



RURAL GOVERNANCE AND INNOVATION

Refining how rural regions reach decisions

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The context....

- continued devolving roles and responsibilities , decreasing public funds
- rural decision makers are often disadvantaged *e.g. smaller staff, budgets, capacity*
- Urban and suburban counterparts are often more victorious in competing for scarce competitively awarded funds.



The challenge...

- Rural regions must better
 - aggregate and articulate a common vision;
 - pool resources, talents and capacities from all sectors; and
 - develop new institutional partnerships and ways of working.



Innovative rural governance model

1. Match the supply of services to the characteristics and assets of the region;
2. Balance equity and efficiency targets;
3. Bridge the rural-urban divide;
4. Encourage a “logic” of investment over a logic of “spending”;
5. Build effective and inclusive governance frameworks, which:
 - Recognise the changing role for the top level of government
 - Facilitate knowledge-pooling and simplify decision making processes
 - Engage local communities and integrate local expectations
 - Consider mechanisms for “rural proofing”
6. Support non conventional approaches to service delivery.



- Distinguish between two types of services:
 - Essential public goods (funded by central govt) *e.g.* roads, water, security, education, health, etc.
 - Competitiveness public goods – the unique public goods that unlock the regions distinct competitive advantage (could be funded by a mix of public and private) *e.g.* business support and availability of broadband and financial services, etc.
- Link the “**right services**” to the “**right regions**”
ensure *links with other regional strategies*



Québec, Canada

- In Québec, CA, the rather limited rural policy budget proves that decentralised territorial policies can be effective with small budgets.
- **Development is stimulated through three key elements:**
 - Place-based partnership agreements (“rural pacts”) between the provincial government and MRCs that support local community capacity building;
 - rural development agents who are among the central actors for promoting the emergence of rural initiatives and integrating policy with other measures; and
 - innovation programmes such as the rural laboratories whose value is to think “out of the box”.



Changing Government roles

- The role of government is shifting towards creating an enabling environment and to facilitating rather than steering local development.
- In *Québec*, the government tries to strengthen a sense of belonging and connections among people and groups as a basis for socioeconomic development efforts.



bridge the rural – urban divide

- Encouraging cross border collaboration
- **United States – Local Government and declining resources:** “White House “Place-Based” Policy” call for rural development programs be coordinated with broader regional initiatives. Programs in neighboring zones and within larger regions should complement each other. Federal programs should reflect better the Nation’s economic and social diversity, both in rural and metropolitan areas. To the extent possible, programs should allow for communities to identify distinct needs and address them in appropriate, strategic ways.



flexibility and new approaches

- Many of the structural barriers to delivering services in rural areas are reduced through the development of different approaches. For example:
 - **Combining multiple functions:** *e.g.* Citizen Service Office in a library; and public service points with combined municipal and state services (One-Stop Shops).
 - **Mobile services:** *e.g.* adult training (mobile computer class and training unit); and multiple service bus experiments (health, culture, shopping or gym for the elderly).
 - **Information technologies:** *e.g.* free internet access points at local shops, libraries, cafes or public offices; PC-Video conferencing for health2008services; peer training or laying experts in local computer classes, internet kiosks, cafes and at home.
 - **Different allocation of responsibilities** *e.g.* transferring power and responsibility from the municipality to the regional government level to improve the provision of services and reduce municipal spending



flexibility and new approaches

- ***Sometimes it is the government and sometimes it is not: flexibility in “who” provides the services.*** The inclusion and active participation of a wide range of stakeholders is proving indispensable for improving rural service delivery. In particular, NGOs, private businesses, financial institutions, and citizens.
- e.g. Public-private partnerships, are being increasingly applied for the provision of public services in rural Spain. This scheme has the advantage of mobilising new resources for both infrastructure and services in rural areas. La Caixa, one of **Spain’s** leading savings bank, set a social objective to “develop the rural territory with the aim of maintaining the rural population as well as providing inhabitants with a standard of living similar to that of urban areas.



flexibility and new approaches

- ***DC10plus*** – is a partnership of local government, private and third sector organisations that seeks to address digital and social exclusion through ICT
 - Very Complex network
 - Funded to specifically “***to think outside the box***” by govt
 - Visible in urban and rural areas projects tailored to suit
 - Linked with different levels of govt and the private sector
- ***Hampshire County Council*** – new rural strategy
 - Traditionally “urban” focus county introduced an elected member of the Council to monitor and support the rural strategy
 - Breaking down “silos” in local govt around services (36,000 employees, £1.7b service budget)
 - Reduced consultation focus to 250 key stakeholders; only targets services HCC directly controls or can influence
 - ***Somerset County*** – delivering affordable housing
 - 5 district councils delivering housing services together.
 - Partnership with private sector on housing