



DERREG

Developing Europe's Rural Regions in the Era of Globalization

Project funded by EU Framework Programme 7, Social Sciences and Humanities

Periodic Report Summary 2 July 2010 – December 2011

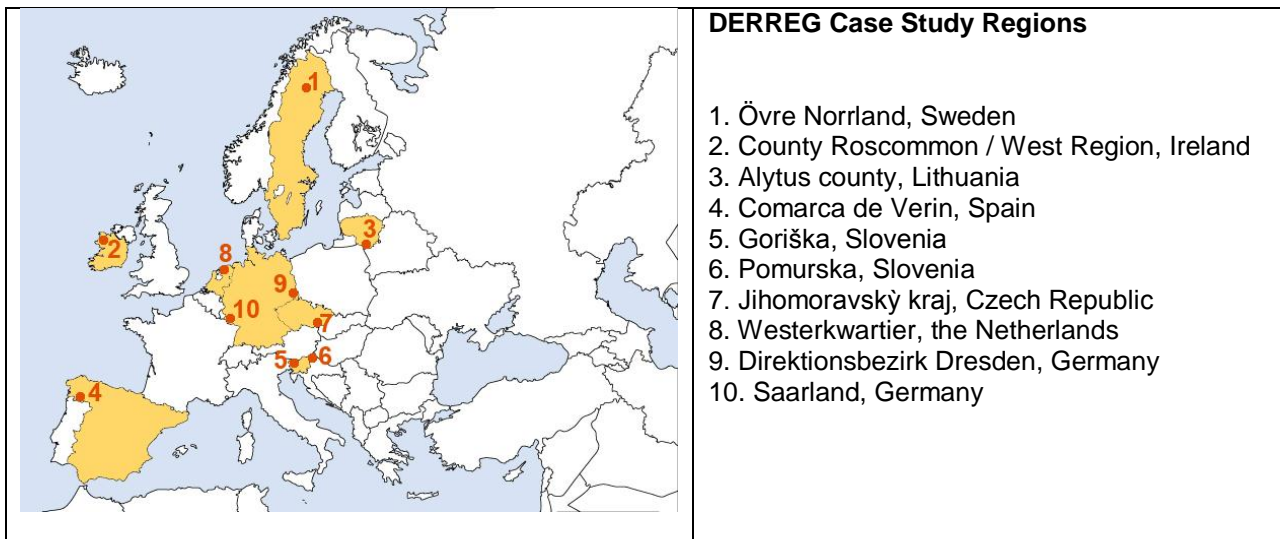
Background and Project Objectives

Globalization increasingly frames the challenges for regional development in rural Europe. As the European Commission has observed, “globalization is seen to touch every walk of life – opening doors, creating opportunities, raising apprehensions”, such that “our response to globalization has moved to the heart of the EU policy agenda” (CEC, 2007). Although academic research on globalization has tended to focus on cities to the neglect of rural areas, the delicate balance of threats and opportunities presented by globalization is arguably particularly significant for rural areas. Yet, popular discourses of rural aspects of globalization are overly simplistic and polarized: on the one hand, globalization is portrayed as a homogenizing force that threatens distinctive rural cultures; on the other hand the global networking of information and communications technologies is described as promising to erode economic inequalities between urban and rural regions.

In the DERREG project we instead draw on concepts that recognize the complex and multi-dimensional nature of globalization, and which hold that globalization proceeds through the engagement and negotiation of local and global actors and forces in particular regional settings. As such, “places in the emergent global countryside retain their local distinctiveness, but they are also different to *how they were before*” (Woods, 2007, p 500). DERREG has sought to develop this understanding by examining globalization processes, local effects and experiences, and regional development responses in ten case study regions. The specific **project objectives** are to: (1) enrich the scientific evidence base for understanding globalization-led restructuring in rural regions by developing an integrated analysis of multiple forms of global engagement; (2) promote best practice in regional development responses to challenges associated with globalization-led restructuring; (3) provide new insights into the challenges associated with particular processes of change, including the global engagement of rural enterprises, international migration, and the globalization of environmental discourses; (4) develop understanding of the different challenges facing different types of rural regions: and (5) establish a web-based resource centre to facilitate and coordinate the dissemination and accessibility of information to researchers and regional development agents.

DERREG is a consortium of nine partners (Aberystwyth University; Leibniz Institut für Landerkunde; Mendel University in Brno; National University of Ireland, Galway; Nordregio; Universität des Saarlandes; Univerza v Ljubljani; Wageningen University; and NeVork), from seven countries, working across ten case study regions that have been selected to illustrate different geographical and socio-economic contexts. The research is organized into four empirical work packages, focused on a specific aspect of globalization or regional development: Global engagement and local embeddedness of rural businesses (WP1); International mobility and migration of rural populations (WP2); Environmental capital and sustainable rural development (WP3); Capacity building, governance and knowledge systems (WP4). There is also a synoptic work package that will integrate the findings from WP1-WP4 in a holistic analysis, and work packages for dissemination (WP6) and project management (WP7).

This report relates to the final 18 months, during which research on the four thematic work packages (WP1 – WP4) has been completed, and findings synthesized into an overarching analysis that has informed the development of an interpretative model. These results have been disseminated to both scientific and non-scientific audiences, including through the construction of a web-based resource centre that includes a searchable database of good practice examples and a downloadable toolkit that can assist rural development professionals to apply the interpretative model in their own region.



Research Findings

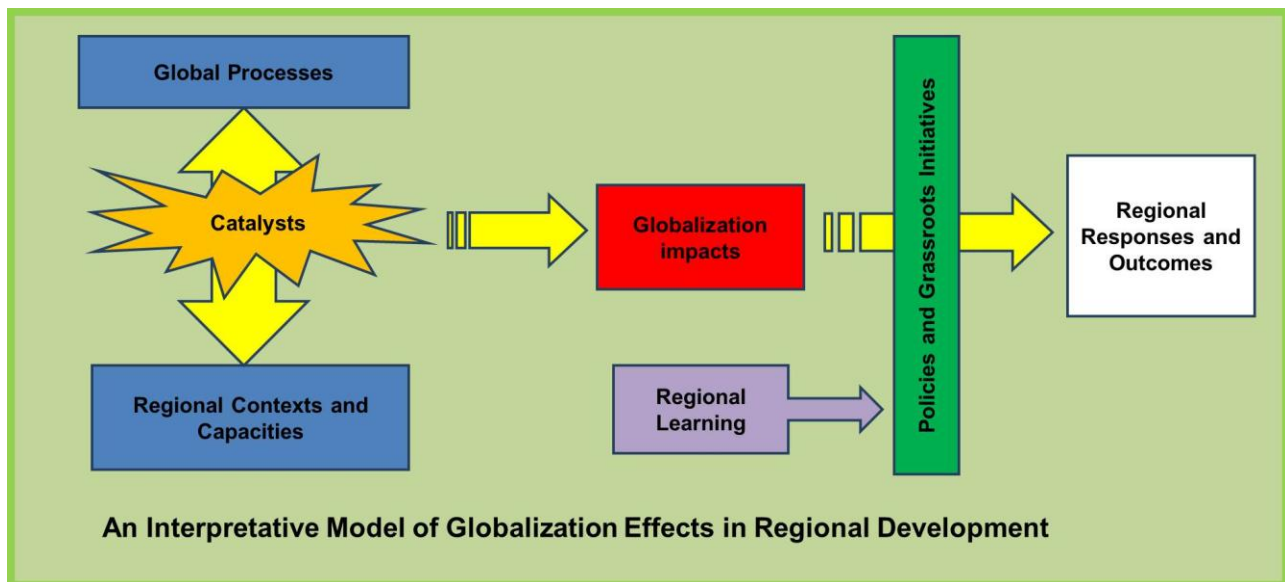
From the analysis undertaken in the DERREG research, an interpretative model has been proposed to understand how globalization produces particular effects and responses in different rural regions. The model shows that **globalization processes** such as market liberalization, network extension and intensification, the intensification of international mobility, acceleration of information flows and the growth of global consciousness, interact with **regional contexts and capacities** to produce differentiated potential effects, influenced by geographical location, regional resources, political-economic context and human capital.

These potential effects are converted into actual impacts through the agency of **catalysts**, which can include individual entrepreneurs, corporate executives and social activists, institutional policies and initiatives, and events such as EU enlargement or the global financial crisis. Resulting impacts identified in the case study regions are numerous and diverse but include, for example, foreign direct investment in branch plants; expansion into export markets by endogenous firms; factory closures due to production relocation; increased numbers of international tourists; purchase of property by foreign amenity migrants and cross-border commuters; international flows of migrant workers from rural region to rural region; the designation of protected landscapes following international models, and so on.

From a rural development perspective the important question is how regions **respond** to these impacts and the challenges and opportunities that they bring. We have identified eight types of responses with different forms of engagement with global networks and processes: (1) global resource providers; (2) global farmlands; (3) branch plant economies; (4) global playgrounds; (5) niche innovators; (6) trans-border networkers; (7) global conservators and (8) re-localizers. These different strategies balance immediate economic impact against long-term vulnerability within transnational networks, and hence a combination of strategies may be followed in one region. The ability of regions to select between these strategies is constrained by regional contexts and resources, and some regions that are severely structurally marginalized can risk getting left-behind. The detailed thematic research by DERREG has identified four key elements that are important to effective regional development strategies, and the appropriate policy interventions and mechanisms required to support them.

Firstly, **resilient responses to globalization require support for endogenous business**. The development of international networks by endogenous rural businesses offers greater long-term resilience than foreign direct investment. Many rural businesses are engaged in international networking, but the extent of internationalization varies between regions. Network brokers can help to build the capacity of rural enterprises and connect them to international networks.

Secondly, **international migrants can make a significant contribution to rural regional development**. The DERREG research reveals a high degree of mobility of international migrants to, from and through rural regions, but their potential to contribute to regional development has been largely neglected. Initiatives to promote entrepreneurship among migrants can help to harness this potential.



Thirdly, **global environmental awareness has created opportunities for the sustainable development of rural environmental capital**. Sustainable development projects have been built into regional development strategies, but their implementation can be contested. Eco-economy initiatives need to be appropriate to regional contexts and developed through inclusive methods to build consensus.

Fourthly, **effective regional development is supported by joint regional learning and innovation**. The joint working of public administration, knowledge institutes and regional groups and individuals can increase the capacity for grassroots development initiatives through exercises in reflection, learning and priority-setting. Appropriate organizational arrangements and resources are required to ensure that such interventions are effective.

Over 100 examples of good practice relating to these strategies have been identified across the ten case study regions and details entered into a publicly accessible searchable database available at www.derreg.eu.

Dissemination and Stakeholder Engagement

DERREG has aimed to produce findings and outcomes that will be of relevance to both academic and non-academic users and which will have an impact both on scientific knowledge and on regional development practice. Key dissemination actions include the organizing of a Final Conference in Slovenia in October 2011, targeted at professional participants from Central-Eastern Europe, and a Policy Seminar in the European Parliament in Brussels in March 2011; a series of short films illustrating examples of good practice, available on You Tube and on the DERREG project website; a edited book with chapters on each of the case study regions (due to be published in 2012); a double special issue of the open access journal *European Countryside* and a special issue of *Form IfL*; submission of articles to international scientific journals; presentations to international scientific conferences; guest lectures; and regional workshops with stakeholders. The DERREG project website (www.derreg.eu) was redesigned in June 2011 as a web resource centre, including a searchable database of good practice, links to illustrative short films, and a downloadable toolkit to support the application of the interpretative model within specific regions, as well as publicly-accessible copies of project reports and working papers (including contextual reports for each case study region) and conference presentations.

References

- CEC (2007) *The European Interest: Succeeding in the Age of Globalization*. Brussels: CEC.
 Woods, M. (2007) Engaging the global countryside: globalization, hybridity and the reconstitution of rural place, *Progress in Human Geography*, volume 31, pages 485-507.

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