Introduction

Objective

To articulate a conceptual model of the range of rural-urban interactions as a unifying theoretical context for the work of Theme 8.3 (Rural-Urban resource flows, resilience and rural service delivery).

Development of Ideas on Urban-Rural Interaction:

• Growth pole theory (Perroux), and "spread effects" very influential in the 1950s and 60s – but in terms of practical policy, discredited by early 1980s.
• European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) 1989 re-kindled interest – but this time in U-R "cooperation" – a spatial planning/governance concept – weak in terms of (economic) theory.
• New Economic Geography revisits and formalises agglomeration theory and rural spillover effects.
• Rise of "City Region" spatial planning – regional planners see cities as "the engines of growth".
• Rural development interest in short supply chains and "relocalisation".
• Increasing interest in "relational" approaches – networks – "organised proximity" – implications so far unclear.

The need for greater theoretical clarity:

• Regional development and spatial planning policy ideas have lost contact with economic theory.
• Technology and markets have changed, patterns of interaction have evolved – conventional theories need to be reviewed.

Methods

Literature review, formulation of a "conceptual model", taking account of:

• The diversity of actors and types of interaction involved;
• Conventional economic theories (agglomeration, spillovers etc);
• New ideas on "relational space" and "organised proximity";
• The recent policy discourse.

A Conceptual Framework

Specification:

• It is important to stress that this is a conceptual model, intended to describe and explain. It is not normative. The model should;
• Be sufficiently flexible/broad to accommodate a range of ways in which rural residents, businesses and institutions, interact with urban areas, other rural areas, and within their global context.
• Reflect recent and likely future technological and market changes in modes of interaction.
• Be logically consistent with current understanding of observed patterns of interaction and (insofar as they have been articulated) theoretical concepts.

3 Different Spaces...

Interaction may take place:

• Between contiguous rural hinterlands and their "central place".
• Between generic (non-contiguous) urban and rural zones.
• In the form of "globalised trans-local linkages", based on "organised proximity".

A Typology of Interaction

• Demographic linkages
• Economic transactions and innovation activity
• Delivery of public services
• Exchanges in amenities and environmental goods

Conclusions

• Rural interaction is an increasingly complex phenomenon. "Within hinterland" linkages are only a part of the picture. Linkages between "generic" urban and rural spaces, and globalised "translocal" linkages, are increasingly important for many types of interaction.
• Our conceptual framework needs to reflect this complexity. The 4x3 grid (type of interaction x space) provides a meaningful structure within which to describe rural interactions, to assess change, and formulate policy responses.