

Smart rural development and beyond

Call for papers for a special session, ERSA Groningen, 29 August – 1st September

André Torre, Fred Wallet, and the participants of the TASTE project
torre@agroparistech.fr; fred.wallet@agroparistech.fr

The growth strategy Horizon 2020 forms the fundamental priority for the overall EU policy and builds on the ambition to create “a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy”. The goals are to be achieved by promoting research, innovation, and knowledge in order to realize regional economic growth. This has been the point of departure for the TASTE project, a collaboration between partner universities in four European countries with the aim to assess the potential of smart growth policies for rural development (<http://taste-smarteurope.eu/>).

In this special session we want to assess about the main results of the TASTE project, resulting from a 4 year research, but also to go one step further in order to define new principles for a future agenda of development patterns in rural and peripheral areas. This session will be an opportunity to present the main results of the project, and to discuss them in the light of contribution from scholars wishing to join.

So, the aim of the special session is threefold:

- First, we want to make it clear that, as it is defined nowadays, the H2020 policy does not really apply to rural, remote or peripheral areas, for various reasons. Smart development strategies appear to be well suited for well-developed or intermediate regions but they offer only very limited possibilities for peripheral remote regions because of the small scale, the weak local specializations and technological skills and the lack of relatedness, connectivity and critical mass.
- Second, we want to open the discussion about the design of the main lines of a future development of rural areas, based on the observations of various local examples or case studies. We want to exemplify that local rural development experiences are based, especially all over Europe, on different factors that could contribute to the setting of a new development policy for these regions. It especially encompasses the possibility of access to different types of environment, cultural or landscapes amenities (for tourism, leisure), the value creation based on local resources, the relations between urban and rural areas, the involvement of local population in participative and cooperative experiences and behaviors, the different types of organizational, social and institutional innovations. Local development strategies need to be tailor-made and flexible enough, regarding local peculiarities and various sorts of resources.
- Third, identifying and measuring the development patterns and innovation processes characterizing rural territories requires questioning the relevance and limitations of analytical tools and available data to account for what may be a coherent rural development. The overrepresentation of technological innovations and patents, the lack of consideration of land issues and environmental amenities, the informal nature of governance relations, or the weight of agriculture and the residential economy are elements that call for the convening of new methods, tools and data.

This session is organized under the umbrella of the TASTE project of the Ruragri Era-Net. Papers are welcomed from the members of the project and from other scholars in the field.

