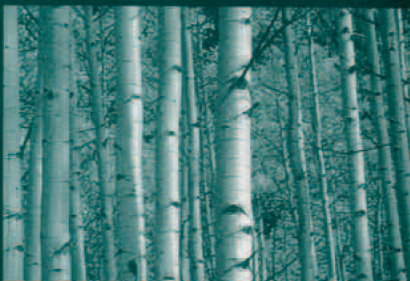


The City's Hinterland

Dynamism and Divergence
in Europe's Peri-Urban
Territories

Edited by
Keith Hoggart



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KEITH HOGGART

King's College London, UK



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Chapter 1

City Hinterlands in European Space

Keith Hoggart

Introduction

The book brings together research in four European countries on the nature and impact on rural areas of linkages with cities. Funded by the European Commission under the Quality of Life and Management of Living Resources Programme,¹ the research for this project was designed to explore a variety of activity sectors and agents in rural zones, with a view to identifying how urban pressure on rural areas produced particular mutations and generated new dynamics of rural change. This book focused on particular aspects of this wider project, with a specific focus on the consequences for employment, housing and services of intensifying rural links with cities. The impetus behind this research was a sense that insufficient attention has been devoted to understanding city hinterlands in Europe. This is an important lapse if we are to grasp positive possibilities for future change in the European space economy. As Berg and associates (1982) recognized more than 20 years ago, Europe has shifted from seeing regional development emerging from differences in sectoral change, to a situation in which new sectoral developments depend on regional specificities. Today, the importance of local/regional institutional 'thickness', of geographically grounded networks, and of 'learning regions', are widely recognized as critical to the advancement of local and regional economies (e.g. Morgan, 1997; Keeble *et al.*, 1999; Castells, 2000). This prompts an impetus toward identifying what different geographical contexts embody that stimulates socio-economic change. Of course, before such questions are asked, a primary issue is what kind of geographical focus should attract investigative attention. For some the answer lies in administrative regions, which explains the popularity of studies exploring differences between provincial, (formal) regional or local government areas. Undoubtedly such areas are relevant for some dimensions of human activity. But when it comes to understanding the breadth of human endeavour, activity patterns tend not to be channelled by political boundaries but

¹ The research programme was entitled 'Urban pressure on rural areas (NEWRUR): mutations and dynamics of peri-urban rural processes' (contract QLK5-CT-2000-00094), which was funded by the DG-VI component of Framework Five under Key Action 5, on 'Sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry and integrated development of rural areas including mountain areas'.

rather wash over them; they might irritate and try to regulate but political boundaries rarely encompass the geography of socio-economic life (e.g. UK Royal Commission on Local Government in England, 1969). More proximate to real life choices, whether personal or corporate, are interaction systems forged around city-regions. Yet, while city-centred regions dominate large tracts of the European space (Herrschel and Newman, 2002), outdated visions of city-region fortunes being driven simply by events in the core city need discarding (Berry, 1970). It might well be, as Dunford and Perrons (1994) note, that successful regional economies are centred around major cities, but this does not mean the city as such determines the success of the city-region. In an economic climate in which there are concerns about diseconomies from over-congested cities, in which 'the environment' has become a key economic attraction, with the vitality of a region depending upon quality of life considerations, the imagery that rural areas offer 'a good life', with supportive community cohesion, a lack of social conflict and (relatively) crime-free conditions, means that country areas and rural landscapes have become central to city-region futures (e.g. Keeble *et al.*, 1992; Cabus and Vanhaverbeke, 2003).

The critical message is that rural hinterlands are not mere city 'appendages' but are integral to development processes that bear on the whole of a city-region, such that if 'appropriate' development does not occur in these areas this could impact on the whole city-region. Recently, this vision has been embodied in conceptions of a future European Union, as illustrated in fairly widespread acceptance of the principles embodied in the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (Faludi and Waterhout, 2002). As explored in more detail below, the ESDP specifies that polycentric development should be promoted across Europe, in order to enhance life chances away from the continental European economic core (Commission of the European Communities, 1999). Yet this Perspective is not just about hierarchies of city-regions. It also promotes the message that only with equality in rural-urban relationships will city-regions generate the creative capacity required to heighten local capacities to compete outside the European core. What the chapters in this book seek to explore is how far current processes within city-regions are supportive of the kind of integrated development that the ESDP calls for, and, if not, why not.

Expressed more broadly, the main reasons for writing this book are threefold: first, because there is a shortage of research on the rural commuter belts of major cities, yet these are major loci of population change, economic growth and dynamic social change within city-regions, such that neither change within cities nor change in more traditional rural environments can be understood adequately without a solid appreciation of the rural commuter belt, its functioning and conflicting tendencies (e.g. Commission of the European Communities, 1999); second, because, as the ESDP shows, rural areas are central arenas within policy debates at the moment, with major readjustments in the cultural, economic and social condition of the countryside, and with policy debate rife over rural issues, yet with comparatively little in-depth analysis of the interaction (and mutual disturbance) of different sectors and segments within rural zones (e.g. Woods, 2005), which this book explores; and, third, because there is an ongoing need for

comparative understanding on how similar processes within the European Union are manifest in both distinctive and shared ways across nations. In approaching these issues with an eye to the manner in which processes in different activity spheres or 'sectors' interact and disturb one another, the chapters of this book seek to move away from commonplace approaches to exploring cross-national differences in Europe, which commonly focus on single sectors or policy fields (e.g. Pfau-Effinger, 1994; Billaud *et al.*, 1997; Golland, 1998). This book is intended not simply to make statements about the nature of change in rural hinterlands but also to demonstrate appropriate viewpoints from which to interpret and understand the evolving diversity that characterizes rural Europe.

As for this chapter, its intentions are more modest, with three main issues targeted for attention. The first is to clarify what we mean by the city's hinterland, as compared with the cacophony of concepts like exurbs, peri-urban zones and urban fringe that overlap with this phrase. This commentary is not contemplative definitional musing, but seeks to highlight an absence of clarity over the geography of significant city-rural interactions. This is followed by an exploration of the policy context of hinterland areas, which pays particular attention to the ESDP, especially in establishing the principles policy-makers have specified as providing an acceptable basis on which the future advancement of city-regions is predicated (e.g. Faludi, 2003). This leads onto a closer examination of the themes that are explored in the research chapters that comprise the rest of the book.

Rurality in the City's Hinterland

The research project that led to this book started with the rather unpromising nomenclature of exploring the impact of urban centres on rural areas by way of investigating change in peri-urban areas. For those who are not aficionados of peri-urbanization, the incongruity of this quest might not be transparent, so it needs emphasizing that the concept 'peri-urban' neither suffers from universal usage, nor is there exactitude over its meaning. Of note here is the potential for confusion over the geographical extent of 'peri-urban' territory. Thus, embodied within Errington's (1994) claim that peri-urban zones are a forgotten European territory, is the heavy colouring of a definitional fix. It takes little time reading Errington's paper to grasp that the vision of peri-urban he presents is known more commonly as 'the rural-urban fringe'. The origin of this concept has been traced by Whitehand (1988) to the 1936 writings of the German geographer Herbert Louis.² An early US study of this 'fringe' defined it as '... that area of interpenetrating rural and urban land uses peripheral to the modern city' (Martin, 1953, p.iii). Similar phraseology is found in Bryant and associates' (1982, p.11) notion that the fringe is an area of transition between well-recognized urban land-uses and agricultural/rural areas, or in Elson's (1987, p.19) decree that the urban fringe is '... the urban shadow, an area of fragmented and "intruded" farmland near the urban fence'. In

2 Audivac (1999) by contrast ascribes the idea to T.L. Smith in 1937, as the built-up area just outside the official limits of a city.

earlier work, Elson (1979) showed a further similarity with Martin, for he saw the urban fringe concept drawing attention to particular problems, like land-use transition and mixed land-uses. This insight is apparent in Martin's (1953) codifying the chaos of mixed land-uses that he associated with the fringe through descriptive attachments like 'marginal area' and 'twilight zone'. But if a complex interweaving of land-uses characterizes such areas, then this undoubtedly helps explain Errington's (1994) conclusion that fringe areas are little investigated in countries like Britain.

At one time urban fringe areas in the UK were zones of keen political and public interest, but the concern and antagonism that was generated by changes in these zones in the 1920s and 1930s led to strong opposition to their expansion (Lowerson, 1980; Jeans, 1990), which culminated in the passing of the London Green Belt Act in 1938 (Munton, 1983). With continued aggravation over the prospect of 'urban sprawl' and outward ribbon development, enactments of green belt protection became more common after the Second World War (Elson, 1986). Indeed, even though 1980s Conservative governments sought to water down other regulatory arms of the land-use planning system, public opposition restricted any desire to weaken green belt restraints (Bishop, 1998). Far from seeing a patchwork of land-uses in the rural-urban fringe, in Britain at least clinical lines of land-use distinction continued to be drawn between rural and urban territories. Those zones that had an uncertain land-use purpose in earlier decades found former confusion eradicated, either through infilling or by enforced land-use reversals (Hardy and Ward, 1984).

This does not mean that the immediate zones around the edge of built-up urban areas have not been of research interest, even if land-use planning keeps sharp lines of distinction between urban and rural (e.g. Ilbery, 1991). Yet the focus on this zone is rather restricted, owing to the limitations imposed by land-use planning. Hence, it has long been recognized that: 'Urban pressures are, for the most part, only of great significance to farmers' business practices on the immediate urban fringe' (Munton, 1974, p.216). Looking at activity spheres that extend beyond such limited effects, urban impacts on rural areas stretch across much more extensive territories. But do these constitute part of the 'urban fringe'? Capturing the indeterminacy with which this concept has been employed, Pryor (1968) holds that we need to distinguish between the urban-rural fringe, in which housing density is above average for the fringe as a whole, and the rural-urban fringe, where it is below the average. Readers might need to read the last sentence twice, for this writer at least finds the slippage from urban-rural to rural-urban an easy distinction to miss when 'fringe' is attached to the expression. Uncertainty over meaning is brought into further focus by some commentators interpreting the 'fringe' as an extensive hinterland zone. Thus, Lapping and Furuseth (1999, p.1) charge that, lying 40-50 miles (65-80km) from every major urban concentration, is a vast territory which can be recognized as the rural-urban fringe. Precisely this area is embodied in the term 'regional city' by Bryant and associates (1982, p.8), is captured in Herington's (1984) 'outer city' and is not far from designations of city-centred travel-to-work areas (Champion *et al.*, 1987).

Moreover, in contrast to Errington's (1994) use of the phrase, in France such spacious geographical areas are known as 'peri-urban' zones. That said, as with the 'urban fringe', embodied within the French notion of a peri-urban zone is an understanding that there is a mingling of open country and built-up territory, with this mixed land-use zone occurring beyond suburban zones as you travel outwards from central cities (Cadene, 1990). However, as with their counterparts in other nations and continents, French researchers have been liberal in their interpretations of what peri-urban and peri-urbanization mean. One symbol of this is the varied terms that are used to explain the patterns, processes and consequences of peri-urbanization, with 'rurbanization' used to express processes of urban sprawl (Bauer and Roux, 1976), while other writers refer to 'exurbanization' or 'suburbanization' to capture the same processes and phenomena others call 'peri-urbanization'. In good part this reflects different interpretations of the processes and areas involved. For some, peri-urbanization is simply a form of urban sprawl (Nicot, 1995). More generally, peri-urbanization is linked to an increasing rural population in areas adjacent to cities and towns, alongside processes of social and functional recomposition within these areas. Such interpretations tend to view the urban-rural relationship as one-way, with rural areas considered by urbanites as sites of consumption (Bauer and Roux, 1976).

At least in so far as a variety of terms are used to signify such processes, the picture in Germany is similar to that in France. A key difference is that, like Britain, in Germany the concept 'peri-urban' has little currency. Instead, the terms dis-urbanization or exurbanization are more common. Similarly, in Spain the more common terminology is to refer to 'rururban' areas. What is meant by these notions is the growth of cities into their wider surroundings, alongside a relocation of city populations, and potentially spheres of administrative control, into the hinterland. In Germany, this process is conceptualized as a continuation of urbanization and suburbanization (e.g. Bär, 2003). From this perspective peri-urbanization is a form of suburbanization into new, outer rings (Heineberg, 2003). In Spain, the urban dispersion process has likewise occurred over zones with imprecise limits, where 'country' and 'city' ways of life are mixed, in territories that see the fastest and deepest population and morphological change of all urban spaces (Zárate, 1984, p.100). As with France and Germany, this expansion into non-urban and non-contiguous urban (or small town) space is associated with an intermingling of 'urban' and 'rural' land-uses as urban housing and economic activities penetrate into rural milieu (Chevalier, 1993; Heineberg, 2003).

When we look at the French, the German and the Spanish cases, we see elements of consistency in socio-cultural and landscape change in zones near urban edges (the urban fringe), as well as in districts that are more distant from the urban rim (i.e. more broadly across a city's rural hinterland). In the UK the intermingling of land-uses identified here is less common, as the land-use planning system keeps vigorous check on the incursion of 'urban land-uses' into 'the countryside'. Yet while they are to some extent 'invisible' as physical manifestations, the cultural, economic and social ties that bind rural and urban together in the UK are not only similar to those in France, Germany and Spain, but are arguably more potent. One

good reason for this is the length of time (and geographical extent) over which city and hinterland have been bound together within the UK. Consider, for example, an observation made almost 100 years ago about South East England:

In a manner all southeastern England is a single urban community; for steam and electricity are changing our geographical conceptions. A city in an economic sense is no longer an area covered continuously with streets and houses ... The metropolis in its largest meaning includes all the counties for whose inhabitants London is 'Town', whose men do habitual business there, whose women buy there, whose morning paper is printed there, whose standard of thought is determined there. East Anglia and the West of England possess a certain independence by virtue of their comparatively remote position, but, for various reasons, even they belong effectively to Metropolitan England. (Mackinder, 1907, p.258)

At the start of the twentieth century localized areas were clearly regarded as 'rural' within the regional landscape of South East England, with fears over the potential 'urban capture' of villages and hamlets (e.g. Bourne, 1912), yet as Mackinder astutely asserts the central features of the South East have long been driven by London. The existence of localized ruralities in urbanized regions points to the importance of scale in understanding the intensity and character of city-rural linkages. Smaller towns can have localized inter-relations with surrounding rural areas, irrespective of whether these towns are in rural regions or fall within the regional orbit of a major city. Of course, if the latter is the case, then the nature of urban-rural interactions can be expected to be more complex, much as the dispersal of population growth impulses from London has seen less direct movement from London to rural areas than shifts down the urban hierarchy in an outward city – town – rural flow (Warnes, 1991; Champion and Congdon, 1992).

One means of addressing such complexity is to recognize a hierarchy of (often urban-centred) 'functional regions', within which a distinction is drawn between the 'regional' scale and more 'localized' networks of exchange. For Britain, for example, travel-to-work areas identify regional scale journeys to work that have a shared focus on one city, with few zones left which merit the designation 'rural travel-to-work areas' because their commuter flows are dispersed across a series of small towns and villages (Coombes *et al.*, 1982; Atkins *et al.*, 1996). Yet, if we take Connell's (1974) suggestion, that an urban commuter belt might be comprised of areas from which at least 20 per cent of the working population travel to work, then we can anticipate more localized travel-to-work areas, which are often centred on one or more small towns (Table 1.1). Add into this equation what urban 'catchment' areas might look like for other economic or social activities, and the ease of classifying coherent 'city-regions' stands on shakier ground (Coombes, 2000). Hence, when writing on what constitutes 'exurban', Bell (1992, p.67) argues that: '... a certain indeterminacy is perhaps central to their definition. What I mean by exurbs is that region where plenty of city money is to be had, but where pastures, fields, woods, or other forms of rural enterprise clearly dominate the landscape. Exurbs, then, are areas where people likely argue from time to time if this is really still the country'. That the issue of whether village and countryside are 'really rural' characterizes discussions in England as much as in other parts of

Europe, and has done so for some time (e.g. Anderson and Anderson, 1965; Spindler, 1973), bears testimony to the dominant position of identity and linkage over physical form in the determination of the city's hinterland.

Table 1.1 Mean Average Values for Variables Used to Classify Rural NUTS5 Areas into Journey-to-Work Zones in Eastern England

Rural ward type	Distance To nearest city (km)	% 'local' workers	% working in main city	% working in secondary cities	Number of rural NUTS5 areas
Single-city centred commuter belts	9.2	22.5	43.8	6.0	125
Multi-city centred commuter belts	11.0	25.1	20.4	19.8	106
Dispersed commuting areas	16.0	35.1	18.5	6.2	143
Rural zones near mid-sized towns	26.5	23.2	8.9	4.3	109
'Self-contained' rural areas	33.3	41.6	5.0	2.3	113

Note: These computations are based on 1991 Census data. 'Local workers' have paid employment in the NUTS5 area in which they live. 'Main' city refers to the city receiving the largest number of commuters from a rural NUTS5 area. 'Cities' are built-up areas with at least 50 000 inhabitants. 'Rural' wards are those with a population density of less than 400 per square kilometre. Eastern England is comprised of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

Critically, then, in this book we are not seeking to provide exactitude over what is the city's hinterland. Terms like exurbs, peri-urban, urban fringe and the like have a value in drawing attention to particular processes or causal linkages, but their usage is tempered by national custom, personal preference and the content of the argument being made. Providing a common method for demarcating European city hinterlands is far from an easy task, even if there were agreement on what kind of linkages are most fundamental to city-hinterland interactions (e.g. Cheshire *et al.*, 1996). Of course, one element of these interactions is their potentially uneven importance across nations; the exploration of which is one of the objectives of this book. In order to explore whether dissimilar dimensions of rural-urban linkages make significant impressions on rural and urban realms, it is important to have an open-mind about the geographical spread for significant city-hinterland linkages. This does not mean this book approaches rural-urban interactions in the same manner as it views globalization processes. For sure, the Wall Street Crash of 1929 had a severe impact on rural Europe, just as it did on cities (Stevenson and Cook, 1977). This does not mean that the financial networks linking rural zones to events in New York constitute urban-rural linkages in the same manner as a city acts as a service centre for its primary hinterland. The nature of interactions between city and hinterland are more diverse, while retaining significant depth, than those that bind rural areas in one part of the world to markets, political decisions and specific places continents away (e.g. Sanderson, 1986). The city-regions that are

the focus of attention in this book are of a kind that binds cultural, economic, political and social fortunes together within central cities and their primary hinterland territories.

City-Rural Linkages and City-Region Fortunes

'Traditional' models of the diffusion of growth impulses envisage cities as centres of dynamism, with rural areas benefiting from urban spread effects (e.g. Berry, 1970). The simplicity of this model is now recognized as a serious shortcoming. For one, urban growth in the context of impoverished rural regions is quite a different process from that experienced alongside vibrant rural economies. Particularly in southern Europe, the apparent strength of some cities in terms of demographic growth results more from a lack of rural options than urban dynamism. Far from spreading growth benefits into the countryside, cities can be weighed down by rural impoverishment, so their problems are intensified by in-migration from the surrounding countryside (Cheshire and Hay, 1989). Yet city problems can also emanate from out-migration to surrounding communities. Much as in the USA (Berry, 1980), a 'suburbanization' process has been occurring in western European cities that has been accompanied by many city cores losing population, with contiguous suburban 'rings' seeing a slow down in population growth (Dematteis, 1998). Fundamental to this new demographic and economic geography of city-regions is a vision of urban influence extending outwards. Here the analogy of a bulldozer has been used by some (Audivac, 1999), although Hart (1991) prefers the imagery of a bow-wave, wherein the pressures from the city on surrounding rural areas are akin to a ship pushing waves forward as it moves through the water.

This pattern of changing urban fortunes has been captured by some in rather unidimensional models of urban growth (e.g. Berg *et al.*, 1982). Although compressing 'reality' rather hard, such models focus attention on transitions over time, as well as highlighting key dimensions of temporal change. Yet models of this kind are most advances in the USA, where processes of unfettered metropolitan decentralization started much earlier than in Europe. As Leinberger (1996) explained the US situation, metropolitan expansion occurred in four (or possibly five) stages. The first generation of growth had the central city as the focus for expansion. By the 1960s and 1970s, a second growth generation had begun, wherein expansion occurred primarily 3-10 kilometres from downtown, largely around freeways. This outward flow strengthened over time, such that the third generation was characterized by the emergence of new suburban centres adjacent to large tracts of upper-middle class and even higher income housing, with manufacturing growth located even farther from the central city. In the fourth generation, which many commentators see today, the growth foci are farther from downtown (some 6-20km beyond third generation centres), with corridors of office and manufacturing activity in low-density semi-rural areas (the prospect of a fifth generation is seen to have started with major warehouse developments even farther