

Summary Working Group 10

Changing ruralities across a region: Actors, policies, innovations

Within this session, we discussed questions about the interplay between national policy and local action.

We began with innovative transport solutions in Northern Sweden, where integrating private cars into the public transport system requires policy efforts. After this, we were delighted by a positive example of the interplay between national strategy and local action in Norway, where the Merkur programme effectively supports rural village shops as important social meeting places. Three examples from Denmark, Finland and Lithuania were presented, in which municipalities cooperate to establish or maintain essential services for rural communities.

However, the centralisation of public services can also be critically examined, as it increases the distance between the state and its citizens and can thus weaken local democracy. Finally, this session ended with a discussion on AI and human agency in regional development. The possibilities of these tools for regional development and rural research will impact our future work, but we must always reflect on their limits, as they are unable to do so. AI always requires human agency and cannot properly address the relational and ethical aspects of regional development questions.