

# Urban-rural relations in Europe

ESPON 1.1.2



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## ESPON 1.1.2 Final Report

Edited by Christer Bengs & Kaisa Schmidt-Thomé

Centre for Urban and Regional Studies  
Helsinki University of Technology

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# Foreword

This report presents the results of the project “Urban-rural relations in Europe”, which was conducted within the ESPON 2000-2006 Programme. The project was co-ordinated by the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Helsinki University of Technology, and included the following institutions (partners, subcontractors and observing partners) and persons:

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The report has a number of authors. They have based their contributions on the various working documents of the project. The editors, Christer Bengs and Kaisa Schmidt-Thomé, are responsible for the final selection of the material and for the possible contradictions with the original partner contributions. Selected working material from the various Workpackages and case studies is available online (see Annex 8 for the links).

The summary has been compiled by Christer Bengs & Kaisa Schmidt-Thomé.

The Chapter 1 has been written by Christer Bengs, except for subchapter 1.3, which has been written by Kaisa Schmidt-Thomé. The section of urban-rural functional relations draws heavily on the contribution of Dominic Stead as well as the section 1.3.1. Chapter 1.

The Chapter 2 is based on the Working Documents of the Workpackage 4, written by Simin Davoudi, Michelle Wishardt, Trevor Hart and Kevin Thomas (see also Annex 8 for links to material that is available online).

The Chapter 3 has been written by Christer Bengs. Jörg Neubauer has elaborated the statistics and maps on national definitions. Tomas Hanell has contributed in developing the methodology. Hanna Ristisuo has elaborated the statistics and maps on the interrelations of various criteria and the harmonised typology. Eduarda Marques da Costa has produced the factor analysis and Kaisa Schmidt-Thomé has contributed comments all the way.

Chapter 4 has been written by Jim Walsh, Kaisa Schmidt-Thomé, Dominic Stead and Eduarda Marques da Costa. The findings were summarized in 4.3 by Kaisa Schmidt-Thomé. The analysis is based on case studies (see Annex 7 for the authors), which are also available online (see Annex 8 for the links).

Chapter 5 has been written by Christer Bengs.

Chapter 6 has been compiled by Christer Bengs drawing on policy conclusions from the other chapters as well as various contributions of Jacques Robert, Simin Davoudi and Kaisa Schmidt-Thomé.

The Annexes have been compiled by Kaisa Schmidt-Thomé, Hanna Ristisuo and Maëva Balay, drawing partially on the Working Documents of the Workpackage 2, written by Simone Reinhart and Christian Muschwitz.

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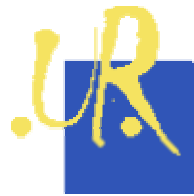
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# Urban-rural relations in Europe



Part One: Summary

## Executive summary

### 1 What is the meaning of “spatial”?

The concept of “spatial” has come into focus for a variety of reasons, one of them being that all political decisions have territorial implications. Therefore “space” has come to be seen as a device for underpinning the need of co-ordinating our different activities. This is increasingly important in a changing world where the hierarchically organised political government is based upon territorial units. The national state is a spatial project that has shaken Europe several times during the last centuries, producing perpetually changing borders of influence in Europe. The national project is still in full swing and the future of European integration is of course relative to the various national endeavours across Europe. The pursuit for *regionalising* Europe could be conceived in the context of European integration, where more independently acting regions, including regional governments, would counterbalance or counteract the influence of national states and favour European institutions.

Regionalisation of Europe is also an endeavour associated with globalisation where the national context seems to lose in importance. Tangible assets such as the supply of qualified labour, the relative position with regard to markets and environmental qualities as well as accessibility are particular *regional characteristics*. In this context the discussion on urban-rural relations gains momentum, because the regional perspective implies the salience of urban-rural relations compared to the previously prevailing national perspective. Moreover, regionalisation actively pursued as a way for increasing local markets by creating larger *functional regions* based on daily commuting, is a tendency that can be traced all over Europe today. *This tendency induces enlarged and intensified urban-rural relations and influences the continuously altered spatial configuration of Europe.*

The continued globalisation gains from the on-going *de-regulation* of markets, including property markets. This is accompanied by continued *de-centralisation* of the decision-making process, where the neoliberalistic economy seeks its counterpart, the neoliberalistic society. In the face of recent development, the regional level is overhauled by the introduction of political and administrative reforms across Europe. The tendency is to establish regional regimes that could provide for de-centralised decision-making in a re-regulated market and, in addition to that, gain political credibility by their pure existence as an “up-to-date” solution and political legitimacy through the introduction of representative democracy on the regional level.

## **2 Is it possible and sensible to make a distinction between urban and rural areas in Europe?**

Currently, it is not so easy to argue in favour of the traditional split between the two spheres of urban and rural Europe. The easily comprehensible traditional picture of town and countryside was blurred already by the emerging industrialisation and it was further reinforced by de-regulated property markets, improved communications and lately by the advanced information technology. A clear-cut visual divide is simply gone, being replaced by *rurbanisation*, a process where the physical environment loses qualities that were traditionally associated with urban or rural settings.

In most countries, urban centres have long since lost their particular privileges and there is no longer a clear difference in administrative status between town and countryside, or it is blurred. Economic enterprises locate where they want to, and the functional division of labour between town and countryside is increasingly indifferent. Only activities of a very space-consuming and bulky type clearly prefer the countryside. The mental map is blurred as well: the rural life is urbanised by transcending commodity relations and life styles are appropriated according to mass consumption patterns regardless location. Ideas concerning mental setups particular to urban or rural environments have been refuted and even the comprehension that urban environment would foster creativity and that rural environment would favour more stable social relations have been strongly questioned.

What is left? Is the urban-rural divide totally anachronistic? Is it altogether sensible or even possible to divide Europe according to these lines? If the divide is possible, how should it be done and what are the criteria? Does it make any sense to get engaged in designing policy recommendations on the basis of urban-rural relations? If the divide makes sense as an intellectual exercise, does it make sense in terms of politics? These and related additional questions are the focus of this study.

## **3 Can we apply one single concept for understanding the changing urban-rural relations?**

If such a concept exists, that would be *urbanisation*! Urbanisation actually encompasses the whole spectrum of human life, which means that the countryside and rural life are not seen as residual factors of urbanism but an equally important counterpart in a relationship between urban and rural settings, and more generally speaking, between urban and rural life. In this study, the concept of urbanisation is understood in this broad context, and urbanisation is conceived as a crucial concept for understanding and conceptualising urban-rural relations further.

Urbanisation can be comprehended as demographic change, as structural changes in the economy and as ideas, images and behaviour of people.

## **4 What does urbanisation mean in more concrete terms?**

Urbanisation in terms of *demographic changes* usually refers to the growth or decline of urban settings of a certain size in relation to growth or decline of rural settings. Furthermore, these urban settings are often classified according to rank size, and a study

of urbanisation would then include a study of the changes in the various parts of the hierarchical urban system, for instance on the national or on the regional level. Usually such a study is carried out by defining an intelligible *urban system*, which constitutes an integrated entity.

Of course one can study very large territories that are not composed of only one integrated urban system. Europe as a whole is an example of a territory that is not composed of only one integrated system, but, due to historical reasons, includes various relatively independent (national and regional) subsystems. It is important to underline that the effects of globalisation are not uniform in urban systems of different types. Some effects of globalisation may have a uniform impact on the whole of Europe while other effects may influence the various subsystems in very particular ways depending on the maturity of the urban system under consideration. Therefore it is important always to study the effects of European integration and globalisation in clearly defined local, regional and national contexts, that is, in contexts that make sense.

Urbanisation in terms of *structural changes* in the economy relates to the movement of people between various sectors of the economy, some of them significantly rural (agriculture) and others mainly urban (commercial services). In some of the European countries this is taken into account in the national classifications of urban and rural population. Urbanisation is not only a way for the society to adopt to new functional and economic requirements, but an economic activity in its own right, which involves landed interests, credit institutions, producers of construction materials, developers, construction firms, real estate agencies, purchasers of dwellings, etc. Urban-rural relations are dependent on prospects for lucrative investments, and those vary over time and according to the national and local context. The nationally and locally developed systems of land exploitation and real estate markets are crucial in understanding urbanisation in any particular place, and even at the national level.

The third meaning of urbanisation is related to *behavioural patterns and lifestyles* as well as *images and ideas* related to them. Such images are often produced or exaggerated, and subsequently employed for commercial purposes. Images of urban and rural lifestyles are made commodities and traded on the market in the mode of various tangible and intangible objects, sports and entertainment as well as housing preferences. Already in the 60s, the notion of the *rurban* was coined, indicating the merge between urban and rural lifestyles.

## 5 How do urban systems change?

According to the theory of *differential urbanisation*, any urban system undergoes ideally various *phases* in its development, passing through a complete cycle of urbanisation. According to the differential urbanisation theory, the initial *polarisation* phase of an urban development cycle includes the growth of large cities ("early prime city stage", "intermediate prime city stage", "advanced prime city stage"). The *polarisation reversal* implies the growth of intermediate sized cities ("early intermediate city stage", "advanced intermediate city stage") and the *counter-urbanisation* phase corresponding to the growth of small cities ("advanced small city stage"). Ideally according to the theory, the growth of prime cities would correspond to the decline of small cities. Eventually this relation is supposed to turn the other way around as small cities grow while prime cities decline.

The growth and decline of intermediate cities would fit in as a medium stage between the extremes.

The various stages of urbanisation have also been conceptualised in terms of *urbanisation* (population increase of the core), *suburbanisation* (increase of the ring, decrease of the core), *disurbanisation* (decrease of core and ring), and *reurbanisation* (increase of core, decrease of ring). Early stages of urbanisation are often associated with *premature urbanisation*, resulting in something called over-urbanisation or a state where the urban centre gains an excess population that cannot be integrated within the formal structures of the urban centre. This would be a situation typical to developing countries, while polarisation reversal would be linked to more advanced developing countries, and counter-urbanisation to highly developed countries.

For the purpose of studying urban-rural relationships in Europe, the differential urbanisation theory could be useful as it can be applied at various scales and as it renders possible to grasp the diversity of urban systems in Europe. These have evolved very differently in the various countries over time. The effects of European integration and globalisation on the different national urban systems could be very diverse, and the theory provides some basic concepts for grasping and articulating this diversity. This theoretical view is important with respect to policy recommendations as well. *If urbanisation is a phenomenon that proceeds with the force of nature, then the conditions are very limited for the successful implementation of policies that seek to influence patterns of urbanisation.* This remark includes the idea of polycentric development as well. According to the theory of differential urbanisation, poly-centricity is inherent in particular phases of any urbanisation process in any country, but probably hard or impossible to steer.

The urban systems of the European countries must be analysed in the context of political history, which seems to explain much of the characteristics of the individual urban systems. The political turbulence of Europe during centuries and during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in particular, has caused situations where urban systems are “displaced” into new political and sometimes cultural contexts. This means that the urban systems have not grown “naturally” within stable political and/or socio-economic frames for very long periods of time. With the relative decrease of the influence of the nation state on the national urban system of each country, the urban configuration of Europe is about to change once more, and will probably adjust to enhanced European integration.

The effects of integration are likely to hit the various urban systems in very different ways depending on matters like size, attractiveness and accessibility. If globalisation has induced different patterns of urbanisation at different levels of the urban hierarchy, this could probably favour some urban nodes and leave the rest of the centres following the old patterns in the national contexts. The traditional relationship between city centre and periphery are being accompanied and overlapped by a hierarchy of networks, where the interdependencies are far more complicated than the relationship to the nearest higher node of the urban hierarchy.

The data on the change of urban population during the last fifty years would support the impression of a slower general pace of urbanisation in the already highly urbanised parts of Europe. However, the effects of immigration and increasing international mobility of people, goods and capital may contribute to further concentration of strategic activities in major cities. This could mean the continuation of suburbanisation outside huge cities. The relative over-representation of small and medium-sized towns should be seen as a European advantage.

## 6 What is rural?

A wide array of notions of 'the rural' has emerged in academic discourses. Four principle approaches can be identified, which are connected to four phases of discussion. In the first phase, there was a search for rurality in *particular spaces and functions* and the mapping of rural areas through non-urban characteristics or through important elements of rural identity such as open spaces, small settlements or particular behavioural patterns. Although the set of elements that gets chosen to represent rurality may have changed, this traditional set of approaches certainly continues to attract attention.

The second phase of conceptualisations was brought about by the political economy and the notion of rurality as such was undermined. The causes of change in rural areas were often seen to originate in the *national and international economy* on a rather non-spatial basis. Researchers came to question whether rural places actually represent distinct localities. Some were even ready to dump the rural as an analytical category. Traits of these approaches continue to influence academic debate especially in connection to the discussions around globalisation and global-local relations.

In the third phase, it was claimed that a single rural space cannot be defined. Instead it was suggested that a number of different social spaces overlap the same geographical space. According to this set of approaches, rurality was a *social construct*, which rescued the rural as an important research category. The meanings of rurality and their dependencies on the agencies and structures played out in various spaces were seen as questions of major interest – and still are.

The fourth phase was connected to deconstructionist approaches and it was claimed that symbols are becoming increasingly detached from their referential moorings. In rural studies, the task was thus to reflect how the socially constructed rural space becomes increasingly detached from the actual geography of every day life in the rural areas. Many scholars devoted themselves to exploring the complexities and ambivalences of the rural, e.g. through deconstruction of different *rural texts*.

## 7 What means rural restructuring?

In the developed market economies changes seem to bring rural areas increasingly towards the so-called *post-productivist countryside*. New demands related to the interactions between rural and urban areas can be identified, including demand for quality food production, public amenity space, space for housing, areas of environmental protection and for the experience of different types of rural 'idyll'. The *commodification* of rural areas offers various development opportunities, but generates pressure as well.

Why do people in some areas seem quite capable of responding creatively and successfully to prevailing trends while others do not? It is claimed that if policies are to meet diverse needs and circumstances, the mobilisation of the local communities and partnerships of various kinds are essential. From the perspective of the urban-rural policy-making, the questions that are raised here are: How do the various kinds of urban-rural relations correlate with the degree of success in the rural areas? What has been – or could be – the role of policy in enhancing success in the future? Could a particular focus on urban-rural relationships and partnerships be relevant in such policies? The study at hand will indicate at least partial answers to these questions.

## 8 How could urban-rural relations be defined?

The existence of urban-rural relations implies the idea that there is something that can be called "urban" and "rural". It is the nature, characteristics and functions of the counterparts in a given context that determine their relations. However, "urban" and "rural" are not entities, which would be in existence regardless human practice and particular interests: the nature and character of these categories are dependent on how they are defined. By defining the concepts "urban" and "rural" we actually define some major traits of their interconnections.

Here it is assumed that the concepts of "urban" and "rural" can be defined in a variety of ways. Chosen definitions must be operational in the sense that they have to be related to some particular interest of knowledge. In defining "urban" as apart from "rural", any definition has to reflect the *instrumental interests* underlying the chosen definition. This requirement is enhanced by the fact that empirical evidence in order to demonstrate the clear-cut distinction between the two categories seems to get more and more arbitrary as time goes by. More than being proper names of given settings, "urban" and "rural" seem to be dimensions or characteristics of any given territory. These concepts represent sets of associations that can be attributed to a whole range of different environmental types.

With respect to urban-rural relations, our point of departure is to make a distinction between structural and functional relations. *Structural properties* refer to those physical characteristics that are comparatively stable over time and in most cases have emerged as a result of human endeavour spanning over centuries. Such structural properties are established land-use patterns, settlement structure and the distribution of population. *Functional properties* refer to the factual use of the physical environment such as various forms of production, consumption and communication. We assume that "urban" and "rural" characteristics of particular territories can be defined according to various structural and functional *properties*. In this sense the two categories can be defined according to for instance population density, land-use patterns, economic activities, and functions in a given system.

We also assume that urban-rural *relations* can be defined in terms of structural as well as functional relations. Urban-rural structural relations are determined by the way the physical environment is *constituted and shaped* while their functional relations are determined by the way the physical environment is *utilised*. Over time, particular functions of any given location change as production and consumption patterns change. An effect of this is that also the physical setting is reworked over time. From this point of view, all urban-rural relations are part of a perpetual reshaping process. Structural relations are, however, characterised by a certain degree of stability, because the physical world cannot be rebuilt overnight. Therefore they provide a comparatively inert context of functional relations. Functional relations on the other hand can be changed over night, given the flexibility of the physical setting to house a multitude of various activities as well as the flexibility of various functions to adapt to various physical settings.

It is possible to identify two distinct phases in urban-rural functional relationships. The first phase occurred when societies of Europe were predominantly rural and cities' relationships with rural areas were characterised by the consumption of agricultural produce by urban dwellers in exchange for cities' commercial products. In the second phase, after the Industrial Revolution, the balance of urban-rural relationships began to shift

towards an increasing dependency of rural areas on urban economies. New urban-rural relationships are far more complex than the traditional simple reciprocal exchanges between cities and villages and concurrently we seem to be witnessing a third phase. Urban-rural linkages are now moving beyond the single one-way exchanges and demonstrate a more complex and dynamic web of interdependencies, which are shaping the fortunes of cities and countryside alike. It is this recognition of the complexity of urban-rural relationships, which has gained a new political salience both at national and European levels. This focus on urban-rural continuum is justified by *the visible and invisible flows* of people, capital, goods, information and technology between urban and rural areas.

## 9 What policies in Europe target urban-rural relations?

A review of various EU sector policy documents, communications and initiatives was undertaken to find explicit or implicit formulations expressing some sensitivity towards urban-rural relations. That sensitivity is not easily detected. The documents reviewed included few references to their potential effects on urban or rural areas or urban-rural relations. The analysis of the policy documents showed that in *agricultural and rural policy* documents as well as in *regional policy* documents there is already some focus on urban-rural matters, but the *transport policy*, for instance, seems rather ignorant in this respect although its spatial impacts can hardly be denied.

In the near future, the new possibilities to bring attention to urban-rural relations could be found within the Community Agricultural Policy (CAP), if this continues to develop towards an increasingly *spatial development policy* where the funds are distributed among territories that encompass both urban and rural areas. That would open up for an opportunity to realize what kind of added value the attention to urban-rural aspects could bring to territorialized development policy.

In the absence of Community competence for urban policy, and the weakness of the rural policy aspects of the CAP, it is not realistic to expect something that could be called an urban-rural policy of the European Union. However, it is worth trying to improve the sensitivity of EU's sector policies in terms of their spatial impacts, including impacts on urban-rural relations.

In order to strengthen the attention to urban-rural relations, it would be important to attempt to influence EU policies with major budgets. Other options include the continued efforts to use the Community Initiatives for reaching a greater urban-rural sensitivity. The Interreg has offered a ground for the active promotion of the ESDP aims concerning urban-rural partnership. Various actors representing regions and localities have been very active in the Interreg context in trying to integrate urban-rural aspects in their work.

Examining the occurrence and nature of urban-rural policies in different European countries, both at national and regional/local levels, has also indicated the opportunities and limitations in bringing attention to urban-rural relations. A review was accomplished with the aim to highlight the expectations of the policy makers involved in urban-rural sensitive policies and to identify relevant experience. The focus of the national level policies on urban-rural relations corresponded to the aim to ensure territorial cohesion at national and regional levels. Approaches included incentives to fostering certain kinds of

actions as well as restrictive policies steered at limiting either urban growth or rural growth. However, the possibilities of various national level policies and regional/local level actions to really have an effect on tangible urban-rural relations – structural or functional – have to be discussed further.

## **10 Is it possible to elaborate a typology of regions in Europe according to urban-rural characteristics?**

Yes, this has actually been done in this study (Map 1)! The task was to carry out statistical analyses and cartographic renderings of European regions (NUTS3) in order to identify the *character of regions on a successive grading form urban to rural*. The analyses and the elaborated typology imply both structural and functional urban-rural relations. There is a correspondence between the two forms of relations as structural urban-rural relations form the precondition for functional relations, and functional relations turn structural over time.

The procedure of the investigations was the following. First, national definitions of urbanisation were analysed and tested. On the basis of this work an initial, not fully harmonised typology of urban-rural Europe was developed. Subsequently, a set of indicators was chosen and investigated by applying a multivariate statistical analysis. Based on the results a smaller set of indicators was chosen for further analyses, and interrelations between the various indicators were identified. A final, harmonised typology of urban-rural Europe was elaborated and this typology was compared to a set of indicators concerning the socio-economic development of Europe. The model was tested on the national level in two cases as well.

The elaborated typology is based on the idea of two main dimensions, that is, *degree of urban influence* on the one hand, and *degree of human intervention* on the other hand. Urban influence is here defined according to *population density* and *status of the leading urban centre* of each NUTS3 area. Land cover is supposed to reflect both the degree of human intervention and actual land use. Degree of human intervention was determined by the relative share of land cover according to the main land cover classes of the CORINE data set. The main classes are *artificial surfaces*, *agricultural areas*, and *residual land cover*. The European average of *artificial land cover* is 3.48 percent of the total land cover. The corresponding figure of *agricultural land* is 50.36 and of the *residual group* it is 46.16. The different land cover types were transformed into relative shares on the territorial scale of NUTS3.

In determining degree of *urban influence*, two factors were taken into account: population density and status of the leading urban centre of the region. Only two classes were defined, i.e. *high urban influence*, which included all NUTS3 areas with a population density more than the European average (107 persons per square km) and/or the areas where the leading urban centre of the NUTS3 area has been labelled "Metropolitan European Growth Area (MEGA)". The rest of the NUTS3 regions were classified as being under *low urban influence*.

*High human intervention* corresponds to a situation where the share of artificial surfaces (and possibly one of the two other land cover categories) is above European average. *Medium human intervention* equals the cases where the share of agricultural land (and possibly the share of residual land cover) is above European average. *Low human*

*intervention* concerns all cases where only the share of residual land cover is above European average.

The two classes of *urban influence* and the three classes of *human intervention* were combined into a six-type model where the main division is in two classes of *urban influence*, that is, *high* and *low*, and a three-class subdivision into *high*, *medium* and *low human intervention* of the two main classes. The two-class main division indicates *functional* (status of urban centre equalising functional specialisation, population density equalling size of markets) as well as *structural* properties (population density equalling built up areas) and the three-class subdivision is based of the structural properties of the physical environment (relative share of the various kinds of the land cover) as well as function properties (land use).

## **11 Is not the harmonised typology of urban-rural Europe very rigid and static?**

No, the model is dynamic in two respects. On the one hand it provides for the employment of statistical time series according to which changes over time can be visually represented. In this study, time series of data were available only in a few cases, and therefore later complements have to be managed in order to bring in the aspect of change. The model is flexible also in another sense: it can be applied on different geographical levels in a way that the renderings of the different levels are comparable with each other. The harmonised model was tested on two countries, Belgium and Austria, but on NUTS5 level (Maps 2 and 3). The results of these exercises are very encouraging, because they indicate the flexibility of the harmonised typology. Applying the same logic (above/below average) it is possible to switch from one geographical level to another and still get cartographic representations that are somehow comparable. Although the scale changes, the logic of the rendering keeps the same and this provides for comparability.

The success of the harmonised model lays in the fact that it is overtly simple. The basic data needed are available and the switch from one geographical level to another is no problem as long as the required data sets correspond to the basic territorial unit (NUTS-level) employed. The simple logic induces the possibility to picture e.g. Belgium in Europe, the municipalities in Belgium, one statistical area of a Belgian municipality relative to that municipality, etc. In all these cases the averages applied can be the averages of the next supreme level: in the NUTS5-based rendering the level of averages can be the national level, in case of a statistical area of a municipality it can be the municipal average. It is the application of averages (above/below) that secures the comparability between geographical levels.

## **12 What is the distribution of the different regional types?**

The distribution of regions across the six regional types is uneven. As many as 691 NUTS3 areas belong to type 1 (high urban influence, high human intervention). The rest is distributed more evenly among the types. The distribution of the different regional types across the new member states and accession countries is uneven as well. In the regional type 3 (high urban influence, low human intervention), the EU10+2 countries are represented by only one NUTS3 area while in type 4 (low urban influence, high

human integration) their relative share is more than half of that category. Because of this uneven distribution, the profiles of these two regional types are heavily influenced by their geographical location.

The regional type 1 (high urban influence, high human intervention) covers only 19 percent of the total area (29 countries), but houses 60 percent of the population and produces 72 percent of the total GDP. The corresponding figures for the sum of all the three types with high urban influence are 27 percent, 69 percent and 78 percent. This means that nearly four fifths of the GDP of Europe is produced in slightly more than one fourth of the territory that is under high urban influence. The regional types 5 and 6, with low urban influence and medium or low human intervention, count for 53 percent (22 + 31) of the total territory but only 20 percent (12 + 8) of the total population and 16 percent of the GDP.

The share of EU15+1 (Norway missing) is 68 percent of the total area and 77 percent of the total population, and the share of the EU10+2 counts for 23 percent of the total area and 21 percent of the total population. In terms of GDP the difference between EU15+1 and the rest is striking: the former countries count for 95 percent of the GDP while the rest, that is, the new member states and two accession countries, count for only 5 percent of the GDP.

### **13 Are there lessons to learn from the structural properties of regions in Europe?**

Certainly! What is truly noteworthy about land cover/land use in Europe is that the relative amount of *agricultural land* is so stable, being an attribute of areas with high as well as low population density, and being an attribute of all kinds of regions regardless the status of leading urban centre. The share of agricultural land does not decrease with increasing share of artificial surfaces either. Of course there are numerous examples of regions with a very low share of agricultural land, but on the average the share of agricultural land is very stable. This indicates the fact that agriculture is an integrated function of all the different parts of Europe, also the most urbanised parts of Europe. Agricultural land loses in relative importance only in those parts where residual land cover is prevailing.

The prevalence of agricultural land across Europe is an asset of tremendous importance. Firstly, it provides for the option to produce food locally. Consumers could have the possibility to literally control the production of the food they are consuming. This could also be an economic advantage as the demand for locally produced, secure food is on the rise. Secondly, the abundance of agricultural land in regions of high urban influence provides for the possibility to utilise agricultural land for recreational purposes. It is an environmental asset that cannot be underestimated. Consequently, the protection and conservation of agricultural land and greenfield land in general in the densely populated parts of Europe in particular should be a high priority.

The *degree of human intervention* was judged by the relative *share of artificial surfaces of the total land cover*. On the average, this criterion correlates with population density, but there are remarkable deviations, which are closely connected to national territories. The east of Europe, (excluding Poland) as well as Sweden, Denmark, Belgium and parts of France are characterised by a high share of artificial surfaces per capita: degree of

human intervention is considerably higher than population density would indicate. This could be conceived as an *ecological indicator*, which places the mentioned countries in an unfavourable position, and should initiate new policies for a more prudent management of land (Map 4). A high share of artificial surfaces also indicates a high share of discontinuous urban land, which indicates urban sprawl.

One could argue, however, that even if the share of artificial surfaces per capita may be conceived as an ecological indicator, it does not add much to the issue of *sustainable development*, which should include the economic dimension as well. In order to scrutinise this question, the share of artificial surfaces (per capita) was compared to economic output (GDPpps per capita), which could be conceived as an *indicator of sustainability* (Map 5). According to this criterion, the situation in Eastern Europe as well as in Sweden and Belgium is depressing.

In EU10+2, there are strong indications that urban sprawl in medium size and smaller centres have been more effectively managed than in the west. In Eastern Europe, the faults of the west should not be replicated, but there are unfortunately strong indications of decreasing prudence of land management in these countries due to increased land speculation. This unfavourable process could be enhanced by investments in transport in the EU10. There, the overall accessibility is not of the EU15 standard, and a deepening economic integration requires enhanced accessibility, but this should not make allowance for urban sprawl.

#### **14 Which are the relations between urban and rural areas that could be described as “functional”?**

Urban-rural relations of a functional kind are connected to the processes of socio-economic diversification and the interconnectedness of different functions located in urban and rural areas. The case studies concerned service provision, flows of people, accessibility to education and knowledge, production of tangible and intangible goods and the use of amenities. A set of “urban-rural situations” with relevance for spatial policy making was identified.

The link between *global-local* relations and urban-rural relations was highlighted in several cases. In Ireland in particular, the viability of major centres is highly influenced by global players. Also the role played by international tourism in the socio-economic restructuring of the Algarve region has had rather drastic urban-rural implications.

In most parts of Europe, the tendency seems to be the increasing size of *functional urban regions* or commuter catchments areas due not only to the improvements in physical infrastructure and accessibility but also depending on the possibilities offered by the developing communication technology. The diversification of the urban economies and the widening labour market areas increase the flexibility of the labour market within a wider urban agglomeration. This improves the possibilities to live in the adjacent and accessible rural areas.

In nearly all of the major urban regions that were covered by the case studies, the tendency has been towards *increasing spatial interconnectedness* of areas within those regions. The division between urban and rural functions is increasingly blurred. This has meant increasing overall diversity, but in particular urban centres the tendency may point towards increasing specialisation.

The analysis of the development trajectories of urban regions indicates a tendency towards an *increasing wealth of the medium-sized towns*. The large metropolitan areas are no longer superior in their performance measured by population and employment figures. Also smaller centres, which are mostly excluded from the global market, are able to be successful. They enjoy a certain economic stability as their economic basis relies on the service sector.

The role of leisure time is of increasing significance in the restructuring of the economy. Access to *consumption spaces* is an important aspect in the perspective of urban-rural relations. High quality environments occur as magnets not only for residents but also for enterprises. However, the regional cases tell still more about relocations of enterprises to the outer rings of urban agglomerations than about moves to the remote countryside. In this respect, decisions related to infrastructure investments play of a decisive role.

## **15 Should we improve the functional collaboration between urban and rural areas?**

The overall diversification and blurring of urban and rural functions have probably been beneficial for the majority of the population in terms of job opportunities. Where major investments in accessibility within a region have been made, the criss-crossing or circular connections have attracted offices and industries to locate along the transport corridors, which has made it possible to draw even more commuters from all areas well connected to the corridor in question.

For urban regions the economic benefits of increasing urban-rural interaction have been quite obvious, but the social and economic sustainability of the trend is far from self-evident. The development of public transport routes has usually not kept the pace with motorway investments, which has tempted or forced private car use. As this development may have several unsustainable effects, it is increasingly important to study the nature of increased interaction and not to advocate interaction for its own sake.

The less accessible rural areas seem to find it harder to diversify their economic base when the agricultural sector at the same time is becoming increasingly marginal as a source of income. The possibilities of small towns and the surrounding countryside to maintain their economic viability seem to correlate with the population density. The search for life-savers has mainly been found in the service sector – often in the services of the urban areas or services directed to the urban residents. Where rural areas have been able to sell themselves as consumption spaces of the urban residents, the diversification has been quite successful.

## **16 Maybe it is better to protect the particularities of the “urban” and the “rural”?**

The case study evidence shows that the accessible and attractive areas close to diversified urban centres get the greatest gain of the increasing urban-rural interaction. It seems as if the surrounding rural areas were the lure for settling down in a particular region in the first place. Such regions receive qualified, well-off migrants and thus often good tax revenues for maintaining public services. If these people also use their purchasing power in the rural areas, they add to the viability of private services. The social dimension can,

again, be more problematic, if the urban and rural realms get to clash against each other. The less well-off rural residents that do not match the qualifications of the urban labour market or cannot access the jobs e.g. due to the poor public transport, may end up being a low-paid service class.

Tourism, both as day-trip recreation and as longer stays, is certainly a key sector that can help in preserving the viability of the rural areas. However, it can also mean that rurality actually vanishes as part-time urban residents move into the area and as the development of the service sector is increasingly guided by the needs of outsiders. The same certainly applies to the uncontrolled sprawl of peri-urban areas. As rurality is increasingly seen as a mindscape connected to particular environments, the rurality that people seek for in the landscape must be defended against urban pressure.

## 17 Why do we see urban sprawl?

The overall tendency in Europe during the last decades is characterised by *decentralisation* of the decision-making procedure influencing land use and development as well as the *de-regulation* of property markets. These tendencies are obviously proceeding hand in hand: *de-regulation of the market is accomplished by de-centralisation of decision making*. In most European countries the planning and building codes have been amended toward increased liberalism by disqualifying previously existing hierarchical planning systems and providing for the possibility of instant, investor-driven development. The trends provide for an increase of *speculation* in real estate and decreased competition in building, because speculators want to establish territorial production monopolies.

When development is based on the *private acquisition of undeveloped agricultural land*, this may effect in a totally dysfunctional configuration of built-up areas, including huge surplus costs for construction and for operation in particular. It is in the public interest to promote well functioning and secure regional structures, which means that development decisions must have other grounds than the purely speculative aims of the development lobby. There is no lack of instrumental knowledge, the problem is to organise development in a fashion so that this knowledge can be harnessed. Basically it is a political and an ideological question: are other than private interests acknowledged by the community? Urban sprawl constitutes a kind of urban colonisation of the countryside, but that is not a "natural" process induced by necessity, but an exponent of speculative development, private land hoarding and the private appropriation of values created by public investments. The losses on the part of the *taxpayers* are enormous.

An aim of regional policies in many parts of Europe is *regional enlargement*, which implies the idea that investments in infrastructure would enlarge labour markets and commuting areas, with the effect that the enhanced complexity of enlarged labour markets would foster economic growth and the region would profit from a more polycentric structure. The implications for urban-rural relations are very important, because extended rapid railway lines and highways do not only mean that existing towns are functionally integrated into core regions on a daily commuting basis. It could also mean extensive investments in development along the new transport corridors. This could mean a further *rurbanisation* of rural Europe, and the destruction of abundant environmental and cultural assets.

A development based on speculative gains seems impossible to combine with the request for sustainable development, which implies long term considerations and a territorial

differentiation of future prospects in terms of scale and extent. Project based haphazard development is simply impossible to fit into such considerations. Case studies have provided a realistic picture of the *magnitude of unearned profits in the development of rural land to urban areas*. These profits are not just a marginal and reasonable surplus for creative entrepreneurs, but a major cost for dwellers and a crucial loss for tax payers. If the aim would be to appropriate the unearned profit of development for the community, the solution involves the *foundation of municipal land banks, a planning policy that would require piecemeal development based on approved land use plans, the possibility for user-driven non-speculative modes of development to operate undisturbed, and a municipal building site release that would not favour the establishment of territorial production monopolies*. All this can take place only providing the financial sector offers a wide array of alternatives, including *long term mortgage loans and non-speculative banking*.

## **18 Can urban sprawl be limited?**

Space consumption by urban development has become a major concern throughout the world. The idea of *urban containment* is a response to urban sprawl. This idea is also based on the belief that compact urban development contributes to sustainability. The pursuit of compact cities and urban development based on containment include mixed use development of existing areas, more residential development in the inner city areas, and focusing growth within existing urban boundaries. In addition, critical areas should be identified and protected, the infrastructure should be in place before development is permitted and infill development should be encouraged. Prospective benefits from urban densification would be less car dependency, low emissions, reduced energy consumption, better public transport services, increased overall accessibility, the re-use of infrastructure and previously developed land, the rejuvenation of existing urban areas and increased urban vitality, the preservation of green space and a milieu for enhanced business activities, in short, a higher quality of life.

Dense patterns of urban development are, however, not only conceived in an uncritically positive manner as it is realised that they may result in a number of drawbacks as well. The experience of urban densification and compact building indicates a number of uncertainties. It is not clear to what extent densification complies with the principles for sustainable development. The principle of sustainability as an overall principle has to be supplemented by local *livability*. Only livable environments are sustainable in the long run. The experiences of densification measures indicate that every case is unique, and is judged differently by the local population in each case. Therefore urban containment cannot be taken as a general reference whenever developers want to obtain additional development rights in urban areas.

Private-public partnership originating in grand-scale private speculation may induce *large-scale corruption* of the political system. Where public agencies get involved in economic endeavours with private partners by producing an enormous increase of the value of mutual assets, corruption seems to be inevitable. One way to decrease the risk of corruption is to require tender and competition in all the phases of the development process, and to secure that allegedly non-speculative developers do not institutionally depend on the other actors involved in development, that is, finance, building material industry, building production, etc. Already prohibition for building entrepreneurs to function as developers would ease the situation across Europe considerably.

## 19 Are policy recommendations important?

Ideas expressed under the title of policy recommendations often acquire the form of a wishful request list. The recommendations are not always very well grounded in specified arguments. The prime objective of this study is to analyse urban-rural relations in order to elaborate policy recommendations: the policy recommendations should of course be grounded in factual research findings. This means one should concentrate on a limited set of matters that are more concrete than previously circulated ideas.

The aim of policy recommendations is to improve public policies, which means that they must concern matters that can be influenced in a somewhat foreseeable way by decisions and actions carried out by public authorities. This requirement may seem self-obvious, but actually it is very strict and limiting, because the major part of human endeavours is closed away by this precondition. Much of policy recommendations mirror a fairly unrealistic idea of the possibilities of public authorities to conduct development. This may reflect the double nature of policy recommendations: on the one hand they are a means for rallying political support, and on the other hand they should be rational and truthful in the sense that they are anchored in empirical research.

## 20 What is to be recommended?

1. The improvement of the quality of life in large cities and the rehabilitation of brownfields are certainly good strategies to limit – up to a certain extent – the out-migration of urban population towards rural areas. Such strategies are probably more efficient in the case of potential out-migration towards the rural areas surrounding metropolitan areas and large towns, than in the case of potential out-migration towards more distant rural areas, because the reasons for moving are rather different. In the rural areas themselves, the settlement policy should attempt to limit dispersal and pressure on natural areas.
2. There is an important task for new forms of public transportation: networks with high capillarity and medium/low intensity; connections of rural settlement nuclei with medium-sized and small towns and with the major public transport networks. Innovative solutions have to be developed, combining efficiency and profitability. Valuable natural areas have to be more strictly protected.
3. It is advisable to concentrate most investments in infrastructure and facilities in small towns for reasons of territorial, social and economic efficiency. Insofar as they make possible the provision of diversified infrastructure, facilities and services, thereby attracting and supporting economic activities, the larger population centres should be the object of special attention.
4. The functional strengthening of small and medium-sized urban centres makes possible the development of networks based on functional complementarity between urban and rural areas, safeguarding the diversity of the rural areas and taking advantage of the development potential of small and medium-sized cities with a perspective of cooperation and integration.
5. Abandoned villages can be rehabilitated for the development of soft tourism and second homes. Flexible and multi-functional transport solutions should be worked out which are suitable for the transportation of people and goods and to the delivery of mail and care to the elderly in remote villages as well as for school population.

6. In addition to the strengthening of the settlement pattern, indigenous economic activities have to be promoted and enhanced. Precise policy recommendations require exact knowledge of the indigenous potential of each region. A number of examples can however be provided, such as:

- the production of high-quality agricultural products, taking advantage of the proximity of some urban markets and of the development of soft tourism;
- the use of forest biomass for energy production, in particular seeking to meet the needs of the urban population and industries;
- the use of marginal agriculture land to introduce noble forestry species and the support to industries that rely on forest resources, such as the timber industry;
- better use of the demand by local residents (in particular those living in the region's small towns) for week-end and outdoor recreation activities, thus contributing to the increase of the economic added value generated in the rural areas;
- fostering the exploration of certain specific tourist niches, such as outdoor, nature and old age tourism.

The development of such activities very often requires cooperation with stakeholders settled in towns which are likely to provide advice, knowledge, technologies, financial resources, insurances, access to markets etc. Economic revival in depressed rural areas is generally dependent upon efficient urban-rural relationships and partnerships.

7. Strategies for improving sustainability, internal cohesion and stability of the regions concerned are to a large extent dependent upon the improvement of relations between urban and rural areas. Such strategies should have an integrated character and should comprise a wide diversity of complementary measures. Examples are for instance:

- the definition of new roles for the countryside, positioning it differently through the enhancement of its own potential (for instance cultural heritage);
- the maintenance of agricultural functions, as far as these are environmentally compatible;
- the strengthening of the regional level, as far as territorial development policy and land use planning are concerned;
- institutional arrangements that facilitate meaningful horizontal and vertical coordination in relation to strategic territorial planning.

Territorial sustainability is more than an objective per se. Internal development stability in a particular region can significantly influence inter-regional connections, success on the national scale and even facilitate international connections.

8. The prevalence of agricultural land across Europe is an asset of tremendous importance. Firstly, it provides for the option to produce food locally. Consumers could have the possibility to literally control the production of the food they are consuming. This could also be an economic advantage as the demand for locally produced, secure food is on the rise. Secondly, the abundance of agricultural land in regions of high urban influence provides for the possibility to utilise agricultural land for recreational purposes. It is an environmental asset that cannot be underestimated. Consequently, the protection and conservation of agricultural land and Greenfield land in general in the densely populated parts of Europe in particular should be a high priority.

9. If the aim would be to appropriate the unearned profit of development for the community, the solution involves the foundation of municipal land banks, a planning policy that would require piecemeal development based on approved land use plans, the possibility for user-driven non-speculative modes of development to operate undisturbed, and a municipal building site release that would not favour the establishment of territorial production monopolies. All this can take place only providing the financial sector offers a wide array of alternatives, including long term mortgage loans and non-speculative banking.
10. The experiences of densification measures indicate that every case is unique, and is judged differently by the local population in each case. Therefore urban containment cannot be taken as a general reference whenever developers want to obtain additional development rights in urban areas. It is not clear to what extent densification complies with the principles for sustainable development. The principle of sustainability as an overall principle has to be supplemented by local *livability*. Only livable environments are sustainable in the long run.
11. Regional co-operation should be based on the recognition that the public must be well-informed and the need for *transparency in any development endeavour*, which is a requirement that may never be accomplished when huge economic interests and power are involved. However, it is an important ideal providing the aim is higher than just to pay lip-service to democracy.
12. Public-private partnership originating in grand-scale private speculation may induce large-scale corruption of the political system. Where public agencies get involved in economic endeavours with private partners by producing an enormous increase of the value of mutual assets, corruption seems to be inevitable. One way to decrease the risk of corruption is to require tender and competition in all the phases of the development process, and to secure that allegedly non-speculative developers do not institutionally depend on the other actors involved in development, that is, finance, building material industry and building production. Already prohibition for building entrepreneurs to function as developers would ease the situation considerably.
13. It is in the public interest to *promote competition in development by offsetting the establishment of territorial production monopolies*, whether generated by private developers or by public urbanisation policies. Private real estate speculation and land hoarding is not an exponent of functioning markets, but rather a restriction to spatial competition. Enhanced competitiveness requires competition in spatial development. The particular characteristics of housing provision and spatial development in general imply a number of restrictions to competition. These restrictions concern all the sub-markets, that is, the *land market* (planning, development practices), the *input market* (building materials, labour), the *construction market* (contractors) as well as the *house market* (private and public systems for provision of houses). All the various development modes, speculative as well as non-speculative forms of building supply, may imply restrictions to competition.
14. With regard to urban-rural relations it is important to realise that development often seems to imply solely the urban point of departure while the rural interests are either considered irrelevant, or of minor importance, or sidestepped altogether. The rural aspects should be included as well.
15. A general concern in many European countries seems to be that medium- and small-income groups are excluded from the property market. An obvious reason for this is finance, that is, the commercial financial institutions, which have little interest in

getting involved in other than profitable projects. Speculative development provides good returns. The financial options for presumptive house owners seem to have shrunk, which may be a result of concurrent changes in the financial markets but also an effect of the reduced interest for non-speculative development in local politics across Europe. The prevailing speculative mode of development promotes urban sprawl, which promotes "rurbanisation" and which is detrimental to urban and rural environmental qualities. Thus, financial instruments that promote non-speculative development are much needed.

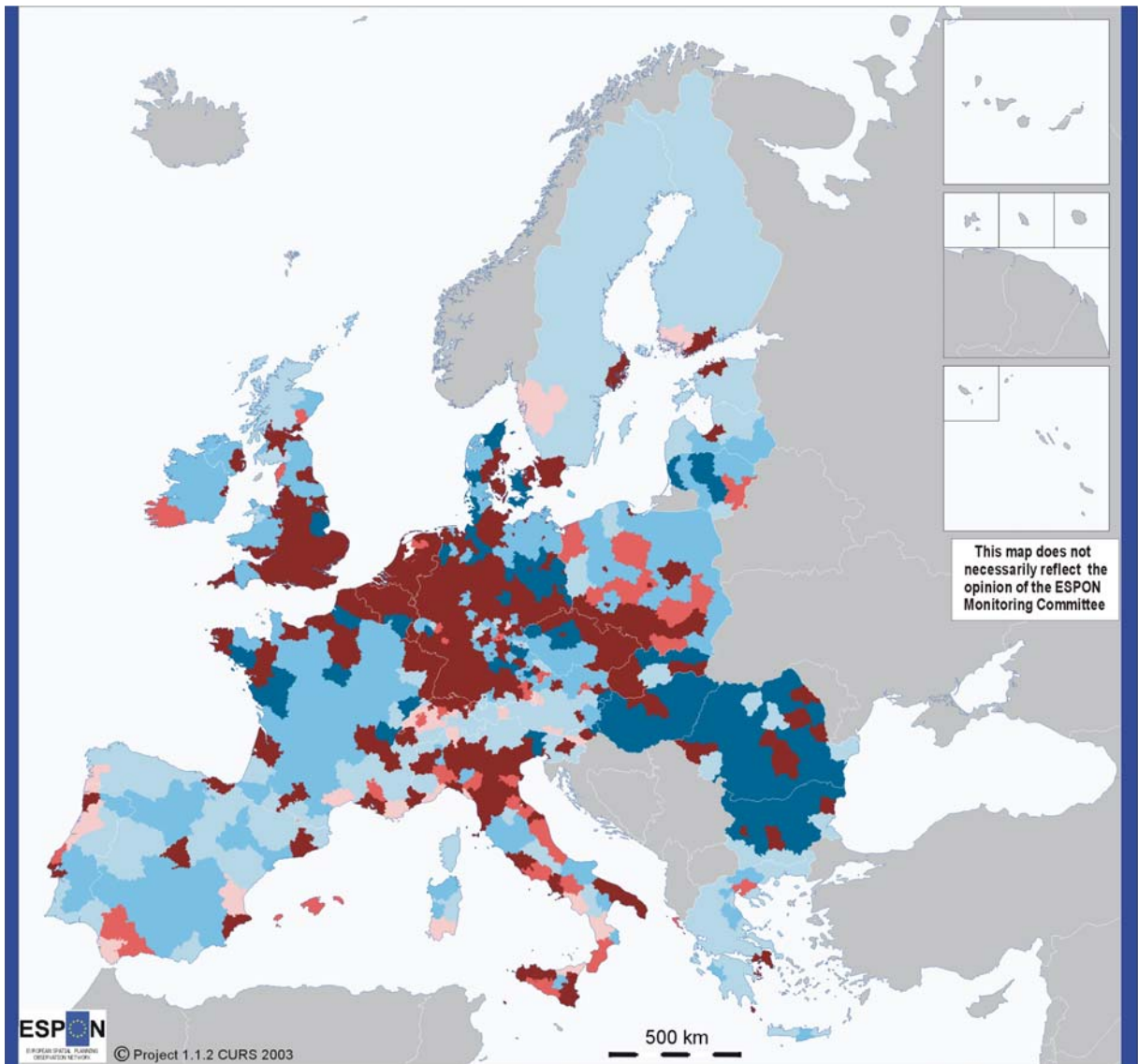
## **21 Are there still important issues that have not been investigated?**

Certainly! This study is the first of its kind and it has fulfilled its task providing it opens up for a further discussion on urban-rural related issues. Some ideas for future research could envisaged on the grounds of the current experiences.

As the methodology of the harmonised urban-rural typology has proven to be useful in NUTS5-level analysis, a major research task is to continue the development of applications on the national level and to test the model in other spatial contexts as well.

The scarce availability of comparable data on commuting patterns hampers the analysis of functional urban regions in Europe. Major steps are required in order to improve the situation. The data collected by the national statistical institutions based on population censuses should be discussed with the aim to reach a European consensus on basic concepts and definitions. While waiting for the required improvements of the spatial and temporal data coverage on functional urban regions, it is possible to develop the methodological tools by employing comparable data from six European countries. This work would mean combining the various ESPON (and other) achievements in an innovative way. The urban-rural typology applied at NUTS5-level, combined with the data on commuter catchment areas could form a starting point. Various GIS-techniques (see e.g. the work done by JRC described in Annex 4) in estimating the areas of urban influence could also be useful.

It is very unfortunate that the Corine Land Cover data (CLC) of the year 2000 was not available in time. In order to get a more dynamic picture, various temporal analyses could be carried out at the European level. It is thus important to continue the work with the tools that have been developed, as soon as the full CLC 2000 data will be available. The possibilities to include such follow-up tasks in the up-coming ESPON projects should be explored.



**Urban-rural typology, based on population density, FUA ranking and land cover**

- High urban influence, high human intervention
- High urban influence, medium human intervention
- High urban influence, low human intervention
- Low urban influence, high human intervention
- Low urban influence, medium human intervention
- Low urban influence, low human intervention

The criteria for urban influence:

- Population density above the average (107 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> in EU25+4)
- And/or at least a European level functional urban area (based on typology made by ESPON Action 1.1.1)

Degree of human intervention is estimated through the average shares of land covers (in EU23+3, no data on Cyprus, Malta and Norway):

- High human intervention: at least the share of artificial surfaces above average (3,48%)
- Medium human intervention: at least the share of agricultural land above average (50,36%)
- Low human intervention: only the share of residual land use above average (46,16%)

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Ranking of Functional Urban Areas (FUAs):  
Origin of data: EUROSTAT, National Statistical Offices, National experts  
Source: Nordregio, ESPON Data Base

Population density:  
Origin of data: EU15 and CC's: Eurostat  
Norway and Switzerland: National Statistical Offices  
Time reference: 1999

Land cover types:  
Origin of data: EEA, Corine Land Cover 90  
Source: ESPON Data Base

**Map 3.24. Urban-rural typology**









## Scientific Summary\*

This scientific summary includes a review of some basic concepts and theoretical considerations as well as a short account of how the theoretical understanding of the research task has been made operational in factual research.

### Theoretical considerations

The concept of "urbanisation" is employed as a point of departure for grasping the evolution of urban-rural relations. Part of this evolution is the blurring of "urban" and "rural" as concrete settings and localities. Accordingly, the definition of "urban" and "rural" are increasingly difficult and always related to actual research interests.

#### *Urbanisation*

In a scientific context, the study of urban-rural relations needs to be conceptualised, which underpins the need for a theoretical framework. Here, the concept of *urbanisation* is employed as such a framework. Urbanisation as an intellectual context has got the advantage of referring to the dynamism of urban-rural relations. The countryside and rural life are not seen as residual factors of urbanism but as an equally important counterpart in a relationship between urban and rural settings. In this study, the concept of urbanisation is understood in this broad context, and urbanisation is conceived as a crucial concept for understanding and conceptualising urban-rural relations further.

Urbanisation in terms of *demographic changes* refers to the growth or decline of urban settings in relation to growth or decline of rural settings. Furthermore, these urban settings are often classified according to rank size, and a study of urbanisation would then include a study of the changes in the various parts of the urban system, which has to be defined. Urbanisation in terms of *structural changes* in the economy relates to the movement of population between various sectors of the economy, some of them significantly rural (agriculture) and others mainly urban (commercial services). Structural changes also include changes in land use patterns and land use regimes. The third meaning of urbanisation is related to *behavioural patterns and lifestyles* as well as *images and ideas* related to them.

Currently there is a prolific discussion on migration patterns and on urbanisation as an effect of globalisation. On the macro level, urban hierarchies are supposed to be revised, and on the micro level, decisions by firms and various organisations as well as by individuals are thought to reflect changing conditions. The underlying assumption seems to be that global trends influence urbanisation patterns regardless place and country. Surely, some

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\* This summary was compiled by Christer Bengs

of the present day features of urbanisation or counter-urbanisation are caused by overall trends related to development in technology, demographic change and de-regulated markets. But do the effects of these measures occur in a uniform way? The answer is probably negative since various parts of Europe are in different stages of urbanisation, which is rendered obvious by comparing the evolving changes in a national context. In countries with a long history of centralised government, the mono-centric national urban system has evolved differently from the situation in poly-centric countries where a central government is more recently established. Other factors of interest are the age of the now existing settlement patterns and the age and pace of industrial history as well as population density.

According to the theory of differential urbanisation, any city system undergoes ideally various phases in its development, passing through a complete cycle of urbanisation. In general terms, urban evolution seems to undergo the same phases all over the world, ranging from the establishment of urban settlements to a differentiation phase when larger urban settlements are formed, often at the expense of smaller ones. Ideally according to the theory, the growth of prime cities would correspond to the decline of small cities. Eventually this relation is supposed to turn the other way around as small cities grow while prime cities decline. The growth and decline of intermediate cities would fit in as a medium stage between the extremes. If urbanisation is conceived as a force comparable to the forces of nature, the possibilities to affect urban systems by policy measures are obviously fairly limited.

#### *Definition of "urban" and "rural"*

The pursuit for identifying urban-rural relations implies the idea that there is something that can be called "urban" and "rural". It is the nature, characteristics and functions of the counterparts in a given context that determine their relations. However, "urban" and "rural" are not entities, which would be in existence regardless human practice and particular interests as the nature and character of these categories are dependent on how they are defined. By defining the concepts "urban" and "rural" we actually define some major traits of their interconnections.

*Structural properties* refer to those characteristics of any physical environment that are comparatively stable over time and in most cases have emerged as a result of human endeavour spanning over centuries of time. Such structural properties are established land-use patterns, settlement structure and the distribution of population. *Functional properties* refer to the factual use of the physical environment such as various forms of production, consumption and communication. We assume that "urban" and "rural" characteristics of particular territories can be defined according to various structural and functional properties.

The practice of distinguishing urban from rural settings has turned increasingly difficult. As urban municipalities have lost their privileges of trade, etc., the administratively based distinction between "urban" and "rural" settings has already disappeared or is in the phase of vanishing. The liberalisation of economic life has entailed the possibility for enterprises to locate where they want to, and thereby "urban" and "rural" settings cannot *a priori* be ascribed particular economic activities. In terms of lifestyles, ideas and images, the distinction between "urban" and "rural" is blurred as well. Both categories are employed commercially when needed, regardless factual conditions. The concurrent phase of urbanisation could be labelled "*rurbanisation*" in order to underline the fact that the

historically existing demarcation line between urban and rural locations is increasingly difficult to detect.

The various ways of making the concept of "rural" operational indicates the problems in defining the basic concepts of this study. A reasonable conclusion could be that "rural" must be an essential component of any new conceptualisation of human settlement, not as an opponent of the urban but as one dimension among others. Also the conception of the rural as something residual must be refuted – a rural place is not necessarily something that will eventually be transformed into a ("modern") urban place. The search for some kind of essence of the rural as a category is also to be avoided. Rurality may be very different in different places and at different times. There may be good practical reasons for keeping the dichotomous setup of urban vs. rural in classificatory systems, but as a matter of principle one should try to do away with the two-poled image. The urban and rural as lived networks are not mirror images of one another, but components of a system.

#### *Urban-rural relations*

With respect to urban-rural relations, the point of departure is a distinction made between structural and functional relations.

Urban-rural *structural relations* are determined by the way the physical environment is constituted and shaped while their *functional relations* are determined by the way the physical environment is utilised. Over time, particular functions of any given setting change as production and consumption patterns change. An effect of this is that also the physical setting is reworked over time. From this point of view, all urban-rural relations are part of a perpetual reshaping process over time. Structural relations are, however, characterised by a certain degree of stability, because the physical world cannot be rebuilt over night. Therefore they provide a comparatively inert context of functional relations. Functional relations on the other hand can be changed over night, given the flexibility of the physical setting to house a multitude of various activities as well as the flexibility of various functions to adapt to various physical settings.

Whilst there is considerable literature on both rural and urban development issues, there is much less concerning the linkages between them, particularly in terms of theories and concepts. The same can be said for spatial planning policy at various levels, which has tended to address urban and rural issues as separate policy areas. Whilst rural communities may be facing separate and distinct challenges, as may other specific communities, when it comes to policy formulation and programming, such challenges cannot be addressed in isolation from their wider context. It is this recognition that is the central plank of urban-rural relationships. The need for integrated policy making is the focus of the debate rather than the denial of some of the unique characteristics of and challenges faced by the rural communities.

#### *Partnership, public interest and policy recommendations*

The issue of *partnership* is related to the idea of good governance, which has been spelled out by the European Commission. The principles of good governance include a set of general principles: openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. The five principles are supposed to reinforce those of proportionality and subsidiarity, and EU initiatives should be checked systematically with regard to whether public action is really necessary, if the European level is the most appropriate one, and if the measures chosen are proportionate to the objectives. Partnership is obviously a form

of participation and thereby a constitutive element of the EU's interpretation of good governance.

The idea of partnership should not, however, blur the fact that the essential rationale of good government is to promote *public interests*, which actually is a fundamental objective that should not be jeopardised by e.g. partnerships, providing that the risk is there. The positive connotation of partnership is related to the idea of pursuing a win-win situation, where all parties involved do gain. From the point of view of *policy recommendations*, the idea is primarily that the public should gain, that is, public interests should form the basis of any public policy. If private interests gain as well, that is very fine indeed. Consequently, policy recommendations should indicate the foreseeable allocation of gains among all partners involved.

### *Accomplishments*

In this research project, the various aspects of urban-rural relations have been studied on the European level by developing a typology of urban and rural Europe. In addition, functional and structural urban-rural relations have been investigated by applying a set of case studied and by relating the results to policy aims and options.

### *The research problem*

This research project was started by giving an account of the relevant academic discussion with regard to urbanisation, urban systems in Europe, rural Europe, concurrent rural restructuring and urban-rural relations as well as the status of policy recommendations in the context of the emerging neo-liberalistic European society.

### *Policy recommendations*

A review was undertaken in order to identify EU- and national policies that are of relevance with regard to urban-rural relations in Europe. Policies explicitly addressing urban-rural relations were comparatively easy to detect. The scientific challenge was to identify other kinds of policies that affect urban-rural relations despite the fact that these relations are not explicitly considered in those policies. The policy aims of the ESDP are still mainly waiting to be concretised in actual policy measures.

As the expectations from urban-rural policies and initiatives are very diverse, telling about attempts – in the name of urban-rural sensitive policies – to steer development into even opposite directions, it will be necessary to discuss how the expectations correspond with spatial development trends in respective countries. So far not much could be said about the success of the policies and initiatives *vis-à-vis* the expected effects. It is obvious that the level of ambition among them is very high.

The added value of the urban-rural relations and partnerships in relation to promotion of regional development and regional co-operation in general remains an open question. What this study tries to address, is to locate the added value of urban-rural linkages vs. linkages between different areas in general. Of interest is whether we can find additional benefits – more sustainable spatial development – in the name of promoting urban-rural relations.

### *Typology of urban-rural characteristics*

The task was to develop a typology of urban and rural Europe that would integrate each and every region into the overall European perspective. The results may not correspond to the self-image of single regions or to the national views of individual member states. The elaborated model can, however, be applied on various geographical levels and thereby it can provide for further investigations where a chosen territory at any geographical level can be compared to a larger context according to its urban-rural characteristics.

The first challenge was to identify criteria, which could be applied in order to define the degree of urbanity respective rurality. In order to get an idea of current practices in defining urban and rural, a survey of national definitions was carried out. The national definitions were tested in terms of correspondence with a set of chosen criteria based on national averages. Based on national definitions, a typology of urban and rural population across Europe was elaborated, and a harmonising element of population density was introduced.

The interrelations among a set of indicators were identified based on a factor analysis, and the criteria for defining the urban versus rural character of the NUTS3 regions were chosen. The inter-correlations of the chosen criteria were studied, and each criterion was related to a set of other criteria indicating economic performance, population change, etc. as well. The purpose was to analyse interrelations in a systematic way in order to provide knowledge for a discussion on policy implications.

A typology of six classes was elaborated based on *population density, the status of the leading town of the NUTS3 area, and the shares of artificial surfaces/ agricultural land/ residual land of the total land cover*. All the three criteria indicate, more or less, structural as well as functional properties. The interrelations of these indicators were studied and each indicator was reviewed according to economic performance, population change and development prospects based on information acquired from other relevant ESPON projects. The typology based on national definitions was compared to the harmonised typology.

The typology does not as such indicate urban-rural relations in a specified manner, but it mirrors the relative degree of urban respective rural features on a successive scale according to which each region (NUTS3) could be classified. In doing so, the typology, however, indicates structural and functional relations as well, but on a fairly general level of abstraction.

### *Socio-economic diversification and interconnectedness of urban and rural areas*

Through the analysis of case studies in terms of socio-economic diversification and interconnectedness of urban and rural areas, more detailed information on processes and relevant policy initiatives were identified, which complements the analysis undertaken at NUTS3 level. The case studies undertaken for this project partly built on the research undertaken for the Study Programme on European Spatial Planning (SPESP).

In the SPESP, urban-rural relations were given no specific geographical reference – they were not related to any spatial context but were rather floating in space. The current project highlights the importance of the long-term trends and ruptures in urbanisation tendencies in various parts of Europe, referring to the differential urbanisation theory. The purpose was thus to locate the various key trends in the differentiated urbanisation patterns of Europe and to identify the key tendencies behind the urban-rural settings that seem to be of importance from the perspective of spatial policy making. This then

leads to the discussion whether the ESDP policy goals can be promoted through operationalising them in the form of concrete urban-rural sensitive measures.

*Land use: development and profitability*

The issue of land use as an economic activity, and its crucial implications for how urban-rural relations – structural relations in particular – have merged over time, was scrutinized. Discussed concepts were land value, speculation, planning, partnership and urban sprawl. In addition, some comments on politically influential slogans such as sustainable development, flexibility competitiveness, cohesion and regional co-operation were added. From a scientific point of view, such general concepts get a scientific significance only in clearly defined contexts.

In the context of studying urban-rural relations, it is important to relate any particular mode of development and land exploitation to specified objectives and to realise the various potential effects of the different modes compared to overall aims. Consequently, particular modes of development can be professed providing the contextual aims are made tangible and operational. Thus, policy recommendations should be based on conditions that are clearly specified. The case studies showed that seemingly very different policies implemented may have very similar outcomes. Therefore it is important to realise the importance of understanding the particular conditions and the endless diversity of factual cases.

## **Report on networking**

### **Networking with other projects and the ECP network**

The project 1.1.2 has exchanged information and data with several other ESPON projects.

A joint workshop with the project 1.1.1 was held in connection with the project meetings in Leiden, the Netherlands, in July 2003. In addition the project coordinators visited each others' TPG meetings already in February 2003. The key issue was to find out possibilities to benefit from the common interests and the available data. The most concrete link in the actual work has been the use of the FUA-typology as a building material of the urban-rural typology. Respectively, project 1.1.1 used e.g. some GIS working material of the project 1.1.2 in the analysis of agglomerations for their TIR. The Lead Partner of 1.1.1 is also a subcontractor of the project at hand. 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 also share two project partners.

With 1.1.4 common interests have also been identified but their problems to provide demographic data with full NUTS3-coverage have limited the possibilities to relate the project achievements together. The project 1.1.4 has also received the urban-rural typology data to be worked with. Discussions with the project 2.1.3 during various meetings and workshops have been very interesting and useful. The projects have also shared a project partner.

Many projects have made use of the various versions of the urban-rural typologies (both the typology based on national classifications and the one based on harmonised criteria). The projects 1.1.1, 1.1.3, 2.1.1 and 2.1.3 were provided with the final version of the typology in early summer 2004. Via the ESPON database in the intranet of ESPON it was also possible for the other projects to access the update.

Through the subcontractors taking part in several ESPON projects it has been possible to see some results that can potentially be processed further through joint efforts. An example of such a study is the calculation of the ICON-indicator on accessibility to transport terminals (project 1.2.1) and its implications for the urban-rural analysis (see Third Interim Report).

Lead Partner meetings and ESPON seminars have functioned as crucial arenas for the exchange of information about the approaches and results achieved by various ESPON projects. For partners that for different reasons have not been able to participate in the seminars, the links within the ESPON have remained distant. This relates also to the use of guidance material from the CU and the project 3.1. – the various requests have fallen mainly on the shoulders of the Lead Partner.

The project team includes many ESPON 'activists', institutes and persons that are engaged in several projects, which is a strength in many ways. For example, they have got rather familiar with the time-consuming financial reporting system of ESPON. Also the sharing of travel costs to ESPON seminars and meetings has been possible. In addition, as the project team includes three ECPs, there has been a realistic understanding about the possibilities to use the ECP network as supporters.

The feedback from the ECP-network on the interim reports was very useful. Some ECPs also provided help in some specific project questions such as access to data. The French and Belgian ECPs, for example, provided useful links to the national data sources when the project tried to collect data from national sources on key indicators. Some ECPs (or other non-partner organisations in those countries) filled in the questionnaires related to national policies or regional initiatives concerning urban-rural relations (Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Hungary, Slovenian and Switzerland). The Belgian ECP even provided an input to the Final Report, namely commenting the application of the urban-rural typology in Belgium, at NUTS5-level.

### **Work undertaken in the TPG**

Within the consortium the work has proceeded in good spirit. The project meetings (sometimes with full team, sometimes with selected partners) have always pushed the process well forward. The main constraint, especially from the perspective of the Lead Partner, is the very limited budget of the project: it means very modest shares per partner. It is obvious that small portions quite easily mean small responsibilities as well, underlining Lead Partner's ability and will to put pressure on partners. The strategy chosen by the Lead Partner of 1.1.2 has been to rather tickle out the contributions from the partners than to control and command. This has probably meant less discipline but has created a more pleasant atmosphere for co-operation.

The consortium agreements signed by the project partners already in early autumn 2002 functioned as a good reference point what comes to the formalities. However, it was very unfortunate that the guidance what comes to the financial procedures of ESPON has in the meanwhile become outdated and might create problems of interpretation in case of disagreements between the LP and the PPs.

The incorporation of the Observing Partners was quite uncomplicated and has been useful for the project. The Hungarian and Slovenian representatives elaborated case studies and commented the overall work in order to ensure that the perspective of EU enlargement vs. key questions of urban-rural relations are taken into account.

The project has got an own logo and an own web-page, which has hardly been used after the Coordination Unit started to update the pages in [www.espon.lu](http://www.espon.lu). However, an internal web-page of the project has frequently been used for providing working material for partners to download (eg. the row of case studies).

## **Report on further research issues and data gaps to overcome**

As the methodology of the harmonised urban-rural typology has proven to be useful in NUTS5-level analysis of several countries, a major research task is to continue applications in different spatial contexts. Several proposals in that direction have already been made – including a trans-national study in four countries of the CADSES area. Within a project “ESPON in Finland” a NUTS5-level study including application of the methodology in Finland has already been commissioned by two ministries.

As the project 1.1.1 has spelled out, the scarce availability of comparable data on commuting patterns hampers the analysis of functional urban regions in Europe. Major steps are required in order to improve the situation. The data collected by the national statistical institutions through population censuses etc. should be a subject to an international debate. While waiting for the required (major) improvements in the spatial and temporal coverage of the data, it is possible to develop the methodological tools with the currently available, at least half-way comparable data from six countries and specific national level studies. This kind of work would mean combining the various ESPON (and other) achievements in an innovative way. The urban-rural typology applied at NUTS5-level, combined with the data on commuter catchment areas could form a starting point. Various GIS-techniques (see e.g. the work done by JRC described in Annex 4) in estimating the areas of urban influence could also be used in the analysis.

It is very unfortunate that the full CLC 2000 data was not available for the project. In order to get a more dynamic picture, various temporal analyses should have been carried out at the European level. It is thus important to continue the work with the tools that have been developed, as soon as the full CLC 2000 data has become available. The possibilities to include such follow-up tasks in the up-coming ESPON projects should be explored. An example of a possible task would be to update the urban-rural typology and use it for studying the changes in the urban-rural characteristics of the European space.

For future research programmes of the type of ESPON it is of major importance that projects such as Data Navigator or the coordinating project 3.1 start way before the actual projects are initiated. Within ESPON a huge amount of (wish-)lists with indicators have been collected from a broad array of themes. They should be used as a basis when negotiating with Eurostat and other institutes in the future, including the providers of national level statistics, to ensure a sound database to work with right from the beginning of the actual research projects.

Other data gaps than those mentioned above are discussed in the Annexes 2 and 3.

