

CRE Rural Development theme document

Introduction

The Rural Development research group within CRE is interested in the theory and practice of sustainable rural development. CRE has made influential theoretical contributions in this area, particularly through developing the concept of 'neoendogenous rural development', to describe socio-economic development that is locally rooted, but outward-looking and embraces the opportunities which globalisation offers.

The research taking place in the group is multidisciplinary and multiscalar. Our research draws on disciplines such as geography, economics, political science, rural sociology, agricultural and environmental science as well as the inter-linkages across these. We focus on local, national and international contexts, with an emphasis primarily on Europe and other OECD countries.

We have expertise in both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies (including environmental evaluation, survey work and analysis particularly through the Rural Business Survey, ethnography, discourse analysis). We also carry out case study research, policy appraisal, international comparative analysis and we are interested in exploring new research methodologies.

We place great importance on public engagement, evidenced by our collaborations with voluntary and public organisations, consultancy work and contribution to public policy debates, particularly through the publication of Policy and Practice Briefing Papers. Furthermore, CRE has been a pioneer in knowledge exchange in rural development through its active participation and contribution to the Northern Rural Network.

We are committed to academic excellence and to furthering the research agenda on rural development, particularly in the following interconnected five themes:

Agriculture, Climate Change and the Environment

The focus of this theme is rural and environmental management, with an emphasis on Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the climate change policy agenda and the impact of such policies on rural societies. It is through this area of research that the Rural Development theme links directly with the other themes in CRE and the RELU programme. Our research themes include:

- CAP reforms and greening the CAP
- Agri-environmental policies (application, evaluation and international comparative analysis)
- Public goods, regulation, incentives, market-based instruments
- Future of agriculture, climate change challenges
- Policy shifts between productivism and post-productivism
- Sustainable development: rhetoric and application in rural contexts
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation and impact on rural communities
- Environmental policy and conflict
- Case studies in developing and developed countries

Rural Planning, Communities and Governance

This theme looks at the relationship between rural development and planning in a changing political landscape. We are interested in examining the governance of rural policies and the role of communities in policy development.

- Housing rural communities and planning (affordable rural housing, supply and demand imbalances and policy intervention)
- National Parks, uplands and rural planning
- Rural governance, partnerships and stakeholder relationships
- Rural place-making and planning
- Land use conflict, environmental planning and social justice
- Policy shifts between regionalism and localism, and their impact on rural communities
- Collaborative and neighbourhood planning, community participation and community power
- Strategic spatial planning and comparative rural planning

Rural Change, Social Justice and Wellbeing

This theme focuses on rural social change, polarisation and social segregation, wellbeing and resilience (both individual and community) and the role of policy in delivering social justice. This theme links closely with two previous themes focusing on environmental and planning policy. Key research themes include:

- Rural social change (counterurbanisation, demographic ageing, rural gentrification, international migration), spatial differentiation and uneven geographies of change
- The needs of a changing rural community (broadband and technological redundancy, rural services delivery, transport)
- Rurality, wellbeing and quality of life (from rural idyll to rural stress/horror)
- Rural social capital (trust, voluntarism, faith groups)
- Social exclusion, rural poverty, emerging inequalities (spatial apartheid, fuel poverty, food poverty, lack of housing)
- Class formation and the role of rural policy in delivering diverse and socially mixed rural communities
- Social justice, power relations within households and local communities in addition to relations between local and extra local actors.
- Wellbeing and democracy

Rural Economy and Innovation

The focus of this theme is on the potential of rural areas to attract and sustain successful and competitive enterprises that contribute to local and national economies. CRE looks at the nature, opportunities and risks associated with rural businesses in terms of family contribution, seasonal employment, entrepreneurialism, scale, networks and knowledge exchange.

- Small and Medium Enterprises, policy evaluation and development
- Rural microbusiness
- Rural business networks, expertise and knowledge exchange in rural business development

- Embeddedness and rural business
- Social and community enterprise
- New rural economies and rural innovation
- IT knowledge economy and rural areas
- Creative economy and rural development
- New products, new markets (artisan food, art and crafts)
- Wellbeing and entrepreneurialism

Rural Cultures, Nostalgia and Identities

In the field of rural studies there is a great amount of literature on perceptions of rurality and rural cultures. The focus of this group is to contribute to this literature but also, crucially, to link these debates to rural development and wider social policy.

- The role of arts and culture in rural areas, place making/shaping
- Oral histories of vets and beekeepers
- Embeddedness and culture of rural businesses
- Identities (including, *inter alia*, gender, sexuality, religion, disability, ethnicity), policy development and social justice
- Representations of rurality in arts, film, media
- Changing values and perceptions of farming
- Cultural landscapes