

Journal of Rural and Community Development

Call for articles – Special issue:

The development of rural and peripheral territories confronted with metropolization dynamics: Which levers of resilience, social cohesion and well-being?

New deadline: 30 November 2023

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1. SYNOPSIS AND RATIONALES

Rural and peripheral territories are confronted with the twinned dynamics of metropolization and the concentration of key infrastructures and activities in large urban agglomerations (Carrière et al., 2020). They are therefore facing strong pressures (Guéringuer et al., 2016) which impact the very bases of their economic and social development, and also the conditions allowing them to attract and retain population, jobs and infrastructures.

Moreover, and whatever the geographic and institutional context of the countries and regions considered, such territories appear increasingly fragilized and experience difficulties in maintaining their distinctive factors as compared to large urban agglomeration. Among these factors are particularly important those related to a preserved natural environment offering a certain quality of life and individual and collective well-being thanks to their relation to the nature and their easy access to key resources (such as water and food), and also to the benefits of proximity and cooperation relationships contributing to the social cohesion specific to low-density spaces (Hamdouch, 2010; Brot et al., 2012; Servillo et al., 2017).

This fragilization is today even more perceptible due to the multiple consequences of climate change, to the energy crisis, to the exode of the youth attracted by large agglomerations, to the ageing of population, to the rarefaction of certain crucial services (especially health services), etc.

These dynamics have structural impacts of such territories in terms of demographic decline, of erosion of the perpetuation of a viable economic activity and services to the population, and of their ability to preserve the conditions of an attractive quality of life.

However, and this is the key argument justifying this special issue, low-density territories (small and medium-sized towns, suburban areas, rural and semi-rural spaces) are not necessarily condemned to an irreversible decline.

Indeed, on the one hand, the advantages offered by large urban centers are increasingly counterbalanced by numerous negative externalities that erode their residential and economic attractiveness: high prices of land and real estate, overcrowding of the urban space, unsafety, erosion of sociability and social cohesion, all kind of pollutions, etc. These externalities impact the quality of life and the health of the population, and can then, in turn, translate into sources of rejection, even repulsion towards excessive urban concentration. Besides the effects observed during and also after the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for more nature manifested by the populations that suffered confinement in constrained habitats and conditions of life, all issues related to the quality of air, water and food, to social life and to the proximity with natural spaces (Bourdeau-Lepage, 2017; Carrière et al., 2021) appear more and more essential for people living in highly-urbanized environments. Hence a certain “revival of the countryside areas” (Grimault, 2020), even a new attractiveness of small and medium-sized towns (Hamdouch et al., 2017; Servillo et al., 2017; PUCA, 2022) which can potentially “reshuffle the cards” between large cities and less-dense spaces.

On the other hand, confronted with increasing demographic and economic attractiveness difficulties, many small and medium-sized towns try to react and define new approaches to their economic and social development, particularly through better valorizing their distinctive resources (Janin et al., 2015; Gumuchian & Pecqueur, 2007; Colletis & Pecqueur, 2018) and with engaging in more strategic spatial planning approaches and actions that are at the same time more creative, participative and integrated (Hamdouch et al., 2017; Servillo et al., 2017; Nyseth & Hamdouch, 2019; Hamdouch & Nyseth, 2023; Hamdouch et al., 2023a).

Finally, in many countries and regions, the role of small and medium-sized towns and rural areas within a more balanced and cohesive territorial organization is more and more acknowledged and integrated in national policies and in the concerns of public authorities at various spatial scales. Hence, beyond the specific programs dedicated to the support to local and rural development in Europe, Canada and elsewhere in many countries, various innovative tools are emerging aimed at better structuring and governing the relationships between large urban agglomerations and less-dense spaces. These tools seek for a better articulated and concerted territorial development dynamics (Mainet & Rieutort, 2021). From this point of view, the design and implementation of “Reciprocal Contracts” (“Contrats de Réciprocité”) in France between metropolises and rural or peripheral intermunicipal entities (Hamdouch & Carrière, 2022), or the essential role of MRC (“Municipalités Régionales de Comté” - “Regional County Municipalities”) in the Quebec Province (Joyal et al., 2005 ; Gouvernement du Québec, 2019), are particularly interesting.

2. OBJECTIVES

The aim of this special issue is to gather an ensemble of theoretical and/or empirical articles dedicated to the study of development strategies in rural, semi-rural or peripheral territories and communities that could allow them for a better economic and demographic viability through an improvement of their attractiveness for residents and investments while preserving, valorizing or restoring at the same time their distinctive resources, particularly in terms of quality of life, social cohesion, and more participative governance practices

(Hamdouch, Serrano & Serrhini, 2023a; 2023b). In such perspective, their ability to promote and implement creative initiatives and social innovations (Moulaert et al., 2013; Nyseth & Hamdouch, 2019; Alberio & Klein, 2022) as well as institutional innovations (Hamdouch & Nyseth, 2023) appear crucial.

Articles (in English or French) should particularly:

- Present original cases of local development approaches in tune with these logics of social and institutional innovation
- Clearly link the strategies engaged to the constraints experienced by rural and peripheral areas (including small and medium-sized towns), be they general constraints (such as the adaptation to climate change consequences) or specific constraints (demographic decline, erosion of services to the population, job losses, etc.)
- Highlight the new logics of spatial planning deployed at various spatial scales
- Analyze the relationships between less-dense spaces and large urban agglomerations (in terms of competition & predation vs. cooperation and synergies)
- Show how these strategies, logics and relationships can contribute to an enhanced resilience of less-density areas.

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4. IMPORTANT DATES

- Reception of the **full manuscripts**: 30 November 2023 at the latest
- Selection process of acceptable papers by guest editors and appointment of external referees: 30 November 2023 – 31st December 2023
- Evaluation by external referees: 02 January – 28 February 2024
- Feedback to authors and revision of accepted papers: 28 February – 30 April 2024
- Reception of revised versions: 31st May 2024 at the latest
- Check of revised versions and editing work: June-July 2024
- Publication asap end of 2024 or early in 2025 depending on the journal planning.

5. SUBMISSION AND NORMS OF PRESENTATION

Manuscripts proposals should comply with the journal presentation norms, available on the journal website:

<https://journals.brandonu.ca/jrcd/about/submissions>

For these norms, the authors are also invited to have a look of published articles (all in open access) on the journal website.

Full manuscripts should be sent to: abdelillah.hamdouch@univ-tours.fr (with Cc to the 3 other Guest Editors of the Special issue ; see emails above in this call).