

## EDORA INTERIM REPORT – SUMMARY

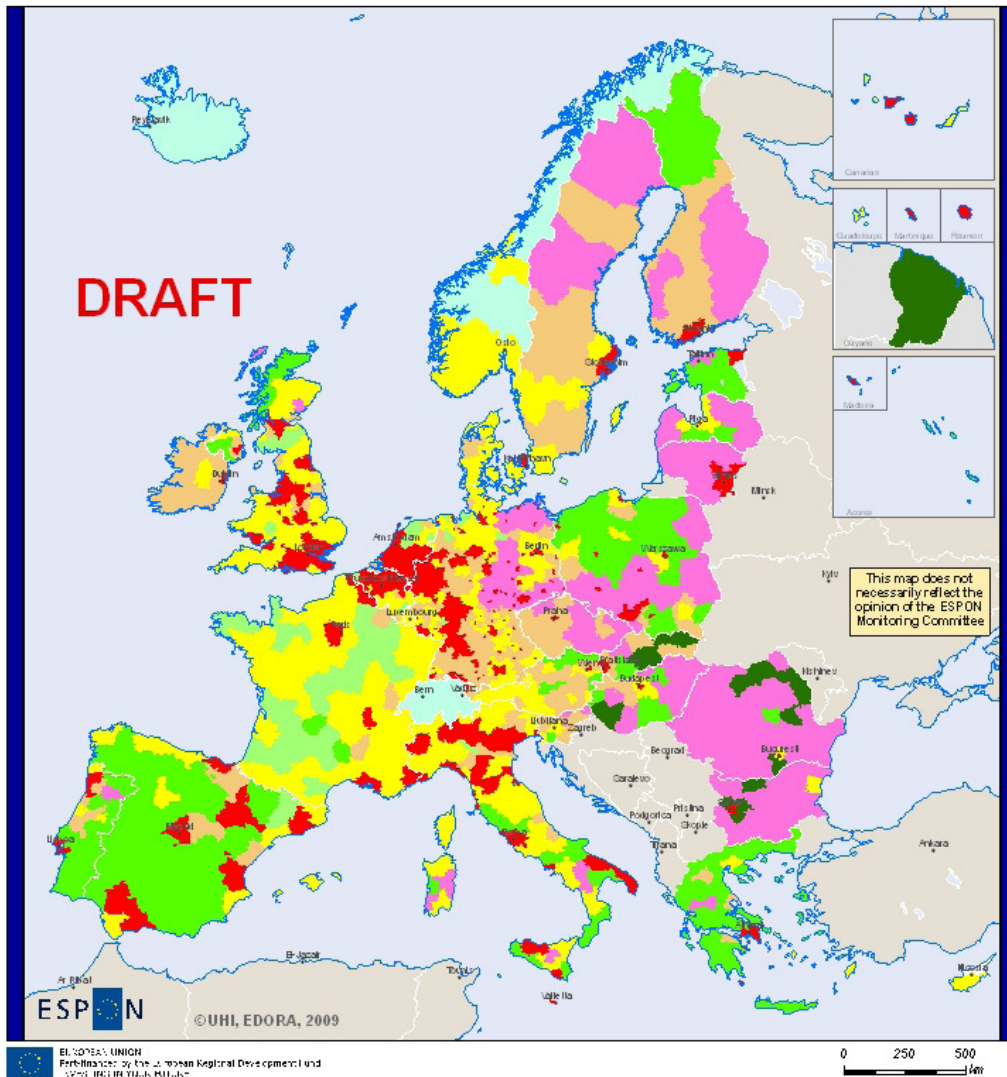
The Interim Report concisely explores the research literature of key rural themes such as demography, employment, cultural heritage, partnerships etc. searching for drivers of change, opportunities and constraints. It draws these together into overarching trends and ways of thinking about Europe's rural regions. There is a brief discussion of twelve "exemplar regions", which include two from the UK – North Yorkshire and Skye and Lochalsh. The report also describes in some detail the data problems that the researchers have encountered and how they propose to address them. Finally it sketches an outline for the final report and thoughts on rural futures and policy implications, though these are not a central theme at this stage.

The report sets out four "Grand Narratives" that the research team are using to explore Europe's rural regions. These are:

- (a) The agri-centric narrative, which equates rural areas with agriculture. Within this narrative there is recognition of changes in the agricultural base. Agriculture is declining in importance in most countries, but there are important regional differences, with diversification for example most marked in marginal areas.
- (b) An "urban-rural" narrative relating to processes of urbanisation, counter-urbanisation, regional enlargement, and evolving forms of peripherality. Basically accessible rural areas have a range of economic advantages, and have economic structures similar to urban regions. By contrast predominantly rural regions (especially in peripheral parts of Europe) lose people and jobs and risk a cumulative process of decline.
- (c) A narrative of "Capitalist Penetration" which reveals a variety of local-global tensions as rural areas seek to adapt to new configurations of economic power.
- (d) An emergent narrative based on "Connexity", which is a generic term for the increasingly (spatially) interlinked nature of many aspects of life; (economic, social, ideas and innovation, policy, the environment, and so on). This implies a more complex set of linkages than just urban-rural or local-global.

However, the team recognizes that there may be other ways of focusing thinking about rural Europe which cannot be easily encompassed in the above "narratives". One of these is a concern for people and places that are being "left behind" – the declining areas and people who, for example, are displaced from agriculture but struggle to access other forms of employment. The second possible narrative would be Europe – the tensions between the idea of a cohesive Europe and the Europe that divides between EU 15 and the states who have joined in and since 2004. This divide comes through in much of the work the project has done.

There is also a recognition that typologies are based on snapshots of the present, whereas in terms of regional development one key influence is a region's past and the trajectory that it is on. This is the idea of "path dependency". The result is a description of rural Europe characterized by diversity and complexity – even within rural regions.



**Draft Typology of Rural Development Environments (7 type version)**

**NUTS 3**

**Types**

- Urban
- Depleting Rural Regions.
- Primary sector dominated rural economy (combined).
- With Semi-Subsistence Agriculture.
- With "Peri-Productivist Agriculture"
- With "Para-Productivist Agriculture"
- "Fordist Mixed Rural Economy" with strong manufacturing sector.
- "New Rural Economy" - mixed, strong in both private services and manufacturing.

A typology is developed that is shown in the map above. The difference between “peri-productivist agriculture” and “para-productivist agriculture” is that the former is a situation where farming is a minority element (alongside farm diversification and off-farm employment) whereas para-productivist is where farmers are still primarily farmers, but subject to a range of regulation, e.g. in relation to environmental protection. There are four regions of each type in the UK. Depleting regions are rural but not agricultural, and appear to be places losing people and jobs. There are two such regions in the Scotland, but they are very widespread in Eastern Europe. There are nine Fordist regions in UK – places that are rural but with a legacy of old manufacturing and state jobs. However, the majority of UK rural regions (32 out of 51 in all) are in the New Regional Economy category, places that seem to have been able to restructure and diversify.

However, one theme in the report is to raise questions about just what constitutes “success” in rural development policy. In this respect the authors lay some store on their findings from Skye and Lochalsh, where there has been out-migration of young people but in-migration of the 45-64 age group. The culture and scenery attract migrants and tourists. The New Regional Economy is exemplified by cultural tourism, IT, horticulture and renewable energy. The report notes (p.30) that “The region’s renaissance is often lauded as a success story of rural development – attributed to positive state intervention, renewed confidence, and the cultural and natural heritage – even though much of the economic activity is low paid, seasonal and reliant on multiple job-holding.”

At a European level the report shows the plight of rural regions that are on the periphery of the periphery, where the risks of cumulative decline are most in evidence. Overall though the main message is perhaps that rural areas are indeed very diverse and that rural policy making needs to be sensitive to the specific regional context.