



RURALIZATION

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The opening of rural areas to renew rural generations, jobs and farms

The RURALIZATION Conceptual Guidelines A Guide for Practitioners



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The ROBUST Horizon 2020 project produced a guide for practitioners from its conceptual framework. We drew inspiration from ROBUST to produce a similar guide for the RURALIZATION project. The ROBUST guide was also used as a model to help shape the design and format of our guide. Find the 'ROBUST Conceptual Framework: A Guide for Practitioners' here: <https://rural-urban.eu/publications/robust-conceptual-framework-guide-practitioners>



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¹ PU= Public, CO=Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services), CL=Classified, as referred to in Commission Decision 2001/844/EC

Table of Contents

Version history	2
1 User guide	4
1.1 Navigating and using the guide.....	4
1.2 Glossary of terms	5
2 The what and the why	7
2.1 A quick introduction to the RURALIZATION project	7
2.2 Why does RURALIZATION need conceptual guidelines?	8
2.3 Guiding concepts	9
3 Key concepts	10
3.1 Regeneration.....	11
3.2 Resilience	14
3.3 Innovation	17
3.4 Capital frameworks	20
4 Putting the conceptual guidelines into practice	23
4.1 Assessing and evaluating	23
4.2 Framing and defining	24
4.3 Open a new dialogue	25
4.4 Analysing and finding.....	26

1 User guide

This document provides a **quick guide** to the RURALIZATION project’s core guiding concepts. It provides a rationale for why we need guiding concepts and how we can put these ‘thinking tools’ into practice to better understand rural regeneration issues and learn lessons for policy and practice. This guide is **supplementary to the Detailed Conceptual Guidelines (Deliverable 3.2)** where the concepts are explored in depth.

In this section, firstly we outline how the guide can be used. The table ‘**Navigating and using this guide**’ provides ideas of how it can be used in full or part. A **glossary of terms** is also provided. This provides a point of reference to consult while using the guide. This doesn’t provide ‘definitions’ as such, but helps to clarify and contextualise the terms used.

1.1 Navigating and using the guide

<p>Want a birds-eye view of the RURALIZATION project and the key ideas underpinning the ‘ruralisation’ process?</p>	<p>Go to </p> <p>Section 2: The what and the why</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read a quick introduction to the RURALIZATION project. • Find reasons why guiding concepts are important to the project and why concepts can be useful to practitioners.
<p>Want to dig deeper into key ideas underpinning the concepts and linkages between more specific issues of concern to RURALIZATION?</p>	<p>Go to </p> <p>Section 3: Key concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find quick guides to the key ideas underpinning each of the guiding concepts. This resource pares back the concepts to their essentials. • Read about the more pragmatic ideas related to the rural regeneration process emerging from the concepts. • Linkages between the concepts and particular themes and topics of concern to the RURALIZATION project are also illustrated.
<p>Want to apply the concepts and explore different ways of doing this?</p>	<p>Go to </p> <p>Section 4: Putting the conceptual guidelines into practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find short, snapshot examples of how the concepts can be put into practice in the process of better understanding rural regeneration issues and distilling lessons for policy and practice.

1.2 Glossary of terms

Term	Explanation
Access to land	A key issue impacting access of new generations to the farming sector that is hugely complex and impacted by a range of factors such as law, policy and markets. It is also a dynamic, multi-faceted concept that is about gaining physical access, but also using the land, maintaining access and how access is controlled.
Capital frameworks	An integrated framework for analysis based on different forms of capital, assets or resources. There are different types of capital frameworks that conceptualise capital differently, such as community capital and territorial capital.
Capital	A diverse range of tangible and intangible resources or assets. Different forms of capital may act as drivers of regeneration or be created because of regeneration. Having certain capital and using it can impact capacities (e.g. for innovation, entrepreneurship, to enter the farming profession).
Community capital	A range of different capitals (e.g. social, cultural, financial) that interact and can be possessed by particular geographic communities or groups of people.
Foresight analysis	Includes different approaches to studying potential future patterns of development and change, such as trend analysis and exploring personal or utopian futures.
Generational renewal	An emerging concept used in rural development research and policy concerned with reviving youth populations in rural areas and farming, but also generally associated with supporting wider rural social and economic renewal.
Innovation	New or improved or adaptation/transfer of products and processes that solves problems and/or creates new opportunities.
New entrants	A difficult term to define where there is much debate. New entrants can be understood strictly as those who enter farming without a farming background. RURALIZATION aligns with the EIP-AGRI Focus Group ² approach to acknowledge there are many types of new entrants to farming and grey areas exist in between complete new entrants and direct farm successors.
New generations	For RURALIZATION focus is placed on new generations as rural newcomers, new entrants to farming, successors and youth. Extra emphasis is also placed on opportunities for new generations of women.
Promising practices	Activities that improve, or may improve, the status quo in rural areas by fostering economic, social, demographic, and/or ecological improvements which ameliorate opportunities for younger generations.
Resilience	Capacity to adapt or even transform, in either a reactive or proactive way, to negative changes, such as rural decline, impacting for example various facets of rural sustainability or well-being (e.g. social, economic, environmental).
Rural decline	Decline may represent itself as a consistent downward trend with negative impacts on rural development. But it may not be a persistent trend, it can go up and down. Decline is a dynamic and complex notion that has multiple dimensions (e.g. social, environmental), may occur at a slow or fast pace and impact some rural places more than others.

² EIP-AGRI, 2016. New entrants into farming: Lessons to foster innovation and entrepreneurship. EIP-AGRI Focus Group Final Report. Source: https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/eip-agri_fg_new_entrants_final_report_2016_en.pdf

Rural newcomers	May be understood simply as people who migrate from another area towards a rural area. Newcomers are diverse group, with different types (e.g. entrepreneurs, labour migrants, refugees), coming from different places and with different primary motivations.
Rural regeneration	A response to decline and a process of transition and more positive reinvention or revival. Regeneration should do more than just reverse decline but enable transformation, be it on a smaller or larger scale that allows places to reach their potential.
Rural	Defined in many ways such as a geographic place and a social construction that we construct in our minds and can be impacted by our experiences. Deep understanding of the rural goes beyond rural as a type of space, region or area. In the RURALIZATION context rural Europe is viewed as a highly diverse space. Rural is also interconnected with other places.
Ruralisation	A process where regeneration enables the creation of a new rural frontier where there are opportunities for new generations in rural areas to build their lives and livelihoods leading to generational renewal. Ruralisation weakens and is a counterforce to the dominance of urbanisation.
Social innovation	Works to address specific social problems and wider social challenges with innovation outcomes focused firstly on creating social benefits but also may have wider value (e.g. economic, cultural).
Succession	Process of farm transfer between the existing and next farming generation.
Territorial capital	Local tangible and intangible assets that underpin local potential and give local places their strength and underpin their successes (e.g. competitive advantage, place attractiveness).
Trends	Defined broadly in RURALIZATION as developments that impact specific regions or activities. Trends come in different forms such as megatrends that impact most places versus weak signals that are much less pervasive.
Urbanisation	The trend of greater levels of migration to cities and away from rural areas. Ruralisation aims to act as a counterforce to urbanisation, weakening this trend.

2 The what and the why

2.1 A quick introduction to the RURALIZATION project

Challenges face new generations building a livelihood in farming. Farm employment in the EU is declining, with a 30% decrease in the last fifteen years³. Most farmers in the EU (56%) are over 55 and only 6% are under 35⁴. There can also be a wider **lack of opportunities for new generations in rural areas** to obtain the job or quality of life they wish for. Between 2014 and 2050, population forecasts expect population growth of 12% in urban regions, while for rural regions a decline of 7% is expected⁵.

The **RURALIZATION project responds to these problems and is ambitious about the potential for a different rural future**. It seeks to **understand issues of rural regeneration** and generate new knowledge to inform policy. Innovative projects and policy tools can potentially address challenges faced by new generations who want to live and work in rural areas. More broadly too, some rural regions defy the decline picture and more positive social and economic trends are found. The RURALIZATION project believes this can become more the norm than the exception through a process of ‘ruralisation’. Foresight analysis and assessment of promising, innovative practices will feed into proposed new regeneration tools and policy options.

	Focus	Summary outcomes
Foresight analysis	Identify rural regeneration opportunities , trends impacting rural regions and drivers of these patterns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trend analysis and database • Youth future dreams inventory and further analysis in 10 countries
	Understand the future dreams of new generations and explore how rural areas can function as places for these dreams .	
Promising, innovative practices	Explore and assess promising, novel and innovative practices (e.g. policy, law projects, organisations and wider phenomena), as well as their potential transfer and adaptation to new contexts .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 case studies on rural newcomers, new entrants to farming and successors • 10 actions on access to land • Analysis of access to land law and policy
Policy design and assessment	Using knowledge developed, assess the performance of current policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good practice guide and handbook • Youth dream futures policy design
	Propose a set of renewed policy options and practical tools to support their uptake.	

³ Schuh, B et al. 2019, Research for AGRI Committee – The EU farming employment: current challenges and future prospects, European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels. Source: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/629209/IPOL_STU\(2019\)629209_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/629209/IPOL_STU(2019)629209_EN.pdf)

⁴DG Agriculture and Rural Development, Unit Farm Economics, 2018. Farm Structures. Source: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/farming/documents/farm-structures_en.pdf

⁵ EUROSTAT, 2017. Statistics on rural areas in the EU. Source: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php/Statistics_on_rural_areas_in_the_EU

2.2 Why does RURALIZATION need conceptual guidelines?

Fundamentally, we need conceptual guidelines because the RURALIZATION project is based on a big idea – the ruralisation process. It needs teasing out and debating if we are to move towards understanding how it might be realised. Such a big idea needs guiding concepts to help draw boundaries, steer analysis and find gaps in current thinking.

Five reasons why guiding concepts are important

1. Clarify what we mean when use the terms like ‘rural regeneration’ and the boundaries we draw around them. This provides a clear starting point to guide us.
2. Identify how others have defined concepts and the processes underpinning them.
3. Provide a springboard of ideas that helps raise questions and debate issues.
4. Have a clear starting point and focus to guide us in exploring if there are new ways to best construct and understand the key concepts and the wider process of ruralisation.
5. Guidelines are developed as opposed to a more rigid framework because ruralisation is a new and ambitious idea. Through the project there is a lot to learn and different specific contexts to explore. This may require adaptations and additions to our guiding concepts.

Concepts do not provide the last word and do not suggest fixed solutions. How we conceptualise an idea is often the subject of debate. For practitioners and policy-makers working on rural regeneration, these concepts do offer tools that help explore complex issues more deeply, ask different questions and work towards better answers.

Seven reasons why concepts can be useful to practitioners

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Dealing with complexity | The modern world is complex. Concepts can help us better understand this complexity using new ideas appropriate to contemporary rural places and the problems they face. |
| • Focus thinking | Concepts represent a particular perspective and way to look at issues. They provide a lens to filter information that can help focus analysis. We can also add different ‘filters’ to expand (e.g. rural foresight analysis) or narrow (e.g. access to land) our focus. |
| • Refresh thinking | Concepts can guide our thinking and re-thinking, opening up new perspectives on how to view the world. They can draw us to ask different questions and understand issues better. |
| • Frame issues | Concepts can help to frame issues in new ways and provide a rationale to link to a particular agenda. This may help to connect with new interest groups beyond those normally concerned. |
| • Communication tool | Using concepts can help to encapsulate complex ideas and provide a tool for use in communicating. |
| • Link to a bigger or different picture | Concepts can help to newly position issues in a wider policy agenda. This can help to create a stronger agenda making the case for addressing issues more comprehensively. |
| • New connections | Positioning arguments in a wider policy agenda can also open up new collaborators or strategic partnerships helping strengthen action. |

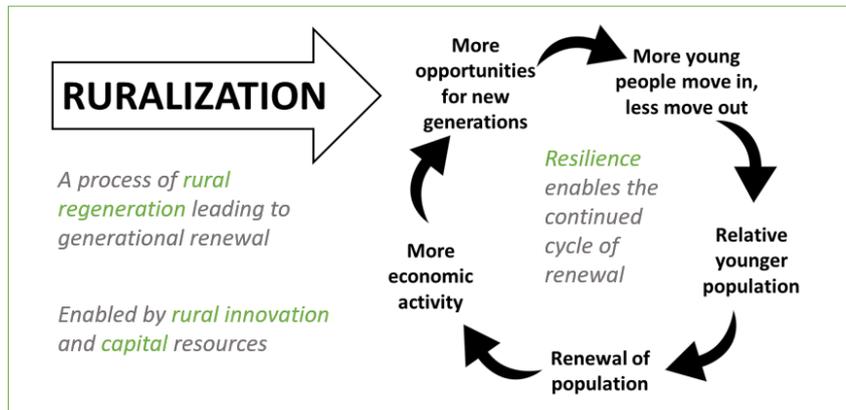
2.3 Guiding concepts

The RURALIZATION project Conceptual Guidelines (Deliverable 3.2) provides the foundation for ruralisation as a theoretical process.

The process of 'ruralisation'
The RURALIZATION project seeks to understand how to create a 'new rural frontier' where:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is generational renewal in farming and wider rural society. • There are more opportunities in rural areas for new generations to build their lives and livelihoods. • More opportunities mean that increasingly new generations stay in rural areas and newcomers move into rural areas.
These patterns result in a new trend of 'ruralisation'. This weakens and is a counterforce to the dominance of urbanisation.

Ruralisation must create a positive spiral of new rural opportunities. The RURALIZATION project will identify specific circumstances and drivers that make some rural areas less susceptible to decline, or perform better than other rural areas in matters of rural regeneration, attracting rural newcomers, successors, new entrants into farming and facilitating access to land.

Alongside the foundational concept of 'regeneration', three other guiding concepts also underpin how the RURALIZATION project initially theorises what supports the ruralisation process. It is theorised that central to generating new



opportunities in rural areas that support **rural regeneration** are a range of **capitals** or resources and **innovation**. However the opportunities created must also be underpinned by **resilience** to support the continued cycle of renewal of the rural population and economic activity.

Regeneration Regeneration responds to rural decline enabling positive change and potentially transformation to generate new opportunities.			Ruralisation
Innovation To overcome decline innovation can solve problems and be the source of new opportunities that support regeneration.	Capital(s) A range of capitals or resources are key to harnessing opportunities, overcoming problems and ensuring capacities exist to act and react to overcome decline and harness regeneration.	Resilience Opportunities must be resilient and sustained to ensure the upward cycle of regeneration does not revert to a downward cycle of decline.	

3 Key concepts

In this section each guiding concept is sketched. Each section takes the same approach:

- **What: The core ideas that make up each concept**
 - Exploring the ‘what’ of each guiding concept involves sketching the key ideas and thinking behind it. This aims to open the narrative or broader story embedded in each concept.
- **How: Pragmatic lessons and wider insights we can take from the concepts**
 - The story concepts tell illustrates their value and hints at potential outcomes. But this narrative is often abstract. It is also interesting to look at the implications of these ideas in practice. For each concept we also detail some tentative practice oriented observations, such as what appears good practice when working to realise the ideas embedded in a concept.
- **Linkages: Linking the concepts to specific areas of concern to RURALIZATION**
 - The concepts are also linked to specific areas of concern to the RURALIZATION project to show how they help to illuminate questions and potential answers.
- **Concept map: Synthesising key lessons and questions for policy and practice**
 - A final visualisation for each concept is also included that attempts to synthesise emerging lessons and questions they suggest for policy and practice.

The guiding concepts do not represent the last word on ruralisation. They were put together at the start of the project and provide a way to conceptualise the ruralisation process. This is also done with awareness that through the RURALIZATION project our insights will develop. Other concepts will also inevitably enter the RURALIZATION project because beyond its overarching goals, it is also exploring diverse areas (e.g. from trend analysis to facilitating access to land). Through the project, we will further learn about ruralisation in theory and practice.

3.1 Regeneration

Rural regeneration is important to overcome rural decline. Drawing on rural research and thinking, we bring the key features of regeneration together to unpack the essence of what is embedded in this idea.

WHAT - Regeneration as an idea: Key features	
Response to decline	Regeneration is a deliberate response to decline issues. It should seek to alleviate decline not in the short term but lead to lasting change.
Resources	For regeneration to address decline, resources (e.g. human, social, cultural, economic) may need to be better harnessed or additional and new resources may be needed.
Importance of place	How regeneration is approached should have sensitivity to local context.
Complexity and interconnections	Regeneration recognises that decline problems are complex and interconnected (e.g. with each other, over time and in different places).
Different pathways	Regeneration may seek to revive existing declining sectors or build particular resources that can help to alleviate decline. Regeneration can take different pragmatic pathways e.g. from harnessing social innovation and developing rural-urban linkages to smart specialisation and agroecology.
Different focuses	Regeneration can take a place-based approach (e.g. focus on a village) or an issue or sector focused approach (e.g. generational renewal or agriculture regeneration). Regeneration may focus on particular resources as drivers of it (e.g. culture as a driver of regeneration).
Different constructions	Regeneration is open to different constructions, such as radical and profound transformation versus more moderate renewal and reform.

Existing research and thinking suggests a number of factors are important when it comes to the process of rural regeneration, how it is approached and what key ideas should be remembered as part of the process.

HOW - Emerging lessons for rural regeneration and ruralisation	
Recognise the complexity of the challenge of addressing decline issues	An awareness of the fact that realising regeneration is a complex challenge is important. It risks being approached too simply or by focusing on one dimension. For example re-location incentives for rural newcomers do not address other decline issues that may impact their rural re-location (e.g. availability of jobs, housing, services).
Locally rooted benefits	Regenerative harnessing of resources should effectively help overcome locally felt decline issues with valuable benefits rooted locally.
Focus on inter-linkages	Focusing on single resources appears lacking (e.g. local over external resources; economic over social, youth over the older generation). Regeneration should be an ambitious, integrated process. In reality it can be more partial and deal with certain issues and not others.
Avoid being prescriptive	Regeneration involves flexibility and avoids being too prescriptive. Many solutions, models or approaches may be needed, that can be selected or adapted as appropriate for local contexts.
Aim for catalytic effects	Regeneration is ideally ‘integrated’ where instruments and strategies may target one problem but also positively influence another linked issue. Strong regeneration measures and approaches should have mutually supportive impacts and may have catalytic effects.

Harness the power of collaboration Local regeneration approaches are recognised to benefit from participative processes with different actors working together in partnership. As different actors work together their multiple perspectives should help to join the dots between the interconnected nature of decline problems. But issues of power and capacity can also impact the potential to participate.

Ruralisation must create a positive spiral of new rural opportunities. The RURALIZATION project is interested in understanding how rural newcomers can contribute to ruralisation. Unpacking the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of regeneration helps to explore what may constitute regenerative newcomer rural migration.

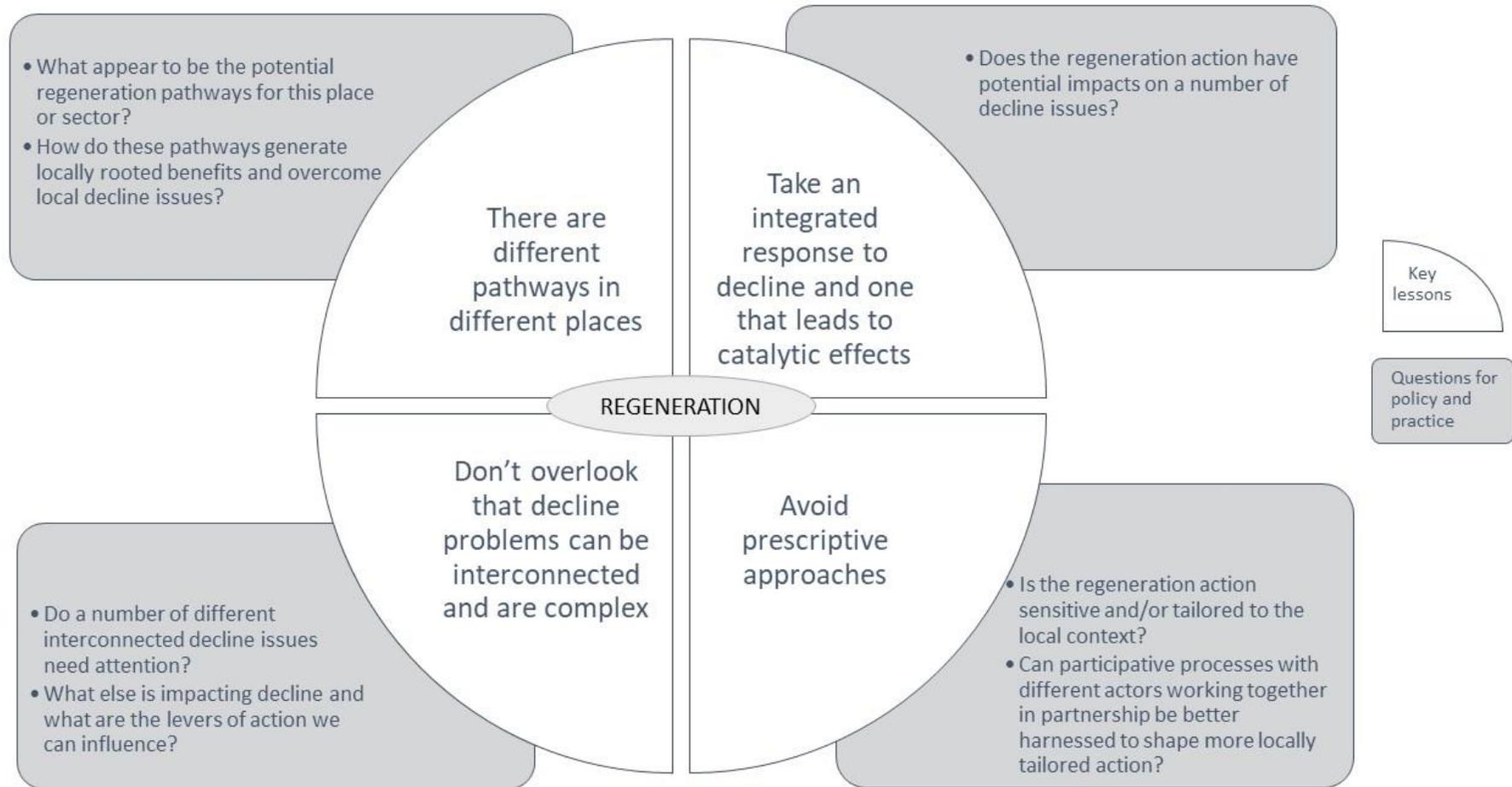
Rural newcomers as drivers of regeneration and ruralisation

Newcomer migration increases the rural population and helps alleviate population decline. But newcomers can have **catalytic impacts** on regenerating rural areas, bringing wider social and economic benefits.

- The **population increase** provided by newcomers can **support the need for and better provision of rural services such as schools, transport and healthcare**.
- Newcomers can become **socially integrated and active members of the rural community**, supporting social opportunities.
- Newcomers can be important **innovators and entrepreneurs generating new job opportunities** for themselves and others.

The examples show that newcomers can contribute to ruralisation creating new economic and social opportunities, which are also key to supporting an upward spiral of renewal. But it is also **important not to be prescriptive and recognise the complexity of the challenge**.

- **Different kinds of newcomers can help alleviate locally specific decline issues**. For example, newcomers who are not entrepreneurs may have regenerative effects if they help overcome local labour shortages and help develop a local burgeoning industry.
- **Different types of newcomers potentially bring different impacts to rural areas**. The innovative, new entrant farmer and the newcomer tourism entrepreneur potentially play different roles in creating opportunities that support ruralisation.
- **Over time newcomers can have greater impacts on ruralisation**. The longer they stay in a rural area, the more they potentially become economically and socially embedded locally.
- But also these **impacts cannot be taken for granted**. Some newcomers may not be strong contributors to rural regeneration, such as second-home owners who are temporary residents and not embedded in local economy and society.
- On the other hand, some newcomers, such as refugees and asylum seekers, **may need specific supports** to realise their potential part in rural regeneration.



3.2 Resilience

For ruralisation, rural regeneration must be underpinned by changes that support resilience to enable the continued cycle of renewal of the rural population and economic activity. Greater rural resilience is a desirable outcome of ruralisation. Resilience is however a layered and debated concept that has many features.

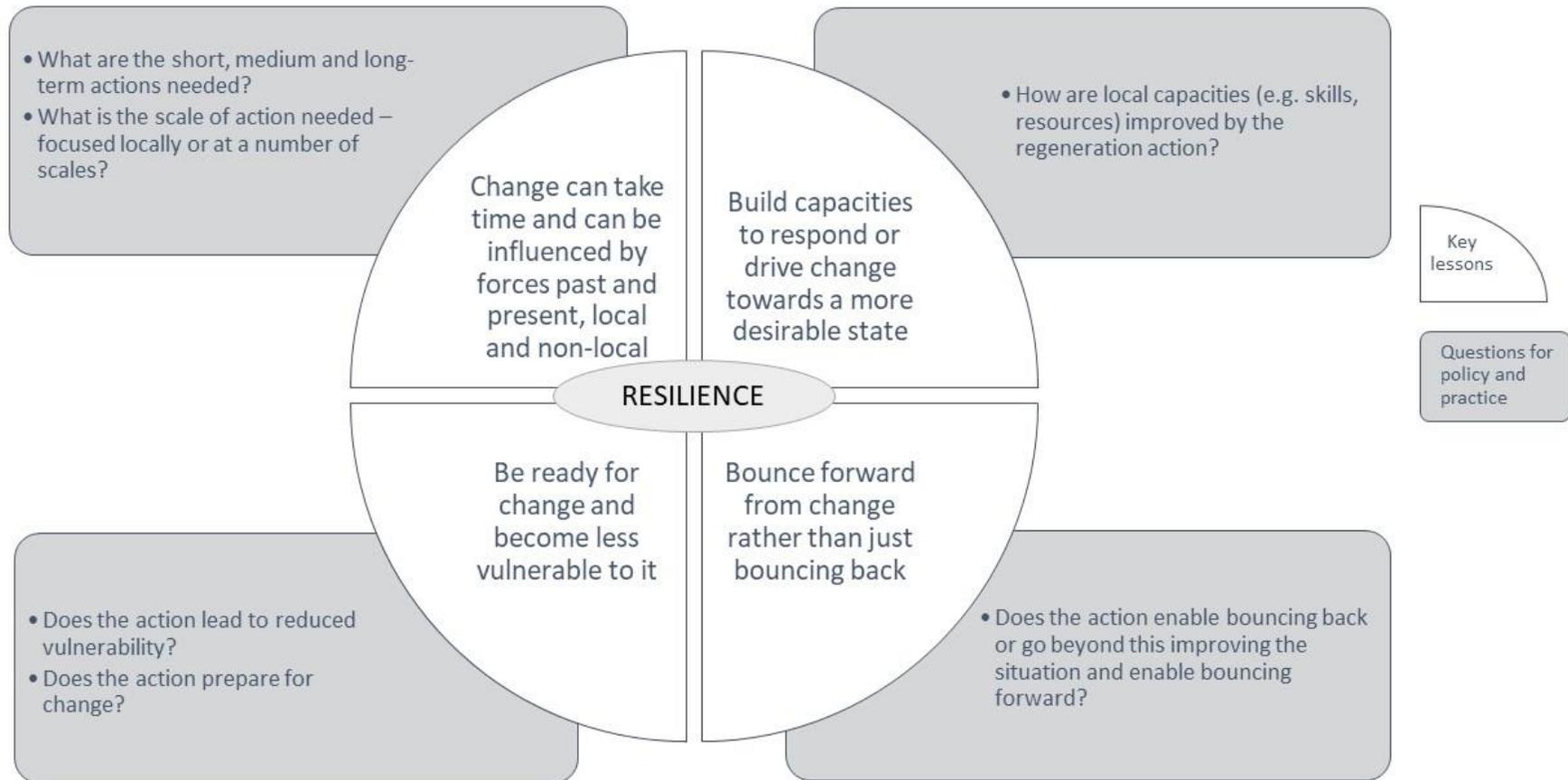
WHAT - Resilience as an idea: Key features	
System change towards a more desirable state	Change happens as part of a complex system. Resilience means the system is better prepared to deal with change reducing vulnerability or influence change towards a more desirable state.
Society and environment interdependency	Resilience thinking calls for an essential focus on environmental change. Environment and society are seen as interconnected in this complex system and should function for mutual benefit.
Change dynamics are complex	Shocks or more severe disturbances can impact change, but change can be fast or slow, expected or unexpected. Change can be impacted by distant or external forces as well as more local forces. Time is also a factor where influences may come from the past or the present and have impacts that appear over a short or long period.
Proactive human action	Resilience building can involve proactive action to drive change in the face of particular decline issues. This may see new and alternative pathways towards regeneration emerge.
Scale	We can also think about resilience at different scales. This might be at a micro scale in relation to particular activities (e.g. farm level) or on a wider sectoral level (e.g. agriculture). The focus could also be more geographic, such as community or regional resilience.
Adaptation versus adaptability	The ability to adapt is crucial for resilience. More dynamic, longer term processes of adaptability sees adaptation occurring in more parts of the system and towards a more significant shift to a potentially alternative, resilient new development pathway.
Path dependencies	Taking new pathways can be limited by dependencies (e.g. policy, culture, industry structure) in the current system that can leave a system stuck or locked into a previous pathway.
Adaptive cycles	A continuous process where different stages (e.g. stability, uncertainty/collapse, reorganisation and growth/exploitation) are passed through towards or away from resilience. The 'reorganisation' phase is a time of innovation and restructuring, which leads to the exploitation phase where new opportunities are seized.
Metaphor for a desirable outcome and process	Resilience can be used as a broad conceptual metaphor and desirable outcome that is aimed for. It can also be understood as a specific process we work to understand more deeply. Used as a metaphor it can stimulate broader reflection on what can support this desirable state. Understanding the process of realising resilience digs deeper, examining more specific aspects of its realisation (e.g. exploring path dependencies, adaptability or adaptive cycles in detail).

Ideas within the resilience concept add more depth to how we can potentially understand the process of rural regeneration. It gives some ideas for further directing how we might explore and view the complexity of the regeneration challenge.

HOW - Emerging lessons for rural regeneration and ruralisation	
No quick fix	Regeneration supporting ruralisation will not likely be a quick fix that enables short-term changes but should ultimately lead to a lasting positive spiral of new opportunities.
Build capacity	Improving the ability of rural actors, communities and regions to respond reactively or proactively in the face of rural decline issues appears important to build capacities for resilient regeneration. This may focus on building and improving access to different resources, such as environmental, social, economic and human resources, that match needs.
Focus on step forward outcomes	System change should not just involve 'bouncing back' to overcome decline, but 'bounce forward' to also create more positive change or create more radical change that is transformative.
Consider both the everyday and the exceptional	Resilience can be driven by what can be considered more everyday social and cultural activities, as well as more reactive activities to certain exceptional circumstances.
Consider the extent of our 'gaze'	Working towards resilience may involve both looking back (legacy issues, path dependencies) and looking forward (future opportunities). The scale requiring attention may be both local and non-local.
Achievable goal or constant ambition?	Is resilience achievable or something to constantly be worked towards? In the face of slower, more pervasive change resilience can call for continual adaptation. If resilience is seen to be achieved its maintenance must not be taken for granted. Regeneration outcomes that are resilient should help to ensure the upward cycle of regeneration does not revert to a downward cycle of decline.

Underpinning the RURALIZATION project's perspective on ruralisation is the assumption that generational renewal and rural regeneration go hand in hand. However generational renewal is a relatively new policy concept and there are lots of questions still to answer related to what it means to achieve it and how to achieve it. Below we tease out how resilience thinking may help direct us to questions to help us understand how generational renewal can be effectively realised.

Can resilience thinking help us understand generational renewal more deeply?
Resilience suggests it is important to build capacity so people and places are better equipped to deal with change, are less vulnerable and more resilient. This suggests an important question to help understand how to achieve generational renewal is what are the capacities needed among new rural generations and in rural areas so there are more opportunities to attract and retain new generations? Resilience sees change as happening as part of a complex system where change can occur quickly or slowly, it may be expected or unexpected, it may be impacted by distant and more local forces. This suggests we need to potentially look at a complex range of factors influencing rural generational change and renewal. Achieving resilience can be impacted by path dependencies that can leave a system stuck or locked into a previous pathway (e.g. generational decline). Another potentially important question to realise generational renewal is if particular issues are creating significant blockages to moving towards it?



3.3 Innovation

Innovation is important to creating new opportunities and solving problems in rural areas. Innovation appears a key enabler of the process of ruralisation and is a guiding concept for the RURALIZATION project.

WHAT - Innovation as an idea: Key features	
Innovation takes multiple forms	Innovation can be about new products or technology to address new demands or solve problems, but it is also about improving ways of doing things, such as new processes or organisational forms. Innovation can also mean the transfer and adaptation of existing innovation to new contexts. It can also be described based on its main goals and impacts, such as social or environmental innovation.
The innovation ambition	Innovation can be a driver of economic growth and development, but it is also potentially a strong contributor to positive social and environmental change. It can be a driver of change or wider transformation.
Innovation occurs in an interconnected complex system	Innovation is not a solitary activity. It can involve networks made up of for example individuals, businesses, researchers, government and non-government organisations. Beyond the actors involved, policy can create a supportive environment.
Importance of rural entrepreneurship	Individual entrepreneurs can be important drivers of innovation and are thought to be a particularly important part of the rural innovation system, such as being sources of new ideas or creating new connections and information flows.
Connecting new networks	Innovation is a social process where networks of people come together, develop and exchange ideas that are realised as innovation. Important is also connecting the disconnected so the familiar and non-familiar come together where innovation can germinate.
Knowledge in all its forms	Specific and specialist expert knowledge can be a driver of innovation, but so can locally learned and developed knowledge. There are many forms of knowledge that may come together or work apart in driving innovation. One form of knowledge does not trump another.

There seems more room for embedding innovation as part of rural policy and research. We need to understand how to realise increased rural innovation to support ruralisation. These and other lessons are expanded on below.

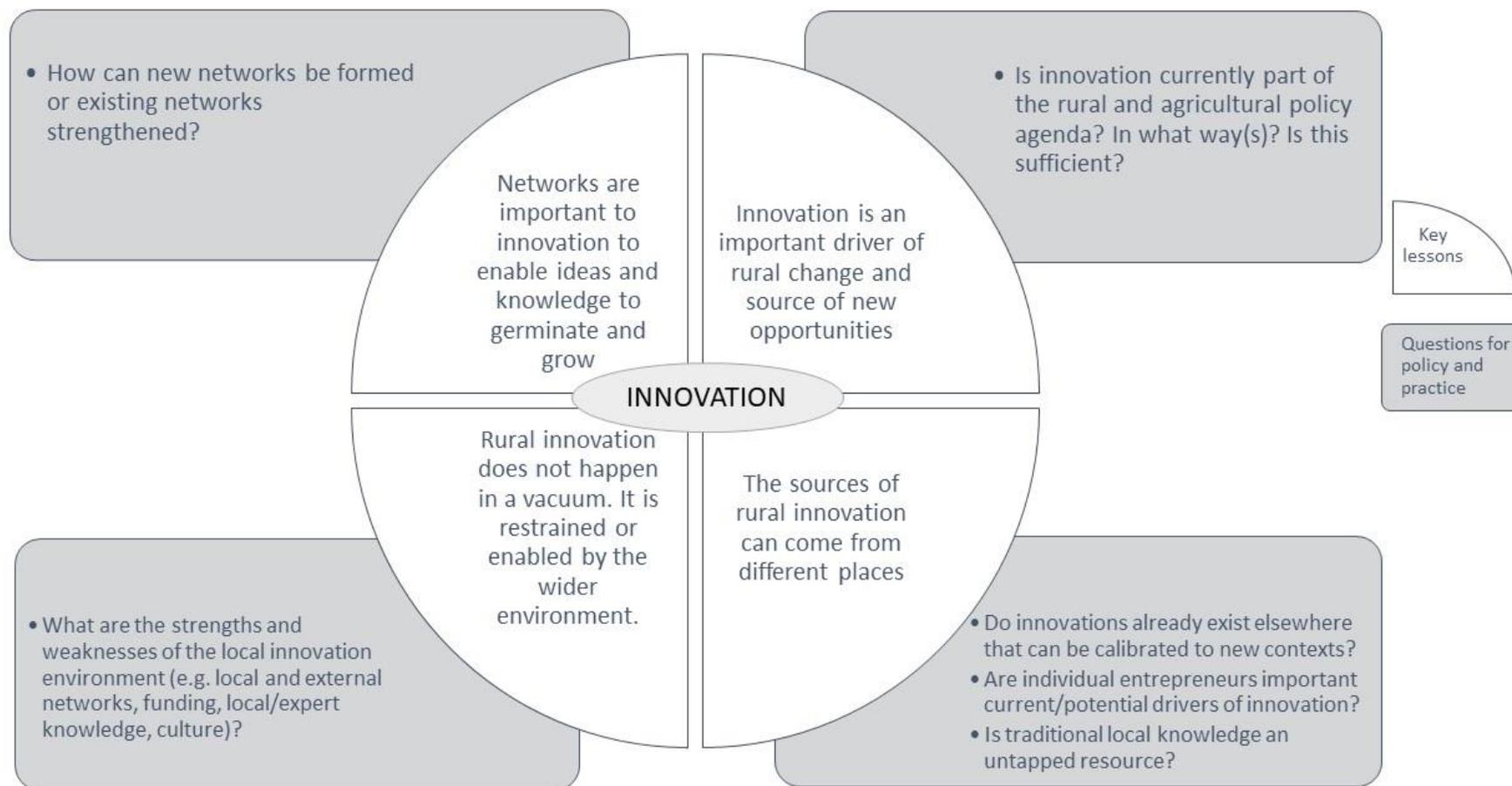
HOW - Emerging lessons for rural regeneration and ruralisation	
Change the narrative	Rural innovation can go under-recognised. While rural areas face innovation challenges, they are still places where innovation happens. There is a need for a changed rural policy narrative, with greater recognition of rural innovation and supporting of the conditions to enable its increased pervasiveness.
Understand how rural innovation is realised to build greater capacity for it	Innovation in rural areas faces challenges. One often cited is how actors can be disconnected and networks are harder to form. Place also has influence. Issues may be different in remote versus rural areas close to urban commuter zones. If we need to unlock more rural innovation and innovation occurs in an interconnected complex system, we also need to find the keys to realising it, such as how to create the conditions so the right actors can come together, develop ideas and find the resources they need.

Importance of a sustainable relationship with natural resources	Natural resources are an important source of development in the rural economy. Because of environmental decline, in a regeneration context innovation could provide solutions, but also more broadly rural innovation should have a sustainable relationship with natural resources.
Don't overlook what seems more 'everyday' innovation	Innovation that contributes to solving more common and persistent rural problems can have as much positive impact on rural regeneration as disruptive innovation that represents a wider shift in how things normally work.
Innovation calibration and transfer to new places	When problems persist, we can continue to look for new solutions. However innovation that is transferable and capable of addressing similar problems in different contexts is particularly valuable to rural regeneration.

Given that innovation and entrepreneurship are highlighted as important and interconnected in realising rural innovation, is ruralisation really about attracting certain types of people to rural areas and into farming? We explore this question briefly below.

Rural innovation and individuals supporting ruralisation

Who are the key entrepreneurial individuals that are the most important rural innovation actors? This is an important question for RURALIZATION as part of understanding the drivers of rural regeneration and ruralisation. From existing knowledge we can identify some groups of potential importance (women, youth, new migrants, return migrants, new entrants to farming, entrepreneurs). While the 'who' is important, perhaps more so are the attributes of these actors, what they do in rural areas and the skills they hold. The question is potentially not just one of who but also how they act. For example, the ability to create new socio-economic relationships (e.g. igniting new collaborations within rural areas, connecting to urban markets) and bring new knowledge to rural areas (e.g. transfer of innovation) is important.



3.4 Capital frameworks

Underpinning ruralisation is the idea that capital resources are also central to generating new opportunities in rural areas that will support ruralisation. For example, innovation does not happen in a vacuum. It needs certain conditions and resources to be realised. Capital frameworks provide a means of organising the potential resources that underpin solutions.

WHAT - Capital as an idea: Key features	
Multiple types of capital resources	Many different types of resources (e.g. social, cultural, financial, human, natural, built) can support rural regeneration. They are sometimes grouped as ‘hard’ or tangible (e.g. nature) and ‘soft’ or intangible (e.g. skills) resources, or also a mixture of both (e.g. culture and creativity).
Capital frameworks	Because there are multiple capital resources, the concept provides a framework for analysis that is integrated and does not have a narrow focus on one type of resource. This complements an integrated approach to regeneration that sees issues as interconnected. Different specific frameworks exist (e.g. community capitals, territorial capital).
Who has capital	Capital can be possessed by individuals. It can also be held by places (e.g. a region) or groups of people (e.g. a particular community).
Interacting resources	Capital resources influence each other and interact.
Resource stocks	Capital resources have a weight and can be possessed in high or low volumes, which is also not static and can change over time. Some capitals can be in limited supply (e.g. land), meaning if some possess a lot it can impact access by others. Good resource stocks are not necessarily a precursor to alleviating decline. This is linked to capacity to use resources, giving them value, which unlocks other resources (i.e. resource flows).
Resource flows	Possessing one capital resource can enable access to or the creation of others. For example, human capital (e.g. skills, entrepreneurial abilities) can unlock financial capital (e.g. jobs, business creation). The natural capital embedded in farms can also generate cultural capital (e.g. cultural landscapes).
From a flow to a spiral	Resource flows can also move in different directions, such as a downward or upward spiral. Generating an upward spiral should increase resources and alleviate decline. This is complex however and needs to be better understood.

The lessons to take from a focus on capital resources are hard to decipher. There are perhaps more unanswered questions than lessons to extract. We explore some of these below.

HOW – Emerging lessons for rural regeneration and ruralisation	
Rural places have different resources and needs	Rural places are diverse and so are the specific assets they hold or lack. Focusing on rural resources may help to find appropriate regeneration pathways based on local resource capacities.
Not a question of ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ resources	Debate exists around the importance of some resources over others. Perhaps this is not an either or question, but depends things like the nature of the issue and features of place.
Unlikely a question of simple cause and effect	Straightforward linking of one resource as the cause of a particular regeneration effect is unlikely the whole story. Resources interact and change over time.

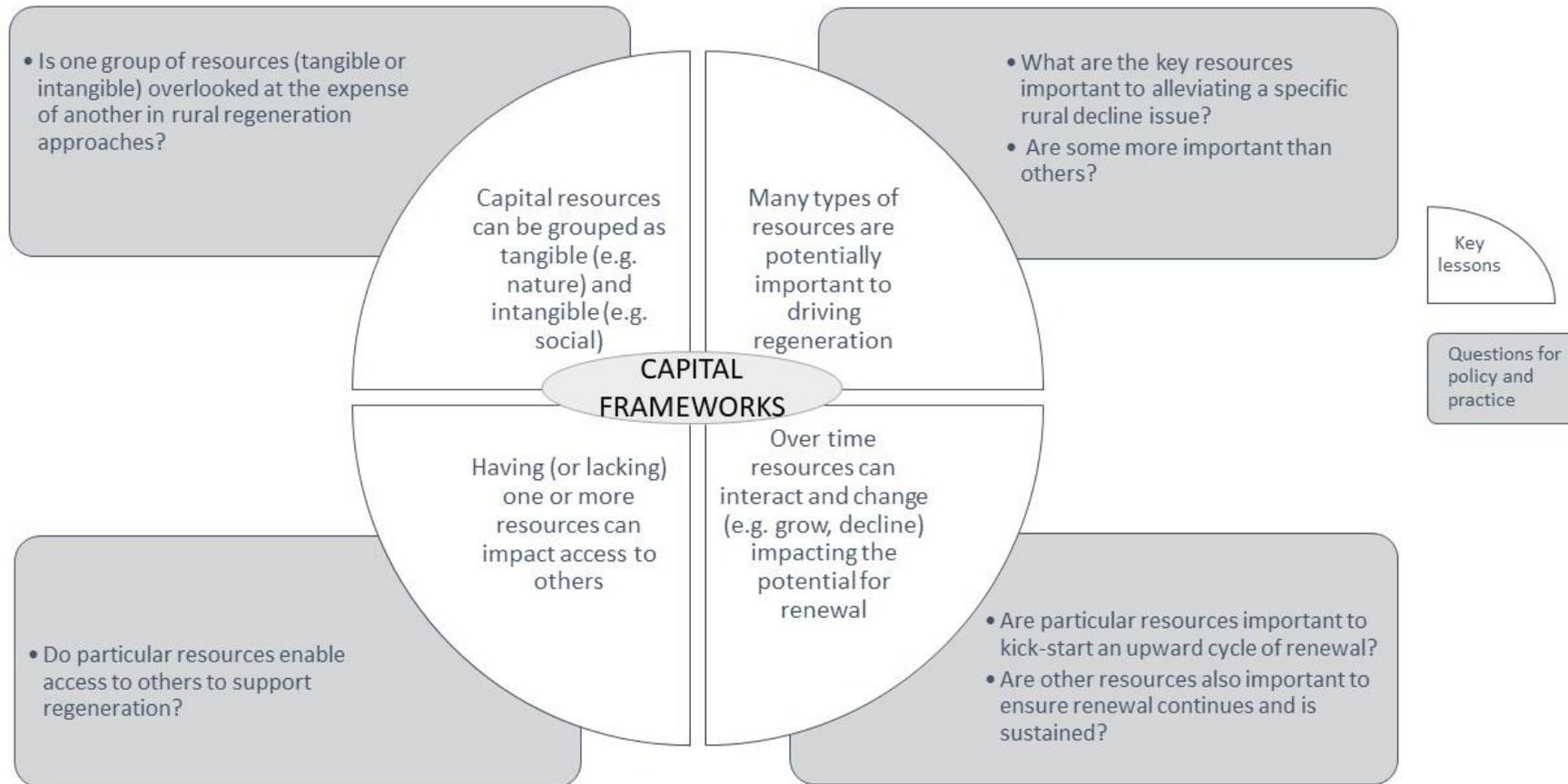
Innovative resources	Are there some resources that are more important to rural regeneration? Territorial capital distinguishes ‘traditional’ and ‘innovative’ resources. For example entrepreneurial skills might be classed as a traditional human capital, but an ability to forge networks and work collectively as more nuanced innovative human resources.
Catalysing resources	Understanding if there are particular resources that kick-start and act as catalysts for rural regeneration presents an interesting question. Some argue that social capital is a key catalyst. The answer may be context dependent to a particular issue or place.
Diverse resources	If too focused on one building one resource this may impact a decline in others. Perhaps we need diverse resources, or at least a balance to avoid unintended consequences.

RURALIZATION is working to understand the visions held by youth for their ideal or ‘dream’ future to feed into the design of policy recommendations to support making these dreams a reality. Can we think about youth dream futures in terms of the range of capital resources needed in rural areas to make these dreams reality?

Resources needed to realise the future dreams of youth?

In the RURALIZATION literature review (Deliverable 3.3 – Review Report and Fact Sheets) we looked at existing research and the drivers impacting insufficient levels of young people in rural areas. The arising issues can be linked to particular resources, their interaction and resource deficits in rural areas, for example:

- Youth leave rural areas to develop their education and skills (human capital) and gain employment (financial capital), but they can also develop their social networks (social capital) in these new locations which can impact their likelihood to return to their rural roots.
- Turning education and skills (human capital) into a job (financial capital) in rural areas can be challenging because of available opportunities (e.g. lack of jobs, low pay jobs, lack of career progression opportunities). Over time if this persists it can lead to further resource deficits (social, human, financial) and social exclusion.
- Resources supporting or acting as barriers are potentially different for youth depending on for example their gender and sexuality. The features of other places can also compete with rural areas. For example, for LGBTQ urban culture (e.g. perceptions of greater openness and acceptance) and more potential to build social networks can act as a draw away from rural areas.



4 Putting the conceptual guidelines into practice

In this section we look at ways the RURALIZATION project can make use of the conceptual guidelines. The RURALIZATION conceptual guidelines play a number of roles in the project. They have fed into a framework for assessment of promising practices. They provide a set of analytical tools the project can draw on and add to. Four ways we can put concepts to work are explored in this section. These have wider relevance beyond the RURALIZATION project and examples linked to each of the four ways are also outlined in the following sections.

Four ways to put concepts to work	
1. Assessing and evaluating	Concepts can be used to guide assessment in the RURALIZATION project. They can also be applied in wider contexts to inform and perform an assessment or evaluative function.
2. Framing and defining	Concepts can also be commonly used terms. Conceptual guidelines can be used to frame and define key ideas more clearly. They can also be used to help further and more clearly define newer or under-explored concepts.
3. Open a new dialogue	We can create a dialogue between concepts to expand under-conceptualised ideas or fill in gaps where unanswered questions or deficiencies exist in how concepts are currently understood. Practice can also help inform better concepts because at the end of the day, theory should reflect reality and not be disconnected from practice.
4. Analysing and finding	Concepts provide an analytical tool, helping us think through issues, support in-depth analysis and generate findings relevant to policy and practice.

4.1 Assessing and evaluating

Concepts can be used to help develop tools to assess and evaluate different real world phenomena such as policies or projects. This involves drawing on key ideas embedded in one or more concepts to develop a broader system of assessment or deeper evaluation criteria. This can help to clearly demonstrate value to funders or beneficiaries and allow for comparison to learn about strengths and weaknesses. The RURALIZATION project used the guiding concepts to shape the project’s Assessment Framework (Deliverable 3.1). This provides a way to assess practices as ‘promising’ to assist selection of case studies.

Assessing promising practices using the guiding concepts

To identify ‘promising’ practices as potential case studies, RURALIZATION used the project’s guiding concepts to derive a set of principles to shape our assessment. This helped to ensure our assessment of ‘promising’ used a consistent method by all project partners. It also helped to ensure our assessment was aligned with the overall project aims, which fed into the selection of the RURALIZATION guiding concepts. Overall, six broad principles for the assessment were identified. For example the principles of ‘rooted’ and ‘interconnected’ drew on the concept of rural regeneration. The principle of innovation emerged directly from our core concept of rural innovation. The principles were also broken down into different dimensions. This helped to pinpoint their more specific, tangible nature and identify them in practice. A suggested list of indicators was also developed, again to help identify the principles in practice. The **principles are fully described** and a **template for assessment** can be **found** in RURALIZATION **Deliverable 3.1 (Assessment Framework)**.

Concepts can also be used to inform more in-depth evaluation. This can be particularly useful to clearly demonstrate and develop an evidence base to show the benefits of practices or policy instruments where their impact is difficult to quantify and measure. Evaluation can help to show how practices or policy instruments have different impacts in different contexts and places. The potential of using resilience to assess the success of agroecological practices is discussed in the example below.

Assessing the agroecological transition using resilience

The **potential of agroecology** to contribute to achieving more sustainable food and agriculture systems is gaining greater interest and acknowledgment, as well as being evidenced in research. Tiftonnell (2020)⁶ argues it is **important to find ways to assess examples of the transition to agroecology in practice**, such as exploring what defines the ideal model of an agroecological farm and how far along are farms in their transition. Tiftonnell (2020) proposes to use the concepts of resilience and adaptability to assess agroecology in specific contexts to understand and evaluate the extent of its impact. It is also acknowledged that any assessment framework must be straightforward to use so it is easily operational. Based on the concepts of resilience and adaptability, ten indicators are proposed: (i) Self-regulation; (ii) Connectivity; (iii) Functional diversity and redundancy; (iv) Response diversity; (v) Space and time heterogeneity; (vi) Building of natural capital; (vii) Social self-organization; (viii) Reflective learning and human capital; (ix) Autonomy and local interdependency; (x) Capitalising local knowledge. The success of the transition to agroecology can be measured in terms of how transitions meet these criteria. The importance of impacts in most of these areas simultaneously is also a key part of the assessment method proposed.

4.2 Framing and defining

The RURALIZATION project will identify and explore novel, innovative practices that facilitate access to land. But what distinguishes a novel innovative practice from an existing innovative practice? Preliminary insights on how to potentially frame the idea of novel, innovative practice can be drawn from aspects of the conceptual guidelines.

Using guiding concepts to explore the idea of novel, innovative practice

Innovation is about problem solving and rural innovation addresses rural issues. Innovative practices provide an important tool to realise rural innovation. **RURALIZATION is ambitious** however and wants **to find ways towards a new rural frontier. Novel, innovative practices potentially provide even greater promise. But in more detail, what does this potentially mean?**

- Innovation can result in solving more every-day rural problems, but it can also be **more widely transformational** changing how things are normally done. Novel innovations then may present transformational ideas relative to how land is normally accessed (e.g. collective versus individual tenure).
- Being novel may also relate to **the issues the practice addresses**. Novel solutions to major, priority access to land problems could also have transformative impacts.
- Taking this a step further, novel innovation may be considered **potentially disruptive**, also having wider impacts on the status quo (e.g. if collective tenure became the norm).
- The notion of place-based rural regeneration emphasises the importance of solutions that are not transplanted from one place to another, that can be adapted and recognise local context. Drawing insights from this, **novel may also be seen as relative to place and may not mean something brand new**. The transfer and adaptation of a practice to a new context where it provides a solution could also be part of its novelty.

⁶ Tiftonnell, P. 2020. Assessing resilience and adaptability in agroecological transitions. *Agricultural Systems*, Short Communication, 184, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agsy.2020.102862>

Rural regeneration is a guiding concept of the RURALIZATION project. The notion of rural decline is also central to rural regeneration. The core of rural regeneration involves responding to and addressing rural decline issues. However the notion of rural decline in itself is not simple and it is also important to explore its key defining dynamics.

Using the guiding concepts to define key dynamics of rural decline

Rural decline is a **downward trend** with negative impacts for economic and social sustainability in a rural context. However some **wider defining dynamics** are also important to identify:

- Rural decline is not a simple downward trend. It is also an **unstable trend** that can lessen in the short term, but does not mean it is solved.
- Decline **may not be a persistent trend, it may go up and down**. In some rural areas for example second home owners and tourists can lessen population decline in the short term.
- Rural decline has **multiple dimensions that often interconnect**, such as rural population decline, wider social decline issues (e.g. declining social capital, service access, inequality), economic decline (job losses), as well as environmental and cultural dimensions.

4.3 Open a new dialogue

Using aspects of one concept to talk to another can create dialogue and this interface can open up new perspectives and ideas. In the section above on ‘framing and defining’ we looked at how decline might be defined. This can also be taken a step further by using concepts to open a new dialogue to understand the dynamics of decline more deeply.

Using the guiding concepts to understand the process of rural decline more deeply

Regeneration responds to decline. But rural decline in itself is a complex process – so how can it be better understood? The guiding concepts present ideas to borrow that could help to explore the circumstances of decline more deeply. For example:

- **A wide range of forces are said to impact resilience, also they may be past and present, local and non-local. Is this also a useful way to look at forces impacting decline?** Decline can be caused by changes that occur slowly, that are hard to measure and observe clearly in reality (e.g. biodiversity loss), or it may be more concentrated in time and observable (e.g. major job losses). What happens in other places (urban areas, other countries) may impact rural economic decline. Decline may be impacted by drivers from a number of different scales (e.g. local, regional, national, international, global trends).
- **Becoming more resilient can be impacted by lock-in – is this also potentially an issue when trying to overcome rural decline?** Certain issues may stifle the capacity to alleviate decline. In relation to resilience, issues such as governance, lack of innovation and diversification are discussed.
- **Important as part of resilience thinking is not just bouncing back, but bouncing forward and not just returning to how things were before.** In relation to rural decline, this thinking appears important to effective alleviation of decline. This would suggest it is **important not just to look at how to reverse decline, but also to generate wider positive rural change**.
- **Spiralling of decline issues adds to further decline.** For example high levels of youth unemployment over time can lead to problems developing skills and future employability, leading to further disadvantage and inequality. The community capitals approach suggests **with the right resources in the right order a more positive spiralling up process can be created**. Territorial capital also suggests there is an innovative core of capital that particularly needs development which crosses traditional lines, blending the tangible and intangible (e.g. networks made up of human, social and cultural capital or place branding that combines

cultural and built capital).

- **Capital frameworks emphasise the interconnections between different forms of capital. This potentially offers insight for looking at how to address decline.** There may not be linear, cause and effect relationships impacting rural decline issues. For example, young women can leave rural areas for opportunities (e.g. education and employment). However, this trend may also have social (e.g. expand social networks) and cultural (e.g. traditional cultural norms) drivers.

There can also be an important dialogue between theory and practice. Practice can help inform better theorisation of concepts so they reflect reality better. This has relevance for more than academic analysis, but also for policy. Using practice to inform concepts and theory can shape policy-relevant concepts such as generational renewal, rural decline and regeneration. This can feed into how they are framed and defined, as well as how realising them is explored and the creation of new knowledge that can support them in reality. Using the concept of resilience, we tease out this idea further below.

Resilience in theory and practice

Resilience is a widely used term, but also a **debated concept**. Traditionally it has been associated with reacting to change and shocks, rather than proactively driving change. However more recent thinking suggests it can also be a **more proactive process** where deliberate human action steers and drives change in a more ongoing way, rather than just reacting to specific shocks or wider change. Skerratt (2013)⁷ uses the example of community land ownership to explore this question, finding that the **resilience lens must be adjusted to take account of how communities can be active drivers of change**. It is argued that the processes and outcomes created are also an important part of better and more fully understanding resilience. It also emerges that this more proactive resilience building has **important benefits for rural communities. They are the drivers of economic development in their community, rather than this just being driven from the outside. This also results in development that is better suited locally to specific circumstances and opportunities**. Community ownership of assets also gives more local control and means development is less stifled by project lifespans and funding timeframes. **This expanded perspective on resilience and analysis of practice can therefore help to bring to light important subtleties in how resilient rural regeneration may be best directed.**

4.4 Analysing and finding

Concepts provide analytical tools we can apply to explore and better understand rural regeneration issues. This is an important discovery process where we can find new knowledge of relevance to policy and practice. Specific concepts can have particular relevance to some questions. For example, what impacts the likelihood of new entrant farmers to become entrepreneurial? Capital provides an analytical tool that is explored below.

⁷ Skerratt, S. 2013. Enhancing the analysis of rural community resilience: Evidence from community land ownership, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 31, p.36-46.

New entrants, opportunities and entrepreneurship: The importance of capital as part of the ruralisation process?

Farm-based entrepreneurship is a pathway that can generate economic opportunities to support a more viable farm livelihood for new entrants to farming. But **what impacts the likelihood of new entrant farmers to become entrepreneurial, so they can identify business opportunities and realise them?**

Pindado et al. (2018)⁸ explore this question in relation to new entrants specifically examining the **role of human and social capital as drivers:**

- In relation to human capital, new entrants that had higher education were more likely to engage in entrepreneurship.
- Another important aspect of human capital is self-belief and confidence in entrepreneurial ability, as well as new knowledge exposure.
- Social capital is also important to potentially identifying entrepreneurship opportunities, where networks and social relationships beyond personal connections are important, such as with other rural entrepreneurs and farmers.

It is argued **for more entrepreneurial new entrants, agricultural policy should:**

- Promote education programmes that effectively build entrepreneurial capacities and skills. In addition the importance of developing the professional social networks of new entrants is highlighted.
- Extension services are flagged as an important space for improving network development and knowledge sharing.

They also raise **unanswered questions**, such as:

- The impact of different types of social capital (e.g. strong bonds within specific communities or weaker ties linking different social groups) on new entrant entrepreneurship and what factors impact entrepreneurial skills becoming entrepreneurial behaviour.

Rural innovation is one of the RURALIZATION guiding concepts. But the conceptual guidelines also raised a question relating to better understand the role of specific types of innovation (e.g. social, environmental, technological) in rural regeneration. To illustrate this further, we briefly explore the example of social innovation.

Social innovation: At the core of rural innovation supporting ruralisation?

Social innovation is important in rural contexts. It can provide novel responses to rural decline challenges, impacting for example social and economic decline. It responds to social challenges and can result in improved rural well-being, addressing social issues and needs, while also leading to wider impacts such as creating jobs. It seems like a win-win approach to support ruralisation. So should this type of innovation be prioritised in rural contexts? Drawing insight from how 'regeneration' is defined suggests that we should look for approaches that have integrated benefits, such as impacting social and economic decline. But it also tells us that context matters and there are no one size fits all approaches. **Rural research cautions us about idealising social innovation and seeing it as a catch-all solution. However this also does not mean it cannot play an important role in ruralisation, we just need to better understand its place, alongside other forms of innovation (e.g. technological, environmental) and in particular contexts.** More broadly, we also need to critique rural innovation and not take the benefits of any form of innovation for granted. It can be a double-edged sword. For example, if technological innovation creates improved productivity it can also lead to job losses.

⁸ Pindado, E., Sánchez, M., Verstegen, J. and Lans, T. 2018. Searching for the entrepreneurs among new entrants in European Agriculture: the role of human and social capital. *Land Use Policy*, 77, p.19-30.