

The graph above (Figure 3) provides a clear picture of differentiation between MS in terms of their non-urban regions profile, as reflected by the distribution of GDP<sup>3</sup> between the classes of the three typologies of the EDORA cube. It is very easy to see, for example, the differences between MS in terms of the degree of rurality (graph a). Contrast, for example, the role of non-urban regions in CZ or RO, with that of BE or NL<sup>4</sup>.

In graphs (b) and (c) the PU regions are excluded (represented by the gaps above the top of the columns). Here again the differences between individual MS are very easy to see. For

<sup>2</sup> NO, CH and TR excluded, due to GDP data constraints.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 3 of the EDORA Draft Final Report for parallel graphs showing distribution of regions, area and population.

<sup>4</sup> MT, CY and LU are not good examples, since they are comprised of a single NUTS 3 region.

example, the importance of Agrarian regions is evident in RO, BG, GR, PL, HU, LT and LV. The importance of Consumption Countryside regions in the MS of N Europe is clear. Manufacturing is important in the non-urban regions of CZ, SK and AT, whilst FR is the prime example of an MS in which Market Services play an important role in rural areas. Their importance in LT is more difficult to explain.

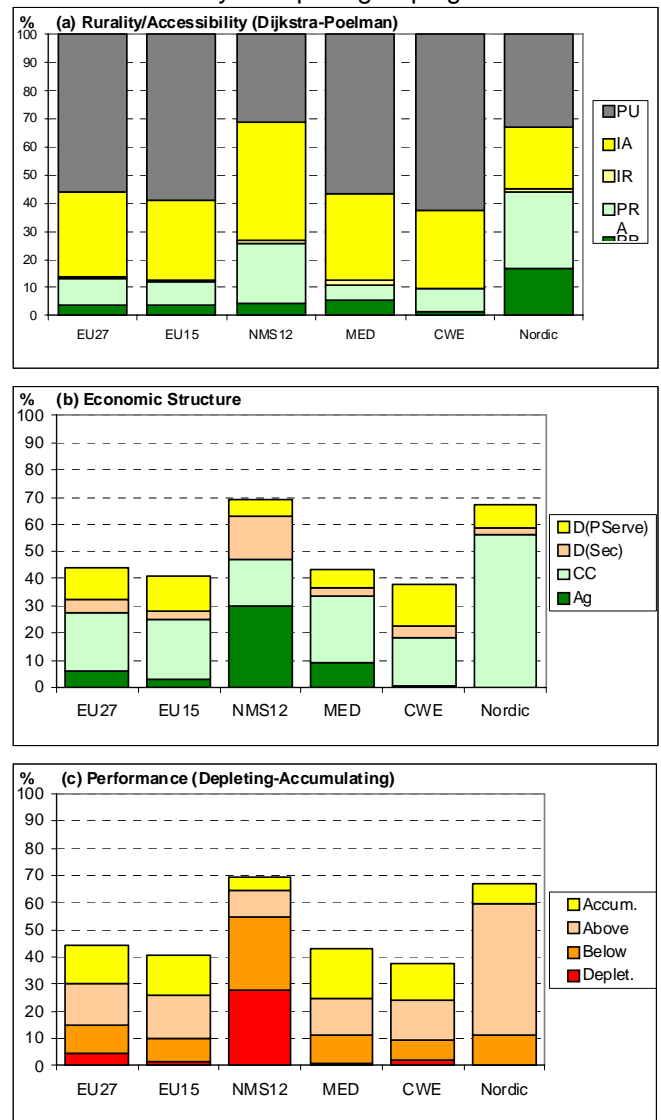
**(b) Comparisons between European “Meta-Regions”**

In order to assess the importance of macro-scale geographic patterns WP25 also presents average results for several groups of EU MS. Figure 5 shows the distribution of GDP by the categories of the three typologies and according to several commonly accepted groupings of countries, (EU15, NMS12, Mediterranean MS, Central-West Europe (CWE), and the Nordic countries).

Of these “meta-regions” The NMS12 is derives the greatest proportion of its GDP (70%) from non-urban regions. The Nordic countries are close behind, at 67%. Both the CWE and the Mediterranean countries derive a minority (about 40%) from non-urban areas. Across all the groups of countries the Intermediate Accessible type accounts for the largest share of non-urban GDP. In the NMS12 and the Nordic countries accessible Predominantly Rural regions account for a significant share, whilst the remote PR type is only of significance in the Nordic group.

The second (economic structure) graph illustrates very clearly the importance of Consumption Countryside regions in the Nordic countries, the Agrarian type in the NMS12, and the Diversified (Market Services) type in the CWE countries. The Diversified (Secondary) type is shown to be of greatest importance in the NMS12.

The third (performance) graph shows that the majority of NMS12 non-urban GDP is generated by regions exhibiting below average performance or “depletion”. All the other groups of countries show a more positive picture, with the Mediterranean group in the lead in this respect.



**Figure 4: Distribution of Regional GDP (PPS) by Typology Class and Macro Region**

Some *words of caution* are apposite at this point: Although the above graphs are “winsome” in their clarity, it is important to keep in mind the fact that the use of NUTS 3 region data means that they incorporate multiple sources of distortion, derived from the internal heterogeneity of many NUTS 3 regions, differences in the way in which regional boundaries are drawn in different MS, and many aspects of the Modifiable Areal Unit Problem (MAUP). It is partly for this reason that the individual Country Profile reports will be made available, as a valuable source of more nuanced and expert interpretation.

## 5. MICRO-SCALE PROCESSES AT A REGIONAL/LOCAL LEVEL

Holistic analyses of twelve “Exemplar Regions” were carried out in order to deepen our understanding of the processes of rural change in different contexts, and thus to enrich narratives of differential change. The exemplar regions reports elaborate upon, and sometimes challenge, the typology and the meta- narratives developed in the conceptual stage of the project.

Analyses were carried out within seven MS i.e.: UK (North Yorkshire; Skye), Spain (La Rioja; Teruel), Germany (Mansfeld-Sudharz; Neumarkt), Slovenia (Osrednjeslovenska; Zasavska) and Poland (Chemsko-Zamojski; Ostrolecko-Siedlecki), Sweden (Jonkoping), and Finland (South Savo). The regions were carefully chosen to represent a variety of rural contexts.

The twelve regions provided a good coverage of the Structural and Performance types. However it is important to acknowledge that where more than one region shared the same type, the differences between them were as prominent as the similarities, reminding us that although generalisations are helpful, indeed indispensable, we should never lose sight of the fact that each region is unique. Some of the regions were also very clearly heterogeneous combinations of sub-areas representing different types.

In some regions one dimension of the EDORA cube was dominant. This was the case in two regions where “depletion” was the most obvious characteristic, and in another where proximity to a city was of overwhelming importance. Accessibility to an urban area did not always lead to benefits.

The overarching theme of connexity runs throughout most of the Exemplar Region reports, emphasising in particular the importance of relational space that transcends distance but also how local relations and connections persist. There is evidence that the importance of Euclidean space is still recognised in terms of issues relating to improvements in physical (transport) infrastructure. Several of the Exemplar Regions are adjacent to international borders, which leads to very specific issues of connexity.

The Agri-centric narrative is evident in a number of the regions described. It becomes clear that progress towards peri- or para-productivist models is not universal, and that “stagnation” or “abandonment” are risks. We are also reminded that a strong agrarian focus is not a universal “starting point” – some regions have never had a strong agricultural sector.

There was much evidence to support the Urban-Rural narrative, and the associated patterns of migration, although in some regions the role of smaller towns (rather than cities) was highlighted.

The narrative of Global Competition is very clearly illustrated by the development of viticulture in one of the Spanish regions. In the NMS12 regions the impact of globalisation has been heightened and compressed in time, by accession.

Regional analysis highlights the crucial importance, in all types of regions and in relation to all of the meta-narratives, of social capital, institutional capacity and styles/structures of governance. This suggests that these themes should receive careful consideration in the Future Perspectives and Policy Implications sections which follow.

A final, and very important, observation, is the way in which the exemplar region reports highlight the variability in the rate and trajectory of change, from very gradual continuing

depletion or accumulation, to “recent turnaround”. It is common that specific events can trigger relatively sudden reversals.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have presented a conceptual framework, incorporating “storylines” of rural change from across a broad range of socio-economic themes, and a set of three “meta-narratives” which illustrate the way in which the storylines commonly interact within particular rural regions. These three meta-narratives are not intended to be comprehensive, others may be proposed and developed. Both their strengths and their weaknesses have been explored and illustrated through accounts of “exemplar regions”. However it is argued that they do illustrate the benefits of refreshing generalisations about rural change as a fundamental step towards more appropriate rural policy. The meta-narratives have also provided the rationale for an “analysis framework”, composed of three typologies, which is designed to facilitate empirical research which can better convey a clearer and more accurate understanding of the changing geography of rural Europe. The typologies have provided an infrastructure comparing the EU Member States, and for some initial exploration of macro-scale, “meta-regional” patterns. Again there is clearly considerable scope for further research: For example, the types within the Structural and Performance typologies could be further elaborated, to provide more detailed differentiation. Data availability is constantly improving, and more sophisticated classification procedures may soon be possible.

Nevertheless, the EDORA project has already laid a foundation for more appropriate, evidence-based, territorial rural cohesion policy, by establishing a conceptual and empirical architecture more attuned to contemporary rural realities. The second EDORA paper, which follows, will explore the implications of this framework for assessment of alternative paths of change over the next 20 years, and consider the implications for policy design and implementation.

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