Project acronym: **DEMo4PPL**
Project full title: **Digital Education Modules 4 Participatory Planning**

OPT-T6: PARTICIPATORY PLANNING IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Short description

This course introduces students to the complexities of rural development, focusing on participatory strategies and the integration of cultural and social diversity. Through an exploration of socio-economic and technological challenges faced by marginalised rural communities, students will learn to propose effective, inclusive strategies for sustainable development. Emphasis is placed on understanding and applying the principles of participatory planning within the context of EU rural development frameworks, including relevant agendas and instruments.

By the end of the course, students will critically assess the role of rural identities in shaping public participation and develop approaches that foster diversity and inclusion in development programmes. They will also evaluate the effectiveness of EU policies and instruments in supporting participatory planning in rural areas.

2. Keywords

Rural Development; Participatory Planning; Social and Spatial Inclusion; EU Rural Frameworks

3. Content
3.1. Socio-economic and technological exclusion of marginalised groups and communities in rural areas

The concept of social exclusion is commonly associated with poverty, social and spatial inequalities, marginalisation and discrimination, or the emergence of an

underclass group in the social structure. Exclusion and marginalisation are related concepts and often used interchangeably in everyday language. However, there are fundamental differences between them, resulting from the degree of intensity of the phenomenon. While marginalisation refers to the limitation of participation of individuals or groups in the basic institutions of a given public order or negligible participation in important aspects of social life, social exclusion results directly from the degree of intensity of this phenomenon.

Exclusion is a more advanced form of marginalisation. It is the effect of the marginalisation process, with the emphasis being placed more on the dynamics than on the description of its final consequences. It is therefore impossible to equate poverty with social exclusion. Both phenomena can be treated as processes of accumulating various negative factors related to both economic and social marginalisation. Complexity of rural territories in terms of socio-economic and technological exclusion of marginalised groups should be underlined. Some rural areas can be described both as disadvantaged regions with vulnerable social groups and as destinations for households seeking refuge from the challenges of contemporary urban living. Some other rural areas face disadvantages to some extent in terms of development, they demonstrate greater resilience in economic terms. Within the EU, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) plays a central role in this resilience. CAP payments remain unaffected during crises and provide a reliable source of income for rural communities.

Socio-economic and technological exclusion results from social and spatial inequalities. The divergence between thriving urban regions and more remote rural areas is one of the key axes along which spatial and social injustices manifest. While social and spatial inequalities can be observed in both urban and rural territories, the range and complexity of stakeholders and resources in metropolitan regions differ significantly from those in remote rural areas. This highlights the need for a particular focus on rural territories. Rural localities are shaped by several key aspects of social and spatial injustice:

– restricted access to public services, compounded by weak governance frameworks,
– insufficient job opportunities and persistent structural unemployment,
– adverse demographic trends (depopulation and ageing) coupled with the geographic isolation of rural areas, and
– the stigmatization of rural communities through stereotypes and labelling processes.

Among all the aforementioned aspects, limited public services and weak governance frameworks pose significant challenges in disadvantaged rural territories, particularly among marginalised groups. These issues often give rise to grassroots initiatives aimed at rural development, where bottom-up actions replace formal planning. Local NGOs or volunteer groups frequently step in to provide essential services, compensating for inadequate municipal and governmental support and effectively taking on public responsibilities. In rural areas, the demand for better public services is not about replicating urban living standards but about addressing local specificities and ensuring that the unique needs of these communities are recognized and supported by more influential entities. In this context, social and spatial justice prioritize

equity over equality, focusing on place-based, equitable procedures and distribution mechanisms designed to accommodate the diverse conditions of rural localities. Such an approach is essential for developing effective participatory strategies in rural development planning.

Geographical distance poses significant challenges for rural areas, particularly where there are no employment opportunities within a feasible daily commuting range. While sparsely populated rural regions are often valued for their alternative lifestyles, sense of community, social security, and natural beauty, they are simultaneously perceived as "left behind" due to limited access to resources and opportunities. Dysfunctional local public transportation systems exacerbate physical isolation and remoteness, making mobility a critical issue. Addressing these challenges requires targeted planning actions to improve transportation infrastructure and connectivity, ensuring that rural areas are better integrated and their residents have equitable access to employment and essential services.

Negative demographic processes observed in rural areas are closely linked to limited public services, weak governance frameworks, and the lack of employment opportunities. These factors drive selective outmigration, particularly among younger, well-educated individuals seeking job opportunities in urban regions. Over time, this outmigration leads to population decline, ageing communities, and the transformation of local societies. The resulting demographic shrinkage often signals broader economic and labour market decline, creating a vicious cycle that reinforces feelings of peripheralization and remoteness. As these challenges intensify, marginalised groups in disadvantaged rural territories increasingly become the majority, further exacerbating the socio-economic disparities and the sense of being "left behind".

In disadvantaged rural areas, the interplay of remoteness, social polarization, and demographic fragmentation is often intensified by stigmatization and negative labelling. These regions are frequently burdened with harmful stereotypes that reinforce their negative social image, perpetuating injustices both externally and internally. Stigmatization is often internalized by rural residents, leading to feelings of guilt, shame, and negative self-perception. This internalized stigma can hinder development efforts by discouraging local initiatives and diminishing confidence in the potential for positive change. Operating at various geographical scales, stigmatization and negative labelling deepen the marginalisation and exclusion of rural communities, further isolating them socially, economically, and technologically (Jelinek et al., 2020).

Technological exclusion of disadvantaged groups in rural territories stems from a combination of structural, economic, and social barriers. Limited infrastructure makes rural areas high-cost markets, deterring telecommunications providers and leaving communities without reliable Internet access. This digital divide curtails opportunities for remote work, online education, and access to vital digital services, widening regional disparities. Beyond infrastructure, digital exclusion is influenced by low levels of digital literacy, educational attainment, and limited motivation to adopt new technologies (Janc et al., 2022; Janc & Siłka, 2016). The remoteness of rural areas exacerbates these challenges, delaying their integration into the digital economy. Overcoming this exclusion requires addressing the four levels of access to new technologies:

- Motivation: Encouraging interest in and perceived value of using digital tools.
- Physical Access: Ensuring the availability of devices and reliable Internet connectivity.
- Skills: Building strategic, informational, and operational abilities to navigate digital technologies effectively.
- Usage: Promoting diverse and meaningful applications of the Internet for economic, educational, and social purposes.

Policies aimed at reducing these inequalities must consider the specific challenges of rural areas to foster genuine digital inclusion (van Dijk, 2005).

3.2. Participatory strategies for rural development planning

Strengthening participatory planning in rural areas requires multifaceted strategies aimed at building political will and sensitising key stakeholders to the benefits of genuine involvement of rural communities in development. A crucial first step is sensitising governments, particularly politicians, decision-makers, and planners, to the importance of participatory approaches. This can be achieved through various methods such as organising conferences, seminars, and field trips that highlight the success of participatory projects. Demonstrating tangible outcomes can help convince policymakers of the effectiveness of involving local populations in decision-making processes. Mass media campaigns, including pamphlets and audiovisual materials, can also play a significant role in spreading awareness and garnering support for participatory planning.

In addition to sensitising government officials, promoting policy dialogues between national and international development agencies, including NGOs, is essential. These dialogues can help to align policy frameworks with the needs of disadvantaged rural communities. Fostering a collaborative approach across various stakeholders ensures that rural development policies address crucial issues such as decentralisation, women's inclusion, and the reorientation of services like extension, credit, and input supply to benefit the rural poor. Encouraging multi-sectoral cooperation and advocacy from international bodies can also strengthen the policies needed to support participatory projects, ensuring they are integrated into broader development agendas.

Finally, the planning and implementation of participatory approaches in larger-scale projects require careful coordination among various institutions. Strategies to promote participatory planning within these projects include holding meetings, workshops, and briefing sessions to educate planners and project implementers about the importance of incorporating participation from the outset. Additionally, involving participatory experts in the project cycle and ensuring that participation is considered during the identification, preparation, and evaluation stages can enhance the overall effectiveness of the approach. By embedding participatory principles early in the project cycle, rural communities can play an active role in shaping development strategies that directly address their needs and aspirations (van Heck, 2003).

A crucial aspect in planning practice is the participation of local leaders rather than all members of a community, especially in contexts where full participation is not feasible.

Operating through community leaders can help achieve practical results by avoiding local conflicts or tensions, making the process less provocative. However, this approach has been criticised for reinforcing existing power structures that may marginalise disadvantaged groups. In some cases, it can lead to the dominance of a small group of individuals who create the appearance of consensus, while the interests of the wider community, particularly the poor, are not fully represented.

Promoting the participation of the most marginalised groups can be especially challenging. Efforts to involve disadvantaged groups often face the barrier that those who are most in need lack the resources to participate in community initiatives. While strategies may focus on building participation through resource centres, public meetings, and training, it can still be difficult to engage the poorest in decision-making and management processes. The evidence remains inconclusive as to whether focusing on the most disadvantaged or involving the broader community and increasing overall resources and opportunities ultimately benefits the poor more effectively (Lowe et al., 1999).

Examples of participatory strategies for rural development planning are:

– **Knowledge-based participatory strategy** for rural development planning focuses on fostering innovation and disseminating knowledge in peripheral areas, often seen as less innovative due to their remoteness and limited technological creativity. This approach emphasizes the combination of technological, organizational, and territorial innovation, involving local stakeholders in the design and implementation of research programs. By engaging local partners, rural areas can generate new knowledge that benefits the community and can be transferred to other sectors or regions. A comprehensive territorial vision for knowledge-based rural development, supported by multidisciplinary and participatory research programs, can contribute significantly to rural innovation. Key areas of focus within this strategy include the governance of agricultural lands, territorial attractiveness and well-being, agroecological transitions, territorialized food systems, and the bioeconomy and circular economy (Torre et al., 2023).

– **Community-led development** is a participatory strategy increasingly used in rural areas, promoting local control and minimal state intervention. It is often seen as empowering, allowing communities to manage risks and drive change. However, this strategy is complex, as it relies heavily on expert knowledge to define and guide development efforts. Experts provide the frameworks and technical knowledge within which communities operate, shaping the boundaries of empowerment. The concept of risk is central, with communities encouraged to self-manage in response to various challenges, but always within limits set by external experts. Thus, while community-led development fosters local ownership, it also reinforces the role of expertise, sometimes limiting true autonomy and maintaining existing power structures (Herbert-Cheshire & Higgins, 2004).

– **Multistakeholder social learning** is a participatory strategy that emphasizes structured, ongoing interactions between diverse stakeholders in rural

development, particularly in complex contexts like natural resource management. This approach fosters deliberation, trust-building, and knowledge sharing, which enhances decision-making and problem-solving capacities. By encouraging sustained engagement, it leads to a deeper understanding of human-environment dynamics and strengthens relationships among stakeholders. Social learning occurs at three levels: individual, network, and systems, helping to integrate different perspectives into decision processes. Multistakeholder social learning holds great potential for improving rural policy, planning, and investment, by fostering a more inclusive and informed approach to development (Lamboll et al., 2021).

3.3. Rural identities and their role in public participation

Rural identity refers to the sense of belonging and shared characteristics that individuals or communities associate with living in rural areas. It is shaped by factors such as geographic isolation, agricultural or nature-based livelihoods, close-knit social networks, and traditional cultural practices. This identity often emphasizes values like self-reliance, community solidarity, and a connection to the land. The rural identity varies across regions, cultures, and socio-economic contexts.

Understanding rural identities is crucial in public engagement and policymaking because it ensures that the unique perspectives, needs, and challenges of rural communities are adequately represented and addressed. Rural identities often shape how individuals interact with governance systems, influencing their trust, priorities, and willingness to participate. Recognizing these identities helps policymakers design initiatives that are culturally relevant and context-specific, fostering stronger connections between rural communities and public institutions.

The cultural dimensions of rural identity refer to the shared traditions, values, practices, and ways of life that define the social and cultural fabric of rural communities. Rural communities often preserve cultural customs, festivals, folklore, and crafts that are passed down through generations, creating a sense of continuity and belonging. A slower-paced, land-centred way of life and an appreciation for hard work, often tied to agricultural or nature-based activities, contribute to rural identity. Rural identity is often deeply connected to religious or spiritual practices, reflecting the moral and ethical values of the community.

Agriculture, local economies, and employment patterns play a significant role in shaping rural identity by influencing daily life, social structures, and values in rural communities. Farming and livestock rearing are commonly central to rural livelihoods, deeply connecting individuals to the land and fostering values such as self-reliance, resilience, and stewardship of natural resources. Rural economies often revolve around natural resources like agriculture, forestry, or fishing. This dependency shapes identities through shared experiences of working with the land and navigating challenges like climate change, market fluctuations, or policy shifts. Rural communities often take pride in producing food or materials that sustain urban areas, reinforcing their identity as contributors to broader societal needs.

Recently, rural identities may be considered in opposition to the neoliberal growth paradigm, serving as a key factor in defining rural development. It is worth noting that many policymakers and researchers often express positive attitudes towards the concept of sustainable development but fail to question the paradoxical embedding of the neoliberal growth paradigm within it. Success is frequently identified as the development goal of rural areas, with success zones being regions of economic growth that stand out from their neighbours. However, this view of success is inherently relative, producing both winners and losers. As a result, a higher level of development in some regions is often accompanied by increased disparities at the local level.

In the context of rural development, it is also important to recognise the gradual shift away from Fordist mass consumption towards post-Fordist (in economic terms) and postmodernist (in cultural and social terms) emphases on quality of experience. Rejecting the neoliberal ontology, which equates development with the growth paradigm, allows for alternative ontologies. Adopting these alternative perspectives can foster development that avoids generating negative ecological, social, cultural, and economic effects. These ontological differences manifest across various groups inhabiting rural areas: farmers, agricultural workers, employees of non-agricultural sectors, and intelligentsia (see Table 1).

Table 1: Ontological differences manifested across various groups inhabiting rural areas (source: Napierała & Leśniewska-Napierała, 2024)

Group	Characteristic	Ontological perspective of development
Farmers	People who have extremely lasting ties with rural areas, both due to history, tradition and ownership of agricultural land	Cultural and emotional values go beyond neoliberal growth; development must respect tradition
Agricultural workers	People employed in agriculture	Diverse ontological perspectives of development
Employees of non-agricultural sectors	An extremely diverse group of people who, depending on the fact of owning land, are characterized by diverse ties with rural areas	Diverse ontological perspectives of development
Intelligentsia	Immigrant population, often without any ties with other groups of the rural population	So-called 'agents of change' reject neoliberal growth, which motivates them to migrate to rural territories

Ownership of agricultural land and its perceived value play a critical role in shaping attitudes towards agriculture and food production in rural territories. For farmers, agricultural land often holds a cultural and emotional value – such as being seen as an 'inheritance' – that surpasses its market price. This perspective has significant implications for discussions about rural development, particularly as they relate to modernization efforts and alternative economic activities like rural tourism. These discussions are frequently influenced by prevailing paradigms, such as the neoliberal growth model. The commonly accepted neoliberal growth paradigm has had its consequences for both science and the practice of economic and social life. It has led, among other things, to the progressive urbanization of rural areas, the degradation of the traditional rural landscape, and the gradual disappearance of physiognomic, morphological, and functional differences between rural areas and cities.

Recently, discussions about new paradigms of rural development have gained momentum, including approaches that emphasise tourism in rural areas. These paradigms propose shifting from a focus on growth to prioritising empowerment, participation, and the equitable transfer of benefits. It is worth emphasising that advancing these concepts, which break away from the neoliberal growth paradigm, requires robust human and social capital. Conversely, adherence to the neoliberal growth paradigm fosters egocentric attitudes among rural development stakeholders, weakens mutual ties and relationships, and ultimately diminishes the quality of social capital.

Social capital plays a crucial role in the development of rural areas, facilitating benefits for local communities primarily through the involvement of local social groups in planning processes and development activities. This essential component of development is reflected in social networks, encompassing enduring relationships based on a willingness to cooperate, mutual understanding, trust, respect, and empathy between individuals (informal networks), as well as the institutions they establish (formal networks), which drive development. Building lasting relationships with local communities is especially important for providers of accommodation services in rural areas. These relationships include creating jobs, organising special events and celebrations for local communities on both commercial and non-commercial bases, and fostering long-term cooperation with local suppliers. Broad-based educational initiatives are indispensable for fostering the development of human and social capital. Ultimately, social capital, which is vital for development, is predominantly created by rural populations with a multifunctional approach who embrace non-agricultural activities with openness (Napierała & Leśniewska-Napierała, 2024).

3.4. EU rural agendas, programmes, and instruments shaping participatory planning in rural contexts

Participatory planning in rural areas is heavily influenced by the **Common Agricultural Policy** (CAP), one of the European Union's oldest instruments, established in 1957. The treaty laid the foundation for the European Economic Community, defining key agricultural policy goals:

- increasing productivity,
- stabilizing agricultural markets,
- ensuring affordable food supplies across member states, and
- providing fair living standards for farmers.

The CAP was formally introduced in 1962, but public participation in rural planning and development was not considered at that time. The shift occurred as agriculture was expected to become more productive and profitable. However, EU policies introduced in the 1970s did not address the socio-economic challenges facing rural communities. On the contrary, the EU supported intensive agricultural practices, leading to negative social, economic, and environmental consequences, as well as a decline in rural social and human capital.

The MacSharry reform in the early 1990s marked a turning point by prioritizing environmental considerations within the CAP. This reform encouraged agricultural extensification (Daugbjerg, 2003). Simultaneously, the EU introduced a rural development policy that combined traditional agricultural goals (such as direct payments for producers) with environmental and socio-economic priorities. The **LEADER** program was launched as a key pillar of this policy, funded initially by the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund. LEADER's success in rural areas paved the way for its expansion to other regions, including coastal and urban areas, through the 2007–2013 EU financial framework.

The program evolved into the multi-funded **Community-Led Local Development** (CLLD) initiative, enabling Local Development Strategies (LDS) to draw support from multiple EU funds. Today, the CAP's rural development pillar, including CLLD/LEADER, is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, with a budget of €95.5 billion for the 2021-2027 programming period. The CLLD/LEADER program remains a cornerstone of EU rural development, founded on seven principles: bottom-up, place-based management; fostering local identity; governance through public-private partnerships (e.g., Local Action Groups); integrating rural functions in development strategies; and promoting innovation and cooperation.

LEADER represents a localised development approach that the EU has employed for the past 30 years. It involves the active participation of local stakeholders, organised through Local Action Groups (LAGs), in shaping and executing strategies, decision-making processes, and resource allocation for the advancement of their rural areas. During the 2023-2027 programming period, the LEADER method will operate under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Local Action Groups (LAGs) are tasked with implementing area-based Local Development Strategies that prioritize bottom-up approaches, fostering innovation, networking, and collaboration.

To support this effort, the **Rural Toolkit** has been introduced as a central resource for accessing EU funding and support mechanisms tailored to rural areas. Its primary aim is to guide local authorities, institutions, stakeholders, businesses, and individuals in identifying and utilizing available EU funds, programs, and complementary initiatives to drive the development of rural regions. By offering detailed guidance, the Rural Toolkit seeks to streamline access to resources and promote sustainable growth across rural Europe.

The EU's expansion to Central and Eastern Europe posed significant challenges for the CAP. Accessing countries received financial support through the **SAPARD** program, guided by principles of sustainability, social and cultural sensitivity, subsidiarity, and public participation in rural development planning (Beckmann & Dissing, 2004). The 1996 Cork Conference on Rural Development Policy resulted in the "Cork Declaration," which emphasized rural development through increased resources, subsidiarity, simplification, and integration. Two decades later, "**Cork Declaration 2.0**" was released, aligning rural Europe with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. This updated declaration highlighted three priorities: public participation, digitization, and planning focused on preserving cultural landscapes, biodiversity, and climate resilience. Enhanced rural governance was also emphasized.

Finally, the EU's **Rural Pact** outlines a vision for European rural areas by 2040, aligning with priorities from the European Green Deal. The EU Commission conducted an open public consultation to involve citizens, civil society, and stakeholders in shaping this vision. However, significant challenges remain, such as raising awareness among farmers about low-emission practices and environmentally neutral technologies, as evidenced by ongoing farmers' strikes. A more inclusive and participatory approach is essential for sustainable rural development. The Rural Pact was introduced and discussed during the EU conference held in Brussels in June

2022. The event brought together the Rural Pact community, which includes public authorities, civil society organizations, businesses, academic and research institutions, innovation bodies, and citizens. Their shared goals were to amplify rural Europe's voice, foster collaboration and mutual learning among diverse rural stakeholders, and encourage voluntary actions for rural development.

Key conclusions related to civic participation highlighted during the conference include:

- Digital Empowerment: Developing digital tools for rural populations requires not only adequate infrastructure but also support for the skills and competencies needed by individuals.
- Integrated Approaches: Combining bottom-up and top-down methods, along with aligning long-term strategies and local action plans, is essential. These efforts must be backed by financial resources directly tied to local communities. Individuals involved in participatory planning need to be aware of the available resources to facilitate decision-making and implementation processes.
- Support for Local Organizations: Providing direct support to local participatory organizations and civil society groups is crucial for empowering communities. This support helps bridge the interests and development goals of rural and urban populations and their respective territories.

The conference also emphasized specific target groups, including young people in rural areas, members of energy communities, and key actors within rural research and innovation ecosystems (Berisha et al., 2024).

4. Classroom discussion topics

Topics that can be discussed in the classroom include:

- **challenges and opportunities in participatory rural development** - Discuss the socio-economic and technological barriers marginalised rural communities face and explore strategies to overcome these challenges through participatory approaches,
- **the role of rural identity in public participation** - Analyse how rural identities influence levels of engagement in community planning and development, considering cultural and social diversity,
- **evaluating EU rural development frameworks** - Discuss the effectiveness of specific EU policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy or the LEADER program, in promoting sustainable and inclusive rural development,
- **technological innovations and rural development** - Discuss the potential of digital tools and technologies to address challenges in rural areas and examine how technological exclusion can be mitigated in participatory development planning.

5. Assignments

In this hands-on group workshop, students will apply participatory planning principles to real-world cases of rural communes, preselected for the course. Working collaboratively, students will collect and analyse relevant statistical data and review key diagnostic, strategic, and planning documents. The objective is to draft a participatory development strategy for the selected area.

The assignment follows a structured process, which also defines the report format to be submitted:

- Identify challenges: Students will identify key socio-economic and technological challenges faced by marginalised rural communities.
- Explore rural identities: Students will investigate rural identities within the selected marginalised communities and develop approaches that integrate cultural and social diversity into rural development programs.
- Propose participatory strategies: Students will propose participatory strategies and apply them to planning processes.

A multimethodological approach is required. Students should employ:

- Desk Research to analyse existing reports and documents.
- Quantitative Methods (including descriptive statistics) to analyse relevant data.
- Qualitative Methods: If in-depth interviews with local stakeholders are not feasible, students may use AI tools to create detailed profiles of potential representatives from the disadvantaged groups under investigation, and then conduct interviews based on these profiles using selected AI tool.

6. Summary of Learning

Q1: What is the difference between exclusion and marginalisation?

A: Exclusion and marginalisation are related concepts often used interchangeably in everyday language. However, they differ in the degree of intensity of the phenomenon. Marginalisation refers to the limited participation of individuals or groups in the fundamental institutions of a given public order or their minimal involvement in key aspects of social life. In contrast, social exclusion represents a more severe form of this phenomenon, where individuals or groups are systematically denied access to rights, resources, and opportunities, leading to their complete detachment from societal participation.

Q2: What are the key levels of access to new technologies required to overcome digital **exclusion in rural areas, and how can they be addressed?**

A: Overcoming digital exclusion in rural areas requires addressing four key levels of access to new technologies:

1. Motivation: Encouraging interest in and demonstrating the perceived value of using digital tools to engage rural populations.

2. Physical Access: Ensuring the availability of devices and reliable Internet connectivity, especially in remote locations.

3. Skills: Building strategic, informational, and operational abilities to enable individuals to navigate digital technologies effectively.

4. Usage: Promoting diverse and meaningful applications of the Internet for economic, educational, and social purposes, ensuring it serves as a tool for empowerment and integration.

Each of these levels must be tackled comprehensively to enable rural communities to fully participate in the digital economy.

Q3: What is a knowledge-based participatory strategy for rural development planning, **and how does it contribute to innovation in peripheral areas?**

A: A knowledge-based participatory strategy for rural development planning focuses on fostering innovation by engaging local stakeholders in designing and implementing research programs that combine technological, organizational, and territorial innovations. This approach helps generate new knowledge that benefits rural communities and promotes sustainable development in key areas like agroecological transitions, territorial food systems, and the bioeconomy, ultimately contributing to rural innovation and enhancing the region's attractiveness and well-being.

Q4: Can community-led development be considered a participatory strategy?

A: Community-led development is a participatory strategy increasingly used in rural areas, promoting local control and minimal state intervention. It is often seen as empowering, allowing communities to manage risks and drive change. However, this strategy is complex, as it relies heavily on expert knowledge to define and guide development efforts. Experts provide the frameworks and technical knowledge within which communities operate, shaping the boundaries of empowerment.

Q5: What is multistakeholder social learning, and how does it improve rural development decision-making?

A: Multistakeholder social learning is a participatory strategy that encourages structured, ongoing interactions among diverse stakeholders, fostering trust-building, knowledge sharing, and deliberation in complex contexts like natural resource management. It improves rural development decision-making by integrating different perspectives at individual, network, and systems levels, enhancing problem-solving and decision-making capacities, and ultimately leading to more inclusive and informed rural policy, planning, and investment.

Quiz

Q1: What is the key difference between exclusion and marginalisation?

A) Exclusion is a less intense form of marginalisation.

B) Marginalisation involves total removal from society, while exclusion refers to limited participation.

C) Marginalisation refers to limited participation in social life, while exclusion results from the intensity of this limitation.

D) Exclusion and marginalisation are the same concept, only used in different contexts.

A: C

Q2: True or false: The SAPARD program, which provided financial support to Central and Eastern European countries after the EU's expansion, was indeed guided by principles of sustainability, subsidiarity, and public participation in rural development planning.

A: True

Q3: What is the role of Local Action Groups (LAGs) in the LEADER approach?

A) LAGs are responsible for overseeing national agricultural policies.

B) LAGs organize local stakeholders to develop and execute strategies for rural development through bottom-up approaches.

C) LAGs implement area-based Local Development Strategies focusing on top-down approaches.

D) LAGs are tasked with managing metropolitan cooperation with rural areas.

A: B

Q4: How does social capital contribute to the development of rural areas?

A) Social capital fosters development through enduring relationships, trust, cooperation, and the involvement of local social groups in planning and activities.

B) Social capital only supports economic development through agricultural activities.

C) Social capital plays a minimal role in rural development and focuses primarily on urban areas.

D) Social capital is only relevant for providers of accommodation services and does not affect other sectors in rural areas.

A: A

Q5: What are some key aspects of social and spatial injustice faced by rural localities?

A) Restricted access to public services, job opportunities, and technological advancements.

B) Strong governance frameworks, positive demographic trends, and high levels of social integration.

C) Restricted access to public services, insufficient job opportunities, adverse demographic trends, and stigmatization.

D) High levels of innovation, urban migration, and widespread access to digital technologies.

A: C

Q6: Match in pairs:

1	farmers	A	immigrant population, often without any ties with other groups of the rural population
2	intelligentsia	B	people often residing in or near rural areas
3	employees of non-agricultural sectors	C	people who have extremely lasting ties with rural areas, both due to history, tradition and ownership of agricultural land
4	agricultural workers	D	an extremely diverse group of people who, depending on the fact of owning land, are characterized by diverse ties with rural area

A: 1-C, 2-A, 3-D, 4-B

Q7: What is the main focus of multistakeholder social learning in rural development?

A) Encouraging top-down decision-making and focusing only on economic factors.

B) Promoting structured, ongoing interactions between diverse stakeholders to enhance decision-making and problem-solving capacities.

C) Limiting stakeholder involvement to government representatives in rural areas.

D) Focusing solely on technological innovations in rural development.

A: B

Q8: True or false: The Rural Toolkit has been introduced as a central resource to guide central government in accessing EU funding and support mechanisms tailored to rural areas, promoting sustainable growth across rural Europe.

A: False

Q9: True or false: Rural identities have no bearing on how individuals interact with governance systems, as these interactions are solely determined by economic factors.

A: False

Q10: Which of the following is NOT identified as a key aspect of social and spatial injustice shaping rural localities?

- A) Restricted access to public services and weak governance frameworks.
- B) Adverse demographic trends like depopulation and ageing.
- C) High levels of urbanization and population density.
- D) Stigmatization of rural communities through stereotypes and labelling processes.

A: C

Q11: True or false: Providing direct support to local participatory organizations and civil society groups is crucial for empowering communities, as it helps bridge the interests and development goals of rural and urban populations and their respective territories.

A: True

Q12: True or false: In disadvantaged rural areas, the interplay of remoteness, social polarization, and demographic fragmentation is often intensified by stigmatization and negative labelling.

A: True

Q13: True or false: Ownership of agricultural land and its perceived value don't' have any role in shaping attitudes towards agriculture and food production in rural territories.

A: False

Q14: True or false: Geographical distance is not significant challenges for rural areas, particularly where there are no employment opportunities within a feasible daily commuting range.

A: False

Q15: True or false: Negative demographic processes in rural areas, such as population decline and ageing, are closely linked to limited public services, weak governance, and a lack of employment opportunities, which create a vicious cycle of socio-economic disparities and feelings of being "left behind."

A: True

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8. Glossary

Marginalisation - refer to processes that deny individuals or groups access to resources, opportunities, and full societal participation, pushing them to the periphery of social, economic, or political life.

Technological exclusion refers to the unequal access to or ability to use digital technologies, tools, and resources, often resulting in social and economic disparities.

Rural identity is the sense of belonging and shared traits shaped by geographic isolation, agricultural livelihoods, close social ties, and traditional cultural practices in rural communities.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is EU framework for supporting agriculture and rural development, aiming to ensure food security, promote sustainable farming, and maintain rural economies.

The LEADER program is EU initiative that supports rural development through locally-led strategies, fostering innovation, cooperation, and sustainable growth in rural communities.

The Rural Pact is EU initiative aimed at mobilizing governments, organizations, and citizens to support sustainable and inclusive rural development, addressing challenges e.g. depopulation, economic disparities, and access to services while fostering vibrant rural communities.