

RT11 | RURAL – URBAN DIALOGUES

Chairs

- Maria Rosário Partidário, Instituto Superior Técnico, UL
- Carlos Pina, Comissão de Coordenação Regional de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo

Speakers

- Nick Gallent
- Karlheinz Knickel
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Description

Rural-urban connections are now facing new challenges, after decades, and even centuries, of disinvestment in rural land and functions. Typically having lost massive amounts of population attracted to cities by the promise of easy jobs, in addition to the wonder of urban life and services, rural areas have served largely as the extended space for industrial and urban development. The value of rural functions has been largely ignored in spatial planning except where rural areas represented significant economic value through farming, livestock production or forest products.

Demographic trends reflected in urban population growth determined the need to concentrate spatial planning on the development of urban areas, even at regional level. But while this is still the case in emerging economies and many developing countries, in Europe and North America the situation seems to start showing signs of change.

Current trends show a transformation of the role of rural areas in land development, with an increasing recognition of urban-rural relationships. While urbanisation processes can contribute positively to rural development by providing access to markets, services, information and knowledge, rural areas can offer urban centres certain amenities that can contribute positively to urban quality of life, regional competitiveness, cultural identity and resilience. Societal needs for a wide variety of eco-system goods and services (or green services), such as renewable energy, sustainable natural resource management, cultural heritage, purification of air and water and climate change mitigation and adaptation are among the valued functions rural areas can provide to an increasing urban population. This is particularly relevant at a time when cities face challenges like climate change, population ageing, depopulation and business relocation.

Urban-rural relations are therefore making way in the territorial development agenda, however

still lacking the means and levels of governance that enable a balanced, future-oriented, sustainable and spatially integrated place-based development that takes into account synergies across rural–peri-urban–urban areas. A H2020 European research project - ROBUST -, recently approved, will address means of unlocking rural- urban synergies through establishing dialogues across urban and rural areas. ROBUST aims to advance the understanding of the interactions and dependencies between rural, peri-urban and urban areas and identify and promote policies, governance models and practices that foster mutually beneficial relations.

Given the above background, this proposed roundtable aims to address the urban- rural relationship as spaces of dialogue for places of dignity. Well-designed multi-level and multi-actor governance systems and processes are key to strengthening beneficial relations between rural, peri-urban and urban areas. On the other hand the harmonisation of economic growth and environmental imperatives is one of the challenges to be addressed in the 2014–2020 period. With this roundtable we seek to identify and address how spatial planning can improve its integrative capacity by addressing the key functional relationships in the rural-urban dialogue to enhance synergies.

In order to stimulate thoughts and discussion we propose the following questions to be addressed in the roundtable:

- Are rural-urban synergies possible?
- What are key challenges for constructive rural-urban relationships in current European planning contexts?
- What may be priorities for action to enhance aimed synergies?