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Rural-Urban Governance Arrangements and Planning Instruments

Re-territorialisation of rural business models

Ede, Netherlands

1. Overview

Rural business models are co-shaping contemporary rural-urban relations in the sense that farmers and other rural landowners may function as catalysts, incubators and drivers of promising rural-urban governance arrangements.

The Netherlands is known for its emergence of novel territory-based cooperation between farmers, other landowners and – increasingly – other rural entrepreneurs and rural dwellers. These cooperatives were initially oriented at improving the agri-environmental performance of farming. Now, however, many are also actively engaged in rural tourism, green care, regional typical food quality, etc. Shortly, the cooperatives transform increasingly into territory-based rural business models that address rural-urban relations in multiple ways, including actively developing new rural markets with a specific focus on integrative capacity building. Historically rooted rural estates play a similar role in Dutch rural-urban relations. These often-larger rural properties (several hundreds of hectares), frequently with roots in Dutch nobility and early industrialization, are characterized by a similar focus on rural function integration and, as such, contribute positively to regional rural-urban relations.

2. Main Challenges

The further identification and unravelling of territory-based collaboration and cooperation with a key role for rural business models concerns a topic of major importance for rural-urban synergy governance as it is basically about identifying promising new expressions of public-private collaboration.

The more specific challenges addressed are:

- > Developing and fostering rural business models with in-built capacity to capture and valorise rural amenities, such as landscape, nature, biodiversity, cultural heritage and other manifestations of ESS delivery.

- > The potential to scale these rural business models with new forms of territory-based cooperation.
- > How to incentivize these models within spatial planning and other public facilitating policy interventions.

3. Main Insights

3.1. Insights related to the broad area of “network governance”

Focussing on the role of rural private actors in governance networks helps identify the various mechanisms and strategies that are being used, developed and explored to enhance and valorise rural-urban relations. Recent emergence of Dutch territory-based cooperatives, as well as historically rooted rural estates, illustrate the prospects, barriers and limitations to surpass and /or avoid global food chain dependencies with alternative – in the sense of deviating from agricultural modernisation logics - rural business models. Such alternative business models represent interesting leverages and components of rural-urban synergy building in the Netherlands. Obviously, their further prospects are closely interwoven with their interaction with institutional settings at different levels (i.e., Ede municipality, Food Valley Region, national and European administrations).

3.2. Insights related to mechanisms of cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation

Cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation are in the DNA of farmer-led territorial cooperatives and the key design principles of rural estates. Both represent rural business models that explicitly intend to (re)establish mutual beneficial relations with other rural sectors (e.g. nature, landscape, leisure, tourism, etc.). Moreover, both critically depend on novel rural-urban partnerships between various policy domains, such as food production, social welfare, public health, food procurement, regional tourism development, consumer-citizen relations, etc. There are novel manifestations of cross-sectoral collaboration that - albeit to different degrees and more or less successful – are increasingly supported by Ede’s and regional Food Valley’s knowledge institutions.

3.3. Insights related to the role of (actual, potential) social, organizational, institutional innovations

Conform the foregoing, expressions of social, organizational and institutional innovation are closely interwoven with territory based rural business models in the Netherlands. Their scope of activity points at a growing acknowledgement of the critical role of private actors in rural-urban governance processes through new coalitions, alliances and partnerships. Next to its various accompanying institutional and organisational innovative aspects, it may be argued that this critical role is also partly rooted in traditional organisational models. Traditional in the sense of strong culturally embedded in the key features of rural estates

and family-based farming. Both are characterized by a certain in-built capacity to approach regional rural-urban relations from more integrative lenses and logics.

4. Data Sources

Available data suggest that Ede's rural businesses models that most clearly deviate from agricultural modernization logics perform economically similar or even better than regional highly-specialized and intensified agricultural enterprises. At the same time, it is important to note that particularly rural businesses that follow a modernisation logic demonstrate major differences in income from year to year. It is further important to realize that available info on regional wider socio-economic impact and societal benefits of alternative (more territory based) rural business models, continues to depend heavily on proxy and soft indicators. Examples are:

- > relatively high property tax revenues in the vicinity of rural estates;
- > growing participation of farmers in territory-based cooperatives;
- > latter's ability to actively engage rural and urban dwellers in the preservation of rural amenities;
- > urban dwellers appreciation of available rural amenities, etc.

Such proxy indicators are certainly helpful but contrast sharply with the enormous amount of "hard" data that aim to underpin the sectoral importance of conventional farming in the region. For the principle advocates of the agricultural modernisation model, this dependency on "soft indicators" is often accompanied by a certain tendency to downplay current socio-economic relevance, as well as future prospects for alternative, more territory-based rural business models.

5. Illustration and further information

The following URL's provide additional info on various expressions of re-territorialisation of rural business models in Ede municipality (mostly in Dutch).

www.O-gen.nl

www.landschapsbeheergelderland.nl

www.hogeveluwe.nl

www.grondbezit.nl

www.kasteelhoeckelum.nl

www.collectiefveluwe.nl

www.anvhetbinnenveld.nl

www.dehooilanden.nl

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