

EDORA:
European Development Opportunities
for Rural Areas

“Stylised Fallacies” or “Turning Diversity into Strength”

Trans-in-Form Kick off Conference
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Narratives as Policy Drivers

1. What are and “Meta Narratives” and “Stylised Fallacies”?
2. What is their role in the policy design process?
3. Some reflections from EDORA...
4. Meta-Narratives and the “policy legacy” of TiF.

What is going on in Rural Europe...? Narratives help us make sense of the rural change.

- **The range of socio-economic changes affecting rural areas is bewildering**
 - e.g:
 - demographic ageing,
 - urbanisation/counter-urbanisation, intra-EU labour migration,
 - farm structural change,
 - “consumption countryside” – economic opportunities based on public goods,
 - economic restructuring, (Farming & Manufacturing & Services)
 - impacts of globalisation and IT on local businesses,
 - “rationalisation”/privatisation of services,
 - Increasing complexity of relationships between rural and urban areas,
 - etc. etc....
- **Rural areas do not seem to be becoming more uniform, but *more diverse*.**
i.e. They are following many different individual “development paths”.
- **A narrative approach helps us to make sense of all this in a (systematic) way which is useful as a basis for more appropriate rural policy.**

This is the “prequel” to The OECD’s New Rural Paradigm!

It can also be a basis for practical approaches to “Turning Diversity into Strength” (EU Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion).

What are Meta-Narratives (M-N)?

- *...a meta-narrative is a **story about a story**, encompassing and explaining other 'little stories'...* (Wikipedia)
- The “**little stories**” are the changes taking place in specific socio-economic characteristics (e.g. demography, economic structure, access to services, environmental change etc. etc...)
- The Meta-Narratives (M-N) pull the “little stories” together into a coherent, synthetic, “big themes” of rural change.
- **(M-N):**
 - Help us to understand the way in which different facets of rural change interact.
 - Help us to systematically describe change in individual rural areas.
 - Should take account of both current changes and look ahead to likely future developments.
- **But they are not:**
 - Discrete regional development paths.
 - Associated in a one-to-one way with different kinds of rural areas.
 - Not a passing academic fashion!

What are “Stylised Fallacies”?

(Hodge 2004)

“General debate about rural policy often seems to adopt **persistent presumptions** about conditions in ‘rural England’. While perhaps not always stated explicitly, debate is often conducted with **implicit generalisations**....

....we argue that many generalisations about the state of affairs in ‘rural’ areas are **partial** or **inaccurate, misleading** and **unhelpful**. We characterise these **unjustified generalisations** as **‘stylised fallacies’**. “

...or “**Inaccurate Stereotypes**”?

Some Contestable Statements Relating to Rural Development... Stylised Fallacies?

- The rural economy can be separated from that of adjacent urban areas.
- Therefore its policy requirements are distinctive, and it is appropriate to have a discrete rural policy environment and structures...
- Rural areas are generally recording negative socio-economic trends and “vicious spirals” of decline...
- Rural policy should therefore focus on addressing this decline, or even “creating a level playing field”...
- The rural economy is driven by land-based industries – therefore rural policy should be predominantly sectoral...
- Geographical remoteness is associated with decline and disadvantage.
- Etc. etc...

Still true in TiF regions? Or in some of them?

For much of Rural Europe these are increasingly seen as “Stylised Fallacies”. The tide is turning...

Some Thoughts on the Importance of M-N in the Policy Design Process...

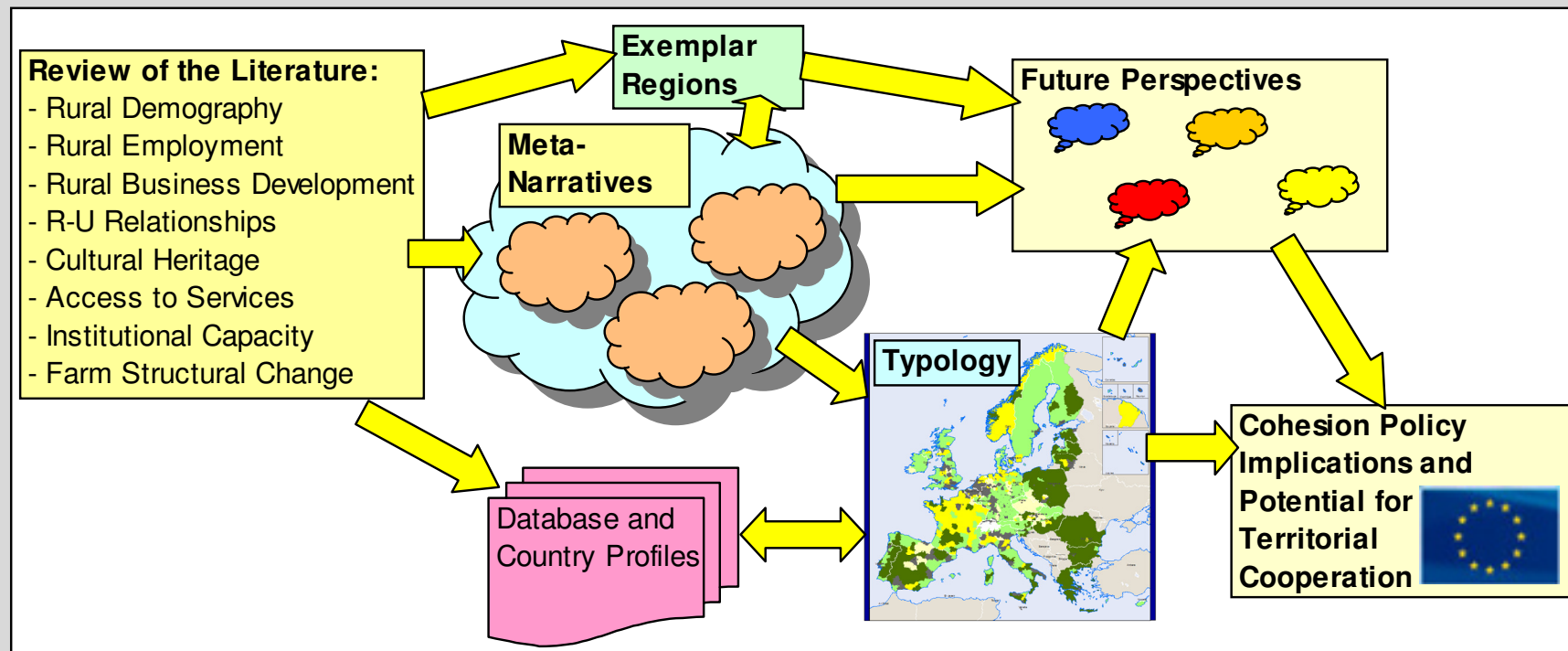
- To what extent are current rural/regional policies (EU, national or local level) based upon **valid** M-N, (rather than “stylised fallacies”)?
- If there are many M-N, combined in different ways in different regions, **flexible/tailored** rural policies are needed.
- These new approaches should be based on a clear and systematic understanding of the **range of assets** (fixed capital, human capital, social capital, environmental capital, institutional capital...), which rural areas have.
- Need to consider:
 - Re-thinking **policy objectives**.
 - Appropriate **diagnostic tools**. (e.g. Some form of local-regional territorial capital audit).
 - Appropriate **forms of intervention** – neo-endogenous.

Some reflections on EDORA....

The EDORA Project Objectives (According to the Specification)

- ...to describe the main processes of change which are resulting in the increasing differentiation of rural areas.
- ...to identify development opportunities and constraints for different kinds of rural areas...
- ...to consider how such knowledge can be translated into guiding principles to support the development of appropriate cohesion policy.

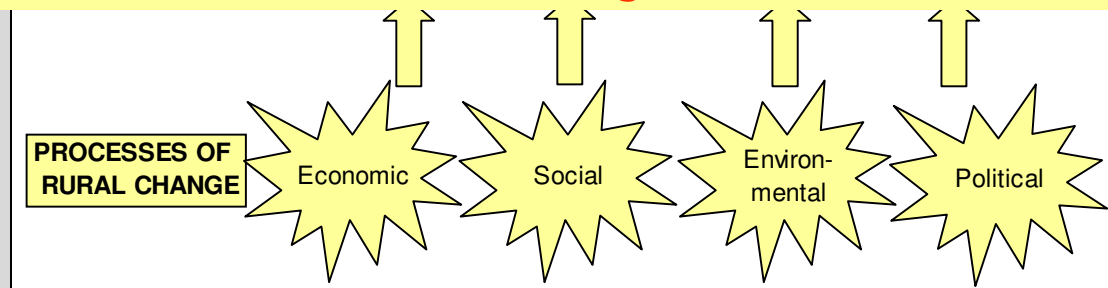
EDORA Project Structure



The Conceptual Phase: Understanding Rural Change

Economic processes:

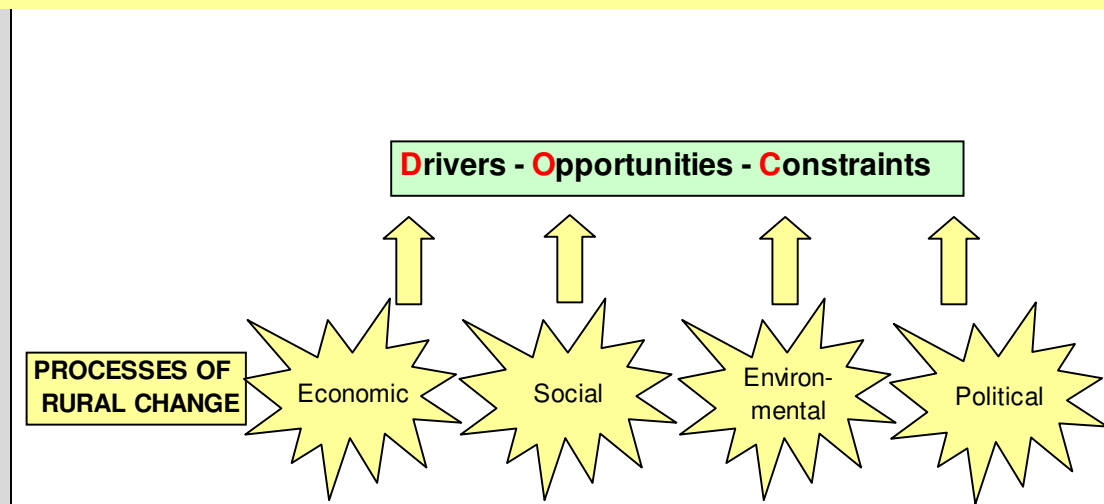
- Declining relative importance of agriculture,
- Refocusing of agriculture (multifunctionality, ecological modernisation, post-productivism etc).
- Opportunities presented by the "Consumption Countryside".
- Semi-subsistence micro-farms as a social buffer (esp. in NMS12)
- Labour market segmentation – human capital issues.
- Rise of diversified New Rural Economy (NRE), especially in accessible areas.
- Importance of extra-local networks in growth and innovation.



The Conceptual Phase: Understanding Rural Change

Social Processes:

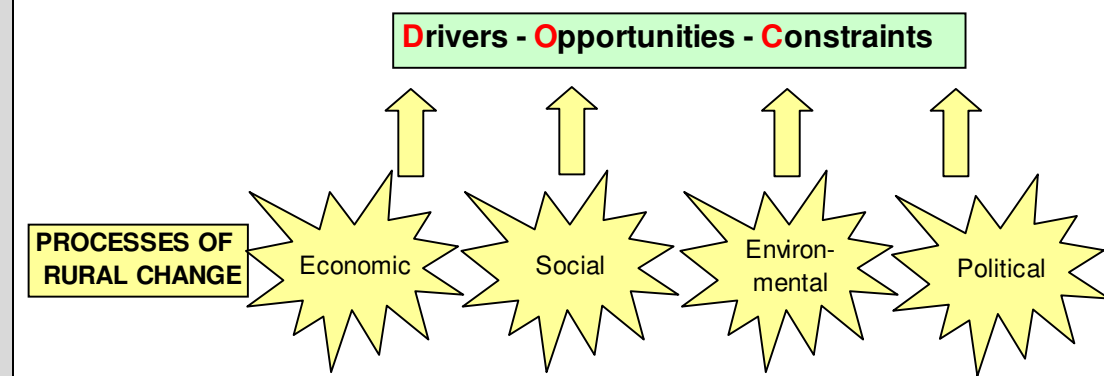
- R-U Migration, counter-urbanisation, ageing.
- “New Rurality” in accessible rural areas, prosperous, urban characteristics...
- Service provision issues in remote and sparsely populated areas.
- Contrasting “live-work” models of NRE and NMS.
- Decline of traditional institutions and rise of individualism.



The Conceptual Phase: Understanding Rural Change

Environmental Processes:

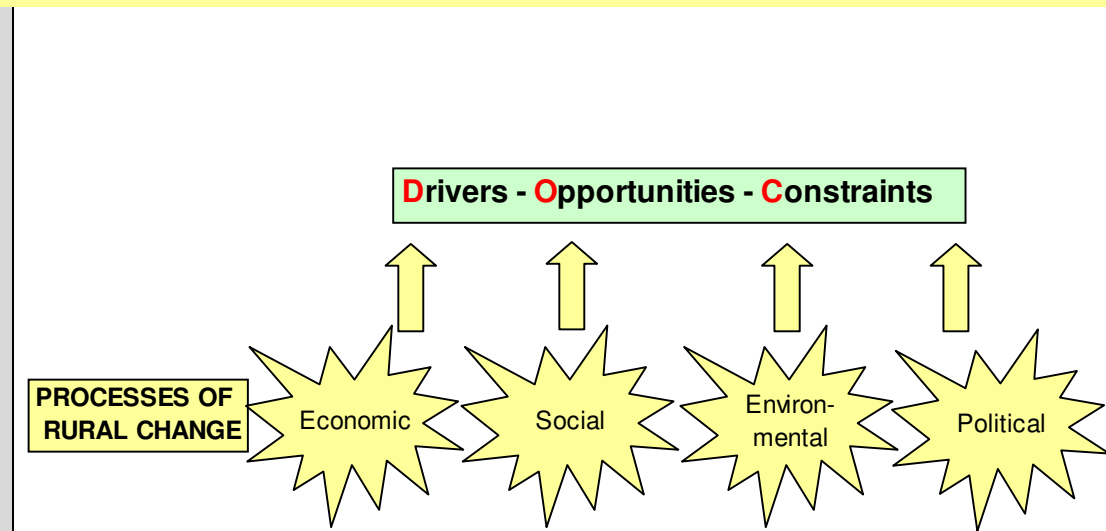
- Maintenance and commodification of the rural environment...
- Effects of climate change.
- Effects of anticipation of C. C. and mitigation efforts



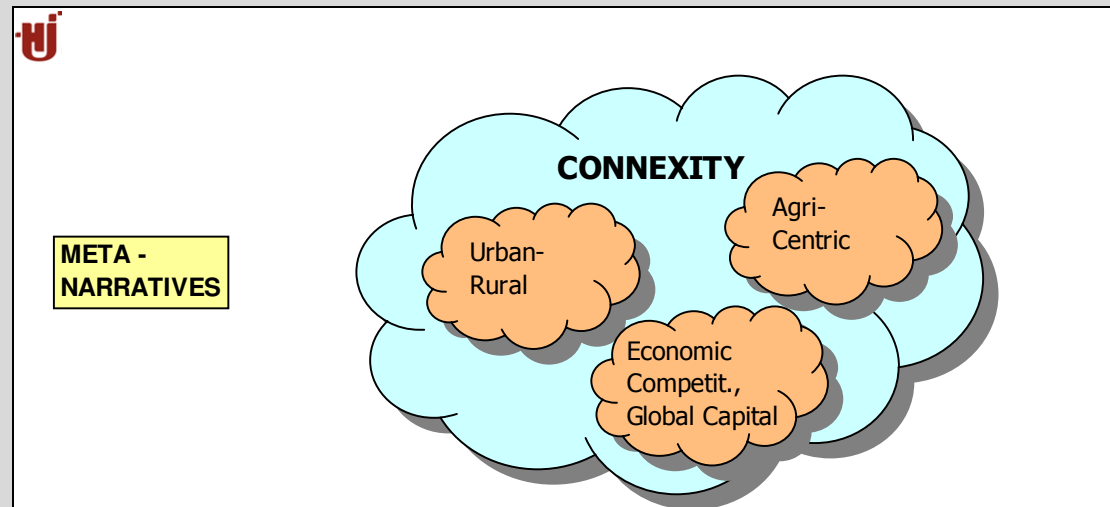
The Conceptual Phase: Understanding Rural Change

Political Processes:

- From Government to Governance, and the "Project State".
- Changing welfare state systems, privatisation, fiscal pressures...
- Innovation strategies, emphasis on potential and competitiveness, (rather than compensation or support for weakness).
- Localism v central control (neo-endogenous) and managerial approaches.



The Conceptual Phase: Understanding Rural Change



Overarching theme of increasing **"CONNEXITY"** (Mulgan) – "network society", "relational space", "multi-level governance".

1. Agri-centric narrative (post-productivism, structural polarisation, multifunctionality etc).
2. Urban-rural (core-periphery) narrative.
3. Economic Structural Change and Globalisation...

The Empirical Phase: The EDORA Typology

Why is a typology helpful?

- Although it is very important to recognise the diversity and individuality of rural regions, its very hard to make recommendations on EU Cohesion Policy without making some broad generalisations.
- It makes it easier to challenge some “Stylised Fallacies” about rural Europe as background to the rural/regional policy debate.
- To provide a means of “benchmarking” for regional and national policymakers.

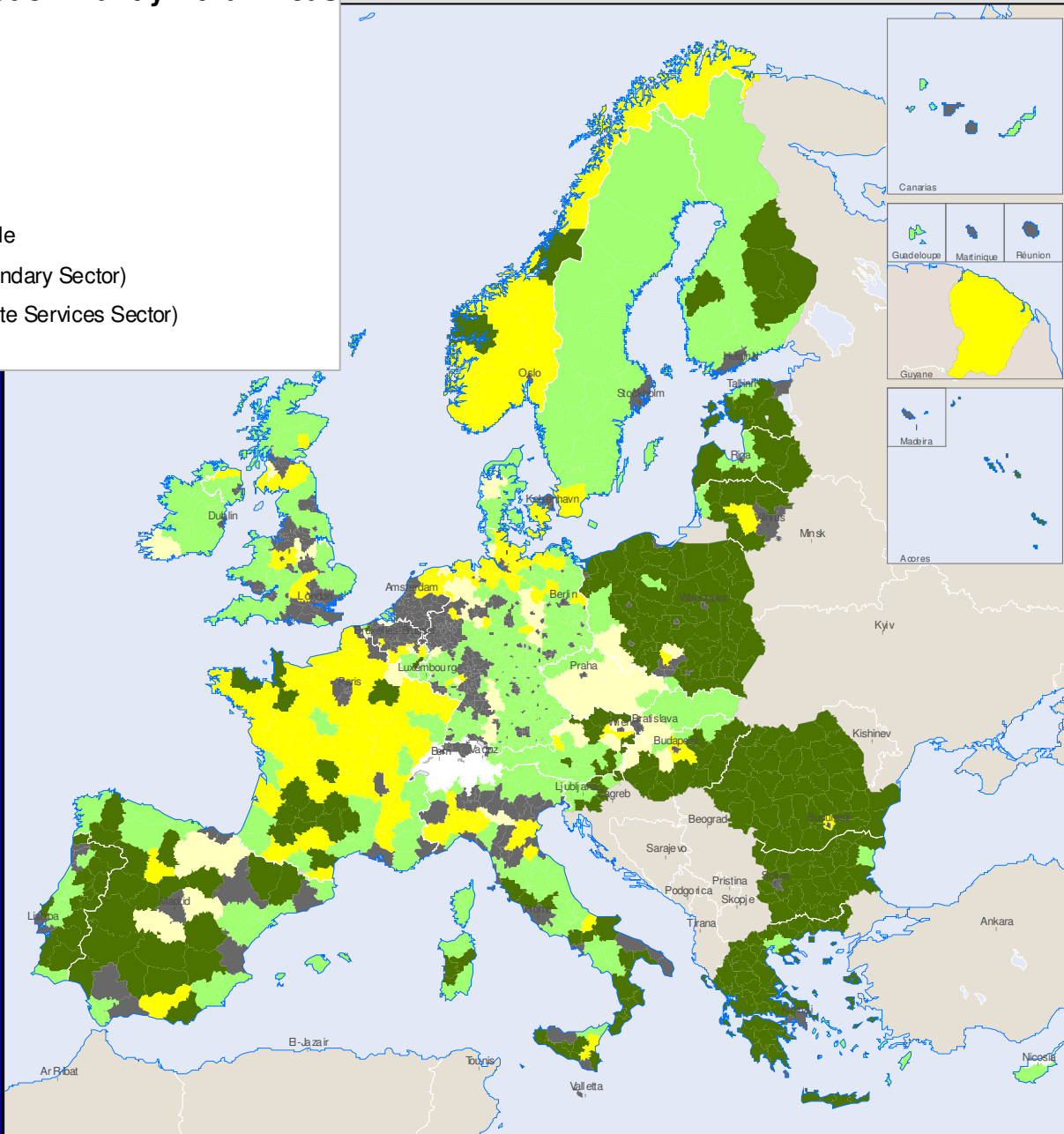
NB There is a link from the Meta-Narratives to the Types – but this does not mean that only one M-N is present in each region – rather that one M-N is conspicuous...

Typology of Intermediate and Predominantly Rural Areas
EDORA Project September 2009

**NUTS 3
 TYPES**

-  PU Regions
-  Agrarian
-  Consumption Countryside
-  Diversified (Strong Secondary Sector)
-  Diversified (Strong Private Services Sector)
-  No data available

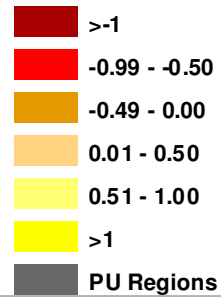
Note: NO and CH results preliminary (missing data)



Accumulation - Depletion Scores

NUTS 3

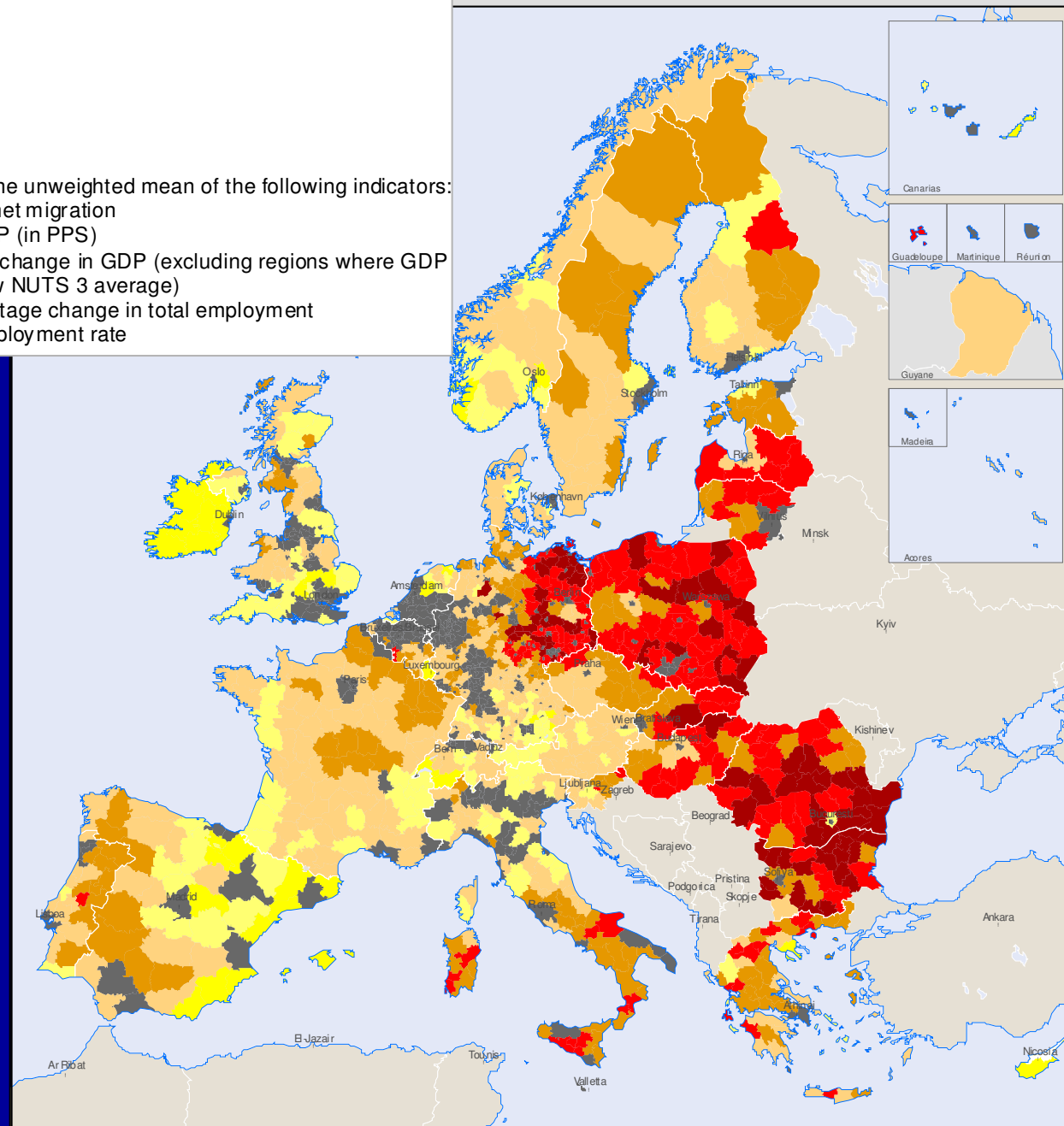
Unweighted Mean of Z Scores



Note:

This map shows the unweighted mean of the following indicators:

- (i) Annual rate of net migration
- (ii) Per Capita GDP (in PPS)
- (iii) Annual rate of change in GDP (excluding regions where GDP per capita is below NUTS 3 average)
- (iv) Annual percentage change in total employment
- (v) Average unemployment rate





The Empirical Phase: Some Generalisations which emerge from the EDORA Typology

- Agrarian regions are mainly concentrated in an arc stretching around the eastern and southern edges of the EU27.
- The rest of the European space is a patchwork of Consumption Countryside, Diversified (Secondary) and Diversified (Private Services).
- Agrarian regions and Diversified (Secondary) regions tend to be relatively low performers, (Depleting).
- The Consumption Countryside regions and the Diversified (Private Services) group are both high performers, and likely to continue to “accumulate” in the future.

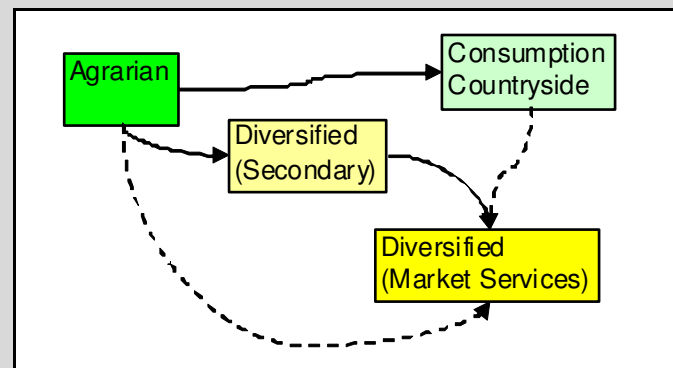
The Empirical Phase:

M-Ns should include Future Perspectives....

M-Ns should not only reflect past or present rural change, but likely future challenges also...

Difficult! –But various approaches are possible, including:

- Quantitative forecasting where appropriate (e.g. demography, economic structural change...)
- Exploring the way in which such forecasts imply that regions would move between Structural Types...



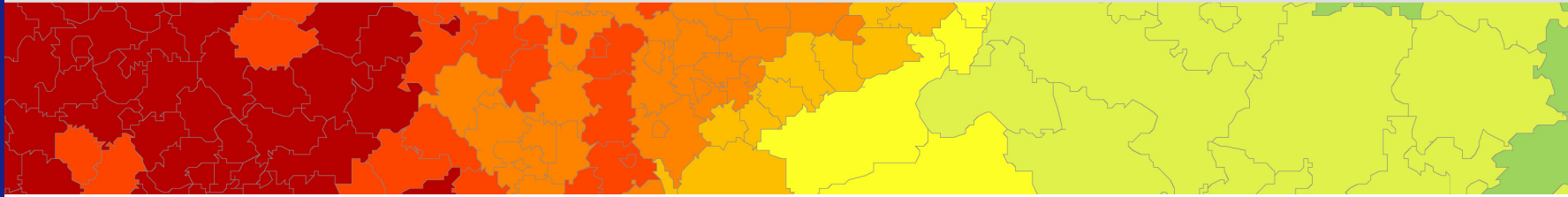
- Qualitative, “story telling” approaches based on expert knowledge – alternative views of the future, given various (endogenous and exogenous) drivers or change.

Trans-in-Form...Things to Consider I

- Its important to be aware of, and “test” the M-N which lie behind both the policy context of TiF, and the TiF activities themselves.
- Are there “stylised fallacies” which need to be corrected in the “hearts and minds” of policy makers/politicians in the TiF regions?
- What particular M-N will drive your project activities?
- Will they vary between regions/countries?
- Are they different (more up-to-date, realistic) than the ones behind existing policies?
- Is there a clear common understanding of them within the project team?

Trans-in-Form...Things to Consider II

- What analysis tools are appropriate to help you articulate these narratives and your vision(s) for the future?
- Can TiF have an impact upon the M-N which guide policy for rural areas and small towns beyond the life of the project (legacy effect)?
- If so, how can you strengthen this? (Publicity material? Dissemination activities? Or...?)
- **Bon Voyage!**



...and they all lived happily ever after...!

Thank you for your attention.

