



3rd Geography of Innovation Conference 2016

Session 2.5: Innovation and Smart development in Rural and Peri-urban Areas

TITRE DE LA COMMUNICATION / COMMUNICATION TITLE

Civil society in the urban governance for urban and periurban farming. New local imaginations for alternative urban land-uses and farming in Toulouse

AUTEURS / AUTHORS

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RESUME EN ANGLAIS / ENGLISH ABSTRACT

The importance of non-governmental organisations (NGO) in farming development has been assessed and discussed for a long time in developing countries. The on-going debate in Europe on urban food provision and urban food governance is currently reshaping farming policies, in a more global framework of smart cities, sustainable and inclusive growth. New actors emerge in this debate, like local public authorities and NGO. The participation of the latter has been red as a way towards a more participative democracy, an opening of the public realm to civil society, the introduction of new imaginations for the definition of public goods and for the formulation of local policies. Nevertheless, some authors advocate for a less mechanical view of the effects of NGO participation in public policies, by taking into account the relationships of these actors with the other actors of the local governance. Following this approach, we intended to understand and categorize civil society involvement in the local policies supporting urban and peri-urban farming in Toulouse urban area, the 4th French city. This urban area is one of the case study of the Era-Net Ruragri Taste project. First, an inventory of local actions to support farming was made, on the basis of previous knowledge and its actualization by press review, web browsing and interviews. Then, these actions were classified according to a smart growth grid elaborated in the WP3 of the Taste project. On a selection of these local actions, qualitative interviews were made to gain understanding in NGO participation, their own construction of the public goods they help shaping, and their relationships with public actors and public action. The results show an enhanced participation of NGO and, more largely, civil society representatives, in the local public realm, advocating for new ideas for the presence of farming in and around the city. It also demonstrates a variety of participation forms in public action, according to the economic dependency to public institutions and the technical profile and competency of the NGO. In conclusion, this communication presents a reflection on the local governance for farming maintenance in urban areas, introducing a complementary view to the more common focus on private-public partnerships.



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In what ways agro-food business strategies in rural areas can be considered as “smarts”? The case of the French department of Aveyron

AUTEURS / AUTHORS

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RESUME EN ANGLAIS / ENGLISH ABSTRACT

Metropolis are considered as the places where innovations emerge. Therefore, they are often seen as the driver of regional development, in particular because they enable economies of agglomeration (Audretsch and Feldman 2004; Massard and Mehier 2009). This perspective lowers the role of rural areas in development processes. On the contrary, we claim that rural areas are also places where innovation can happen (Magrini and Galliano 2012). As part of the European research project “Towards a SmarT rural Europe” (TASTE), our study questions the processes of innovation that can be observed in European rural areas by examining the case of the French department of Aveyron. The purpose of this study is thus to understand to what extent these processes of innovation can be considered as an example of Smart development. The latter is not always easy to define (Steiner and Mossböck 2014). But it can be considered as a sustainable growth that relies on the specialization of a rural area based on the valorization of local resources. This specialization doesn't refer to a Marshallian district and its amenities but to the related variety of local activities (Naldi et al. 2015). The relatedness support smart development by facilitating knowledge spill-overs that are key drivers of innovation processes (Frenken et al. 2007; Boschma and Lammarino 2009). The main questions of our work are therefore: to what extent the innovations / eco-innovations in Aveyron have been developed thanks to local resources and local socio-technical networks? Have these innovative firms been able to benefit from specific local externalities? How did these innovative firms mobilize their networks in the innovative process, and, in turn, how the innovative processes have reshaped or strengthened firm's network by building new or more specific knowledge and ties? Are these networks locally embedded? Therefore, our first hypothesis is that lower density in rural areas strengthen the importance of relatedness in the surrounding economic activities as a key driver for innovation. The second one is that weaker geographical proximity in rural areas is compensated by strong ties between the stakeholders. To answer these questions and test these hypothesis, we build monographs of innovations developed by agro-food firms in Aveyron. To do so, we will interview the companies as well as their partners, in order to understand the process from the idea of the innovation / eco-innovation to its implementation. These interviews will be used (i) to bring information on how the innovative idea is born and has evolved, (ii) to characterize the phases of the process and, (iii) to identify the (natural, organizational or institutional) resources used during each phase, and how and to whom they have been obtained. These materials will be used to construct a modelling of the networks.



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Innovation in rural and peripheral areas. Towards territorial innovation and reconsideration of local policies

AUTEURS / AUTHORS

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RESUME EN ANGLAIS / ENGLISH ABSTRACT

In standard or evolutionist literature the notion of innovation is often related to two main key points: 1) it is based on a technological or an organizational framework, and 2) it is mainly concentrated in mostly urban areas. However recent empirical evidences reveal that a slightly different model is about to emerge regarding the changes in several areas and the development of knowledge pipelines based on ICT. Some firms are able to sustain a huge growth and to become specialized in highly value-added industrial or technological fields, even if they are not located within clusters, and sometimes at an important distance of populated areas, due to their ability to connect and to work with other firms or labs situated in different parts of the world. At the same time, and due to massive decentralization processes and the decline of the welfare state in several countries and regions, we are facing the emergence of new forms of innovation in the territories, be there institutional or social ones (living labs, crowdsourcing, social coops, local care, crowdfunding, circular economy, local food chains...). In parallel, the concept of smart specialization surfaced in the mid-2000s in the context of debates on EU competitiveness and in the wake of doubts over the success of the previous European policy, i.e. the Lisbon Strategy. The Barca Report (2009) shows that the latter has not yielded the expected effect; there has been a deterioration in competitiveness, innovation has been slow, and some enterprises have been tempted to relocate production. These weaknesses are attributed to excessive uniformity at EU level, which results in insufficient specialization, as well as in a lack of interest in the spatial dimension and territories. Smart development and smart specialization policies (Foray et al., 2009) emphasize that each region should specialize in activities in which it has a competitive advantage. S3 then consists of determining, in each region, intervention priorities out of a limited number of sectors or technologies which have a competitive advantage over other territories. In the end we are nowadays facing two major changes. The first one is bottom up, and related to the increasing concern of local population for territorial development, and their growing commitment in new forms or modes of innovations. The second one is more top down and linked with the recognition of the failure of previous one-size-for-all and mainly technological policies. Both claim for a renewed and enlarged vision of innovation at the level of territories, that we can call territorial innovation. Given these major changes, be there multi-level governance based or grounded at the level of the society it is now time to design and to experiment new forms of innovation in the territories. This communication intends to investigate this notion and to underline its main components, as well as to draw lines for future developments in the field.

