
From social to territorial capital in European rural development paths: a time-space and crosswise approach

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Abstract

Starting from the definition of rural development as a 'continued process of improving the quality of life of rural societies', this leads us to consider the relationship between the processes of change and the types of 'rural' and rurality in Europe.

We assume that these differences in the types of 'rural' derive from a historical construction of diverse cultural, socio-political and institutional valorisation of territories, so also from a history of capacity building of individuals and collectives, organizations and institutions, shaping different types of social and territorial capital. In other words, we follow all those authors who recognize that the initiatives turned into development ways (social, economic, cultural, territorial), with expression in the rural areas, are framed by antecedent and spatial surrounding conditions (the time and space of changes in the humanized systems which include countryside and cities).

The purpose of this paper is to provide, on the one hand, a comparative portrayal of the relationship between differentiated paths of development of societies and territories in Europe and the types of 'rural' and rurality that have been corresponded to them, which is related with different contexts of (human) agency, but mainly institutions shall be emphasised.

On the other hand, we intend to illustrate how major paradigm shifts – including those favouring both different public policies and the resignifications of the 'rural' (in the political, social and academic spheres) – had different consequences, according to several authors, in the great divisions of Europe: Southern, Northern, Western and Eastern. Some of the consequences were nuanced and/or lagged in time, mostly in Southern and Eastern Europe. The role of the EEC, the CAP and the evolution of policies in the context of the affirmation and enlargement of the EU are areas covered by this analysis.

Our concern comprises from pre-World War II experiences, in the context of capitalist countries, including some kinds of education in the countryside, agricultural and rural extension and community development, to the outcome of postwar public policies, in their different phases, from a functionalist and sector privileging to those of diversification and multifunctional territorialism. The diverse situations of countries that have gone from socialist to market economy are also contemplated. In all cases, we emphasise in particular the neo-endogenous approach of Rural Development and the case of LEADER, after the end of the

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1980's. We refer to the enlivening contexts of greater or lesser rural 'animation', activation and mobilisation of actors, both in some rural areas and in (influential) urban territories and centers (as in the 'hinterland contexts').

Several European situations lead us to reflect on the sense of what we call 'local development' and 'territorial development' and the involved multilevel territorial (and rural) governance processes, in the face of the challenges of competitiveness and cohesion in the context of globalization. This is even more relevant when considering the limited instruments within the framework of Europe 2020.

The methodology involved comprises, on the one hand, a wide-ranging bibliographic analysis (although resorting only to publications in English and in Latin languages), covering different disciplinary and interdisciplinary dimensions that cross contributions in the context of history, political economy, sociology, political science, for example, as well as certain domains of human geography. On the other hand, the academic / scientific bibliography is complemented by the relevant gray literature and the European technical and institutional documentation which enables additional means for the characterization, explanation and discussion of strategies and policy measures for the (re)structuring of the social and territorial capital inherent to the partnerships and networks involved in rural and territorial development.

As a conclusion, the paper opens perspectives on how Europe 2020 instruments can promote – to what extent suitably to different European rural areas – the forms of social capital and territorial capital as conditions of sustainability and cohesion.

Keywords: rural development, social capital, territorial capital, governance, rurality