

# “New rural geographies in Europe: actors, processes, policies”

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Abstract

Draw me a sheep: a pedagogical tool to discover the complexity of rural planning

Since 2007, I regularly organise workshops with graduate students in geography or planning or with local politicians aiming to a better understanding of land use and country planning. I ask groups of four to six participants to elaborate their ideal village using blocks. During forty to sixty minutes, the participants discuss the town plan and functions, position buildings, draw roads and green areas and reflect on services, mobility, conflicts of neighbourhood. After this period of construction and discussion, the groups present their ideal village to the other groups and argue why they selected different functions and locations. Then I suggest a checklist to discuss what was taken into account and what was neglected. Some of the recurring statements are about equipment of the village offering a very large range of services, cultural prevalence such as positioning a church in the central market, negligence of the relief and natural constraints, rejection of farm outside the village... Other statements refer to the decision process.

Due to the ludic aspect, strengthened by the use of children toys, this exercise is a respiration in the

Notes:

This paper aims to encourage colleagues to do the same kind of exercise with their students or to use this tool in action research with stakeholders. When a majority of students are no longer familiar with the countryside, this exercise may help to grasp their preconceptions to adapt and target the learning objectives. From a political point of view, it allows listing the shortcomings and may help to increase the awareness of the countryside particularities, identities and the possible evolutions. Yet, the organiser has to pay attention to the context within which the exercise is performed because it strongly affects the result.

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Doing the same exercise with professionals or stakeholders of public area leads to the demonstration of the diversity of ways of imagining both lives in community and in the countryside.

Beside this pedagogical target, this exercise also produces a wealth of information for the researchers who want to understand decision making in planning and collect representations and desires regarding countryside and rural village today. In an ideal village, most of administrative, health and commercial services must be present to avoid frequent travels to the city, green spaces everywhere, plenty of transport opportunities, places for recreation and some heritage that gives identity and singularity to the locality. Curiously, workplace is frequently omitted.

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