Urban-Rural Interactions: Finnish Experiences

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Changing Finnish Regional Policy

• Traditionally regional policy has been closely linked to aim of industrialisation

• Promotion of underdeveloped regions has been prevailing target
  – Targeting to balanced development in the country
  – Economic activities spread evenly in the country

• Priorities of regional policy
  – 1980s support of less developed and problematic regions
  – Beginning of 1990s increasingly promotion of stronger growth centres
  – Mid 1990s emphasis on promotion of stronger growth poles

= Efficiency, regional differentiation, competitiveness, global markets new key words
Changing Finnish Regional Policy

- Regional differences continued to grow during 1990s
- Polarisation has been obvious in Finland
- BUT: Improving competitiveness of growth poles has not really been emphasised
- Rather emphasis has been laid on developing a large number of urban regions
- Attitude towards Helsinki region has been negative
- Only lately major cities and especially Helsinki region has got a policy programme of their own
Different Rural and Urban Regions

• Rural areas adjacent to cities
  – Growing regions, various interests to land use, residential areas, recreation
• Rural heartland areas
  – Strong agriculture and food processing
• Sparsely populated rural areas
  – Strong outmigration
  – Agriculture minor importance
• Urban areas
  – Different size and types of cities
• Small cities similar to rural areas
Introduction of Urban-Rural Interaction

- Working Group on Urban-Rural Interaction worked mainly in 2000s
- Tasks were:
  - to consider thematic fields of policies
  - to consider actions of policies
  - to consider governance arrangements of policies
- Result has been a growing awareness of urban-rural interaction
- We may argue that awareness has been stronger in rural policy
- Urban/regional policy has comprised urban-rural interaction as an “in-built impact”
Dimensions of urban-rural interaction

• Economic dimension
  - trade, tourism, commuting, networks between enterprises

• Social dimension
  - Social networks, networks between societies

• Political dimension
  - Governance, formation of regional partnerships, mutual regional policy strategies
Challenges Concerning Territorial and Social Cohesion

• Different modes and spatial scales of approaching the identity and behaviour
• Cohesion inside the regions defined between urban and rural spaces
• Urban-rural interaction usually not an explicit goal of national/ regional policies
• Often institutionalised divides
• Most regional programmes do not directly comprise urban-rural linkages
• Rather regional programmes may constrain interregional openness
Policy Response to Urban-Rural Interaction

• The Regional Cohesion and Competitiveness Programme (COCO)
  – Government’s special programme for period 2010-2013
  – Merged of Regional Centre Programme, Regional Section for Rural Areas of the Special Rural Policy Programme and Island Development Programme
  – Each region consists of at least one strong urban centre
  – Promotes preconditions for independent development
  – Develops networking of economic and other activities in the region, between regions and internationally
  – Programme is a tool to support strategic development efforts
  – Aims to initiate important projects
Policy Challenges

• Extract best solutions to support urban-rural interaction
  – Structure basic conditions for openness
  – Create opportunities for urban-rural interaction
  – Direct brokerage of linkages
  – Generate rural capacities to interact

• Institutional obstacles
  – Between regional programmes
  – Between national level policies
  – Between EU policies
Thank you for your attention!