

RURAL EUROPE AND THE WORLD: GLOBALIZATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (EDITORIAL)

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1. Introduction

Globalization has a pervasive influence across rural Europe. From the forests of Scandinavia to the orange groves of the Mediterranean, from remote Irish farmsteads to German commuter villages, the economic, social, cultural and political lives of rural localities are being continually refashioned by globalization processes that stretch, intensity, multiply and create new relations, ties and dependencies between places scattered around the world (Steger, 2003). As the European Commission (2007) has observed, “globalization is seen to touch every walk of life – opening doors, creating opportunities, raising apprehensions”, such that the impact of globalization is multi-facted and differentiated, and responses to globalization are diverse.

In spite of the reach of globalization into rural areas, globalization remains in the popular imagination most commonly associated with urban centres, and particularly with the concept of the ‘global city’ – places where expressions of globalization such as international banks, large corporate offices, and ethnically-mixed immigrant populations are most visible. This association has been reflected in academic research on globalization, which has exhibited a distinct urban bias (Hogan, 2004; Woods, 2007). In contrast, the dynamics of globalization as worked through rural localities has been comparatively under-researched, and this lack of academic attention has permitted the flourishing of two contradictory, but equally misleading, myths about globalization and the rural that have gained purchase in popular, political and some academic narratives of globalization.

The first myth represents globalization as domination. Globalization is portrayed as a domineering, homogenizing force imposed from above, that threatens the traditions and distinctiveness of rural regions in Europe and elsewhere. This interpretation has motivated anti-globalization protests from both the xenophobic right and the anti-capitalist left, finding articulation in campaigns against refugees, migrant workers and foreign home-owners perceived as threatening settled rural cultures (see for example Hubbard, 2005), as well as in progressive movements such as José Bové’s celebrated revolt against McDonalds in rural France (Williams, 2008). Globalization is hence positioned as something to struggle against, but such is the unevenness of the perceived power balance that the future for rural regions imagined in this narrative is overwhelmingly bleak.

The second myth conversely represents globalization as the saviour of rural economies. Globalization is equated with time-space compression created by new technologies, especially

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the internet and other communications advances, which are perceived to remove the barriers of accessibility and location holding back rural economies. In other words, the spatial economics of the industrial age that produced urbanization are turned upside-down by new technologies (and by economic and political liberalization) that remove the benefits of industrial clustering, proximity to markets and access to large labour pools, and instead enable rural localities to compete on an equal footing with towns and cities in a globalized economy. For adherents to this interpretation (which has obvious attractions for neoliberal politics), globalization enables any rural locality to thrive economically, so long as they are able to find a competitive niche.

We have labelled these two narratives as 'myths' because they both fundamentally misrepresent the reality of globalization in rural regions. Both positions are too simplistic in their imaginings of both globalization and rural areas. Both positions see globalization as something that *happens to* rural areas, an external force over which rural localities and their actors have little influence, and accordingly, both positions also represent rural areas as being largely static and isolated in character.

The papers in this double special issue of *European Countryside* (*Volume 3, Issue 3* and *Volume 4, Issue 1*), in contrast, adopt a relational perspective to the analysis of globalization in a rural context. The implications of this shift in perspective are two-fold. Firstly, it emphasizes that globalization essentially involves the reconfiguration of social, economic, cultural and political relations, and that as such, 'globalization' comprises a complex, multi-dimensional and sometimes contradictory bundle of different processes. Secondly, the perspective also recognizes that rural places are relational entities, in that they are constituted by the entanglement of multiple social, economic, cultural and political relations. Putting these two implications together, it follows that globalization works by modifying the relations that constitute rural places. Accordingly, globalization proceeds not by domination but by negotiation and contestation, and the outcomes of globalization will be different in each locality (Woods, 2007).

This collection aims to illustrate and examine the complex realities of globalization in rural Europe through case studies focussing on different aspects of globalization, and on the ways in which actors in rural regions are responding to the challenge of regional development in the context of globalization. The articles all report on different elements of research conducted as part of an over-arching project, 'Developing Europe's Rural Regions in the Era of Globalization' (DERREG), funded by the Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities strand of EU Framework Programme 7.³ DERREG aims to develop understanding of the dynamics and outcomes of globalization in rural Europe, with the objective of enabling regional development actors to better anticipate and respond to the challenges presented. To achieve this aim, DERREG brings together a consortium of nine research partners working across ten case study regions (Figure 1), with empirical research structured around four domains: the global engagement and local embeddedness of rural businesses; international migration and mobility of rural populations; environmental capital and sustainable rural development; and knowledge, capacity-building and regional learning (for more information see www.derreg.eu).⁴

In the remainder of this introductory article, we set the scene for the subsequent papers by discussing further the DERREG project's theoretical framework, placing the research in historical and geographical context, and identifying some of the key contemporary trends associated with globalization in rural Europe, with reference to the individual papers in which specific issues are examined in more detail.

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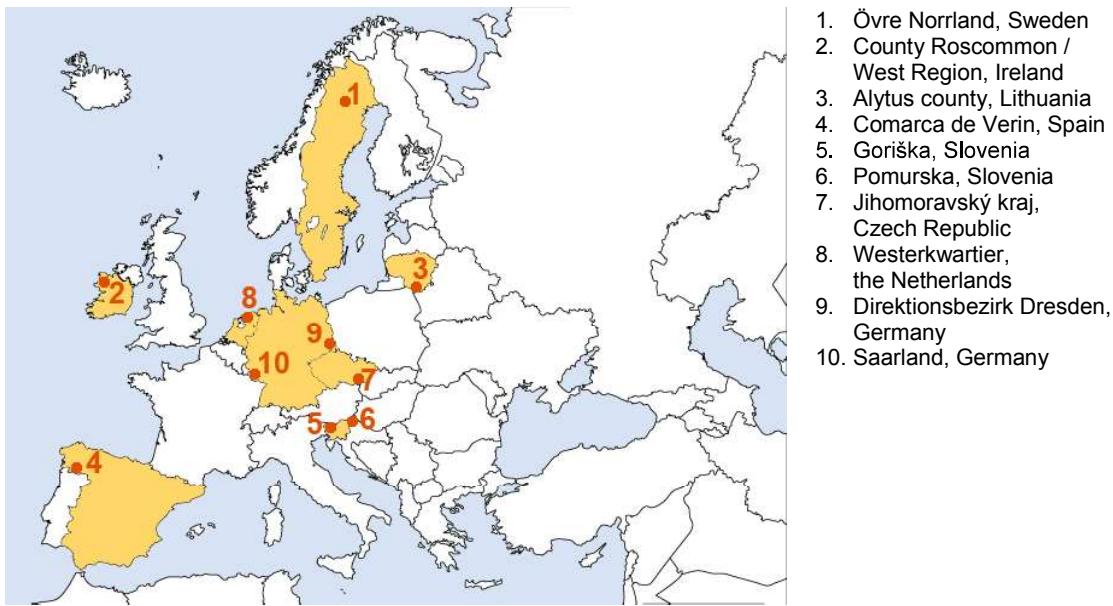


Fig 1. The DERREG case study regions.

2. A relational approach to globalization and the rural

The relational approach to place has become prevalent in geography in recent decades, offering a way of moving beyond the flawed perspectives of essentialist accounts that presented places as fixed and bounded, structuralist accounts that denuded the significance of locality in emphasizing super-structures, and social constructivist approaches that prioritized the discursive to the neglect of the material. Relational perspectives position space as “a product of practices, trajectories, interrelations” (Massey, 2004, p. 5), that are dynamic and contingent. Space is not segmented into territorialized places, rather relational space contains places that are brought into being as meeting points or entanglements of diverse social, economic, cultural and political relations. Massey (2005) refers to this as the “thrown-togetherness of place”, that places are always hybrid, always fluid, always changing, always threaded together with other places.

In a relational perspective the rural can be understood as neither a bounded and definable territory nor as a purely imaginary space without material foundation. Rather the rural is relational, discursively constructed in relation to external referents such as the city or the nation, but also given material form through the hybridization and entwinement of different social, economic and cultural processes and relations to produce evocatively ‘rural’ articulations (Murdoch, 2003; Woods, 2011). Take, for example, the family farm, which sits at the heart of discourses of rurality in many European nations. The family farm is a product of diverse economic relations and processes, social processes, labour relations, cultural conventions, landscape practices and family relations. It is the particular combination of these different relations that produces the distinctive model of the ‘family farm’ that is so iconic of the essence of rurality. Yet, it is also these relations that tie the family farm into broader networks and structures, and which make the family farm vulnerable to distant events, such as commodity price fluctuations, agricultural policy reforms, or changes in environmental regulations.

Globalization hence impacts on rural areas through the relations that constitute rural place. Indeed, globalization can be perceived to be intrinsically relational as it is in essence about the refashioning of relations across space. As Steger’s (2003) four-fold definition encapsulates, globalization involves firstly, “the creation of new, and the multiplication of existing, social networks and activities that increasingly overcome traditional political, economic, cultural and geographical boundaries” (p. 9); secondly, “the expansion and stretching of social and economic relations, activities and interdependencies over increasing distances” (p. 12); thirdly, “the intensification and acceleration of social exchanges and activities, with connections able to

be made across increasing distances in increasingly less time and with increasing frequency" (*ibid.*); and fourthly, the development of a global consciousness that changes how people relate to each other.

Moreover, the stretching, expansion, intensification and multiplication of social and economic relations does not occur at some abstract level. All relations are grounded in space, and as such the reconfiguration of relations happens in and through actual places, engaging both local and non-local actors. The global hence reshapes the local, but Massey (2005) observes that the reverse is also true, if often neglected: the global is constructed through the local. The local and the global exist not in opposition to each other, but in negotiation, with different outcomes in each place, producing the uneven geography of globalization:

"In a relational understanding of neoliberal globalization 'places' are criss-crossings in the wider power-geometries that constitute both themselves and 'the global'. On thus view local places are not simply always the victims of the global; nor are they always politically defensible redoubts against the global. Understanding space as the constant open production of topologies of power points to the fact that different 'places' will stand in contrasting relations to the global."

(Massey, 2005, p. 101)

The uneven geographies of globalization include differences between urban and rural areas, but also different outcomes between different rural regions, and even contested outcomes within individual rural localities between the conflicting logics of different globalization processes. Woods (2007) accordingly argues that the emergent 'global countryside' (employed here as a hypothetical foil to the 'global city') is always a contested space, in which processes of negotiation, manipulation and hybridization are conducted through, but not contained by local micro-politics that inevitably enrol and engage local as well as non-local actors and produce outcomes that are not pre-determined:

"The reconstitution of rural spaces under globalization results from the permeability of rural localities as hybrid assemblages of human and non-human entities, knitted-together intersections of networks and flows that are never wholly fixed or contained at the local scale, and whose constant shape-shifting eludes a singular representation of place. Globalization processes introduce into rural localities new networks of global interconnectivity, which become threaded through and entangled with existing local assemblages, sometimes acting in concert and sometimes pulling local actants in conflicting directions. Through these entanglements, intersections and entrapments, the experience of globalization changes rural places, but it never eradicates the local. Rather, the networks, flows and actors introduced by globalization processes fuse and combine with extant local entities to produce new hybrid formations. In this ways, places in the emergent global countryside retain their local distinctiveness, but they are also different to *how they were before*.

(Woods, 2007, pp 499-500)

A relational approach to globalization therefore rejects easy narratives about domination and homogenization and time-space compression in exchange for more demanding questions about how precisely rural places are remade under globalization, about how rural localities are enrolled into new or refashioned relations with other places, and about how extra-local relations are captured, manipulated and exploited by rural actors. These are questions that the DERREG project has sought to ask, and the subsequent papers in this issue provide a number of insights into the dynamics of globalization as observed in various rural regions in Europe.

3. Contemporary Globalization and Rural Europe

A relational perspective challenges popular perceptions that globalization is a new or solely modern phenomenon, and that globalization is a linear process leading from a differentiated past to an homogenized future. Globalization from a relational perspective is irregular, punctuated and sometimes cyclical. Individual rural regions in Europe have been connected into transnational networks for centuries, but the geographical pattern of these connections has shifted over time with geopolitical, technological and economic transitions. From the sixteenth

century, rural Europe was influenced by the consequences of European exploration and colonialization, which introduced new crops and commodities to the European countryside, but also created new opportunities for migrants from depopulating rural areas. By the end of the nineteenth century, the integration of the global economy had advanced significantly, such that agricultural products from the colonies were being sold in Europe in competition with domestic producers, and commodity prices fluctuated with global patterns of supply and demand. The twentieth century, however, witnessed the introduction of protectionist trade policies and state intervention in the rural economy which, combined with the propagation of discourses representing rural areas as the signifiers of national identity, promoted an identification of the countryside with national interests that has continued to inform attitudes towards globalization today.

Viewed in this context, the contemporary era of globalization is not entirely novel, but has clear historical antecedents. However, contemporary globalization can be distinguished from previous manifestations in three key ways.

Firstly, contemporary globalization is characterized by the *totality of reach*. In earlier eras commodity chains, trading networks and migration flows have extended around the globe, but they have been anchored in specific localities and often mediated through imperial political geographies. In between these networks, however, it was quite possible for rural communities to exist with very little engagement with the outside world, at least on an everyday basis – even in Europe. Today, the reach of globalization processes is almost absolute and there can be few rural localities not enrolled into global networks in some way.

Secondly, contemporary globalization is also characterized by the *immediacy of the connections* established. Modern communications technologies enable information to be transmitted around the world instantaneously, such that social relations can be maintained and financial deals transacted between any two parts of the world, and events in one place can have immediate reverberations elsewhere. These developments have eroded the communication gradient between city and countryside creating both opportunities and challenges for rural localities.

Thirdly, the development of contemporary globalization has been informed by the *ideological underpinnings of neoliberalism*. Whilst globalization itself cannot be attributed to neoliberalism, the adoption of neoliberal policies has promoted the dismantling of regulatory structures to facilitate the expansion of a global free market, and principles of neoliberalism have shaped discourses of the global countryside as a singular economic space.

Each of these characteristics can be observed across the multiple arenas in which globalization operates, from the economy to culture. As noted earlier, globalization is not a singular, monolithic force, but rather is advanced through a loose constellation of processes that share a common direction of travel, sometimes working in concert, sometimes in conflict. The particular combination of processes acting on and through any given rural locality will differ depending on the specific social, economic, political and geographical context of the locality, and the particularistic practice of agency by local and non-local actors. The papers in this double special issue elucidate the specificities of globalization as identified in the ten case study regions of the DERREG project, but they also illustrate some of the most prominent trends embedded in contemporary globalization.

The papers by Copus et al, Potočnik Slavič, and Šťastná et al, in this issue, examine aspects of economic globalization. The integration of the global economy is one of the most widely recognized and most widely researched dimensions of globalization, including the stretching and intensification of global commodity chains for food, timber and other traditional rural products (see for example Jackson et al., 2006; Pritchard and Burch, 2003; Stringer and Le Heron, 2008), and the quasi-imperialist strategies of transnational corporations (see Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002; Kneen, 2002; van der Ploeg, 2008). The prevailing wisdom is that rural regions are primarily the victim of such developments, as local farms and firms are forced to compete with cut-price imports, factories are closed as production is relocated to lower-cost economies, and rural localities survive as the ‘dumping grounds’ for low-grade, low-paid industries (see Epp and Whitson, 2001). There is evidence of such impacts in the DERREG case study regions, notably the closure of established factories and the struggle

of small farmers to compete in a liberalized domestic market. However, there are also positive examples of economic growth from foreign direct investment – pharmaceuticals in rural Ireland; electronics in the Czech Republic; automotive engineering in Slovenia – or from the global resources boom stimulating industries such as mining in northern Sweden.

The DERREG research has particularly focused not on these extreme examples of economic loss and gain, but on the relatively under-researched middle – the small and medium enterprises that form the mainstay of the economy of rural regions, whose engagement with transnational networks has been more nuanced. As Copus et al describe, the research employed surveys and interviews to map and analyse the transactions, collaborations and support networks of SMEs in five regions, revealing significant variations in the extent and depth of engagement with transnational networks, reflecting both structural and opportunity factors. In their own study of Övre Norrland in northern Sweden, Copus et al. find that most SMEs continue to be embedded in the region for sales, supplies and, especially, support services; but, they also identify a sizeable group of businesses that have developed export markets or formed relationships with firms elsewhere in Europe, in many cases as a response to the constraints on growth in a remote rural region. Šťastná et al, in contrast, record the more limited international engagement of rural SMEs in South Moravia, Czech Republic, influenced by the legacy of socialist central planning and a post-socialist emphasis on foreign direct investment rather than the development of endogenous enterprises. Yet, they also note that the economic recession has stimulated more SMEs in the region to explore international markets in search of higher returns than those available in the Czech Republic.

The highest degree of engagement with international networks recorded across the five case study regions was in the Goriška region of Slovenia. As Potočnik Slavič discusses, the reasons for this include the geographical location of the region with open borders with Italy and Austria, and the catalyst provided by the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia which prompted firms in the region to replace lost markets in Croatia and Serbia with new international trade, but also economic development policy. Business support networks and infrastructure such as business zones have helped to attract and nurture firms that can use Goriška as a base to access both markets and labour in Slovenia, Austria and north-eastern Italy.

A second notable expression of contemporary globalization is the expansion and acceleration of transnational mobility, ranging from short-term tourism to permanent migration. In contrast to the mass inter-continental immigration of the post-war period, where immigrant communities primarily settled in urban areas to support the industrial economy, contemporary flows of transnational mobility include the movement of non-nationals into rural regions with little recent experience of immigration. The groups involved are also more diverse in character and motivation than in the post-war era, and their presence in different rural regions is not uniform. Across the ten DERREG case study regions there are notable populations of foreign migrant workers in western Ireland, northern Sweden, Saxony and Saarland; amenity migrants and holiday-home-owners in Slovenia, Sweden and Galicia; refugees in northern Sweden and the Netherlands; cross-border commuters in Saarland; and return migrants in Ireland and Lithuania. Much of the movement identified has occurred within the European Union – Polish and Lithuanian migrant workers in Ireland, British amenity migrants in Slovenia, Luxembourgese commuters in Saarland, and so on – but there are also pockets of Brazilian migrant workers in rural Ireland, Indian immigrants in rural Germany, a South Malouccan ex-refugee community in the Westerkwartier district of the Netherlands, among others.

The papers in the next issue by Nienaber and Frys, Lampic and Mrak, Nadler, and Farrell et al examine the dynamics and experiences of international migrants in three different rural regions. Lampic and Mrak describe the case of British amenity migrants in the Pomurska region of Slovenia, where the purchase of properties by Britons as permanent or holiday homes has followed from a mix of factors including a property surplus in the region created by extensive depopulation, the liberalization of investment controls following Slovenia's accession to the European Union, and the facilitation of a British-born local resident who acted as an agent for many of the transactions. As Lampic and Mrak show, these particular factors have helped to enable the relatively amicable integration of the migrants with the local community, contributing to the regional economy.

By contrast, Nadler details the more ambivalent experience of international migrants in rural Saxony, eastern Germany. Although the immigrant population of the region is comparatively small, Nadler identifies two types of immigrant resident in rural Saxony, distinguished by contrasting orientations of their 'lifeworld' towards professional life and family life respectively. The family-oriented migrants place a greater emphasis on integration with the local community, but both they and professional-oriented migrants report encountering ambivalence, suspicion or even hostility from local people. By the same token, however, professional-oriented migrants tend to be more ambivalent themselves about putting down roots in the rural region and look more towards extended networks centred on metropolitan areas.

Nienaber and Frys, meanwhile, explore the nuanced experiences of international economic migrants in a rural district of Saarland, revealing the diverse pathways that have brought the migrants to the regions and the different strategies that they have followed to find employment and engage with the local community. Although most are not employed in occupations matching their qualifications and previous experience, several have become entrepreneurs and few report experiences of discrimination or express dissatisfaction with their life in the region.

The fourth paper on this theme, by Farrell et al., locates its focus further along the migration chain by examining return migration to County Roscommon in rural Ireland. They discuss both the complex influences that feed into the decision to return home, and their experiences of moving back, intertwining economic motivations, nostalgia, ideas of the rural idyll, and notions of family and kinship. Farrell et al., report that return migrants to County Roscommon have acquired financial, social, cultural and human capital making them both employable and capable of employing others within a self-employed capacity. Moreover, they show that return migrants use social networks both before and after their return to (re-)establish contacts and investigate economic opportunities, and the combination of acquired capital and networking assists the successful reintegration of return migrants into the rural community.

Collectively, these narratives affirm the fluidity and dynamism of mobility in the emergent global countryside. Relatively cheap international travel and modern communications technologies mean that migrants living abroad can maintain social networks at home, following what Skaptadóttir and Wojtyńska (2008) call "dichotomized lives" (p. 124) over two geographically distant localities (see also Davis, 2000). Individual migrants negotiate their attachment to place(s) differently – whilst some settle in their new localities, others maintain a transient mindset, looking to move on elsewhere, or to return home.

All migrants, however, have a potential to contribute to rural development that is commonly under-utilised. Even transitory migrants can contribute skills and labour to the rural economy, as well as creating markets for new products and services. Longer-term migrants can play an important role as entrepreneurs. Return migrants, meanwhile, take back to their home regions the skills, qualifications, experiences, know-how and connections that they have acquired abroad. Yet, the capacity of rural regions to take advantage of migrants' capabilities varies. Thus, whilst return migration to rural Ireland has both contributed to and been facilitated by the economic growth of the 'Celtic Tiger' period, early return migrants to Alytus county in Lithuania struggled to find appropriate employment opportunities, generating a pattern of repeat emigration.

A further dimension of contemporary globalization is the propagation of universal discourses as the basis of a global consciousness, and with it the globalization of standard values. This has been particularly evident with respect to thinking about the environment. Since the 1960s, the discourse of an interconnected and fragile 'global nature' has become dominant in popular perception (Heise, 2008; Urry, 2003) and has fed into transnational environmental campaigning and policy-making. One consequence has been the development of conflicts in rural regions as global environmental narratives and values have over-ridden traditional locally-embedded understandings of nature and contested established agricultural and industrial practices.

However, as with other aspects of globalization, the globalization of values is not an irresistible force. The paper in the next issue by Kriszán et al examines how global, national and local environmental discourses are translated into regional sustainable development strategies

through processes of mediation and negotiation. They discuss the example of the Upper Lausitz region in eastern Germany, where ambitions to develop renewable energy production as part of a strategy to diversify the regional economy away from brown-coal mining – informed by global environmental discourse – have been contested and resisted by continuing local support for the mining sector.

Similarly, Frys and Nienaber in their paper, in this issue, study the designation of a UNESCO Biosphere reserve in Saarland as part of a global movement for protecting valued environmental sites and promoting sustainable development. As they show, whilst the designation is claimed by supporters to present economic opportunities for the region, it has been opposed by farmers and hunters who fear that their traditional use of natural resources will be restricted by the biosphere regulations, in effect imposing global standards on local culture and economic activities.

4. Rural Development in the Era of Globalization

Globalization is a pervasive influence in reshaping rural regions in Europe and elsewhere, and as such presents both challenges and opportunities for rural development. Traditional mainstays of rural economies, including family farming, mining and manufacturing, have struggled to adapt to the challenges presented by increased market competition, the centralized decision-making of transnational corporations, new regulations informed by globalized values, and so on. Rural development programmes have been called on to attempt to fill the voids created as these industries have contracted in many regions. At the same time, new opportunities for rural economic development have arisen from the dismantling of trade barriers, increased international mobility, and the near-ubiquity of modern communications technologies. As the relational perspective adopted in the DERREG research emphasizes, the outcomes of globalization in any given rural region are never pre-determined, but can be shaped by local agency. As such, rural development strategies can make a difference, if correctly targeted, formulated and supported.

Over recent decades, rural development strategies in Europe have adopted two contrasting stances towards the global economy. Initially, the emphasis was placed on attracting foreign direct investment, especially in manufacturing, as part of a wider modernization paradigm in rural development (Woods, 2011). As noted earlier, foreign direct investment has been an important vehicle for economic growth in rural Ireland, and more recently in parts of central and eastern Europe, most notably in the form of branch plants for transnational corporations. Yet, whilst foreign investment in branch plants can provide a short-term boost for the local rural economy, it also locks the locality into global networks that make it vulnerable to the effects of distant events and corporate decision making (for example, see Inglis (2008) on the life-cycle of a Japanese electronics plant in rural Ireland). The model of inward investment has also been criticised ignoring local culture, creating jobs for in-migrants more than endogenous residents, and for the leakage of profits out of the region (see Woods, 2010).

Accordingly, the emphasis within European rural development has shifted since the early 1990s to a ‘new rural development paradigm’ focused on ‘neo-endogenous development’ (Ray, 2006; van der Ploeg et al., 2000; Woods, 2011). Rather than relying on external investment to stimulate economic development, this approach looks inwards to mobilize local actors and valorize local resources, but equally seeks to engage customers and markets outside the region. It is in part based on the perception that the structural disadvantages of geography that had held back rural localities in the past have been eroded by globalization, and that rural localities are therefore able to mobilize themselves to carve out distinctive niches in the global economy (Halseth et al., 2010).

However, the world is still not flat, and rural localities are not all equally equipped to compete in the global economy. Van der Ploeg and Marsden (2008) portray endogenous development as a web of inter-locking components and argue that different government policies and structural conditions influence the way in which these components interact, the relative significance that they have in driving development in a territory, and the outcomes that result. Research in the DERREG project has similarly indicated that the capacities of regional actors (including

companies, public agencies and communities) to respond to globalization is constrained or enabled by geographical location, national and local government policies (including economic and spatial planning policies), access to finance capital, natural environment, economic structure and legal context.

Equally important alongside these structural factors is the agency of local actors. The DERREG research has highlighted examples of individual entrepreneurship and initiative, but also of collective learning and reflexivity enhancing a community's capacity to act. The final two papers in this collection, published in Volume 4, Issue 1, explore these processes of capacity-building in rural development. Wellbrock and Roep adapt the concept of 'learning regions', primarily deployed in urban contexts, to modelling the interaction of regional civil society, public administration, and knowledge institutions in building regional capacity, as illustrated through an example of the Westerkwartier in the northern Netherlands. In a companion piece, Dominguez Garcia et al. examine a number of initiatives in the Comarca de Verin in Galicia, Spain, that have developed new economic opportunities for endogenous resources. These have variously combined private entrepreneurship and public support, the rediscovery of traditional skills and new scientific knowledge, and the utilization of endogenous with the targeting of exogenous markets.

Globalization is reshaping rural Europe and rural communities need to be equipped to respond. The processes of globalization mean that rural regions in Europe are more intensely integrated into global networks than they have been at any point in history, exposing them to the influences and effects of events and developments around the world. The economy of this emergent global countryside will be more diverse and dynamic than previously, and the population more varied and fluid. Yet, globalization should not be seen as an unstoppable force that imposes homogeneity on the patchwork cultures of the European countryside. As Woods (2007) has argued, the global is reproduced through the local in processes of negotiation and hybridization that involve both local and non-local actors. Accordingly, rural development programmes and initiatives can make a difference – but their delivery is contingent on structural constraints and the serendipity of local agency, such that the outcomes of globalization will continue to be different in different rural regions. The papers in this collection, resulting from the DERREG project, provide some insight into how globalization is working through the European countryside, and how rural development actors can respond.

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