



Rural web and role of agriculture

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The rural area

The rural is the place where the ongoing encounter, interaction and mutual transformation (in short: the co-production) of man and living nature is located (Ploeg J.D. at all. 2008)

This co-production is specific in space and time depending from the new functions of rural areas that could be extremely contrasting

The basic characteristic of rural areas

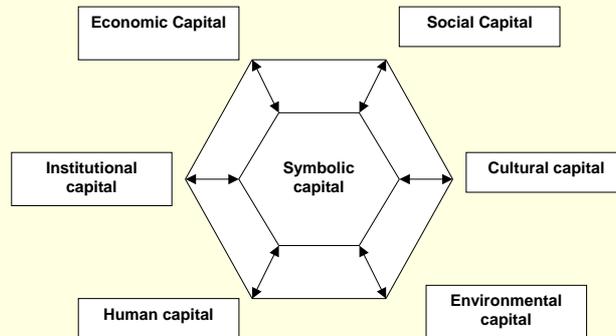
- The high expression of Heterogeneity (difference between presence of natural resources and human investments)
- The multifunctionality of natural resources
- The emerging conflictuality between old and new actors and old and new activities
- The different relationship between rural and urban (material and immaterial elements)

What makes rural regions successful

In the ETUDE project emerge to leading elements:

- The perception of an high quality of life in the area (the actual territorial capital)
- Sustainability of the development process in the area (the view of the oncoming territorial capital)

Actual territorial capital



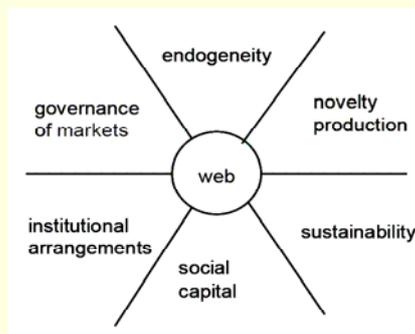
High quality of life perception is based on the endowment and “Fine Tuning” of different capital dimension and on the opportunities to have an easy access to them

The oncoming territorial capital

1. The presence and development of a model of governance for the emerging competing needs of economy, society and nature able to guarantee the existence of social and ecological conditions necessary to support a human life and certain level of well being through future generation

The rural WEB

The rural web: six dimensions interrelated



In a broader sense, the 'rural web' can be understood as the relational system through which the human and non-human components of a rural territory interact in a sustainable way.

The rural web: six dimensions interrelated

The rural web concept may provide:

1. an approach to sustainable rural development:
 - the rural web helps scholars to conceive of rural development as 'reflexive territorialisation', a strategy aimed at differentiating and positioning a rural region into global networks. It also helps to understand the drivers of change and of resistance to change, the integration between the social sphere and the non-human sphere, the influence of power relationships on the processes of territorialisation.
 2. a tool for comparative analysis of different development paths in rural areas:
 - the rural web can improve comparative tools of analysis between initiatives and territories. It can also stimulate grounded theory, as it allows to test these concepts against factual data.
 3. a diagnostic tool to explore potentialities and limits of rural development patterns.
 - the rural web may feed appropriate monitoring and evaluation methodologies related to public and private initiatives, which may combine together quantitative and qualitative data into a common framework.
- The rural web' is its aim to look to rural practices and policies with the awareness that there are no one-size-fits-for-all strategies, and to assume an actors' perspective. Looking at rural areas as hybrid networks, it links goals of development to their physical basis and provides a framework for understanding co-production as a negotiated process among actors.
 - the 'rural web' provides a tool for understanding processes of endogenous growth and to advocate the relevance of collective action and of the need for better taking into consideration the externalities of rural activities.
 - The rural web is the result of the relationship and coherence between 6 dimensions that are interrelated each other in a time and in a space

The role of agriculture in the six dimensions: reducing conflicts – creating synergies

The dimension of **endogeneity** refers to the degree to which a regional economy is grounded on regionally available (and regionally controlled) resources. The agriculture in the new multifunctional model contribute in different ways to strengthen this dimension and at the same time to create an autonomy of regional economy from global trends.

- The multifunctional agriculture:
 - is one of the major producer or reproducer of endogenous resources as natural resources or cultural heritage, landscape and quality food;
 - Is based on SME characterised by family labour and where the redistribution of Value added is more internalised in the area
 - Is based on local knowledge and learning by doing process with an improvement of entrepreneurial and cooperative attitude
 - Use mainly short chains where the relational aspects (reputation, identity, ecc...) play a key role

The role of agriculture in the six dimensions: reducing conflicts – creating synergies

The dimension of **novelty production** refers to the capacity to produce continuously local specific innovation that are more promising for the competitiveness and the sustainability of the area. Agriculture is the co-production between nature and human activities. In this context the novelties are the tools to reconnect agriculture to the specificity of the area. At the same time the heterogeneity of areas and the need of sustainability require a continuously creation of new promising solutions in terms of practices, products and organisational forms strengthening the interrelationship between natural resources, society and economy.

- The multifunctional agriculture:
 - Is the model where novelties can be produced in rural areas as they are a rupture from the existing and explained regularities typical of conventional agriculture model. The novelties have been supported the farm process of broadening (Agritourism, care activities, environmental services) and deepening (quality products, short chain, on-farm food processing) their activities creating a new rural economy and opportunities
 - The novelties is strongly associated with contextual knowledge and at the same time strengthen the dynamism and competitiveness of rural regions

The role of agriculture in the six dimensions: reducing conflicts – creating synergies

The dimension of **sustainability** refers to the capacity of human activities to correspond to the requirements of economic growth, social justice, ecological protection and inter-generational equity. The agricultural sector remain the principal utilized of landscape and natural resources of rural regions. Sustainability is a must for agriculture.

The multifunctional agriculture:

- Is based on practices dimensioned on the availability of farm resources reducing the external inputs and cost of production as well as pollutions
- Is based on a more systemic approach to farming that valorise a local resources (nature, labour, knowledge, relationship)
- Is characterised by more relations with sectors and actors internal and external to the regions. This contribute to a the creation of negotiating room for a new definition of intersectorial, intercultural and intergenerational equity
- Create opportunity to implement economy of scope
- Is an answer to the price squeeze

The role of agriculture in the six dimensions: reducing conflicts – creating synergies

The dimension of **social capital** refers to the ability to get things done collectively and to use social relations for a common purpose and benefit.

The multifunctional agriculture:

- Makes farmers rediscover the cooperative dimension both in old and new farm activities.
- Is more interested to the farming system as a whole ant to the local context that is a key element of competitiveness. There is more attention to collective action and to creation of synergies with other actors
- is characterise by emerging new networks where complexity is manage trough the division of risk and responsibilities among all actors involved in the networks and where diversity become a common benefit
- This is strictly connected with novelties production and sustainability

The role of agriculture in the six dimensions: reducing conflicts – creating synergies

The dimension of **governance of market** refers to the institutional capacity to control and strengthen markets and to construct new ones. This is related to the way in which specific supply chains are organized, how the total realized value is shared (between actors but also spatially) and how the potential benefits of collective action are delivered.

The multifunctional agriculture:

- Open the opportunities of new markets both for farmers and other actors of rural economy
- Create new externalities that could evolve in marketable goods (carbon credits)
- Reshape the interrelations in the food chains with a new construction of quality definition and redistribution of value added
- Contribute to create the territorial identity that valorise all products (Tuscany: region of Chianti)

The role of agriculture in the six dimensions: reducing conflicts – creating synergies

The dimension of **institutional arrangements** can be understood as structures and mechanisms of social configuration and cooperation. Institutions can play the role as agent between different actors on the same level as well as a communicator between higher and lower levels.

The new institutional arrangement becoming more and more important due to the increasing number of actors in rural areas and of relationship between urban and rural areas. The role of institutions is to reduce conflict and create synergies.

The multifunctional agriculture:

- Need new institutional arrangements because is characterise by multilevel and multifaceted activities. Many of this activities could create conflict in the area (agritourism with conventional tourism enterprise, direct selling with local distribution, etc..)
- Create a new opportunities for cooperation between local and external actors