



‘Rural nexus’ – challenges and opportunities
Conference ‘Empowering Rural Industries’

Philomena de Lima, 20 March 2017

Structure of Presentation

- 'Rural' beyond binaries
- Rural communities recurrent themes
- 'Rural' nexus – opportunities

'Rural' beyond binaries

Rural is :

- **diverse:** e.g. accessible , remote, island, resource/ amenity based; diversity of people, cultures, histories...
- **dynamic and changing** – economic transformations
- **relational :**
 - involves lineages & flows of people, capital, goods and services, information & knowledge within and outside nation states.
 - encompasses Euclidean distance but also non-spatial 'relational proximity'.

It also embodies :

- **lived everyday life, experiences and practices**
- **inclusionary & exclusionary** practices /experience.

(Bell et al. 2006; Copus & de Lima 2015; Partridge , 2017; Shucksmith & Brown, 2016; Woods, 2011)

Rural communities recurrent themes- Positives

- Population growth in ‘accessible rural areas’ – increase in creative and entrepreneurial activity

- ‘A good life’ : rural residents in Scotland are more likely to :
 - rate their neighbourhood as a ‘very good’ place to live.
 - feel they belong to their immediate neighbourhood.
 - volunteer in the community.
 - ‘feel ‘very safe’ when home alone at night’.

- Growing examples of communities organising, buying and owning assets – e.g. land , forest- and co-production /delivering services (social care, food banks .

(Community Land Scotland- <http://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk> ; Hoffman, 2012; Stockdale, 2006a &b; Scottish Government , 2015 ; What Works Scotland- <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/>

Rural communities recurrent themes- challenges

- Uneven development across rural areas
- Ageing Population
- Poor access to services and transport
- Lack of access to good quality, secure and well paid work
- Poverty and social exclusion –e.g. minimum income ; fuel poverty ; social isolation
- Fragmented policy making
- ‘Rural agency’ is constrained by macro-structural factors/conditions : neo-liberalism; globalisation; deregulation, etc

'Rural Nexus' – Opportunities ?

Rural nexus as places and spaces that connect, link and interweave the social, cultural, psychological, environmental, economic domains within and across national spaces .

This means :

- **Going beyond sectoral approaches and voices :an inclusive rural Scotland** that recognises the diversities it encompasses and the assets and challenges it embodies –e.g. 'community empowerment' local food movements, etc.
- **Viewing rural as connected and mobile**
- **A continuum rather than binary emphasis in policies** – e.g. exogenous < - >endogenous ; people<->place development ; agency <->constraints
- **Moving beyond vertical policy silos and governance arrangements**
- **That bottom up action and expert driven knowledge are critical to achieving transformative change.**

‘Rural Nexus’ Moving Forward

‘What is needed, is not only ‘joined up thinking’, but profoundly transformative change in infrastructures, organisations, behaviours, markets, governance practices and even cultures more widely .’

(Stirling, 2015, p.2)

Contact

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see also **Rural Policy Learning Commons (RPLC)** :

<http://rplc-capr.ca/>