



Innovation, entrepreneurship and industrial dynamics in rural areas

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Abstract

Rural areas face significant challenges, including population decline, ageing demographics, limited access to services, weak digital connectivity, and insufficient economic diversification. These challenges threaten the sustainability of rural communities and economies. Innovation and entrepreneurship can play a central role in transforming rural areas, empowering communities, and enhancing their resilience.

This session invites papers that explore how innovation, entrepreneurship, and industrial dynamics shape the development of rural and peripheral regions, as well as the role of policies in influencing these processes.

We encourage both quantitative and qualitative contributions that address the following themes:

- **Rural-urban convergence and divergence:** Analyses of economic growth, innovation, and entrepreneurship patterns between rural and urban areas, focusing on factors that drive convergence or exacerbate disparities.
- **Innovation and industrial transformations in rural regions:** Studies examining the transformation of rural industrial landscapes, with particular emphasis on the co-evolution of skills, employment patterns, innovation, and industrial structures.
- **Rural innovation ecosystems:** Studies on the emergence, evolution, and performance of rural innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems, with a focus on place-based enabling factors and urban-rural linkages.
- **Role of rural start-ups and SMEs:** (Firm-level) analyses into the role of small- and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups as drivers of innovation and

competitiveness in rural areas, including their challenges in accessing finance, skills, and global markets.

- **Policies for rural innovation and entrepreneurship:** Analyses of the role of policies in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in rural areas and/or driving industrial transformation.

We particularly encourage research that reflects the systemic nature of rural development, addressing sectoral and territorial interdependencies. Papers that explore innovative approaches to measuring rural innovation are also strongly encouraged. This session aims to bring together diverse perspectives to advance our understanding of the factors that shape innovation, entrepreneurship, and industrial change in rural areas.