Developing a methodological approach to create indicators contributing to measure the effects of policies in rural areas - Case study in Alentejo, South Portugal

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**Abstract**

There is a need to go beyond the state of the art in characterizing rural areas “as a whole” instead, considering different landscape assets and constraints as well as socio economic dynamics in order to better target rural development policies. A crucial issue to explore is which set of indicators can best represent the different dimensions embeded in an array of possible rural development options, from production and protection to consumption, or a combination of those, framed according to socio economic and institutional dynamics in place. The aim of this paper is thus to develop a methodology for a typology based on a set of different indicators encompasssing several dimensions in order to identify the different potentialities or vocations for the Alentejo territory in southern Portugal. By applying a set of indicators for each one of the dimensions namely production, protection and consumption, proposed by Holmes (2006) altogether with a socio-economic dimension different vocations or the territory were gauged and further an approapriate framework of policies likely contributing to enforce the implementation of vocations were described. Results show that the ways in wich the set of indicators selected were used to gauge the vocations of the territory can be a valuable tool to inform the public in general as well as the decision and policy makers, including potential investors. Nevertheless, further work needs to be done in order to both refine the indicator set now used as well as to include other possible dimensions also relevant for measuring the possible effects of different policies into a diferentiated countyside.