



In Europe and the United States, **developmental paths of rural areas are believed to be plural** (Edora, 2011). As early as Thünen (1826), regional and urban economists began analysing spatial and regional disparities through three drivers: (i) natural-resource advantages, (ii) economies of agglomeration, and (iii) costs of transport and communication. Even though natural amenities have been introduced into numerous economic studies, their inclusion remains quite limited. National and international assessments show that ecosystems are and often continue to be degraded; therefore, ecosystem services and public goods are now considered a part of policy and have become increasingly important within the European context (European Commission, 2010).

Population and production locations, commodities, and flow of people are critical components of the relationship between economic development and ecosystem services. Such a relationship has three major unresolved questions:

- Does an optimal spatial organisation of activities, leading to rural economic development while ensuring the provision of ecosystem services, exist?
- How does one combine market mechanisms and policies to reach sustainable spatial allocation of activities?
- Under which conditions do ecosystem services constitute opportunities for rural development?

The trade-off/synergy dilemma between economic development and ecosystem services is one of the major issues of sustainable rural development.

The main research objective of TRUSTEE is to disentangle the complex relationships between economic development and ecosystem services at different spatial scales. We will use an interdisciplinary approach that will involve economists, geographers, agronomists, and ecologists. At every step of the research process, we will involve scientists, experts, and stakeholders. In doing so, this research will also strengthen the capacity of a range of stakeholders to design sustainable strategies for rural areas. The sub-objectives are:

- Analyse the multi-scaled determinants of economic development and ecosystem services on a large European gradient of rural and rural/urban areas.
- Increase our understanding of how to achieve mutual benefits for economic development in rural areas and ecosystem services.
- Identify and assess the governance mechanisms and policy instruments that enhance sustainable rural vitality in very diverse contexts.
- Produce synergies among international researchers of varied disciplines and between researchers and various stakeholders at different governance scales.

TRUSTEE project is organized in 7 work packages, separated by their knowledge domains and their spatial-temporal scales.

WP1 gathers and structures all the data needed to capture the diversity of rural situations. It articulates between the different scales of governance, from local to global.

WP2 will provide an assessment of the exogenous drivers of land use dynamics, and some medium- and long-term forecasts (as scenarios) of future changes in the EU. Finally, the economic drivers of land use changes will be modeled at different scales so as to provide estimated policy scenarios that affect and possibly regulate land use

WP3 evaluates human capital impacts on economic development in peripheral areas, taking into account local economic structure. It evaluates the implementation and impact of rural development policies.

WP4 deals with the characterisation and modelling of the distribution of ecosystem services at different spatial (from local to national) and temporal (current and future) scales.

WP5 uses starting point inputs from WP3 and WP4 to explore specific links between economic development and ecosystem service bundles.

WP6 revisits policy concerns by examining potential impacts to specific objectives and investigating how policymakers can use the effects from earlier programs to design new ones.

WP7 is a transverse action that will be based on the outputs of most WPs and which will play a federative role to create synergy among researchers, experts, and stakeholders.

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