

International Mobility, Local Agency and Regional Development in the Emergent Global Countryside

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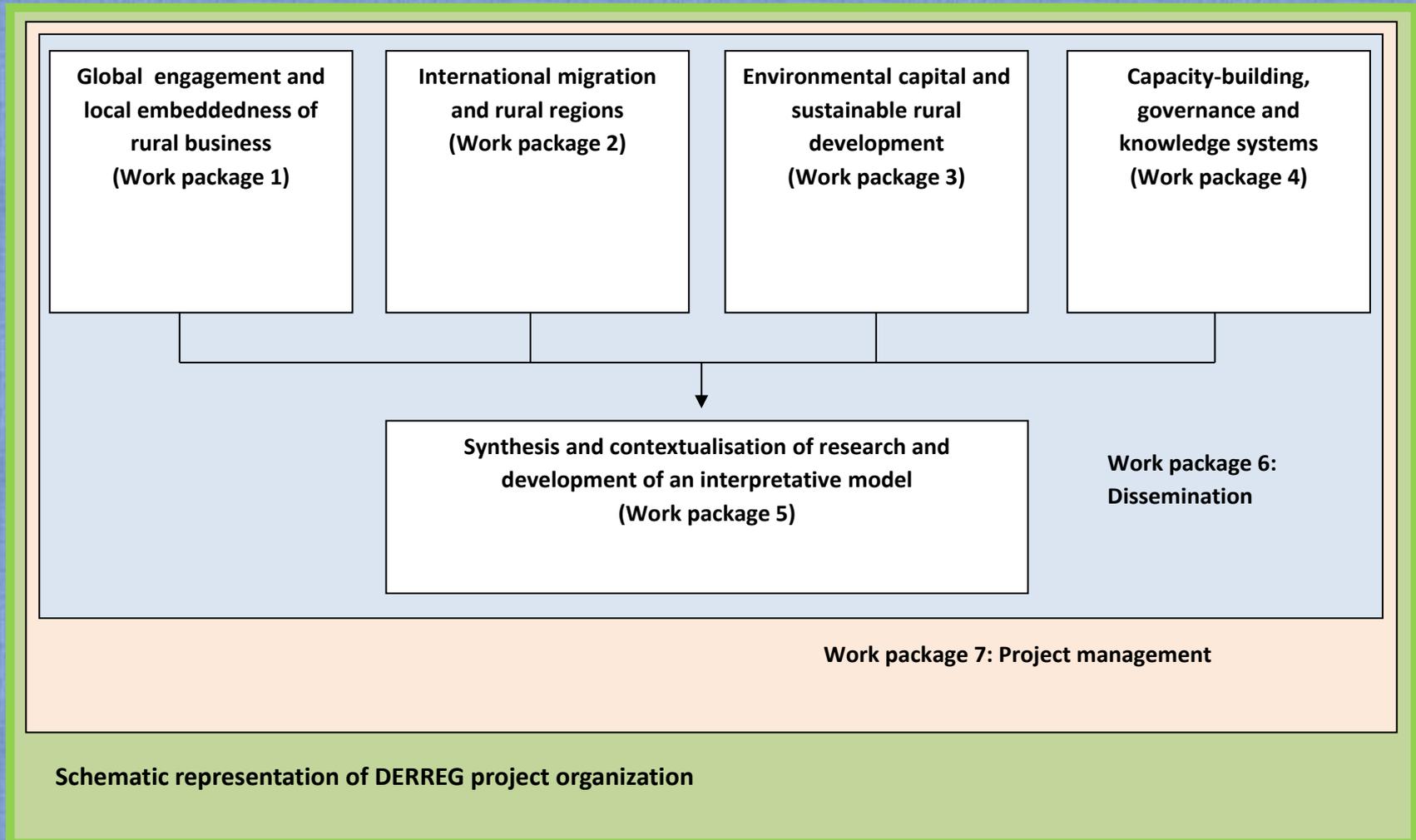
DERREG



- ‘Developing Europe’s Rural Regions in the Era of Globalization’
- EU Framework Programme 7
- January 2009 – December 2011
- Consortium of 9 universities & research centres in 6 countries led by Aberystwyth University



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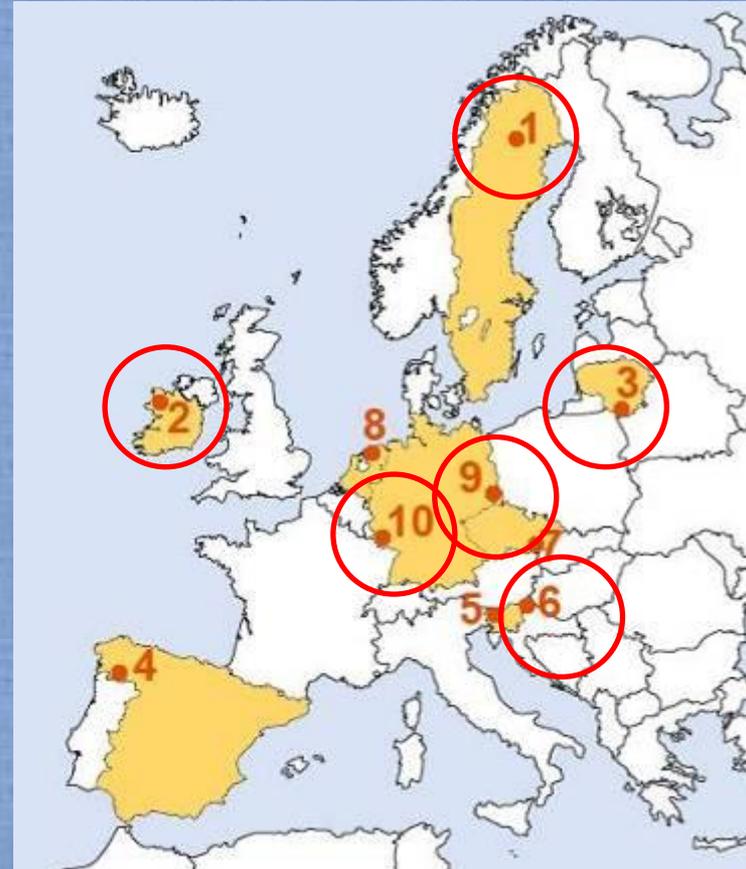
Case Study Regions

1. Oevre Norrland, Sweden
2. West region (Roscommon), Ireland
3. Alytus, Lithuania
4. Comarca de Verín, Spain
5. Goriška, Slovenia
6. Pomurska, Slovenia
7. Jihomoravský kraj, Czech Republic
8. Westerkwartier, the Netherlands
9. Direktionsbezirk Dresden, Germany
10. Saarland, Germany



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Research on international migration had three foci:

- Migrant workers (Alytus, Dresden region, Oevre Norrland and Saarland)
- Foreign home owners (Oevre Norrland, Pomurska and Saarland)
- Return migrants (Alytus and West of Ireland)

International Migration

Relatively recent growth of research on international migration in a rural context in the global north

- Latino migration in rural US (e.g Nelson & Hiemstra, 2008; Nelson & Nelson, 2011; Smith & Furusest, 2006)
- Eastern European migration to UK, Ireland, Norway and Iceland (Rye & Andrezejweska, 2009; Skaptadottir & Wojtynska, 2008)
- Migrant workers in Greece and Spain (Kasimis et al., 2003, 2010; Hoggart and Mendoza, 1999)
- Amenity migration from US to Central America (Moss, 2006)
- Amenity & retirement migration from northern Europe to Mediterranean (King et al., 2000)
- Refugees and asylum seekers in rural Europe (Hubbard, 2005; current research in Sweden)

International Migration

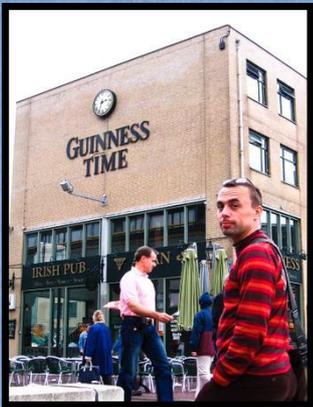
- Immigration and multiculturalism are not exclusively urban phenomena
- Patterns and processes of contemporary migration are fluid and dynamic than often imagined
- Situated within a matrix of stretched translocal social relations
- Skaptadottir and Wojtynska (2008): 'Bifocal lives' of Polish migrant workers in Iceland

Global Mobility

- International migration as just one expression of an intensified and accelerated global mobility
- Mobility of people to, from and through rural areas, forming diverse and transitory attachments, without necessarily jettisoning the attachments that they have accumulated in different places
- Facilitators for the mobility of things, ideas and practices
- Agents of hybridization: unavoidably changing the places that they inhabit

International Migration in Rural Europe

- Polish and Lithuanian migrant workers in Ireland
- German second home owners in Sweden
- British amenity migrants in Slovenia
- Thai seasonal workers in Sweden



International Migration in Rural Europe

Luxembourgese cross-border migrants in Perl, Saarland



International Migration in Rural Europe

South Malouccan community in Westerkwartier, Netherlands



International Migration in Rural Europe

Brazilian migrants in Gort, Ireland



International Migration in Rural Europe

1) Pervasiveness of international migration is disguised by the relative invisibility of migrants within rural communities

International Migration in Rural Europe

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Pomurska, Slovenia

650 properties purchased by foreign buyers (mostly British) between 2004 and 2010, yet dispersed between villages

International Migration in Rural Europe

Pervasiveness of international migration is disguised by the relative invisibility of migrants within rural communities



Westerkwartier, Netherlands

Cultural Centre and Church for South Malouccan community of over 1,000 people show few outward signs of a distinctive cultural identity

International Migration in Rural Europe

Pervasiveness of international migration is disguised by the relative invisibility of migrants within rural communities



Gort and Roscommon, Ireland



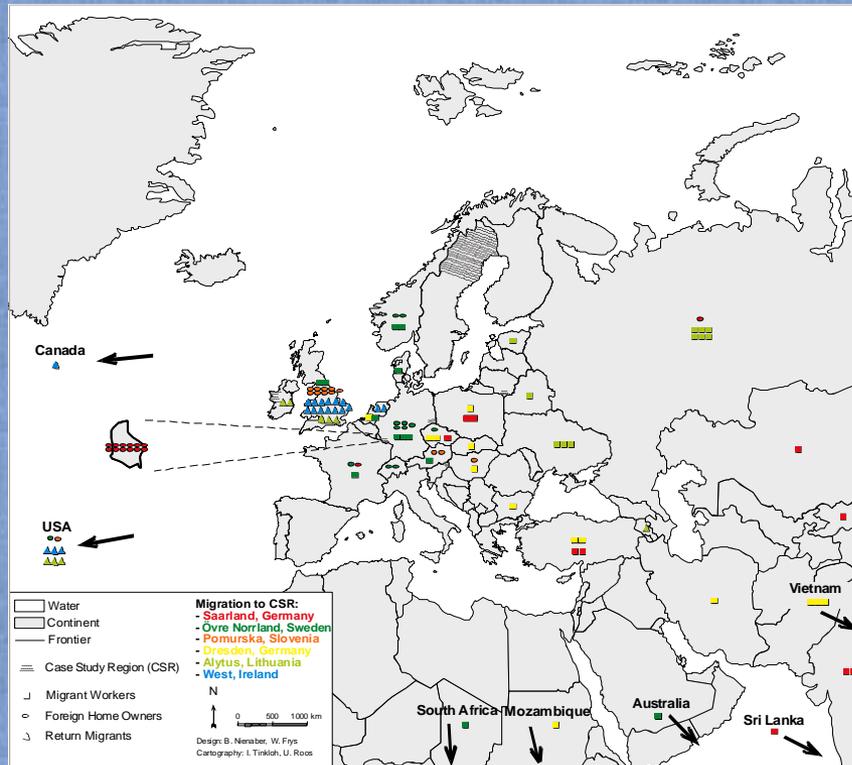
International Migration in Rural Europe

Pervasiveness of international migration is disguised by the relative invisibility of migrants within rural communities

Torres et al (2006): 'Silent bargain' – migrants accept a shadowy, marginal existence in rural communities in return for relative freedom from harassment and conflict

International Migration in Rural Europe

2) The origins and types international migration evident in different regions varies, and is shaped by geography and history



Previous residence of migrants interviewed for DERREG

International Migration in Rural Europe

The origins and types international migration evident in different regions varies, and is shaped by geography and history



Malouccan community, Westerkwartier

Initially arrived as refugees from political violence in former Dutch colony of South Malouccan Islands in 1950s

Settled in former army camp in Westerkwartier and stayed in region

Approx. 1,500 new arrivals 2000-2003 escaping inter-communal conflict



International Migration in Rural Europe

3) Geographies of international mobility dependent on catalysts

- Events as catalysts (e.g. EU enlargement in 2004)
- People as catalysts
 - British ex-pat renovated and sold-on empty properties in Slovenia to British purchasers
 - Irish exporter acted as an agent to recruit Brazilian workers for meat processing plants in Gort and Roscommon

International Migration in Rural Europe

- 4) Migrants experiences of integration with the local community vary, reflecting differing outlooks of both migrants and established local residents
- Most respondents positive about experience
 - Migrants welcomed as revitalising declining communities
 - Return migrants as 'outsider insiders'
 - Suspicion and hostility in post-industrial regions with high unemployment

International Migration in Rural Europe

“Zittau as zero-point experience: this means, everything that you have learnt so far you have to give up more and more, you have to distance yourself from the structures of the developed understanding. Then you could experience this absolute zero-point experience. Only then you could learn and develop totally new structures, and only then you can feel at ease here.”

(Migrant worker, Dresden region)



International Migration in Rural Europe

5) International mobility is multi-directional and temporally contingent

- Events as catalysts
 - Closure of meat-processing plant in Gort
- Effects of post-2008 recession
 - Fewer opportunities for migrant workers
 - Sale of second homes / return home of amenity migrants
- Reversal in not total nor traced over same geography
 - Repeat emigration rather than return migration in Lithuania

International Migration and Regional Development

Regional development potentials of international migration under-researched (but see Kilpatrick et al., 2011)

- Migrant workers seen as stop-gap labour
 - Low grade employment: meat-processing, agricultural field work
 - Professional positions (e.g. doctors, dentists)
 - Internationalization of key occupations in traditional rural economy and society

International Migration and Regional Development

- Majority of international migrants to rural Europe educated or skilled
- Many not in jobs that match their qualifications or training
 - Half of migrant workers in rural Wales not in matching jobs (WRO survey, 2007)
 - Half of these had unsuccessfully looked for more appropriate employment
- Structural factors – shape of rural economy
- Cultural barriers

International Migration and Regional Development

“For me, it was a bit difficult at that time [for the search of employment] because I could not speak German properly. [...] I have worked for half a year until the company went bankrupt. [...] For me, the second and third year was exhausting, because several times, I worked for temporary-employment agencies and [...] there you feel like a second-class citizen.”

(Migrant worker, Saarland)



International Migration and Regional Development

- Attracting investment by firms that can offer higher-grade opportunities for international migrants, including return migrants
- Inward investment in 'Celtic Tiger' facilitating return migration to Ireland
- Repeat emigration from Alytus, Lithuania, reflecting limited development of regional economy



International Migration and Regional Development

International migrants as entrepreneurs

- Significant number of migrants interviewed were self-employed
- Especially amenity migrants and return migrants
- Many businesses international in focus (internet-based)
- Some regionally-focused, using skills and experience gained abroad

“I returned to Ireland as a qualified plumber and set up my own business in addition to running the farm. I trained and obtained all my skills in Boston and without a doubt the training helped me gain employment contracts once I came home.” (Return migrant, West of Ireland)

International Migration and Regional Development

- Difficulties negotiating national bureaucracies etc.
- Lack of awareness of available business support
- Limited schemes expressed targeted at migrant entrepreneurship
 - Jokkmokk, Sweden



International Migration and Regional Development

- International migrants able to act as 'network brokers' linking regional businesses to international markets and partners
- Documented in global south (e.g. Aguayo, 2008)
- Emerging evidence among some European diasporic communities (e.g. Lithuania)

Conclusions

- International migration increasing prominent feature of rural regions
- Conventional concepts of 'migration' too rigid and linear to fully capture the dynamic and contingent mobility of people within the global countryside
- Need a relational perspective, recognizing importance of individual agents and locally-embedded social networks
- Regional development need to work through local agents and migrant networks to tap into the economic potential of international migrants

For more on DERREG see www.derreg.eu