
The importance of innovation as a key to economic growth prompted a strong neo-Schumpeterian innovation theory. This theory, however, is inappropriate for addressing innovation processes in lagging rural areas. Consequently, from a multidimensional conception, this research work proposes to construct a Rural Innovation Theory from six elements: 1) the definition of the object, 2) the posing of key questions and their relevance, 3) a model of knowledge, 4) construction methods, 5) capacity of anticipation and 6) an ethical framework, with the implications that this entails.) A Rural Innovation Theory as the proposal constitutes a significant contribution to the design of public policies and strategies to orient rural change from the perspective of endogenous territorial development.

**Keywords:** rural change; social innovation; rural territories; endogenous development; theory building.

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