

- *Spatial differentiation – Network society – Demographic change – Regional development*

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**Demographic Change beyond the Urban-Rural Divide:  
Re-Framing Spatial Differentiation in the Context of  
Migration Flows and Social Networks**

*Demographischer Wandel jenseits des Stadt-Land-Gegensatzes:  
Räumliche Differenzierung im Kontext von  
Wanderungsbewegungen und sozialen Netzwerken*

With 4 Figures

Spatial differentiation can be analysed as both state of the art and as process. One important distinction in the analysis of spatial differentiation has been that between the urban and the rural. But the interrelationship of the urban-rural divide with other dimensions of spatial differentiation, such as demographic change, is increasingly unclear. Modern assumptions that urban areas are growth engines and rural areas lag behind have been replaced by the acknowledgement of much more heterogeneous development patterns. Neither extent nor direction of demographic change can be directly linked to a region's classification as rural or urban today. The paper focuses on the question of how research on human flows and networks may contribute to such a framework and aims to draw attention to the coexistence of different kinds of flows and networks which interfere with each other, resulting in regionally specific spatial patterns and development paths. The paper suggests an extension of the analysis of cores and peripheries beyond the focus on key economic sectors, such as financial services, and taking into account individual and social networks of private households, migrants and commuters. Instead of understanding regional demographic change as the result of rational migratory decisions, due to regional push and pull factors, we aim to conceptualise it as related to the existence of social – multi-local, sometimes even transnational – networks that contextualise migration strategies of individuals or households. Consequently, we argue that such an analysis may help in obtaining a more detailed picture of demographic change as a mosaic of interrelated processes and raise awareness towards drivers of spatial differentiation beyond the urban-rural divide that may deserve more attention in the future.

## 1. Introduction

Spatial differentiation, in its broadest sense understood as the development of diverse socio-spatial and socio-temporal patterns, can be analysed as both state of the art and as process. The term conveys a set of relations, some of which are continuously being re-negotiated, while others remain relatively stable. One important distinction in the analysis of spatial differentiation has been that between the urban and the rural. Even today, the urban-rural divide continues to be reproduced and represented in maps and spatial development strategies, although it has been questioned and challenged in scholarly work ever since the 1950s. Suburbanisation, urban sprawl and new 'in-between' settlement structures have blurred the interfaces between urban-rural classifications. Consequently, the interrelationship of the urban-rural divide with other dimensions of spatial differentiation is increasingly unclear (see e.g. *Andersson et al. 2009*, *Schmidt-Thomé 2005*). Modern assumptions that urban areas are growth engines and rural areas tend to lag behind have been replaced by the acknowledgement of much more heterogeneous development patterns. Neither regional growth nor shrinkage – for example of the economy, jobs, or population – is necessarily linked to a region's classification as rural or urban. In Germany, for example, demographic change is affecting many rural regions in a way that they are shrinking and ageing significantly (see e.g. *Beetz et al. 2008*), while there are others facing economic and/or population growth and rising birth rates (see e.g. *BMVBS 2008*). The same diverse demographic development can be observed in urban environments (*ILS 2003*). Thus, the distinction between the urban and the rural does not seem to provide valuable insights for understanding how this kind of spatial differentiation comes about.

This paper suggests that in order to approach the complex patterns and paths of spatial differentiation in terms of demographic change today, a

conceptual framework is needed that goes beyond the urban-rural divide and allows the taking into account of heterogeneous and sometimes contradictory processes. We agree with *Andersson et al.* that "new classification systems must be explanatory and, instead of producing mere geographical and demographical descriptions, must address the processes behind the observed changes from economic as well as cultural and political points of view" (*Andersson et al. 2009: 7*). In this paper, we focus on the contribution of research on human flows and networks to the kind of explanatory framework that can be expected to capture both the procedural and the multidimensional character of spatial differentiation. In contrast to analyses of world and global cities (e.g. *Sassen 1994*, *Taylor 2004*), which define a sort of global spatial (urban) hierarchy, our paper wants to draw attention to the coexistence of different kinds of flows and networks which interfere with each other and result in regionally specific spatial patterns and development paths. While the urban-rural binary still adequately describes a certain set of material, economic and socio-spatial conditions, we suggest that analysing processes of becoming core (centralisation) or periphery (peripherisation) in networks highlights the procedural dimension of regional development dynamics and, therefore, may be able to make sense of sometimes contradictory spatial development patterns across urban and rural regions. In this context, core and periphery are not defined in geographical, but rather in functional terms. We propose to extend the analysis beyond the focus on key economic sectors, such as financial services, and to take into account individual and social networks of private households, migrants and commuters. Instead of understanding regional demographic change as the result of rational migratory decisions, due to regional push and pull factors, we aim to conceptualise it as related to the existence of social – multi-local, sometimes even transnational – networks that contextualise migration strategies

of individuals or households. Consequently, we argue that such an analysis may help in obtaining a more detailed picture of demographic change as a mosaic of interrelated processes and raise awareness towards drivers of spatial differentiation beyond the urban-rural divide that may deserve more attention in the future.

In the following, we conceptualise the urban and the rural as relational spatial settings (Section 2) that influence but do not determine regional development dynamics. Rather, we argue, spatial differentiation can be seen as a result of regional network integration (Section 3). Regional development in urban, rural and 'in-between' areas can then be understood through the process of becoming core or periphery in functional networks. In Section 4, we show that areas defined as rural are, as well, part of transregional or transnational/global networks. Our main concern is to take a look at people's flows within social networks, which we consider also to be important drivers of development. For this purpose, in Section 5 we describe three recent branches of research which may support our argument: amenity migration and second homes, multi-local households, and transnational social spaces. Then we discuss the potential effects of the observed phenomena on regional demographic change (Section 6), before concluding the paper by considering two of many potential questions for further research.

## 2. The Urban and the Rural as Relational Spatial Settings

The urban-rural divide has been a significant classification for spatial differentiation in large parts of central Europe ever since medieval times (see e.g. *Brake* 1980), based upon material and environmental conditions that favoured a division of labour between towns (trade and manufacturing) and their hinterlands (agriculture). This division of labour was reflected in

legal, economic and social differences that increased significantly with the emergence of the modern industrial city in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The modern urban environment offered new opportunities for immigrants from the countryside, but also required specific socio-cultural coping strategies that have been described by *Georg Simmel* and others (*Simmel* 1983). Although the legal basis for urban-rural differentiation disappeared over time, economic and social differences prevailed. In Germany, these were addressed after World War II in regional planning strategies, considering cities as engines of development and their hinterlands as benefiting from trickle-down effects of urban affluence and innovation – taking for granted that cities were sites of modernity and progress. During the 1960s and 1970s, cases of urban economic decline and rural prosperity disturbed these well-established assumptions. Modernisation of society left 'urban' and 'rural' as ideal-type classifications, but the empirical distinction became to some extent ambiguous. As early as the 1960s, scholars argued that the urban-rural divide was an oversimplification: incapable of adequately reflecting, much less explaining, lifestyle differences and the spectrum of existing living conditions. *Pahl* proposed that "a whole series of meshes of different textures superimposed on each other" were observable, which were "creating a much more complex pattern" (*Pahl* 1966: 321). He therefore suggested speaking of an urban-rural continuum to avoid the strong binary opposition between urban and rural as well as to conceptualise in-between forms and shapes (*Pahl* 1966).

The division of labour between cities and countryside still exists to some extent and is reflected, for example, in variations of sectorised employment shares. The ubiquitous availability of mass information and communication media, transportation infrastructures and private cars have allowed residents from the countryside to benefit from broader job supplies on urban labour markets, while urbanites have benefitted

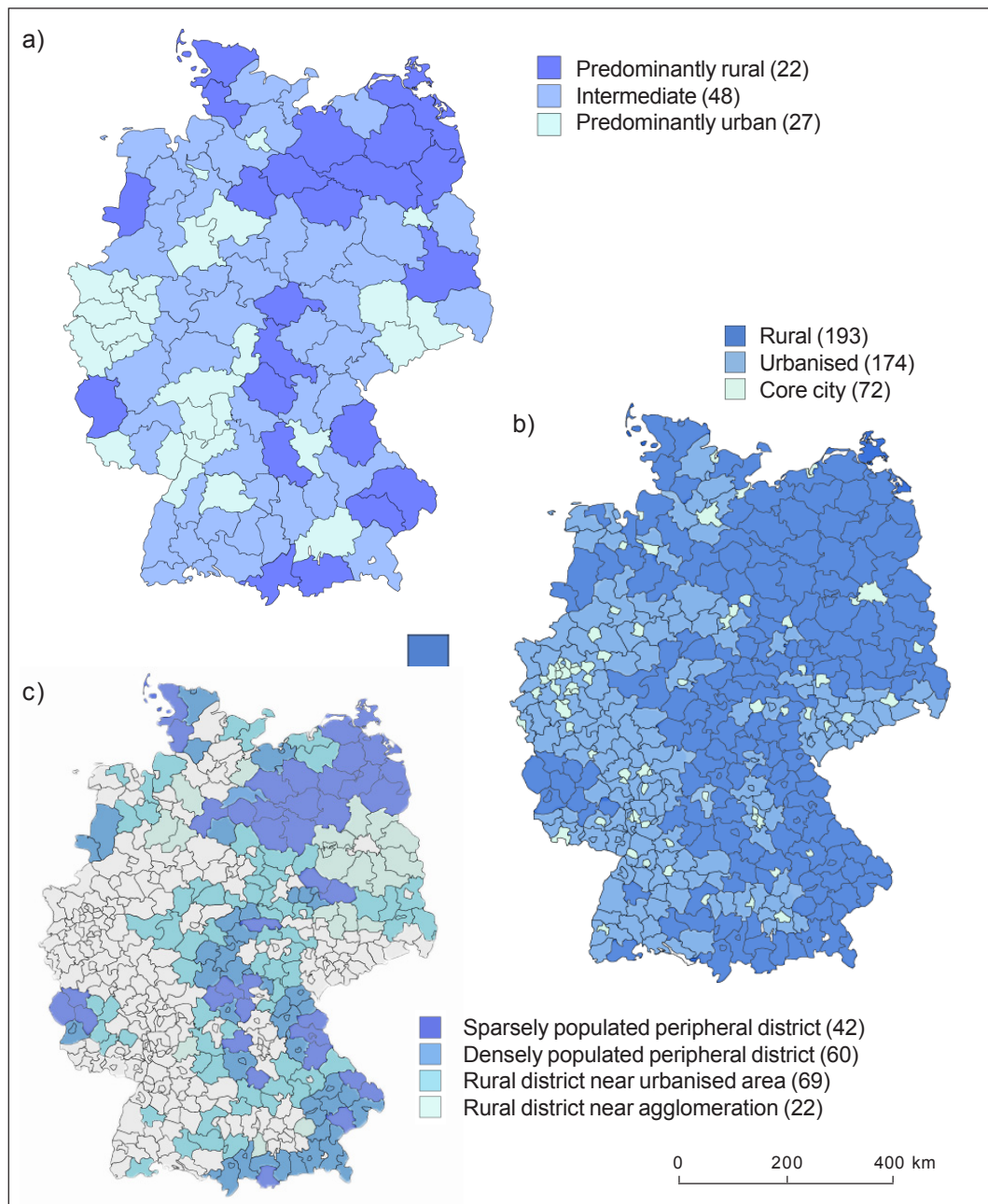


Fig. 1: Maps of rural Germany. Source: OECD 2007: 31. – a: OECD Territorial Level 3. Source: OECD 2007a; b: Classification by district. Source: BBR 2005; c: Types of rural districts. Source: BBR 2005 *Ländliche Räume in Deutschland in verschiedenen kartographischen Darstellungen. Quelle: OECD 2007: 31. – a: OECD, Räumliche Ebene 3; OECD 2007a; b: Klassifizierung nach Landkreisen; BBR 2005; c: Typen ländlicher Räume (nach Landkreisen), BBR 2005*

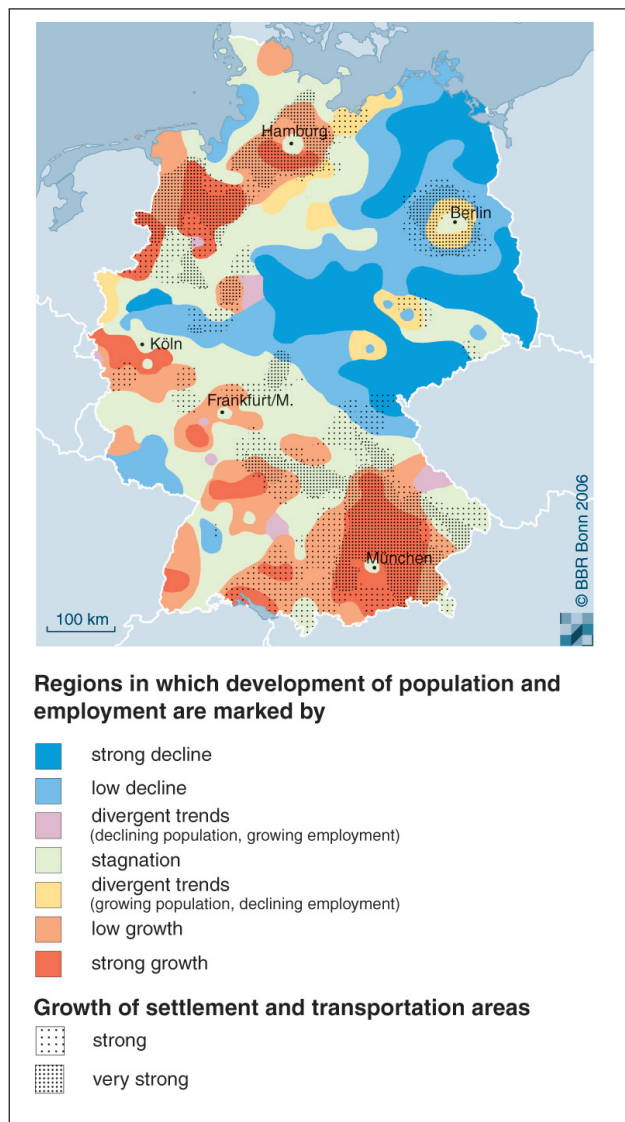
from greater capacity to consume nature and the idea(l) of country life in remote rural areas. The growth of outskirts, suburbanisation and urban sprawl have been and continue to be driven by real estate markets, housing policies, new economic and job regimes, and, perhaps foremost, by the bourgeois *leitbild* (guiding principle) of green family living in close proximity to urban amenities (for Germany after reunification see contributions in Brake et al. 2001, Aring 1999; for the U.S. Fishman 1996; for European outskirts Dubois-Taine 2004). As a consequence, there are more and more areas that cannot be satisfactorily classified as urban or rural. New concepts have been developed that are supposed to capture these settlement types theoretically. For example, the concept of the *Zwischenstadt* (sprawl) describes a settlement type which “is neither city nor countryside, but possesses characteristics of both” (Sieverts 1999: 14). *Peri-urban areas* are defined as “discontinuously built development containing settlements of less than 20,000 inhabitants and with an average density of at least 40 persons per km<sup>2</sup>”; they have been found to be growing four times faster than urban areas (Nilsson and Sick Nielsen 2011: 2; also see McGregor 2006, www.plurel.net). It is expected that these settlement patterns will continue to increase their share in European countries in the future. Thus, neither social, community nor lifestyle indicators adequately reflect a distinction between urban and rural regions today (Dirksmeier 2009, Dünckmann 2009, Green 2004, Hugo et al. 2001, Scott et al. 2007). “Urbanity as the reigning mode of life has become placeless”, as Walter Siebel, a renowned German urban sociologist, has put it (Siebel 2000, own translation).

The project *Urban-rural relations in Europe* of the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) suggested using ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ as relational characteristics for spatial settings that are socially constructed (Schmidt-Thomé 2005; see also Woods 2005: 3ff.). From this perspective, a certain territory would then

be more or less rural or more or less urban, depending on the selected parameters and classifications. The variety of qualitative indicators discussed today in this context includes land-use classification, degree of urban influence and human intervention, access to transportation and communication networks, infrastructure, economic basis, housing types, the meaning of ‘nature’, landscapes, distance to the next city or airport and so on. While a clear distinction between urban and rural areas may empirically be possible if these indicators are used independently, it becomes more difficult to clearly distinguish urban from rural spaces as soon as a combination of them is employed.

Even if indicators are fixed, the question whether a spatial unit is considered to be predominantly urban or rural also depends on scale, as illustrated by the following maps (Fig. 1) comparing the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) classifications with those of the German Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (BBR) (OECD 2007). They show that, in OECD terms, 29 % of the surface area of Germany is significantly rural (BBR: 59 %) and 12 % of the German population lives in these areas (BBR: 27 %), while 9 % of the German gross domestic product (BBR: 21 %) is produced here. Consequently, outcomes are dependent on the selected scale. Scales “are strategic, contingent and politically powerful concretisations of fundamentally fluid social processes” (McCann 2004: 2319). It is therefore important to consider scales themselves as outcomes of socio-spatial dynamics (Swyngedouw 1997, 2004), instead of as objective structural elements. Dependent on the respective analytical perspective or the pursued policy goal to which the urban-rural divide is supposed to be instrumental, urban and rural can then be understood as relative settings.

Neil Brenner considers the “city/countryside opposition” to be one of the “deep structures” of



*Fig. 2* Trends of spatial development in Germany (2005). Source: Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung und Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung 2006 / *Trends der räumlichen Entwicklung in Deutschland (2005)*. Quelle: Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung und Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung 2006

uneven spatial development: “Global inequality and the urban/rural divide remain persistent, durable features of capitalism, but their precise geographical contours have been reshaped during the past three centuries” (Brenner 2009: 30). According to him, spatial differentiation is a process at the interface of “deep structures” inscribed

in space and spatial strategies emerging to transform them. Brenner further argues that the analysis of different spatial development patterns, in the sense of a “scaled political economy”, must link place-, territory-, scale-, and network-sensitive approaches to socio-spatial theory if it aims to understand both persistence and change (Brenner

2009: 49). Consequently, analyses based exclusively on deep structures such as the urban-rural binary underestimate the complexity of spatial differentiation and may be misleading especially when it comes to spatial policies.

One case in point for the need to go beyond deep structures is demographic transformation. The map in *Figure 2* from the German spatial development report of 2005 shows that trends of population development and employment seem to be – at the particular selected scale – more or less independent of a region's classification as urban or rural. Cities that used to be seen as engines of progress and growth are today rather facing decline (*Gestring et al. 2005, ILS NRW 2003, Schildt 2008*), while some countryside areas may have growth figures outrunning agglomerations by far (*BMVBS 2008*). Both growth and shrinkage affect all types of regions, both in terms of population and employment, and they can be observed in close spatial and temporal proximity to each other.

We agree with *Brenner* that the network perspective is not sufficient in itself to fully explain spatial differentiation and that a combination of frameworks promises the most comprehensive analysis. Nonetheless, in the following we choose to single out the network perspective. On the one hand, it draws attention to the interdependence of regional development and supra-regional dynamics and, on the other hand, it points towards a phenomenon that has in our view been thus far underestimated in its impact on regional development: the increase in human flows, not in the sense of a one-directional move or change of home, which is traditionally called migration, but as a continuous mobility pattern of commuting transnational or multi-local households, families or communities. Taking people's flows into consideration means a challenge to established understandings of home, identity and belonging. Obviously, migration has long played an important part in the discourse on demographic change, as it is a key factor of re-

gional (population) growth or shrinkage. But we argue that more attention needs to be paid to the social spaces that emerge between people – inter-regional and international migrants and their kin – who move back and forth and who have great influence on both home and host locales. Conceptualising these spaces as spaces of people's flows may shed light on demographic change as a kind of social transformation which differs significantly from region to region, no matter whether it is presumed to be in an urban or rural setting.

### 3. Spatial Differentiation Through Network Integration: The (Re-)Production of Cores and Peripheries

Ever since the 1970s and 1980s approaches to spatial differentiation have undertaken 'post-modern', 'post-industrial' or 'post-fordist' re-interpretations of established and newly emerging socio-spatial patterns (*Amin 1994, Harvey 1990, Lipietz 1997*), while at the same time taking into account the 'rescaling' of spatial and temporal relations (*Brenner 1997, 2009, Swyngedouw 1997*). Many authors have focused on the analysis of an increasingly polarised and hierarchical spatial system of core and peripheral regions, with 'global cities' (*Sassen 1994*) or 'world cities' (*Friedmann 1986, Taylor 2004*) at the top. In all these cases, the economic factor has been "likely to be decisive for all attempts at explanation" (*Friedmann 1986: 69*). Spatial patterns beyond urban hierarchies and beyond inter- and intra-urban polarisation, though, have been neglected to some extent (*Brown et al. 2007: 1*). Rural areas or the urban 'hinterland' have not been assigned any important role and are either subsumed, as parts of metropolitan agglomerations, or ignored altogether. The literature has exhibited – and continues to exhibit – a strong urban bias, and the "exclusion of the 'rural' as part of an undifferentiated 'other' beyond the global city [. . . has] reinforced the subconscious urbanisation of the globalisation experience" (*Woods 2007: 491*).

*Manuel Castells* argues in his seminal work 'The rise of the network society' (2000) that spatial differentiation is to a great extent based upon the integration of cities into transnational networks. As open systems, networks of industries, services, political institutions and social movements "selectively switch on and off individuals, groups, regions, and even countries, according to their relevance in fulfilling the goals processed in the network, in a relentless flow of strategic decisions" (*Castells* 2000: 3). According to his reading, networks as forms of social organisation today permeate the entire social structure (*Castells* 2000: 500). They are located, reproduced and modified in time and space and continuously manage to integrate new nodes, but also create new peripheries by leaving out those cities and regions that have no relevant functions within a respective network (also see *Brenner* 2009: 47f.). *Castells* agrees with *Sassen's* 'global cities' theory that a hierarchy between metropolitan and urban centres exists which is modified or reinforced through parallel processes of concentration and decentralisation (2000: 410). But these hierarchies are "by no means assured or stable" (2000: 414). Rather, the global city is perceived not as a place, but as a process, which, on the one hand, strengthens global networks of centres of production and consumption of advanced services, while, on the other hand, disintegrating established links to the hinterlands (2000: 417). The space of flows – of capital, management, information, symbols and interaction – "links up electronically separate locations in an interactive network that connects activities and people in distinct geographical contexts" (*Castells* 2004: 85). While it is, according to *Castells*, not the only spatial logic of society, it has become "the dominant spatial logic because it is the spatial logic of the dominant interests/functions in our society" (2000: 445). By continuously redefining hubs, nodes and peripheries, the space of flows makes spatial patterns ephemeral and spatial differentiation a continuous process rather than a perpetual

state of the art. *Castells* does not rule out the possibility of rural areas becoming hubs or nodes when he states that "the most unlikely sites become central nodes because of historical specificity that ends up centering a given network on a particular locality" (*Castells* 2000: 444). Other authors agree that there are no more territories untouched by global flows (*Robinson* 2005, *Smith* 1998: 485, *van der Wusten* 2007: 190f.).

As a consequence, argues *Castells*, the "prosperity of the region and of its dwellers will greatly depend on their ability to compete and cooperate in the global networks of generation/appropriation of knowledge, wealth and power" (2004: 90). The orientation towards global spaces of flows, quite frequently to the disadvantage of local and regional facilities and services, has been criticised: "Successful regional development therefore involved the encouragement of a variety of flows (of commodities, money and people) into regions, processes of transformation and value-adding within those regions, and then subsequent sale and the flows of the resultant commodities out of regions, creating flows between regions scattered around the world with little or no regard for the ecological costs or, often, for the ethical consequences for so doing" (*Hudson* 2007: 828f.). *Sally Marston* et al. propose "abandon[ing] hierarchical scale in its entirety" (2005: 420) in favour of a "flat ontology concerned with both the world's very real potentialities and actualities" (2005: 426). This perspective argues for a multi-scalar and non-hierarchical analysis of social, economic, cultural or political relations in and across space, not only in cities and metropolitan areas, but also in small towns and rural regions. These may not be integrated into global networks of advanced services, but rather into agricultural commodity and value chains, into flows of tourists and migrants, into political networks and the like. A multi-scalar analysis of the interrelations between all these different networks may contribute towards obtaining a better understanding of spatial differentiation.



#### 4. Spaces of Flows in Rural Regions

Although in theory spaces of flows that affect rural spaces may still be undervalued, flows of capital, people, information, symbols and interaction are as effective in “the material organisation of time-sharing social practices” (Castells 2000: 442f.) in rural areas as they are in cities. The countryside is indeed a space where material and human flows can be observed in manifold ways. These flows may be used as indicators of whether a region or a place is functionally core or periphery in specific (i.e. in relation to one economic, cultural or other sector) or in general (i.e. for a bundle of sectors, political functions etc.) terms. An important engine of rural integration into such flows has been new information and communication technologies that allow enterprises of any size and sector to participate in supra-local networks and flows (OECD 2001). The “global countryside”, integrated into spaces of flows, is “a rural realm constituted by multiple, shifting, tangled and dynamic networks, connecting rural to rural and rural to urban, but with greater intensities of globalisation processes and of global interconnections in some rural localities than in others, and thus with a differential distribution of power, opportunity and wealth across rural space” (Woods 2007: 491).

Many scholars have shown that the primary sector is also part not only of local, regional and national, but also of international value chains (Dannenbergh and Kulke 2005, McMichael 1995, 1994, Woods 2005: 32ff.). The global market in agricultural export goods has increased significantly in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, due for example to deregulation measures. One specific case in point is the agro-food and -energy sector. The increasing integration of the primary sector into global economic networks and material flows goes hand in hand with increasing corporate concen-

tration. Regional economies can benefit or suffer from concentration or decentralisation tendencies. On the one hand, they may become increasingly dependent upon entrepreneurial decisions taken elsewhere; meanwhile, on the other hand, those where company headquarters are located may benefit from high degrees of innovation (BMVBS 2008: 29). Consequently, intra-regional networks determine how regions perform in supra-regional networks, but also how dependent a region is on economic developments at higher territorial levels (BMVBS 2008: 40, Mose 1993). Clusters have been found to be an important prerequisite for economic stability or even growth in rural regions (BMVBS 2008: 62ff.). For this reason, endogenous regional development has received much attention ever since the 1990s. The *Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale* (LEADER) programmes at the European level reflect this turn in regional governance towards cooperation and clustering (Beetz et al. 2008, Dargan and Shucksmith 2008). But rural economies have undergone other significant changes over the last decade, too, such as with the ‘post-productivist’ turn from an exclusive basis in agriculture and forestry towards the service sector (Plieninger and Bens 2007, Woods 2005: 62ff.), including rural tourism.

We argue here that it is not only economic production chains and networks that determine regional shrinkage or growth, but also people’s networks and flows. New information and communication technologies have not only allowed enterprises to expand (or to be exploited), but they have also enabled people to span the range of their daily, weekly or monthly activities across two or more locations. In combination with improved communication and transportation links, commuting distances continue to increase, and community and family ties as well as social spaces span across ever larger territories. These social spaces may impact regional development in several ways.

## 5. People's Flows as Engines for Development

There are at least three, if not more, threads of research today that have inspired our argument towards shifting attention to people's networks and flows and their effects on regional development. First, studies on amenity migration show that not only jobs motivate people to move (back) into rural areas, but also attractive landscapes and natural amenities. Amenity migration may have important consequences on regional infrastructure, services and significance as transportation and communication hubs. The same can be true for second homes as soon as they reach a relevant number in a region. Some authors speak of 'rural gentrification' when the social distance increases between old and new neighbours to the disadvantage of the established. Second, research on multi-local households illustrates how an increasing number of mobile households in Europe not only manage to organise their livelihoods in economic and social terms, but may also shape their concrete spatial environments in two or more remote places. Third, studies on transnational social spaces highlight that international migration today can no longer be described as a one-way process and that transnational ties influence socio-spatial development in both home and host countries. Even if rural homes are left because their owners seek work elsewhere, they may be left only temporarily, while still being considered 'homes' embedded in a local community. These three threads of research overlap in terms of their object – to describe and/or explain people's flows and their effects on (not only rural) regions – but differ in terms of perspective.

### 5.1 Amenity migration and second-home ownership

The concept of amenity migration was developed during the 1990s. It means that "migrants move for reasons of lifestyle rather than job,

choosing places with natural amenities, climate, authentic rural culture, recreation and affordable housing" (Borsdorf 2009: 225). In many cases, amenity migration does not appear to be a one-way process, but rather is linked to a broad variety of highly mobile lifestyles of households well-equipped with financial and social resources (McIntyre 2009: 230f.). New information and communication technologies, as well as extended transportation networks, allow households to locate their home(s) not only in accordance with job locations, but also with personal ties or natural amenities (Aring 1999: 40f., Kunzmann 2001, OECD 2001, Dubois-Taine 2004, O'Reilly 2003). Especially after retirement, distinctions between migration and tourism become blurred in the description of such mobile lifestyles.

Research highlights the effects of amenity migration on rural host regions (see e.g. the contributions in DIE ERDE 140, Issue 3, concerning rural mountain areas). In the context of north-eastern Germany, there is some evidence that people move into the countryside in order to find a relatively undisturbed 'natural' environment, where they can pursue their own ideals of living, working and community life. The 'empty country' offers ideal preconditions for such undertakings, as it is not only amenities that attract these pioneers, but also the specific type of 'void' that can be found in institutional and social terms. *Stephan Beetz* shows how urbanites searching for self-fulfilment and pursuing an idyllic view of the countryside build upon regional structures to implement innovative forms of production, trade and consumption, but also of community and housing. Without any models or examples, actors are at greater liberty than in other settings to re-define living conditions and social relations.

The infrastructure provided for migrants and tourists changes the image of urban and rural host regions, integrating the respective regions not only into economic, but also into social and cultural

networks. This is true for regional and national, but also for international, mobility and migration; today, “transnationalism is a reality for many [workers]” (*Hubbard* 2007: 193, see 5.3 below). The extension of information, communication and transportation networks has enabled many households to benefit from natural resources at greater distances on a regular basis. On the one hand, this may mean an incentive for development not only in demographic, but also in economic terms when the new arrivals spend money or create demand for new products and services. On the other hand, when social polarisation between long-established residents and newcomers becomes too high, conflicts are inevitable.

Figueiró dos Vinhos in central Portugal is a case where second-home ownership has significantly influenced the re-organisation of a shrinking municipality which had been facing an ageing population and significant out-migration for some time. Many smaller settled areas were fully abandoned. Today, the municipality is characterised by a high number of seasonally used or vacant houses and by secondary residences. Many houses are owned by emigrants who return to the village, either for good or occasionally, after older relatives have died and left them their property. The high number of secondary residences has been interpreted as a stabilising factor for the village. The municipality is more and more focusing on the exploitation of its cultural and natural resources: aiming to create growth and employment in agriculture and forestry, sectors which may in return contribute to the preservation of the regional heritage (*Schmidt-Thomé* 2005).

Amenity migration and second-home ownership in areas with natural amenities, either used only during the summer or the whole year round on weekends, are two sides of the same coin. In Sweden, second homes in rural areas became popular for working- and middle-class households as early as the 1930s. Natural amenities play a key role for the choice of location (*Löhr*

1989: 103ff.). While second homes are fairly common and not only tolerated, but supported in an affluent country like Sweden, the case of Wales shows how second homes and tourism have been considered two of “the most significant threats to the survival of Welsh communities, their culture, traditions and language” (*Gallent et al.* 2003: 271). Apparently, this has to do with a correlation of regional deprivation and second home ‘hotspots’. As *Gallent et al.* explain, “[s]econd homes compound the existing problems facing many communities in rural Wales; they often add insult to injury and it is no surprise that they are so vigorously vilified” (2003: 283). Conflicts seem to arise when social distance surmounts a certain level of mutual tolerance and becomes visible in terms of economic or political power. How in-migration is perceived depends on the socio-economic and political context. An effect of this type of migration, as the case of Wales and others show, can be increasing social polarisation, gentrification, competing interests and opposed images of country life in urban and rural regions (*Green* 2004, *Scott et al.* 2007: 12ff., *Woods* 2005: 87f.). In northeastern Germany, there have been many cases of conflict between urbanites who have moved to the countryside or are second-home owners and permanent residents who are in need of local jobs and local infrastructure. While permanent residents welcome large agrarian companies that come to invest in their regions, others do not appreciate the visual disturbance of regional cultural landscapes. Another case are regions in the Netherlands where parts of the rural long-term population have become a kind of service class – working as nannies, cleaners, gardeners and the like – for urbanites that move there (*Schmidt-Thomé* 2005). Although social differences have always existed in rural areas (e.g. between landlords and servants), a new dimension now seems to be developing through demographic transformation processes in terms of social polarisation.

### 5.2 Multi-local households

Both urban and rural areas are suppliers and employers of migrant labour (*Woods* 2007: 492). Although labour migration is not at all a new phenomenon (*Münz* 1997), significantly improved and extended transportation and communication networks based on new technologies have made multi-local households a feasible option for the organisation of work-life relations and a strategy for families to improve their incomes. While multi-locality has been an established research topic for disciplines dealing with cultures and societies outside Europe, especially in the global South, it is a fairly new one in European social science (*Rolshoven* and *Winkler* 2009: 99). *Mimi Sheller* and *John Urry* elaborated the ‘new mobilities paradigm’ (*Sheller* and *Urry* 2006), stressing the multiplicity of mobilities today as well as the rising importance of ‘places of in-between-ness’ or ‘interspace’, such as airports (*Sheller* and *Urry* 2006: 219). But there are still many open questions with regard to the ‘archipelagos’ that are reference points for multi-local households (*Duchêne-Lacroix* 2009).

Multi-locality enables households to combine potentials of places at greater distances from each other by, for example, living in one place and working in another (*Weichhart* 2009). Thereby, they establish social networks and social spaces that are no longer place-bound, but transregional or even transnational (see 5.3). Quite frequently, multi-locality is oriented towards larger agglomerations for work, while family or community ties can be located both in urban and in rural areas. In their project on multi-local households in Saxonia, Germany, *Christine Weiske* et al. found that all settlement types were affected (*Weiske* et al. 2009: 70). Research is only starting to uncover what multi-locality implies for the kinds of place that are no longer permanent home to household, but rather part-time domicile to one or all of its members. Consequences

can be expected to be to some extent similar to those described in Sections 5.1 and 5.3. On the other hand, these households deserve specific attention, as multi-locality is expressed in different forms leading to different types of multi-local households (*Weiske* et al. 2009), and this phenomenon not only concerns adults, but also children of divorced couples in patchwork situations, whose number is increasing constantly (*Schier* 2009). As society attributes important functions to private care relations, the ways these can be performed in multi-local contexts have to be negotiated within the household. Gender relations are being affected significantly in this context (*Rolshoven* and *Winkler* 2009, *Schier* 2009). The number of concerned households raising questions about housing, transportation, care infrastructures and services is increasing. Information and support services may become crucial factors in the allocation patterns of these mobile and remote household structures, and therefore they may become of great interest for the affected regions as well (*Schier* 2009: 65). As multi-local households aim to optimise the benefits they can derive from several places, the integration of these places into communication and transportation networks is likely to become more important in the future.

### 5.3 Transnational social spaces

*Michael Peter Smith*, one of the protagonists of the debate on ‘transnational urbanism’, suggested re-conceptualising the urban as “a social space that is a crossroads or meeting ground for the interplay of diverse localising practices of national, transnational, and even global-scale actors, as these wider networks of meaning, power, and social practice come into contact with more locally configured networks, practices and identities” (*Smith* 2001: 127). He aims to dissolve the global-local binary, which is part of many global cities theories, and to shift the focus on ‘transnationalism from below’, that is, on

people's networks, flows and actions that actually perform transnationalism (Smith 2001, Smith and Guarnizo 1998). We propose that this holds true not only for cities, but increasingly also for the countryside. Several case studies, especially in the US-Mexico context, show that transnational migrants have strong bonds to their home communities, support their kin, and also engage in community development there, such as renovating public buildings or public spaces, contributing to local education, or supporting the – often temporary – migration of other community members (Smith and Bakker 2008). So-called transnational social spaces have emerged not only in rural Mexico, but also in U.S. 'ethnoburbs', where immigrants build their own communities outside of cities, in villages which had previously been predominantly inhabited by American citizens, but are now being increasingly shaped by transnational commuters and migrants. Commuting back and forth not only to work, but also to visit friends and relatives, or to go on vacation, makes differentiation between migration and tourism increasingly difficult (McHugh 2000, O'Reilly 2003, Sherlock 2001, Williams and Hall 2000, 2002).

Today, labour migration as well as other types, such as retirement migration, take on a multitude of forms, both within and between nations. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), there are more than 100 million international migrant workers worldwide. The positive potentials for developing countries have been debated by organisations such as the United Nations (UN), the ILO and the OECD (Faist 2008), but the ways that labour mobility and temporary migration potentially contribute to rural development in European countries have not yet received much attention. Transnational types of migration significantly change the demographic and social constellations in places of origin as well as destinations. The impact of migration has been particularly researched in countries of the global South, where rural-urban migration

has led to a "social space of reproduction [that] encompasses – and disrupts – the space of the conventionally 'urban' and 'rural'" (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003: 341). Within Europe, labour migration from Central- and Eastern-European countries is significantly changing established socio-spatial relations. In Romania, for example, many villages are inhabited by old and young generations, while those middle-aged groups fit for employment travel to countries like France, Italy or Germany to work. The money transfers and remittances from these migrants are important sources of income for those left behind. Similar effects have been studied with regard to Polish labour migration. While cross-border migration to Germany used to be popular during the 1980s and 1990s, England and Ireland became important destinations for Poles looking for work abroad after Poland's EU accession in 2004. As Jörg Dürrschmidt has shown for the twin city Guben/Gubin, emigration does not take place once-and-forever; rather, based upon cheap airline tickets, people commute to keep up their social networks or they return after a while to exploit the capital they have acquired elsewhere in their home region. Dürrschmidt argues that such migrants "can rather eloquently mediate between the local community and the translocal networks" (Dürrschmidt 2008: 71). They develop a different perspective on their home towns or regions, bringing back with them 'cosmopolitan' skills and a newly developed creativity. Both commuters and returnees constitute a space of flows in social networks.

## 6. Discussion: Cores and Peripheries in People's Flows

Although further research is needed, the three branches of research described in 5.1-5.3 provide initial insights into potential impacts that new forms and/or new conceptualisations of mobilities may have for regional development in particular and for spatial differentiation in general. Research on

amenity migration, second homes and transnational social spaces shows how people relate to places they have left or they have come to, temporarily or permanently, and thereby potentially influence regional development in both urban and rural areas.

These flows sometimes affect no more than two places – origin and destination – but sometimes they are interconnected in that many people leave one particular place or meet in another they have migrated to. Personal networks facilitate mobility processes of individuals and households, playing an important role in linking two or more places in people's personal lives. The geographical interconnections of these ties can be located in urban or rural areas. They are hubs and nodes in transregional or transnational networks of people, who leave their traces in regional development in that they transfer power, wealth and knowledge between places that may be peripheral in geographical terms, but are core in terms of their communities. The emergence of these networks depends on material transportation and communication infrastructures, on available information and on location-specific features that invite or prevent agglomerations of multi-local households, such as natural amenities.

With regard to the analysis of spatial differentiation, we argue that the network perspective based on people's flows provides a lens pointing to an important driver of spatial development whose impact has not yet been fully captured. We have tried to show preliminary insights into how people's flows affect different regions and how they may result in regionally specific spatial patterns and development paths. In addition to the set of material, economic and socio-spatial conditions linked to the urban-rural binary, we suggest that a functional core-periphery distinction within social networks would highlight the procedural dimension of regional development dynamics and, therefore, may be able to make sense of sometimes contradictory spatial development patterns across urban and rural regions.

## 7. Re-framing Spatial Differentiation: Open Research Questions

This paper has suggested a re-conceptualisation of spatial differentiation as a process that is increasingly shaped by human flows and social spaces emerging between geographically remote places. Attenuating the long-standing research bias towards urban economies in favour of a broader understanding of regional network relations reveals the multiplicity and overlapping of economic relations at the local, regional, national, trans- and international levels. We have presented some empirical evidence that a broader understanding of spatial differentiation can be gained when the focus on the economy is complemented by an additional perspective on social relations. It is likely that a comprehensive analysis of political, cultural and environmental relations will take the argument even further.

Apart from a lack of empirical studies to prove the resilience of such a framework, there are several open questions which need further debate and investigation. Two themes seem especially important at this point:

1. Methodology: While there is expertise in the analysis of regional clusters and economic interrelations, a more nuanced set of tools is necessary for an integrated perspective that a) is able to value relationality as a key issue of spatial differentiation, and b) not only takes into account economic, but also social relations. Studies focusing on transnationalism have shown that ethnography may have something to offer if research is itself conducted transnationally (*McHugh* 2000, *Smith* 2001).
2. Valuation: How can the influence of different kinds of networks on spatial differentiation be estimated, both on their own and in relation to each other? The global cities literature has been very interested in hierarchies. But spatial differentiation has both a horizontal and a vertical di-

mension. Although an unprejudiced evaluation of different networks may be useful for an analysis of spatial dynamics, it is very likely that some networks may be more powerful in the spatial differentiation process than others. How these evaluative and normative perspectives can be shaped will become another crucial aspect for future research to take into consideration.

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*Summary: Demographic Change beyond the Urban-Rural Divide: Re-Framing Spatial Differentiation in the Context of Migration Flows and Social Networks*

The urban-rural divide has been a significant indicator for spatial differentiation in large parts of central Europe ever since medieval times. Post-war planning strategies considered cities as engines of development and their hinterlands as beneficiaries from trickle-down effects of urban affluence and innovation, but cases of urban economic decline and rural prosperity have disturbed these well-established assumptions. Modernisation of society has left ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ as ideal-type classifications, and new concepts such as the Zwischenstadt (sprawl) and *peri-urban areas* have emerged. Demographic trends today cannot be directly linked to either urban or rural settlement types. The paper argues that analyses of human flows and networks can contribute to better understanding of spatially differentiated regional demographic change. According to *Manuel Castells*, spatial differentiation is related to networks of industries, services, political institutions and social movements. By continuously redefining hubs, nodes and peripheries, emerging spaces of flows make spatial patterns ephemeral and spatial differentiation a continuous process rather than a perpetual state of the art. While *Castells* focuses on global spaces of flows, other authors argue for a multi-scalar and non-hierarchical analysis of social, economic, cultural or political relations in and across space, not only in cities and metropolitan areas, but also in small towns and rural regions. This paper focuses not on economic production chains and networks, but rather on human networks and flows. New information and communication technologies have enabled people to span the range of their daily, weekly or monthly activities across two or more locations. The paper presents three threads of research that support the argument for shifting attention to people’s networks and flows and their effects on regional development. 1) Studies on amenity migration show that not only jobs motivate people to move (back) into rural areas, but also attractive landscapes and natural amenities. 2) The second strand of research is on multi-local households. Multi-locality enables households to combine the potentials of places at great distances from each other. Their social networks and spaces are no longer place-bound, but transregional or even transnational. 3) Last, but not least, research on

transnational social spaces focuses on spaces where actors meet and connect local and global practices transnationally. This holds true not only for cities, but also for the countryside. Transnational migrants have strong bonds to their home communities, support their kin, and engage in community development. The network perspective based on people's flows provides a lens pointing to an important driver of spatial development whose impact has not yet been fully captured. Reducing the long-standing research bias towards urban economies in favour of a broader understanding of regional human networks in urban and rural contexts reveals the multiplicity and overlapping of relations at the local, regional, national, trans- and international levels.

*Zusammenfassung: Demographischer Wandel jenseits des Stadt-Land-Gegensatzes: Räumliche Differenzierung im Kontext von Wanderungsbewegungen und sozialen Netzwerken*

Der Stadt-Land-Gegensatz ist in großen Teilen Mitteleuropas seit dem Mittelalter eine zentrale Kategorie räumlicher Differenzierung. In Planungsstrategien der Nachkriegszeit galten Städte als Entwicklungsmotoren, während ihr Hinterland von urbanem Wohlstand und damit verbundenen Innovationen durch Trickle-Down-Effekte profitieren sollte. In den folgenden Jahrzehnten waren jedoch städtische Ökonomien zunehmend von Niedergang betroffen, während ländliche Räume aufblühten. Dies führte zu einem Umdenken. Mit der Modernisierung der Gesellschaft wurden die Indikatoren „urban“ und „ländlich“ zu idealtypischen Klassifizierungen, und neue Konzepte wie die „Zwischenstadt“ und „peri-urbane Räume“ traten auf. Demographische Entwicklungstrends können heute weder mit urbanen noch mit ländlichen Siedlungstypen direkt in Verbindung gebracht werden. Dieser Aufsatz spricht sich dafür aus, dass eine Analyse menschlicher Wanderungsbewegungen und sozialer Netzwerke besser zu verstehen hilft, wie und weshalb demographischer Wandel auf regionaler Ebene differenziert verläuft. Für Manuel Castells steht räumliche Differenzierung in Zusammenhang mit Netzwerken von Industrien, Dienstleistungen, politischen Institutionen und sozialen Bewegungen. Indem Knotenpunkte, Schaltstellen und Peripherien

kontinuierlich neu definiert werden, machen *spaces of flows* räumliche Muster zu Momentaufnahmen; räumliche Differenzierung wird zu einem ständigen Prozess anstatt zu einem beständigen Zustand. Während Castells sich auf die globalen *spaces of flows* konzentriert, setzen sich andere Autorinnen und Autoren für eine vielschichtigeren und nicht hierarchische Analyse sozialer, ökonomischer, kultureller oder politischer Beziehungen im und durch den Raum ein, und zwar nicht nur mit Blick auf Städte und städtische Gebiete, sondern auch auf Kleinstädte und ländliche Regionen. Dieser Aufsatz thematisiert in diesem Sinne nicht ökonomische Produktionsketten und -netzwerke, sondern soziale Netzwerke und Bewegungen. Neue Informations- und Kommunikationstechnologien haben es ermöglicht, dass Menschen ihre täglichen, wöchentlichen oder monatlichen Aktivitäten auf zwei oder mehrere Orte ausweiten können. Dieser Aufsatz diskutiert drei Forschungsansätze, die das Argument unterstützen, dass mehr Aufmerksamkeit auf die sozialen Netzwerke und Bewegungen und ihre Auswirkungen auf die regionale Entwicklung gerichtet werden sollte. 1) Studien zu *amenity migration* (landschafts- oder lebensqualitätbezogener Migration) zeigen, dass Menschen nicht nur aus beruflichen Gründen (zurück) in ländliche Gebiete ziehen, sondern auch aufgrund der dort vorgefundenen attraktiven Natur und Landschaft. 2) Ein weiterer Forschungsstrang sind multilokale Haushalte. Multilokalität ermöglicht es Haushalten, die Potenziale verschiedener Orte in zum Teil großer Distanz zueinander zu nutzen. Ihre sozialen Netzwerke und Räume sind nun nicht mehr ortsgebunden, sondern transregional oder sogar transnational. 3) Zu guter Letzt werden transnationale soziale Räume durch Akteure auf verschiedenen territorialen Ebenen hergestellt. Dies bestätigt sich nicht nur für Städte, sondern auch für ländliche Räume. Transnationale Migranten haben häufig starke Bindungen zu ihrer Heimat, unterstützen ihre Verwandtschaft und engagieren sich in der Entwicklung der Gemeinschaft. Die Perspektive auf Wanderungsbewegungen als Netzwerke verweist auf einen wichtigen Faktor der räumlichen Entwicklung, dessen Einfluss bisher erst ansatzweise erfasst werden kann. Der Blick jenseits städtischer Ökonomien begünstigt ein breiteres Verständnis der Netzwerke von Menschen in urbanen und ländlichen Kontexten und zeigt somit die Vielfalt und Querverbindungen von Beziehungen auf lokaler, regionaler, nationaler, trans- und internationaler Ebene.

*Résumé: L'évolution démographique au-delà du clivage rural/urbain: une nouvelle approche de la différenciation spatiale dans le contexte des flux de migration et des réseaux sociaux*

Depuis l'époque médiévale, le clivage rural/urbain a été un indicateur important de la différenciation spatiale dans de grandes parties de l'Europe centrale. Les stratégies de planification d'après-guerre ont considéré les villes comme des moteurs du développement et leurs hinterlands comme des bénéficiaires des effets de retombée (*trickle-down effects*) de l'affluence et de l'innovation urbaine; néanmoins, des cas de déclin économique urbain et de prospérité rurale sont venus perturber ces théories bien établies. La modernisation de la société a relégué les termes « urbain » et « rural » au rang de simples classifications de type d'idéal, et de nouvelles notions telles que « inter-villes » (*Zwischenstadt*) et « zones péri urbaines » (*peri-urban areas*) ont fait leur apparition. De nos jours, les tendances démographiques ne peuvent pas être rapportées directement aux types de peuplement urbain ou rural. Le présent document soutient que l'analyse des flux de personnes et des réseaux contribue à une meilleure compréhension de l'évolution démographique régionale, différenciée sur le plan spatial. Selon *Manuel Castells* (2000), la différenciation spatiale dépend des réseaux d'industries, de services, des institutions politiques et des mouvements sociaux. Alors que *Castells* s'intéresse aux espaces globaux de flux, d'autres auteurs plaident en faveur d'une analyse multiscalaire et non-hiérarchique des relations sociales, économiques, culturelles et politiques dans et à travers l'espace, et ceci non seulement dans les villes et les zones métropolitaines mais également dans les petites villes et les régions rurales. Le présent document s'intéresse non pas aux chaînes de production ni aux réseaux économiques, mais aux réseaux et aux flux de personnes. Les nouvelles technologies de l'information et de communication ont permis aux personnes d'étendre la portée de leurs activités quotidiennes, hebdomadaires ou mensuelles à deux sites ou plus. Le document présente trois approches de recherche étayant cet argument pour attirer l'attention sur les réseaux et les flux de personnes et sur leur impact sur le développement régional. 1) Des études portant sur la migration d'agrément montrent que les emplois ne sont pas la

seule raison motivant les gens à venir s'installer (à nouveau) dans les espaces ruraux, mais également les paysages attrayants et les avantages naturels. 2) La seconde approche de recherche s'intéresse aux foyers multilocaux. La multilocalité permet aux foyers de combiner les potentiels spatiaux sur de plus grandes distances, les réseaux et espaces sociaux de ces foyers ne dépendant plus d'un lieu mais étant désormais transrégionaux voire transnationaux. 3) Pour finir, la recherche sur les espaces sociaux transnationaux traite des espaces étant des terrains de rencontre pour l'interaction de diverses pratiques de localisation d'acteurs à l'échelle nationale, transnationale voire mondiale. Ceci vaut aussi bien pour les villes que pour la campagne. Les migrants transnationaux sont étroitement liés à leur communauté d'origine, soutiennent leurs proches et s'engagent pour le développement communautaire. Sur le plan de l'analyse de la différenciation spatiale, l'angle d'approche du réseau basé sur les flux de personnes fournit une vue révélant un moteur important du développement spatial et dont l'impact ne peut pas encore être cerné intégralement. Renoncer à la recherche de longue date sur les économies urbaines pour lui préférer une compréhension plus vaste des réseaux régionaux de personnes dans les contextes urbains et ruraux met en évidence la multiplicité et le recoupement des relations au niveau local, régional, national, transnational et international.

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