Rural-urban relationships

The search for the evidence base

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Outline of presentation

• Rural-urban relationships in policy documents
• Interpretations of the term rural urban relationship
• Rural-urban classification
• Less-explored aspects of rural-urban relationships
• Analysis of Commuting based on Census 2001 figures
• Analysis of Business Moves using the Beta Model
• Conclusion
Rural-urban relationships in policy documents

• A number of policy documents both on national and regional level stress the importance of rural-urban relationships
• Yet it often remains unclear what is really meant by that
• Economic policies for rural areas tend to focus on agriculture/ marketing of regional products/ tourism
• At the same time a necessary diversification of the rural economy is stressed
• Lack of knowledge and detailed policies for the rest of the rural economy and their development in relation to urban areas
Interpretations of the term rural urban relationship

• Patterns of urbanization/”ruralization”
  – Linked to the debate about the definition and classification of rural and urban areas
• Flows (material/informational) or links between rural and urban areas
• Relationship as a partnership or cooperation between rural and urban areas
• …
New urban/rural classification by ONS

- Categories: Urban; Fringe and town; Village, hamlet and dispersed households
- Differentiation by sparse/remote and less sparse/non-remote
• Long distance commuting 2001
  – Based on Census 2001
  – Calculated distance between postcodes of place of work and place of residence
  – Easier to analyse than directional flows
  – High shares in parts of Allerdale, the southern wards of Lancaster and parts of Cheshire/Vale Royal
  – Not surprisingly generally low rates in all urban areas
  – Surprisingly low rates in rural parts of Lancashire and South Lakeland
  – In comparison with the rest of England generally low rate of long distance commuting.
• **Working at or from home 2001**
  - Based on Census 2001
  - Calculated distance between postcodes of place of work and place of residence
  - Clear rural urban-difference
  - Reflection of the higher share of people working in agriculture or tourism
  - In comparison with the rest of England relatively high share of homework
• Changes in long-distance commuting
  – Comparison of Census 1991/2001
  – Figures for 1991 are less reliable as these are based on a sample
  – Decrease of the share of long distance commuting in some rural regions such as West of London
  – This trend is not as clear in the rest of England nor in the North West region
Is there an urban-rural shift of business activities?

- Not many detailed studies about rural economy beyond agriculture and tourism
- Study by Keeble/Tyler in early 1990s
  - Different structures of change in accessible and remote rural locations
  - Both categories showed significant growth
  - High growth rates in job creation in the 1980s slowed down recently
  - High growth rates in manufacturing but increasingly also service sector
  - Definition used includes small- and medium-sized towns
- Study by Kiehl/Panebianco about urban-rural employment shift in Western Europe
  - UK, Germany, Italy
  - Importance of manufacturing sector
- The studies did not discuss the impact on rural-urban relationships or on issues like commuting flows
- Most studies so far investigate a rather large spatial scale
• Small firm birth rate 2003
  – VAT registrations per 10000 economically active population
  – Highest rates in Trafford, Ribble Valley Macclesfield and South Lakeland
  – Low rates in Merseyside and the north of Greater Manchester, Lancaster and the coastal districts in Cumbria
  – No clear rural-urban difference
  – Lowest possible level of analysis is local authority district
Getting a more detailed picture – the Beta Model

- Database monitoring business location, appearance and moves on a small scale
- Mainly based on address data from Yellow Pages
- Currently mainly used for policy evaluation of area based regeneration initiatives
- Not yet explored for academic work or used in a rural context
- Limited access allowed by the company for PhD research
Two case studies

- **Ribble Valley**
  - Very high small firm birth rate
  - Comparatively low share of long-distance commuters
  - Low unemployment rate
  - High average income
  - Located nearby the coastal towns of Lancashire and medium-sized towns north of Manchester
  - Relatively high housing prices in the North of the district

- **Congleton**
  - Medium small firm birth rate
  - Low to high share of long-distance commuting
  - Very low unemployment rate
  - Located in accessible distance to the Manchester/Liverpool conurbations and other medium-sized towns in the West Midlands
  - Medium average income
  - Low housing prices compared to the rest of Cheshire
Conclusion

- Number of overall movements is quite low per ward – typically 1 to 3 over the four years observed.
- Movement tends to take place inside and between neighbouring local authorities and less on a region-wide level.
- No significant difference between the movement on the region-wide and nation wide level.
- Analysis is currently quite time consuming due to necessary manual adjustments.
Conclusion

• Some signs of increased economic independence of some rural areas
• This might lead to a strengthened socio-economic disparity between rural and urban areas
• It remains to be seen in how far these diverging interests would lead to a process of rational cooperation between rural and urban areas.
• Some evidence based approaches to understand rural-urban links and relationships might support such a process.
• Yet the voluntary evolvement of such a rational cooperation process is not very likely given the complex nature of rural-urban relationships.