

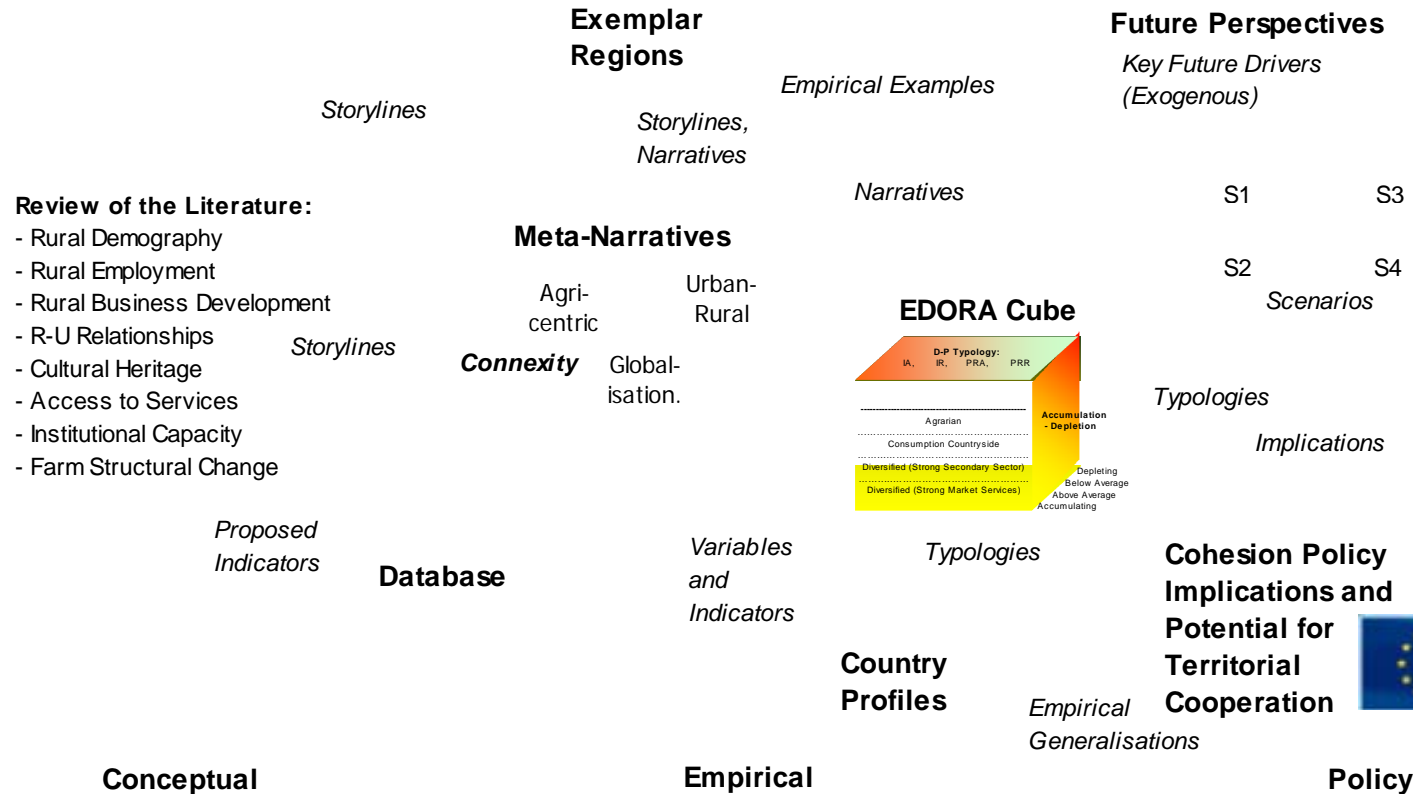
# Current processes of change in rural areas

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*“It’s so lovely out here you wonder why they have it so far from the city.”*

# The EDORA Project



## What is going on in Rural Europe...?

Narratives help us make sense of the rural change.

- The range of socio-economic changes affecting rural areas is bewildering.
- Rural areas do not seem to be becoming more uniform, but *more diverse*. i.e. They are following many different individual “development paths”.
- A **narrative approach** can help us to make sense of all this in a (systematic) way which is useful as a basis for more appropriate rural policy.

## Some Contestable Statements Relating to Rural Development... “Stylised Fallacies”?

- The rural economy can be separated from that of adjacent urban areas.
- Rural areas are generally recording negative socio-economic trends and “vicious spirals” of decline...
- Rural policy should therefore focus on addressing this decline, or even “creating a level playing field”...
- The rural economy is driven by land-based industries – therefore rural policy should be predominantly sectoral...
- Geographical remoteness is associated with decline and disadvantage.
- Etc. etc...

**Still true?** ... For much of Rural Europe these are increasingly seen as “*Stylised Fallacies*”. We need new generalisations...new “**meta-narratives**”.

# What are Meta-Narratives (M-N)?

- *...a meta-narrative is a **story about a story**, encompassing and explaining other 'little stories'...* (Wikipedia)
  - The “**little stories**” are the changes taking place in specific socio-economic characteristics (e.g. demography, economic structure, access to services, environmental change etc. etc...)
  - The Meta-Narratives (M-N) pull the “little stories” together into a coherent, synthetic, “big themes” of rural change.
  - **(M-N):**
    - Help us to understand the way in which different facets of rural change interact.
    - Help us to systematically describe change in individual rural areas.
    - Should take account of both current changes and look ahead to likely future developments.
- But they are not:**
- Discrete regional development paths.
  - Associated in a one-to-one way with different kinds of rural areas.

## The Conceptual Phase: Understanding Rural Change

### Economic processes:

- Declining relative importance of agriculture,
- Refocusing of agriculture (multifunctionality, ecological modernisation, post-productivism etc).
- Opportunities presented by the “Consumption Countryside”.
- Semi-subsistence micro-farms as a social buffer (esp. in NMS12)
- Labour market segmentation – human capital issues.
- Rise of diversified New Rural Economy (NRE), especially in accessible areas.

**Drivers - Opportunities - Constraints**

- Importance of extra-local networks in growth and innovation.

**PROCESSES OF  
RURAL CHANGE**

Economic

Social

Environ-  
mental

Political

## The Conceptual Phase:

# Understanding Rural Change

### Social Processes:



- R-U Migration, counter-urbanisation, ageing.
- “New Rurality” in accessible rural areas, prosperous, urban characteristics...
- Service provision issues in remote and sparsely populated areas.
- Contrasting “live-work” models of NRE and NMS.
- Decline of traditional institutions and rise of individualism.

**Drivers - Opportunities - Constraints**

**PROCESSES OF  
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## The Conceptual Phase: Understanding Rural Change

### Environmental Processes:



- Maintenance and commodification of the rural environment...
- Effects of climate change.
- Effects of anticipation of C. C. and mitigation efforts

**Drivers - Opportunities - Constraints**

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## The Conceptual Phase: Understanding Rural Change

### Political Processes:

- From Government to Governance, and the “Project State”.
- Changing welfare state systems, privatisation, fiscal pressures...
- Innovation strategies, emphasis on potential and competitiveness, (rather than compensation or support for weakness).
- Localism v central control (neo-endogenous) and managerial approaches.

**Drivers - Opportunities - Constraints**

**PROCESSES OF  
RURAL CHANGE**

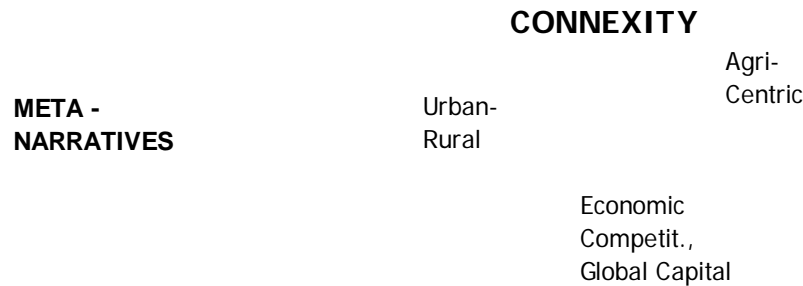
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# The Conceptual Phase: Understanding Rural Change



Overarching theme of increasing **“CONNEXITY”** (Mulgan) – “network society”, “relational space”, “multi-level governance”.  
Freedom v interdependence. **D**rivers - **O**pportunities - **C**onstraints

1. Agri-centric narrative (post-productivism, multifunctionality etc.)

2. Urban-rural (core-periphery) narrative



3. Economic competitiveness and global capital penetration (Globalisation)...

# Opportunities, Challenges and Policy Domains linked to the Meta-Narratives of Rural Change

Meta Narrative	Opportunities	Challenges	Policy Domains
<b>Agri-Centric</b>	<p>Increased agricultural competitiveness in some areas.</p> <p>Diversification.</p> <p>Remuneration for rural amenities (consumption countryside).</p> <p>Quality products, short supply chains, regional appellation.</p>	<p>Loss of agricultural competitiveness in some areas → low income or abandonment.</p> <p>Decline in farm employment, even in competitive areas.</p> <p>Environmental effects of intensification in competitive areas.</p> <p>Difficulty in valuation of public goods.</p>	<p>Agriculture.</p> <p>Rural Development.</p> <p>Human capital (training).</p> <p>Land use.</p>
<b>Rural-Urban</b>	<p>Counter-urbanisation (increased population and economic activity in intermediate and accessible rural areas).</p> <p>Information technology facilitating new activities.</p> <p>Establishment of the New Rural Economy.</p>	<p>Sparsity (especially in remote rural areas)</p> <p>Peripherality.</p> <p>Selective out-migration from remoter and sparsely populated regions.</p> <p>Accelerated demographic ageing.</p> <p>Difficulties in provision of SGI.</p> <p>Pump effects of infrastructure improvements.</p>	<p>Infrastructure.</p> <p>Telecommunications.</p> <p>Land use planning.</p> <p>Transport.</p> <p>SGI</p>
<b>Globalisation</b>	<p>Wider markets for rural products.</p> <p>Rapid diffusion of innovation.</p> <p>Increase in “primary segment” jobs.</p> <p>Expanded opportunities for international tourism.</p>	<p>Restructuring – loss of competitiveness for “traditional” activities.</p> <p>“Rationalisation” of globally controlled activities → concentration in accessible rural, intermediate, or urban regions.</p> <p>Loss of local control over economic activities, employment, provision of market services etc.</p> <p>Loss of regional distinctiveness, cultural assets, → reduced residential attractiveness and potential for tourism.</p>	<p>Competition.</p> <p>Trade.</p> <p>Employment.</p> <p>Social Inclusion.</p> <p>Tourism.</p>

For more detail see EDORA Working Papers 1-10,  
available for download from **EDORA project website:**  
[www.nordregio.se/EDORA](http://www.nordregio.se/EDORA)

