

Rural policy integration

PD Dr Sylvia Herrmann and Professor Christina von Haaren give an overview of RUFUS, a research project aimed at establishing a multidisciplinary conceptual framework on policy integration for rural areas in the European Union

Could you begin by outlining the overall aims and objectives of RUFUS?

RUFUS' objectives are: to display the diversities of rural areas in Europe and show the different combinations of their strengths and weaknesses; to provide tools and methods which will help to consider these diversities in the shaping of rural development policies; to explore the necessity and the options of policy integration for rural development (Regional Policy, Agricultural Policy, Social Policy, Environmental Policy); and to formulate proposals for policy makers and stakeholders on how to consider the diversities of rural areas and how to shape a more place-based policy.

Can you elaborate on the 'types of integration' that RUFUS has been looking at?

Different types of integration, from 'informing' (information exchange) to the creation of one joint policy are described in the literature. RUFUS tries to derive evidence from the findings in the case studies, the review of development projects, and the discussions with stakeholders and policy makers for the applicability of this concept. The question is whether these types are only theoretical or if they are of practical use also.

Could you briefly describe the 12 regions selected for study and the reasoning for focusing on these areas?

RUFUS worked on 12 case studies in six European countries (two in the UK, three in Germany, two in France, one in Portugal, two in the Netherlands, and two in Sweden). The characteristics of the case studies range from remote agricultural areas to manufacturing dominated areas close to the hinterland of central towns. The aims were: to check the relevance of the classification of the 12 areas by the new typology, to include additional

important driving factors for rural development not displayed in the typology, to learn about good examples of policy integration, to learn about stakeholder's ideas for the future rural development in the region and the role of policy intervention.

The CAP covers many diverse geographical and socioeconomic regions. How will RUFUS aid policy makers in developing legislature that best serves the needs of individual regions in providing a solid base for pan-European rural development?

RUFUS contributes on two levels: by providing an EU-wide applicable typology depicting the strength and weaknesses of regions (NUTS 3 level). This typology can be used in the future as one criterion (among others) for a more place-based formulation of programmes; and by providing concrete suggestions for funding instruments like regional budgets and regional revolving funds, which also focus on regions and their capacities regarding endogenous potentials, innovation and institutional abilities.

RUFUS uses a multidisciplinary approach to encourage multiple functionality, which goes beyond physical landscape potential and includes social and economic activities. How important is this multidisciplinary approach and could you offer an insight into the skills sets that RUFUS processes?

The multi-disciplinary approach is a central element of the RUFUS research concept. Researchers from a broad range of disciplines participate (environmentalists, geographers, regional planners, environmental planners, rural planners, agronomists, economists, architects, sociologists, environmental lawyers). This broad mix was the basis for a combination of diverse methods like the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches (statistics and mapping; interviews

and focus groups). Economic, social and ecological indicators have been chosen for the typology; different policies (Agricultural, Regional, Social, Environmental) have been looked at and considered in the policy recommendations.

With such a diverse range of landscapes and cultures related to rural development, how can RUFUS assist in reducing contradictory and conflicting policies?

RUFUS contributes to reducing contradictions and conflicts by providing decision support to form and substantiate policies that put the specific needs of the European regions in the foreground. They also aim to demand a stronger coordination of policies, especially at EU-level, presenting rural development on more than one basis (policy) and offering possible instruments to achieve a higher degree of coordination.

With the current phase of the project set to end early this year, what do you hope to achieve in the remaining time? What is the future of RUFUS after April 2011?

We started an intensive dissemination with political administrators on EU level to offer the results of RUFUS for the discussions about the post-2013 programmes. We discussed with different DGs, actors from the national level and stakeholders on EU and national level.

First bids for a new Seventh Framework Programme project, where the typology can be adapted to other societal questions, are on the way. A bid for an EU COST action has been submitted. This project aims to bring together the substantial number of existing European typologies, to derive a tool box for the future use of typologies for policy support and, to better connect top-down and bottom-up approaches, eg. typologies and case studies.

Rural regeneration

The Common Agricultural Policy has broadened its scope, encouraging environmental and conservational efforts in rural areas, along with the promotion of entrepreneurial activities such as tourism. **RUFUS** is an EU-funded project developing a conceptual framework which could underpin efforts to generate effective policy integration in these areas

WITHIN THE 27 Member States in the EU, 60 per cent of the population live in rural areas covering 90 per cent of the territory. As such, rural development has become a vital policy area for assisting those regions in responding to the economic, social and environmental issues of the 21st century. The EU2020 Strategy and the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative stress the necessity to stimulate smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and to introduce a new approach to innovation in Europe.

These issues are specifically relevant for rural areas where large imbalances still exist.

The objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have shifted from an agricultural-centred approach to wider rural development. The concept of multi-functionality in rural regions is now promoted and brings the CAP into closer association with a wide range of policy regimes, such as regional policy, spatial planning, environmental management, social and energy policy. These sectoral regimes interact with each other in a variety of ways determining the development of rural areas, thus leading to an increased need for policy integration.

THE EMERGENCE OF RUFUS

In response to these reforms, the RUFUS project, led by PD Dr Sylvia Herrmann and Professor Dr Christina von Haaren, was launched to establish a multidisciplinary conceptual framework on policy integration and rural multi-functionality. The project involves collaboration between several other research projects (RUDI, EDORA, DERREG), stakeholders and users, under the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). RUFUS primarily assesses the possible combinations of policy regimes and builds up networks to ensure sustainable and integrated rural development. The team are investigating how rural development policy can be targeted at the specific endogenous potential of rural regions, which go beyond physical landscape potentials, to include social and economic activities and opportunities. The consideration of the specific combinations of strengths and weaknesses of rural areas as starting point for policy intervention is a central component of the project analysis. RUFUS aims to provide policy makers and

stakeholders with a better theoretical and practical understanding of how CAP measures and other forms of public intervention in rural development can be combined.

A NEW COMBINED METHODOLOGY

One of the methodological pillars of the RUFUS project is the characterisation tool, which is based on a wide indicator set developed by an interdisciplinary methodology. By means of this tool, different types of rural regions with specific characteristics concerning their resources and potentials are mapped. The typology is based on the results of a policy baseline assessment (Nadin, V & A Van Nes, 2008. Position Paper. Baseline assessment) which reflects the actual politics relevant to rural regions.

The ecological, economic and social resources of the regions are also all taken into account and, in this manner, types and sub-types can be described. The typology is very much a top-down statistical approach and the data used is provided by EUROSTAT – the statistical office of the European Union situated in Luxembourg. By producing the results on the regional and local level and by deriving sub-types, the researchers try to come as close as possible to the regional reality. Nevertheless, the statistics do not include cultural features or indicators for 'endogenous potential' which are as significant for rural development as all the rest. It is only through case studies that these factors can be effectively assessed.

Although the 12 case studies are not enough for statistical evidence, they provide additional information for the understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the regions. The development of scenarios in the case studies, together with

INTELLIGENCE

RUFUS

RURAL FUTURE NETWORKS

OBJECTIVES

The project aims to address the multifunctional aspects of rural areas. It will assess the possible combinations of policy regimes to build up networks and to ensure sustainable and integrated rural development.

FUNDING

Funded under the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) within Theme 8: Socio Economic Sciences and Humanities. Contract no. 217381

PARTNERS

Professor Dr Christina von Haaren, PD Dr Sylvia Herrmann, Leibniz Universität Hannover • **Professor Vincent Nadin**, Technische Universiteit Delft • **Professor Dr Peter Verburg**, Free University, Amsterdam • **Professor Dr Andrew Lovett**, University of East Anglia • **Associate Professor Dr Ann-Katrin Bäcklund**, Lund University • **Dr Marc Benoit**, Institut National de Recherche Agricole • **Dr Sebastian Elbe**, Sprint Consult

CONTACT

PD Dr Sylvia Herrmann
Coordinator

Institute for Environmental Planning
Leibniz Universität Hannover
Herrenhauserstrasse 2
D-30419 Hannover
Germany

T +49 511 762 3960
E info@rufus-eu.de

www.rufus-eu.de

PD DR SYLVIA HERRMANN is senior researcher and work group leader 'Rural development' at the Institute for Environmental Planning, Leibniz Universität Hannover.

DR CHRISTINA VON HAAREN is Professor for Landscape Planning at the Institute for Environmental Planning and Dean of the Faculty for Architecture and Landscape, Leibniz Universität Hannover.

RUFUS



Rural Future Networks



the stakeholders covers all those aspects that the typology cannot fully encompass by itself. Through the combination of the two approaches – top-down, quantitative (typology) and bottom-up, qualitative (case studies) – RUFUS demonstrates the regional diversity in Europe and foregrounds the necessity for a more in-depth analysis. In addition to these methodological tools, land function maps are used and developed. They show the huge variation in the capacity of the landscape to potentially provide goods and services to the population.

CONCEPTS EXPLAINED

The RUFUS project began with the development of a shared conceptual framework by reviewing the main concepts used in the study. In this way, alternative conceptual positions can be uncovered and some consistency in the approaches across the components of the project can be ensured. The meanings of principal concepts in the project proposal are explored, including the drivers of rural development, territorial capital, multifunctionality, and policy integration.

As Herrmann outlines, the main target of the project is policy integration to reflect the diversity of rural areas, and so most of the preliminary work has been focused here: "Policy is inevitably going to be separated into compartments – this is necessary to give clear objectives to those who need to implement them and simply to organise resources and attention around specific topics. So, the efforts to integrate policy need to be balanced with the costs of doing so and the value of connecting," she explains. Integration can be divided into horizontal, vertical and territorial: horizontal integration includes activity sectors

such as agriculture, environment, regional policy, economic policy, transport, or employment; the vertical one describes a 'multi-level' governance system consisting of levels of government; finally, geographical, spatial or territorial integration is implemented across administrative boundaries between jurisdictions such as municipalities, regions and countries.

Since in practice it is very hard to investigate and operate these different levels of integration with accuracy, the RUFUS project adopts a more simple 'spectrum' of integration approaches – ranging from 'informing' at one end of the scale, to the creation of one joint policy at the other – for the analysis of practical examples in the case studies. The RUFUS researchers are using these ideas to clarify what forms of integration can be achieved or should be sought and what means can be employed.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

RUFUS is currently working on the final policy recommendations. The typology raised the interest of several stakeholder organisations and several DGs who are very interested in the first recommendations on the future programming of integrated rural development, as well as the delivery mechanisms. Furthermore, the possibility of using the typology for policy purposes has been discussed: "We are lucky that the end of the project and the production of results coincide with the preparation phase of the post-2013 policy. This raises the interest of policy makers and stakeholders, and RUFUS will have the chance to discuss – and probably adapt – the results with them," Herrmann concludes.

RUFUS Final Conference 'Diversity of rural areas and the Challenge of Policy Integration'
22 February 2011, 10am – 5pm in Brussels

Venue:
Representation of the German Federal State of Lower Saxony at the EU
Rue Montoyer 61, B – 1000 Brussels

See www.rufus-eu.de for more details

