

Quarterly journal of the LEADER II European programme

LEADER magazine

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Spring 2000 No.22

**The (re)population
of rural areas**

Leitrim/North Roscommon

Entre Lousã e Zêzere

Sudoeste





Country: Sweden

Action carried out:
creation of a telework cooperative

Total cost: EUR 111 058

EU: EUR 24 529

Other public funds: EUR 24 529

Private: EUR 62 000

“Three isolated villages in Jämtland – Högarna, Fagarland and Ollsta – reacted to the depopulation which was threatening their survival by creating a development cooperative, ‘Byssbon’ (The Villagers). It helped ten young families move to the area, saving the school in the process, created various services (creche, multipurpose centre, shop, etc) and set up a telecottage. The latter joined four other telecentres and in 1998 launched, with LEADER’s help, ‘JämtOffice’, a cooperative venture specialised in teleservices, the creation of Internet sites and the computer filing of documents. Recent contracts signed with a bank and a museum in particular should lead to the creation of 20 jobs. The job opportunities offered by information technologies are vital for the continued population growth of the villages.”

Ann-Margreth Göransson,
LEADER official



Country: Spain

Action carried out: relocation and expansion of a business in a rural area

Total cost: EUR 222 481

EU: EUR 39 145

Other public funds: EUR 39 145

Private: EUR 144 191

“Serna del Monte, a village of one hundred inhabitants, is threatened with depopulation even if it is only 80 km from Madrid. Attracted by the countryside, a family from Madrid decided to move to the village, relocate its insulation business and branch out into tourism. LEADER helped it make large-scale investments, namely, the purchase of a new machine for the insulation business, but also fitting-out a 30-bed hotel (6 units) with a restaurant, catering service, multipurpose room and mountain bike rental service. A personalised training course was also organised for the project. In all, three steady, full-time jobs were created.”

Juan Quintana Cavanillas,
Director of the LEADER group



Country: Belgium

Action carried out: creation of a rural planning advisory service

Total cost: EUR 173 524

EU: EUR 86 762

Other public funds: EUR 86 762

“So that our municipalities do not become dormitory towns, the Nature Park of the Pays des Collines (the Land of Hills) has created with LEADER II funds its own ‘architectural and landscape assistance unit’ which became operational just recently. The creation of a landscape charter, a project that aims to protect the intermunicipal landscape, should lead to a democratic debate on the specific purposes of the various parts of our area. The landscape of the Park is for us one of the main leverages of development. The protection and more appropriate management of our wooded sites, the problems of setting up new farms or of creating business zones are all reasons for a sustainable development project.”

Emmanuel Desmette,
project leader



Country: France

Action carried out: introduction of a housing policy for new residents

Total cost (study): EUR 37 186

EU: EUR 15 152

Other public funds: EUR 11 364

Private: EUR 10 670

“The Pays de Menat, in the Massif Central, has launched a housing development policy. Its aim is to match the growing demand for housing from people working in the neighbouring employment areas (Clermont-Ferrand, Montluçon) with the many empty, and in some cases abandoned, houses. Encouraging new people to move to the Pays de Menat means first of all rehabilitating the building heritage. A vast communication campaign has been launched to raise owner awareness, and housing feasibility studies (for private and public buildings) have been financed. The year 2000 will be devoted to mobilising funds for the planned renovations. Finally, communication actions targeted at people in neighbouring cities will be organised. In parallel, the local authorities are trying to make the Pays de Menat more attractive, particularly by sponsoring actions to improve the look of towns and hamlets but also to protect landscapes.”

Alain Escure,
President of the LEADER group



**New inhabitants in the countryside:
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Many rural areas are witnessing population decline and an ageing of their population. But city dwellers are also showing renewed interest in moving to these areas. Across Europe, rural areas are coming up with all kinds of ways to cope with the arrival of these newcomers.

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From housing assistance to the renovation of a cinema, from the development of recreational areas to the creation of new services and activities, a wide range of means is being used to encourage people to resettle in the least populated part of Ireland. LEADER is playing a key role in this effort.

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With the accelerated expansion of the service sector, young people are no longer finding the Portuguese countryside attractive, preferring instead to be in the city and not some village. They are interested in service jobs that pay a steady wage rather than seasonal work on a farm or self-employment in a craft. In contrast to this trend, a whole category of former “urbanites” – from Portugal and especially Northern Europe – are finding their “place in the sun” in the hinterland of certain regions, bringing genuine relief to rural areas. Here the spotlight is on some of the (neo-)rural entrepreneurs from the LEADER areas of Entre Lousã e Zêzere (Centro) and Sudoeste (Algarve/Alentejo).

Cover photo:
A family moves to the country
(Basse-Normandie, France)

In a word...

Yves Champetier, Director,
LEADER European Observatory

“(Re)populating the countryside” is the title of this issue of LEADER MAGAZINE, itself symbolic at a time when LEADER II is nearing completion and LEADER+ is set to begin.

For decades the countryside in many regions of Europe was synonymous with inevitable decline, exodus, ageing, and desertification, but what is the situation today?

A number of areas are “redeveloping” themselves, and some are even witnessing a “rural renaissance”, as John Bryden would say. Of course the areas experiencing this “rebirth” are generally to be found near large urban centres, in the valleys rather than the mountains, in areas well equipped with modern transport facilities rather than in hard-to-reach areas. But this trend of renewal is also growing, spreading to areas where until recently development was not considered possible.

This phenomenon is especially encouraging since those areas most people were too willing to write off have gradually seen a burgeoning of local dynamism, the emergence of a collective will, and the building of a project for the future of the community as a whole. And LEADER has often played a decisive role in this. Despite all this, a lot of areas continue to suffer from the major handicap resulting from too many dramatic years of rural depopulation, namely, too few births to renew the generations, thus a shortage of “living strengths”.

In this context, it is significant that one of the last LEADER II seminars organised, and described below in the article by Corinne Legrand, concerned the repopulation of rural areas, and more precisely ways to encourage people to move there to live and work.

For those areas that continue to lose inhabitants, the arrival of new families and new workers is a must. This implies a comprehensive approach that takes into account all the aspects of integration: housing, work, income, the presence of services, and social and cultural integration.

In parallel, city dwellers are looking for a new living environment. Although not always simple, a meeting point therefore has to be found between the expectations of one group and the aspirations of another. This is a major challenge for many rural areas, a challenge that has not really been tackled yet, that is still given too little consideration in the various public interventions and thus where a lot remains to be done in the years ahead.

The theme “Repopulating the countryside” clearly reflects the fact that today many rural areas, whose attitude varied between more or less active resistance to an inevitable marginalisation, have decided to go on the offensive and invent a new future.

Of course the situation remains complex, and in many cases nothing has been gained. But nothing has been lost either. In this period of great change brought about in particular by the internationalisation of the economy and the widespread development of the information society, rural areas do have assets. To take advantage of these, they must, with the support of new rural policies and the LEADER+ Initiative, show even more voluntarism, creativity and innovation. <

New inhabitants in rural areas

Helping people



make the move

BY CORINNE LEGRAND [*]

Many rural areas are witnessing population decline and an ageing of their population. But city dwellers are also showing renewed interest in moving to these areas. Across Europe, rural areas are coming up with all kinds of ways to cope with the arrival of these newcomers.

"We had to save the primary school of our three villages," recalls Ann-Christine Andersson of Sweden who explained what motivated her area to encourage people to move to the area. For Jim Connolly in Ireland, *"the countryside is an opportunity to deal with urban problems like unemployment."* In France, in the Region of Limousin, *"it is the arrival of new inhabitants that can enable us to keep our villages alive,"* says an official in charge of helping new inhabitants to settle in. Across Europe, for various reasons, more and more rural areas are taking steps to attract new residents. And more or less everywhere, there are people in the city in search of better living conditions who are contemplating moving to the country. However, the fact that there are so many different socio-demographic and cultural contexts makes a comprehensive approach to the issue of rural repopulation difficult. This was the topic of a seminar that was held in Eymoutiers in Limousin (France) from 10 to 14 November 1999.

Limousin takes decisive steps to encourage repopulation

To tackle a worrisome demographic situation – its population has been rapidly declining, falling by over 25% in less than a century, and is steadily growing older, the average age being 43 or 5 years more than the national average – the Limousin Region introduced a voluntarist policy to attract newcomers. The Regional Council has made repopulation one of its priorities and has set up a "Repopulation Unit" responsible for providing information about moving to the country and providing guidance and assistance. *"Although a survey of the inhabitants of Limousin reveals that 80% of the local population is today convinced that people have to be encouraged to move to the area, it was an uphill battle to make rural people aware of the problem."*

However, it is difficult for rural people who were unable to keep their own children in the country to acknowledge that their region can attract city dwellers. The region gained 15 000 new residents between 1990 and 1999, but it is proving difficult to offer a precise explanation for this; could it be down to the housing policy or the encouragement and assistance provided or the regional authority's efforts to promote the region?

Since 1997, Limousin has been working with several national media, including the "Village" magazine and the television channel "Demain!" ^[1]. A direct result of this partnership has been numerous requests to move to the country, and in some cases projects have materialised (reopening of a hotel-restaurant by a couple from Paris, creation of a tile business, opening of a cocktail bar-pancake restaurant, etc). However, there is still a long way to go. The Region would now like to have a better picture of these migrants in order to satisfy their demands, to understand why some municipalities far from the main roads are gaining in population, and to mobilise everyone in Limousin, *"especially the elected officials in rural areas many of whom are still not aware of this migratory phenomenon and who need to understand the positive impact that it can have on their area if it is supported,"* says Robert Savy, president of the regional council. *"Although people have accepted the idea, more are preaching it than practising it."* ➡

[*] **Corinne Legrand** is a journalist for the "Village" magazine. Created in 1993, Village is published every two months and distributed throughout France and is devoted to the creation of activities in the countryside. It contributes to a better understanding of the challenges facing rural areas. Contact: acteur.rural@wanadoo.fr



Launched and run by the local community, "Télé Millevaches" is a dynamic part of this rural area of Limousin (France)

➔ The next step therefore is to structure the process of attracting newcomers and helping them to settle in. The idea is to set up a regional network involving local development practitioners and other players from the different areas. This way, the entire region can benefit from a coherent dynamic and some of the more noteworthy experiences.

The Millevaches Plateau, one of the LEADER areas of Limousin that started up a local development process more than ten years ago, is today reaping the benefits of this local mobilisation. It has rehabilitated 564 dwellings, half of which have been rented by people from outside the Plateau. This type of action could become widespread and carried out in other areas of Limousin. To accomplish this, the Region has also joined forces with the "Collectif Ville-Campagne" association (2). This has enabled it to be present at trade fairs, information sessions and annual conferences addressing these issues and to come into contact with a larger number of city dwellers who want to leave the city. A genuine repopulation dynamic has been created that includes assistance and follow-up for those who want to move. *"We must take in the number of people we are capable of absorbing and not encourage an uncontrolled arrival of new residents,"* adds the president of the regional council.

In France, other rural areas of a smaller size are trying to implement the same dynamic, but Limousin seems to be the only region so far that has taken action in such a voluntarist fashion.

In comparison

In Ireland, on the other hand, "Rural Resettlement Ireland" (RRI) has been successful in introducing a national policy. In 1990, Jim Connolly decided to create an association to improve the situation of urban families in difficulty and to contribute to the population growth of rural municipalities.

"The rural environment is an opportunity," says Jim, *"it offers disadvantaged families low-rent housing."* Since

then, the association has opened offices in the city in order to provide information and advice to people interested in moving. In the beginning, all the rural government agencies were far from convinced of the relevance of this project. Jim Connolly therefore took action at the national level and in 1996 signed an agreement with the government and the Bank of Ireland.

What is new is the opportunity unemployed people are given to become homeowners. Today, Jim regrets that these measures only apply to new homes and not to the restoration of existing houses. *"It is by pressurising the national authorities that local volunteers will obtain recognition leading to a genuine resettlement policy in rural areas,"* believes Jim.

The RRI experience has inspired a pilot programme, which is co-funded by the European Union and is being implemented in nine rural areas of Ireland. Its aim is to better understand the phenomenon of resettlement in rural areas and to define a genuine national policy for the matter. Unlike the experience of the RRI association whose target public is first and foremost disadvantaged people, the pilot programme, which is coordinated by ADM (Area Development Management) is targeted at people with a more "solid" economic base, such as professionals or emigrants wanting to return home, etc (see article by Jean-Luc Janot *"The Irish Way to Rural Resettlement"*).

In Finland, *"there is no specific national policy, but certain local initiatives (particularly in the context of LEADER) tend to encourage families to move to the country, but not necessarily to isolated areas,"* notes Pentti Malinen, an academic in Oulu (see Minna Silander's story about the village of Kamppi).

In Sweden, it was the threat of the primary school closing that made the inhabitants of three villages of Jämtland react. In 1984, they decided to join forces and set up a cooperative, "Byssbon" ("The Villagers"). After an analysis of the area, the fifty members voted to organise actions for housing, community services and employment. Here too, a communication strategy was implemented in partnership with the press to advertise the area.

Looking back these past fourteen years, Ann-Christine Andersson singles out among the successes the rescue and renovation of the primary school, the opening of a creche and a home for the elderly and the creation of a tele-working centre. However, difficulties remain. *"All the actions undertaken receive no political support, but are carried out exclusively with the funds of volunteers, with loans taken out by the cooperative, with funds generated by certain activities like the nursing home and with some contributions from the municipality,"* points out Ann-Christine. In Spain, whereas the region of Aragon whose rural areas are for the most part experiencing serious demographic problems (densities often less than 10, or even 5 inhabitants/km²) would like to see outsiders settle in the region, this was not the case in Sierra Norte de Madrid. This area, also called "Sierra Pobre" (the Poor Mountain), has a depopulation problem, particularly in the small villages, despite the fact that it is just fifty kilometres away from Madrid. The idea of repopulation is gradually gaining ground, in particular at the initiative of the LEADER group and in collaboration with the regional authorities. Nonetheless, the local people have certain reservations, they are afraid of seeing disadvantaged persons arrive from the city and more generally do not understand the importance of encouraging "outsiders" to move to their area. These contrasting positions can be found throughout Europe.

Defining a strategy

The fact that each area has specific features of its own makes it harder to define a general policy to support repopulation. Nonetheless, in the beginning, it should be possible to draw up a five-point list: definition of needs, target group, obstacles to be overcome, actions to be undertaken and key people to be mobilised. In France, some have reservations about the importance of drawing up a list of the needs to be covered. This technique can ignore the innovative projects that are not the result of a formal request. *"The countryside has to promote innovation. Rural actors have to go on the offensive and not just defend what exists,"* insists Mohammed Chahid, of the *Association régionale des Pays d'Auvergne* (ARPA – Regional Association of the Pays d'Auvergne). The views are also divided about the people to be encouraged to move; some talk about the right of rural areas to choose the people they help resettle. Others are trying to ensure a better match between the project and the area. This means communication between the city dwellers and the rural inhabitants in order to dispel any mistaken ideas either side might have. A number of examples in France (Plateau of Langres, Plateau of Millevaches, village of Voivres in the Vosges) show that by not targeting a section of the population —

Keeping the local school is essential for the village's future





The president of the LEADER group of Mezquin (Aragon, Spain) and his family also used to live in the city before moving to the country

innovative projects can be developed that otherwise would not have been possible. Everywhere the diversity and magnitude of the obstacles to be overcome prevent people from moving to the countryside. Such obstacles may be of a cultural nature – the most common expression is the resistance of rural communities who are afraid of the newcomers (prejudices, negative experiences in the past, poor knowledge about one another, negative self-image); an economic and financial nature (lack of knowledge of existing job opportunities, partitioning of sectors of activity, cost of moving, difficult access to credit and land); an administrative nature, due to a lack of coordination between sector-based technical sectors and local services; or may relate to the living environment (lack of housing, community services and recreational facilities for the young “neo-ruralites”), and finally, last but not least, may be linked to political obstacles.

If a policy of supporting repopulation is to be successful, local mobilisation is essential. With the exception of Ireland, national political mobilisation is still lacking, even in France where the “Collectif Ville-Campagne” association has been working on this problem. Improving the settling-in process means involving the local community, elected officials, private and public figures and associations. The target group has to be reached; the “newcomers” and the “existing inhabitants” have to be involved as do the other rural areas that are looking for new residents and the partners

doing research, such as universities; the government agencies and all the local actors (development agents, housing professionals, financial institutions, etc) have to be made aware of the issue.

Opinion is more divided as to whether or not the “exiles” should be mobilised. People who left the area several years ago sometimes have a distorted image of the local reality. As for the actions to be undertaken and the actors to be mobilised, everyone agrees that an area cannot be developed without the injection of new human resources. This awareness is only possible if the people living in the country are informed about the challenge of repopulation. “Media coverage helps when it comes to informing the local community,” says Jim Connolly. The local officials have to be informed and trained, successful cases of resettlement have to be held up as an example, young people have to gain more knowledge about their area, the negative view the inhabitants have of the place where they live has to be reversed, and even second home owners have to be made aware of the problem. It is important for the repopulation scheme to be made an integral part of a local development programme. In the same way, by having a place where people can obtain information, ask questions and seek guidance, by organising information days, and by putting people wanting to move in touch with local inhabitants who can lend them moral and technical support, the right conditions are created for a genuine policy of repopulation. <

[1] Launched in 1997 by the French group CANAL+, “Demain!” is a TV channel devoted to employment and business takeovers in particular. It has set up a local office in Limousin.

[2] “Collectif Ville-Campagne” is a French association set up in 1995 and has 16 members, including academics, professionals from the public, private and non-governmental sectors, and the media. Its aim is to create a bridge between city dwellers who know little about the set up of rural areas and the rural areas which do not know how to organise themselves to attract newcomers.



“Looking for new families”

Minna Silander, LEADER Seinänaapurit [Finland]

The village of Kamppi (population 365) is part of the municipality of Kurikka, about 70 km southeast of Vaasa in Western Finland. The village's two main activities are agriculture and furniture-making.

Since August 1998, a formal process has been under way to develop the village through the LEADER II programme. Fearing the possible closure of the local school, the people of Kamppi formed an association and decided to set about attracting young families to the village. Working in close collaboration with the LEADER group, the association hired me as development agent to implement the project.

The action consists in improving the quality of life in the village and making it as pleasant as possible in order to attract new residents. For this, the total cost of the LEADER project amounts to EUR 80 000, of which EUR 32 000 have been provided by the European Union, EUR 19 000 by the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture, EUR 13 000 by the municipality, and the rest (EUR 16 000) financed out of own funds.

The first, short-term objective is to keep the school in the village which this year has 30 pupils compared with 33 in 1998-99. This figure should remain stable over the next five years, but could then fall if nothing is done, as only two children were born in the area in 1999.

We have drawn up a list of well-located land sites, easily accessible and suitable for building new homes. Thirteen of these lots are ready to build on and we also have several houses for rent.

The land for sale is announced on the radio, in the local press and on posters put up at strategic places, such as in shops and public buildings. We are also taking part in the building shows in several large towns of Finland, and in the “Property Days” organised by the banks. We have also done a lot to promote our village, organising various events and activities, for instance, second-hand markets, conferences, beginner courses in Ikebana (Japanese art of flower arranging), walks, etc.

The village's main assets are the beautiful surrounding nature, a great environment for practising a number of sports, the quality of the school, the dynamism of the local community, and the proximity (6 km) of the small town of Kurikka.

The price of building lots is very competitive and the people of Kamppi say that they are also prepared to give a helping hand to the newcomers, like digging the foundations, removing the dirt and other preparation work. Our main target groups are young families who have some kind of link – family, for example – with our village, and anyone interested in returning to the region of Kurikka.



The job situation is not very good in the province of Etelä Pohjanmaa, particularly for university-educated women. It is a problem, but we have always succeeded in finding work for those who wanted to move here.

All kinds of activities help to make the village more attractive and of a better quality, including, “mini-clubs” for children, after-school activities in the afternoon, dance lessons, foreign language classes, etc.

Heavily involved in these activities, the villagers have always extended a very warm welcome to newcomers most of whom quickly become integrated and find their place within the local development association.

Several families have expressed interest in Kamppi and we hope that some will soon move here. Our village is a living place. People like it because of the good quality of life. We hope that others will also be able to discover this place and decide it is where they want to live. <



A demographic revival is being observed
in a number of rural areas

Decline? What decline?

Demographic changes and social changes are closely linked. Rural areas are no longer necessarily areas of population decline, quite the contrary. The demographic trend of an area depends on the available supply of natural, human and financial resources but also on how efficiently these resources are used for local economic benefit. The strength of LEADER has precisely been its ability to rise to this challenge.

BY JOHN BRYDEN [*]

There is perhaps no better indicator of the diversity of rural Europe than population density, and no simpler single indicator of the economic successes and failures of an area as population increase or decrease.

A glance at the map of regional population density shows us that the most densely populated and predominantly urbanised regions with over 150 inhabitants/km² are situated mainly in England, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Italy although such regions also exist in or around the main cities of all other European Union countries except Finland. At the other end of the demographic spectrum, the least densely populated and predominantly rural regions are to be found in Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Northern Scotland and Central Spain, with pockets in the mountain areas of France, Greece and Portugal.

Rural Renaissance

More interesting for those concerned with rural change and development are the trends in population over time, and their causes and consequences. Until relatively recently rural areas were considered to be areas in which population was declining, due to the outward migration of younger age-groups, low natural growth due to population imbalance, and the consequent ageing of the population.

The notion of "rural renaissance" was born in the 1970s when the population of many rural areas appeared to grow against expectations, a tendency which continued in the 1980s. However, population growth was not by any means to be found everywhere – in some remoter sparsely populated and mountainous areas, population

has continued to decline, while in others, especially nearer to towns and cities, it has increased rapidly. Yet even in remote and sparsely populated rural regions, there are examples of population growth in recent decades – examples being found in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, the west of Ireland, and northern Sweden.

The immediate reasons for positive or negative trends in population of rural regions are complex, and differ from one region to another. Population change is the result of natural changes, or the balance between births and deaths, and migratory movements (people entering and leaving the area). Given the almost universal decline in birth rates across Europe in recent decades, in most cases it is migration which makes the difference.

Contrasting situations

In the urban-centred ruralities of the Netherlands, Southeast England and the Paris Basin, the impacts of urban development spill over to accessible rural hinterlands, creating demands for housing by commuters, changing the type of service provision, and having environmental and social impacts.

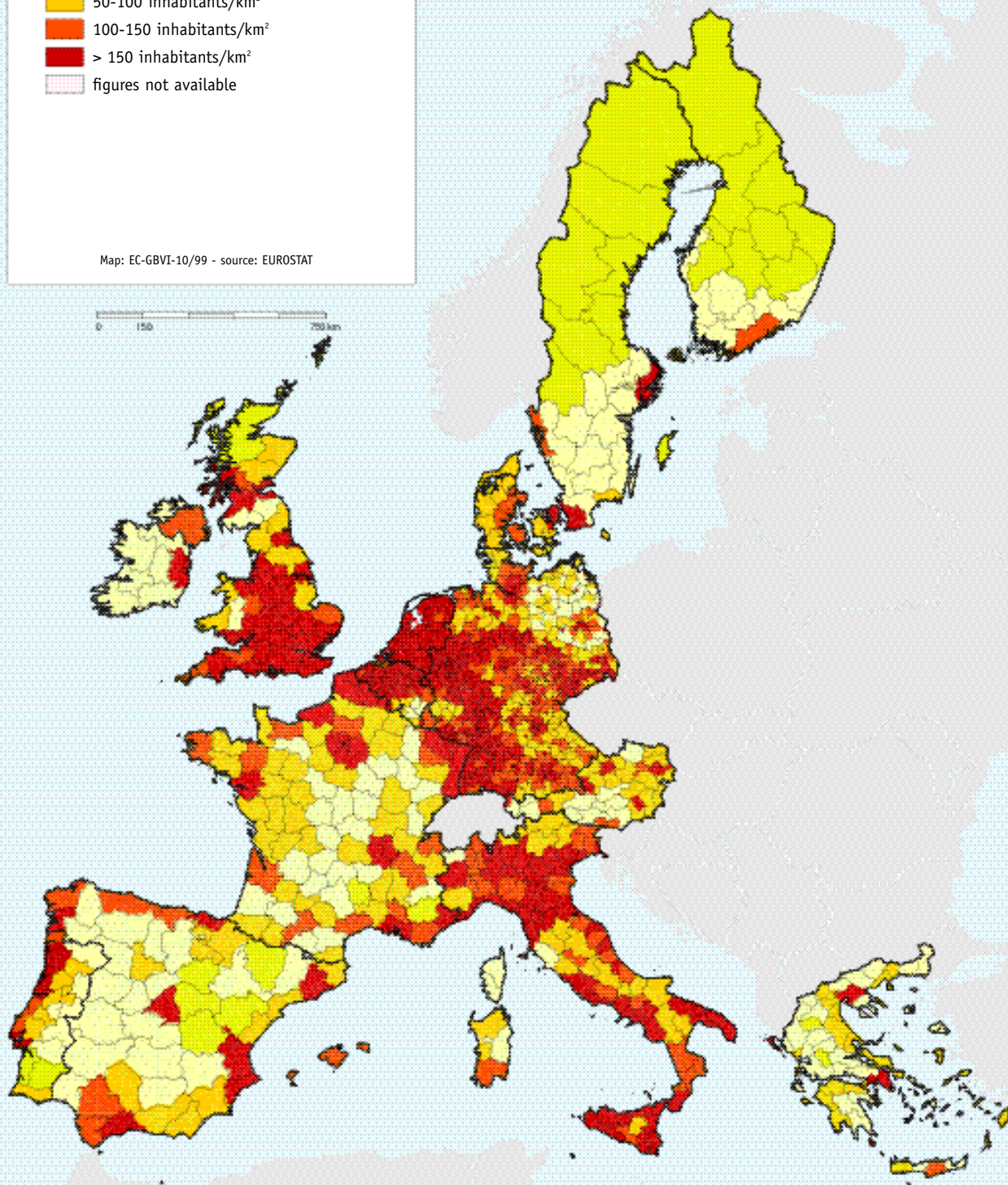
[*] **John Bryden** is a professor of Human Geography at the University of Aberdeen (Scotland, United Kingdom) and coordinator of the "Future Prospects" work of the LEADER European Observatory. He is also a co-director of the Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research and an advisor to the Scottish Office Interdepartmental Committee on Rural Policy.

EUROPEAN UNION POPULATION DENSITY PER REGION (1997)

- ≤ 20 inhabitants/km²
- 20-50 inhabitants/km²
- 50-100 inhabitants/km²
- 100-150 inhabitants/km²
- > 150 inhabitants/km²
- figures not available

Map: EC-GBVI-10/99 - source: EUROSTAT

0 150 200 km



➔ In these areas close to towns and cities, population is increasing due to net inward migration from cities and suburbs. Population deconcentration is taking place in the form of population outflow from metropolitan areas. In such cases, most of those moving to the countryside from towns and suburbs are in higher income groups, apparently moving to escape what they see as urban problems such as inner city impoverishment, falling tax base, poor school performance, increasing crime, long-term unemployment, and decay of urban public goods. One of the challenges the LEADER groups intervening in this kind of area face is to prevent a situation where this inflow of newcomers pushes up housing and land prices, forcing even more local people from the most fragile group to leave.

In other areas, for example in southern France, in a number of rural coastal areas of Spain and Portugal, and in parts of Wales, there has been a growth in the inward migration of retired people with relatively high incomes. Other types of in-migration are return migrants and new working age immigrants attracted by 'quality of life' factors. Integrating these newcomers, who are very often likely to play an active role in the development of rural areas, is a concern of many LEADER areas.

Regions that continue to experience population decline have often been suffering from a strong outward migration, of younger age groups in particular, for many decades. This often results in lower birth rates, an ageing of the population, and a working population that is too small. There is no longer a renewal of the generations. These are the regions that are the most concerned by and should be the most involved in active repopulation policies whose aim is to attract new workers, essential for the creation of new business activities and the revitalisation of the areas in question.

Inward and outward migrations

Although different types of inward and outward migration have different economic impacts, it is generally considered that a population increase is a sign of positive economic trends and/or strong perceptions of a good quality of life by residents and in-migrants alike, whilst population decline is considered to be a sign of negative economic trends and/or a poor quality of life.

But it is interesting to analyse in greater depth this population trend and to see that several regions, like Limousin in France (*see article by Corinne Legrand*), continue to have a natural population imbalance, the result of a long period of large-scale rural depopulation, and a migratory influx of new people who more and more are offsetting the outward migration that is

starting to slow down. While these newcomers are essentially part of the working population, and a significant percentage are families with children, it is clearly a process of renewal that is slowly getting under way in a number of rural areas which a few decades ago seemed doomed.

New comparative advantages but new conflicts

Some rural areas are in fact now seen as relatively good places to live, particularly for young families and even for retired people.

These new values have led to new forms of comparative advantage for rural areas, and new economic activities, which both attract inward migrants and help to retain young people in rural areas. At the same time, new conflicts arise about property rights, access to housing and land, and in other ways. These conflicts are both substantive, arising for example from inward migrants or second home owners forcing up housing prices for locals, from increasing pressure for recreational access to land, and subjective in terms of different perceptions and representations of rurality acting out in local political and social conflicts, or from conflicts about what rural space should be used for.

Winners and losers

If we are to understand more deeply why some rural areas seem to be 'winning' and others 'losing' in the economic stakes and therefore having increasing or falling population, natural and human resources, access to capital, and infrastructure undoubtedly remain key factors, although in the case of natural resources we have to include new uses of these for recreation, tourism and living space.

But it is more and more obvious that in this search for 'territorial competitiveness' a key role is being played by 'softer' factors like how well markets and public institutions are performing, or how effective internal and external networking is, in terms of putting such resources to use for local economic development. These factors have been a focus of the LEADER Initiative through its stress on community involvement, empowerment, partnership, integration and local focus. Among these factors, the need to encourage people to move to rural areas, and in some cases even assist them and plan their integration, is for many areas a difficult challenge but one that is liable to bring renewal. <



(Re)populating Leitrim and North-Roscommon (Ireland)

A matter of quality of life

From housing assistance to the renovation of a cinema, from the development of recreational areas to the creation of new services and activities, a wide range of means is being used to encourage people to resettle in the least populated part of Ireland. LEADER is playing a key role in this effort.

Once upon a time, there where the River Shannon lazily begins its journey out to the sea, stood a village with the last working coal mine in Ireland. Unfortunately, the power plant which bought 95% of the mined coal shut down in 1990, leading to the closure of the mine. 260 miners lost a job that more often than not had been handed down from father to son. And a countless number of indirect jobs also disappeared... Arigna (current population 500) and the mine's entire area of economic influence had no choice but to reconvert. Out of this was born the Arigna Catchment Area Community Company Ltd. (ACACC) comprising 40 community groups from the region. In 1991, LEADER I began and the ACACC became the local action group (LAG) for this part of Ireland (*). *"The closure of the Arigna mine was the last economic blow to hit our region,"* deplores Pat Daly, director of the LAG. *"Take the case of Leitrim: already it*

was the least populated county of Ireland and, unlike the others, its population has been steadily declining since the Great Famine, falling from 155 000 in 1841 to a mere 25 000 today... The Arigna catchment area is slowly overcoming the coal shock of 1990 – LEADER, for example, has helped create about 140 direct jobs and keep a lot more – but 40% of the young people continue to leave the region. The demographic situation remains our major problem. We must put a stop to the population drain before our area becomes totally lifeless and incapable of recovering the critical mass essential for development, especially since 36% of the working population of the LEADER area still depends on agriculture which here does not have much future with the current situation." —————>

➤ In addition to the many training courses organised by the LEADER group – especially to help the redundant miners find jobs in the building and transport sectors – the major undertaking for local reconversion is the Arigna Energy Valley project. It is organised around three sites located in the river valley from which the village takes its name: a Mining Museum, an Energy Museum and a Centre for Alternative Energies. *“With the mine, the old power plant and the wind turbines installed on the hill, we already have at least three ‘life-size’ infrastructures that we just need to set up as a network for educational and tourist purposes,”* explains Seamus Rynn, president of ACDC (Arigna Community Development Company), a well appropriated name in an ‘Energy Valley’ that has nonetheless remained very bucolic and surprisingly well preserved. *“LEADER I financed the feasibility study and LEADER II devoted about 270 000 euros to the project. What is difficult for a small association like ours is to find the matching funds. Our mine was too small to be eligible under RECHAR, the European programme for the reconversion of mines, and because County Roscommon does not border Northern Ireland, we don’t have access to the Peace & Reconciliation programme... The fund raising that we have undertaken in the United States has, on the other hand, already brought in 13 000 euros.”* *“Another major obstacle that we encounter here in terms of development,”* adds Padraig McLoughlin, director of the technical college of Drumshanbo and president of the LEADER group, *“is the lack of initiative. We often come up against a still very ingrained mentality of the ‘well-paid wage earner’ among many former miners. Miners are not entrepreneurs.”*

Electronic commerce

“60% salaried workers, 40% self-employed workers” is precisely the job ratio expected by Bill Connelly and the others involved in the ‘E-commerce’ project which started up in Arigna in December 1999. This is a partnership between the local action group and a software maker – Trojan – based in Boyle (population 1 800).

“Arigna, energy valley”: in the background, Lough Allen; on the right a coal briquette production plant, a survival from the old coal mine.



Twelve young unemployed people with basic computer skills took a nine-month training course in electronic commerce: *“they learned about the creation of Web sites and the marketing of products on the Internet, and about graphics and advertising,”* notes Bill, member of the LAG and headmaster of the primary school of Arigna where the training courses are given. *“We will never have major industries here, so this project is a unique opportunity to retain our young people and this thanks to an intellectually stimulating activity. We want to create a centre of excellence, a kind of ‘conveyor belt’ in business-oriented information technology. We expect that at the end of their training, all the participants will be hired by Trojan; later, some will want to venture out on their own and set up their own business.”*

The project entails hiring a teacher and a coordinator who is also responsible for finding customers interested in having a commercial Web site. The sites built by the students will finance at least part of the programme, and an electronic commerce company is to be created at the end of the first training session. At the moment, the action (a total cost of EUR 170 000 of which EUR 35 000 is being provided by Trojan) is being funded under Measure C of LEADER. It is part of a transnational cooperation project organised with the South Tyrone LEADER group in Northern Ireland which is implementing a nearly identical project. In addition, McGee College of the University of Ulster will be issuing a certificate for the two training programmes in the North and South.

“The ‘E-Commerce project’ is not only providing job opportunities but also doing a lot to improve the quality of the region’s educational services, a very important factor to attract new residents,” notes John Burke, vice president of the LAG and president of the Uná Bhán cooperative which brings together thirty socio-economic partners from the region of Boyle (all the profit from the café-restaurant opened by the cooperative in 1995 with the help of LEADER I is being reinvested in the organisation of activities and the promotion of tourism in the area).

With the phenomenal growth witnessed by Ireland in recent years (over 8% a year in 1997 and 1998) and the resulting situation of near full employment (jobless rate below 6% in 1999), even in the rural counties (see article *“The Irish Way to Rural Resettlement”*), it is more quality of life factors that are making the difference between an attractive area and an area that people tend to leave.

Leitrim/North-Roscommon is full of natural and cultural resources: an undulating landscape full of the vast lakes found throughout Shannon and dotted with quaint villages and castles, the LEADER area has everything to please tourists and also people looking for a rural place to move to.

In addition, better road facilities and the widespread use of the Internet mean that the remoteness of the area is no longer an intractable handicap. *“The telecommunication lines are better than in Dublin – 44000 bits here compared with 33000 bits there – and we are soon going to have ISDN,”* says Liam Breslin, researcher in the field of information technologies who in 1998 moved with his companion, Aedin McLoughlin, to Ballinaglera, a village of 300 inhabitants along Lough



Beautician Karen Taylor was able to stay in her area thanks to LEADER financial assistance

Allen (Leitrim). And he adds: *"here, people take their time, even the butcher is a philosopher and then there is another reason for our presence here – we are still far enough away to escape babysitting our grandchildren!"* *"The quality of life is our major asset,"* notes Brian Nerney, managing director of the Roscommon Herald newspaper. *"We have been penalised by our proximity to the border with Northern Ireland. For investors, big and small, we were considered a region at war... The November 1999 agreements are the best news we've had in a long time."*

So, with this feeling of optimism, local officials are dusting off projects that had been put aside pending. One example is the magnificent forest park of Lough Key, the oldest national park in Ireland whose visitor numbers have dropped since 1991, which is going to be revitalised and undergo a genuine overhaul. Nearly EUR 6 million are going to be invested in various facilities (new interpretation centre, self-catering cottages, recreational equipment, etc) that will be fully integrated in the environment. *"Here too, we are confronted with the problem of low population,"* recognises Frank Feighan, elected councillor of County Roscommon: *"nobody wants to invest in a luxury hotel in the park; all the potential investors that we have approached say that our population is not large enough..."*

Housing

"Housing is today the biggest obstacle to resettlement," says Noel Collins, resettlement officer for County Roscommon working on the Pilot Scheme for Rural Resettlement (see article *"The Irish Way to Rural Resettlement"*). His counterpart in County Leitrim, Tina Rehill, shares his view: *"On the one hand, there is not enough suitable housing. On the other hand, prices have gone up so much these past two years that owning a home or even renting has become difficult for many people..."*

The Upper Shannon, encompassing the entire LEADER area, is the geographical area chosen by the Irish government to test between 1999 and 2002 a rural renovation programme (Upper Shannon Rural Renewal Scheme) based on tax incentives, namely, a 50% cut in the capital tax for the building of a new home and a 100% reduction for the renovation of an existing dwelling. *"The public has shown great interest in this: in barely four months, we have received several hundred applications,"* underlines Gillian Buckley, project manager at the Western Development Commission which is overseeing the programme.

"This is the rural application of a model that has proved successful in urban areas. It is a programme that is essentially aimed at the average-income owner and emigrants who want to return. In a sustainable resettlement strategy, we must target these two categories which are more 'economically reliable', if I dare say that, than the disadvantaged groups or the neo-ruralites who are attracted above all by a new way of life."

As for the LEADER Initiative, it is largely directed at supporting the repopulation effort engaged in Ireland and in a rather wide range of sectors, for instance, help to create 12 jobs in a new home for the elderly, support for the creation of new local services (eg, a beauty salon), the establishment of a centre for community activities and cultural events (exhibition space, recording studio), renovation of the Carrick-on-Shannon cinema which was going to shut down. *"It was more the arguments of the LEADER people than the funding (17% of the 130 000 euros that I invested) that convinced me: keeping a cinema open is very important for a small town like ours,"* stresses the owner of the Gaiety Cinema.

"We want to keep people here," repeats Padraig McLoughlin, the president of the LEADER group. *"You know what really motivates me is that my entire family is near me and not in America, England or somewhere else."* <

[*] The LEADER I Arigna catchment area (1991-1994) also covered part of Counties Sligo and Cavan, or 4 500 km² in total (90 000 inhabitants).



LEADER LEITRIM/NORTH ROSCOMMON

Surface area: 3 285 km²
Population: 56 936 inhabitants
LEADER II funding: EUR 6 250 720
EU: EUR 2 180 000 – **Other public funds:** EUR 935 000
Private: EUR 3 135 720

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The Irish Way to Rural Resettlement

The success of Rural Resettlement Ireland, an association that helps disadvantaged families in the cities move to the country, has prompted the Irish government to launch a pilot programme to deepen the experience and extend it to other segments of the population. Nine rural areas, all covered by LEADER, are concerned.



"We were afraid of finding ourselves in some social housing estate in the country..." Instead of a "social housing estate", Frank and Eva Page live with their four children in a modest but comfortable, single low-rent home that is owned by County Leitrim Council.

"Dubliners for generations," the Pages decided to leave the "Fair City" in 1994 when Frank lost his job as delivery man and their two oldest children who were entering their teen years *"risked becoming drug addicts and delinquents because of the neighbourhood."* The Pages heard about Rural Resettlement Ireland (RRI). They contacted the association in the summer of 1994, and in November RRI informed them that a house was available in Ballynamore in Leitrim. The Pages went to see the house, liked it and rented it for two years, the time it took the County Council to find them their current home.

New blood

The Pages are a good example of the type of family RRI has helped resettle in the countryside: disadvantaged city dwellers, even threatened with exclusion, they have found safety, peacefulness and quality of life in the countryside.

Jim Connolly is the man who came up with the idea that led to RRI back in the 1970s: *"a sculptor from Dublin, I was living in the western part of County Clare and started seeing my neighbours disappear one after the other, with no young people to replace them. In fact, the whole of western Ireland was becoming depopulated and*

the economic programmes implemented were not doing anything to help. They had been designed with a long-term view but the problem had become so serious and urgent that a real 'injection of new blood' was needed for the countryside. By contrast, in Dublin and in the major cities of England, a lot of families were living in poor conditions due to unemployed parents, insecurity, a depressing environment, etc. This being the case, why not ask these families to move to our area? At the time, I thought that the key to the operation was employment, but in 1990 the number of unemployed was just 300 000 in Ireland yet emigration was at its peak... So, I turned the question around and asked myself: 'and if the problem was not the solution? Shouldn't the focus be unemployment instead of employment to repopulate the countryside?'"

Rural Resettlement Ireland

With a few friends, Jim created in 1990 Rural Resettlement Ireland. The association used the radio to broadcast its message: *"Are you unemployed? Do you live in a tough neighbourhood? Why don't you move to the country? You won't necessarily find work in the country, but you will certainly find a better quality of life."* RRI received over a hundred letters from interested people. *"They all said the same thing,"* recalls Jim: *"find us a house!"* An element played in our favour: *the Irish social security system is not linked to the place of residence – you can live anywhere in the country without losing your benefits. This is true for unemployment benefits and for the housing allowances granted recently under certain conditions. You can tell that the government is working with us..."*

RRI is one of the partners, along with the Department of the Environment and various local authorities, of a national pilot programme, the Village Renewal Scheme which encourages people who live in social housing in the city to move to the country where they will continue to benefit from a low-rent dwelling.

It is also the Irish State that provides three quarters of RRI's annual budget, about EUR 100 000. The rest comes from private donors, particularly in the United States. *"We still do not receive any direct aid from the European Union,"* points out Jim, *"but it is worth noting that LEADER and other European programmes have done a lot to help several of our resettled families by co-funding some of the investments needed for their new rural business activity."*

With a permanent staff of four and volunteer correspondents scattered across the country, the association scours Ireland in search of houses for the would-be resettlers. A report published in December 1999 revealed that no less than 400 families had gone through RRI

and already moved to 19 counties in Ireland. And Jim Connolly indicates: *"in the beginning, all the families who move are unemployed and not one goes into farming. The success rate, meaning the percentage of families that do not go back to the city, is on average 80% after nine years of operating and even 92% in the past three years, probably because of the 'Celtic Tiger' phenomenon."*^[1] Often, those who have resettled find work only a few weeks after they arrive."

Pilot scheme

The successes of Rural Resettlement Ireland drew the attention of the European Commission at the Cork Conference on Rural Development in November 1996 (see *LEADER Magazine No. 13*). As there was no European instrument that could support the association during the 1994-99 programming period, the European Commission officials suggested that the Irish authorities put together a pilot rural resettlement programme, as additional European funding was to become available. In the end it was ADM (Area Development Management Ltd.), an intermediate body responsible for the implementation of the Local Development Programme (LDP) in Ireland, that was commissioned by the Department of Tourism, Sports and Recreation to develop and manage a mechanism to "enhance understanding of the challenges linked to rural resettlement, particularly with regard to employment, training and vocational integration. The purpose was to devise a national strategy for rural regeneration." The Pilot Scheme for Rural Resettlement was launched in 1999 for a period of one year. With a budget of about EUR 400 000, this programme – designed as a research action to facilitate rural resettlement – is applied in nine rural areas ^[2] selected according to demographic, economic and social criteria. As a national technical assistance unit and member of the advisory group, Rural Resettlement Ireland is closely involved in its implementation.

In each of the nine areas concerned, a resettlement committee was set up and a resettlement officer was recruited. His job is to inform people and raise their awareness, to identify needs, to contact the owners of empty dwellings, to take stock of available housing, etc. So that the programme can benefit from as wide a range of experiences as possible, each resettlement officer is given considerable autonomy in the choice of interventions.

Eventually and more generally, the purpose is to raise the awareness of all the players concerned, to explore new ways to support resettlement, to identify examples of good practice and to issue recommendations that, outlined in a widely distributed document, *"will lead to a genuine national resettlement strategy as an instrument for regenerating the countryside,"* says Martin

Flatley, coordinator of the project. *"Helping people move to the country is like putting together a puzzle with four main pieces,"* says Martin: *"the target groups, the possible areas of resettlement, the supply and quality of the housing, and integration and job opportunities. A programme's success depends on the good coordination of these four elements."*

Survivors

"Unlike RRI whose main purpose is to help disadvantaged families move to the country," continues Martin, *"we are trying here to look at the possibilities of helping other specific groups move: emigrants wanting to return to Ireland, practitioners and professionals attracted by the countryside and whose activity is in no way connected with any specific geographical place, not to mention all the means that can help keep people in the country. In fact, we are interested in any category of person who can contribute to the local development of a rural area."*

It looks more like a marriage of convenience than a love match between ADM and RRI, but what Martin Flatley says is confirmed by Jim Connolly: *"our paths run parallel but more and more they cross. Everyone has understood that the real challenge is the future of rural Europe. I'm now arguing for a 'Rural Resettlement Europe.' What I always find fascinating with our 'customers' is their determination to survive. And that is precisely what rural Europe needs – a breed of survivors."* <

[1] The very strong growth witnessed by Ireland these past few years has earned the country this very "Asian" nickname.

[2] The nine areas concerned by the Pilot Scheme for Rural Resettlement are covered by LEADER II, but four local action groups are directly involved in the pilot programme since they were chosen to implement the programme in their area. They are Duhallow, Galway, South Kerry and West Limerick.





People from Germany, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland and urban Portugal are all making their projects and dreams of life in the country come true in rural Portugal

Neo-ruralites bring relief

With the accelerated expansion of the service sector, young people are no longer finding the Portuguese countryside attractive, preferring instead to be in the city, not some village. They are interested in service jobs that pay a steady wage rather than seasonal work on a farm or self-employment in a craft. In contrast to this trend, a whole category of former urbanites – from Portugal and especially Northern Europe – are finding their “place in the sun” in the hinterland of certain regions, bringing genuine relief to rural areas. Here the spotlight is on some of these (neo-)rural entrepreneurs from the LEADER areas of Entre Lousã e Zêzere (Centro) and Sudoeste (Algarve/Alentejo).

“We can never go out and leave the village without surveillance because of vandalism,” complains Kerstin Thomas. With her husband and their two children aged eight and four, she is the only woman inhabitant of Cerdeira, a remote village at the end of a dirt road high

up in the Serra de Lousã, in central Portugal. *“When we studied Portuguese in Coimbra, we discovered this deserted village and decided to move here. We were able to buy four houses.”* Originally from the region of Kassel, in Germany, the couple wanted to live close to



Sabine and José de Sousa (on the right) in front of their new workshop. She is German, he is Portuguese, and their assistant, Edward Beaumont (on the left), is British

nature, “to work at home, to take the time to live, to no longer run... Here, I don’t have the impression I’m rushing to drop the kids off at school so I won’t be late for work.” The work Kerstin and her husband do is first of all woodcarving but they also rent guest rooms nearly every weekend. They did not receive any help or assistance whatsoever in 1986 to move there, but a few years later, at the instigation of the municipality of which Cerdeira is a part, the Youth Institute volunteered to clean up the village streets and alleys. Since then, most of the houses have been bought up by the people of Coimbra or Lisbon who have made them their second homes. Today, Cerdeira and the other old abandoned villages in the region have become what could almost be called “chic” holiday resorts and are known throughout the country.

Credit

Since entering the euro zone, Portugal has become part of the consumer society. “For a long time largely informal, the rural economy first became monetarist; now, people are discovering credit in all its forms...”, explains Andreas Apitz, originally from Hamburg and living in the Serra since 1987. “People have to pay the monthly instalments of the big 4X4 they bought on credit... So, they look for a relatively well-paid salaried job that you just don’t find here.”

Andreas and Iris Apitz chose Serra de Lousã almost scientifically: “We decided on Portugal because we found it was the country in southern Europe most open to foreigners. We then studied a map of Portugal and opted for the country’s geographical centre. We thought Algarve was too hot and the North had too much rain... Here, it looked ideal to us, and we do indeed live in pretty wooded mountains, not far from a cold sea so there are no tourists and with dominant west winds which protect us from air pollution.”

Twelve years later, has reality lived up to their hopes? “In a nutshell, yes” replies Andreas, “we can certainly complain about a lack of environmental awareness – particularly in the case of waste management, a very bureaucratic administration, and a certain contempt on the part of the people for their recent local history – associated with deprivation if not poverty – but Portugal is evolving at its own pace, as the wealthier countries did. However, this phase where consuming seems to be the only preoccupation is a little silly, and I’ll certainly be glad when it’s over.”

Like Kerstin, Andreas is one of those North Europeans marked by the 1960s-70s who chose Portugal because of a cultural ideal (an “authentic” rural society), a political ideal (the Revolution of the Carnations of 1974) or a socio-economic ideal. Manfred Markl, 45 years old, defines himself as someone from the “alternative” group of Nuremberg: “between 1974 and 1981, we formed an autonomous community of several hundred people in the city centre. I was a garage mechanic... And then the real estate developers descended on the neighbourhood and we had to find another place to live. I wanted to be out in the country, but staying in Germany was out of the question because of exorbitant land prices. In France and Spain, the situation was more or less the same... So on the edge of Europe, all that was left was Portugal.” In 1984, he bought a 1.5 ha farm from Pedrogão Grande and took a course in cheese making. “I also learned a lot by working with people: the whole village was still living on agriculture at the time.” With the passing of the years, Manfred has become the only farmer still left in the village. With his 60 goats, he is also the only cheese maker in the entire LEADER area. “There is no cheese-making tradition in the Serra,” explains Maria Marques, director of the Entre Lousã e Zêzere LAG, “the activity of Markl was an innovation that absolutely had to be supported.” As a result, LEADER should soon be financing 65% of the EUR 30 000 Manfred needs to build and equip a small, more efficient cheese dairy.



Among the different forms she makes, Kerstin Thomas carves wood caricatures using photos her clients send her



— *"Most of the projects that we support are collective ones," points out development agent Ana Soute. "There are a lot of neo-ruralites in the Sierra, but they are not a specific category of players for us, and certainly not the ones who need the most help. Usually they blend in with the local society and are a discrete part of the socio-professional networks of the area. Many are craftsmen, for example, and it is in this capacity that they may become involved in a LEADER action."*

Innovators

Let us leave the Serra de Lousã for the Serra de Monchique, 400 km south, at the border with Algarve and Alentejo. *"Roughly speaking, there are two kinds of foreigners here,"* sums up Gordon Sillence, an English sociologist who came to Portugal ten years ago and co-founded the Portuguese Institute of Ecology (INPECO) in 1996. *"In addition to the very typical group of retired people found in sunny regions, there are the 'entrepreneurs': unlike what is often the case in Wales or in Ireland, the people who move here are not necessarily the fringe who will do whatever it takes to flee the urban system. Often they are entrepreneurs who felt their country of origin was unsuitable to fulfil their project. Almost all are innovators. They are a wonderful resource for local development, a resource that is unfortunately often underutilised..."*

"I don't agree with that last remark," objects Carlos Albano, LEADER development agent in the Serra de Monchique. He continues *"here, the first people involved in a LEADER project in 1997 were foreigners: you, Gordon, who produced a topographical guide of the area, and Amanda Twohig, who is Irish and who received EUR 13 000 in funding for her organic jam business."*

"We don't have any specific strategy for inward migrants;

we have a strategy, and that's it, but it just so happens that a lot of the work we do is with newcomers," insists Pedro Dornellas, coordinator of the "Vicentina" development association which is managing the Sudoeste LEADER programme. *"A large majority of the people who live in this part of Portugal are from somewhere else – several colleagues and myself grew up in Mozambique, the president of the association, Joaquim Marreiros, is married to a Dutch woman, etc. – and therefore, mathematically, many of those with projects here are 'foreigners'. This is also the case because more often than not they have taken over businesses that the Portuguese no longer want and which are precisely in the sectors that we support: agriculture and crafts..."*

The Vicentina association/LEADER Sudoeste intervenes in the western part of Algarve, in the area of cape Saint-Vincent, on the southwestern tip of Europe. Stretching all the way to the Serra de Monchique and the other mountains forming the border between Algarve and Alentejo and north of a very narrow strip of the coast that is extremely popular with tourists (4 million visitors a year) and densely built up from Lagos to Faro, lies a scarcely populated area (barely 6 inhabitants/km² in some places) that today would be deserted if it were not for the "neo-ruralites".

Neighbours

"An old woman has already told me: 'I don't care about the nationality of my neighbours, I just want to have neighbours'," tells Fernand Silva, LEADER official, *"the coast has 'taken away' all the young people from this area..."* And she cites as an example the municipality of Barão de São João, where the young families are almost all English, German, Dutch or Swiss, and the primary school has 19 foreign chil-

dren and 3 Portuguese children. *"The foreigners have helped us keep open the school, the post office, several cafés and five grocery shops, including one that sells a wider range of organic products than in Lisbon,"* notes Fernanda. Niels Rump and Marielle Demenga (36 years old) are among the "living strengths" of Barão de São João. Originally from Genoa in Italy, they worked for development organisations in the Third World before settling down in Portugal in 1989, buying 4 ha of land in the middle of nowhere. To live, these trained agrobiologists decided to launch into *"organic farming, of course! For us to go into any other kind of farming was inconceivable."* The ingredients of a "Christmas ratatouille" were what guided them in developing their product range and finding their niche: *"tomatoes, onions, courgettes, aubergines, peppers, beans... all the fruit and vegetables that are ready for picking here when the season is ending in France,"* says Niels. In 1992, European aid enabled them to trade in their small tunnels in favour of vast greenhouses and forced them a little against their will to move into high gear: *"1 ha of greenhouses is a lot. We would have preferred a smaller project, to have grown at our own pace, but for the subsidy it was either take it or leave it..."* As for LEADER, the Community Initiative contributed half of the EUR 17 500 needed to buy a machine to wash and grade the fruit and vegetables. In addition to Niels and Marielle, the farm has four permanent employees. Only 1% of the production is sold on the local market (the tourist sector of Algarve consumes very little organic food), 60% of the production is exported (to the United Kingdom and Germany) and 39% goes to the various supermarkets in Portugal. To strengthen the bargaining position with buyers, Niels helped found in 1995 "Urze" ("heath"), a group of 22 organic producers scattered across Portugal.

"DistriBIO"

Eric Balans, from France, and his wife Alexandra, born in Mozambique, founded the "DistriBIO" company a few years ago, providing a weekly home delivery of organic food baskets to some fifty customers within a radius of 200 km. *"To develop the system,"* explains Eric, *"we drew on an experiment carried out in Trièves, France to help unemployed people return to the working world. Delivering all the baskets takes about three and a half days. Each basket contains between 8 to 10 different products. The composition depends on the season; the customers – 50% Portuguese, 50% foreigners – never know exactly what they are going to receive."* Benefiting from LEADER co-funding for the packing equipment, DistriBIO naturally buys from Niels and Marielle, among other suppliers.

"Networks of neo-ruralites have formed, especially according to the language and sector of activity," stresses Eric. Organic production, the ecology and alternative sources of energy weave powerful links: Amanda Twohig, for example, sells her organic jams in places like Vera Diesselbrede's natural food shop in Aljezur. Vera's companion, Franz Wagner is himself an entrepreneur-innovator in the region. Originally from Neuss near Düsseldorf, he had opened a restaurant in Algarve in 1979. But like all the other neo-ruralites who were moving there at the time, he was faced with the problem of no electricity. Forced to provide it himself, he discovered a passion for alternative sources of energy and created, with two fellow Germans, the "Sistemas de Energias Alternativas Portugal Lda" company, now a national leader in the assembly and installation of solar and wind power equipment. *"We're growing 20% to 30% —>*

Alexandra and Eric Balans grow and sell a wide range of organic products





Manfred Markl is the only cheese maker in the LEADER area of Entre Lousã e Zêzere

— annually” announces Franz proudly. “We have a permanent staff of 8 and work with 80 retailers around the world. Our customers are 60% individuals and 40% groups. We have participated in several European programmes – JOULE, THERMIE – and are currently cooperating with the Mine Academy of Paris on a COPERNICUS project in Uzbekistan.”

Franz Wagner’s systems and the enormous efforts made by Portugal to install electricity across the countryside these past several years have solved the great problem that newcomers encountered ten years ago. But the same can be said about water, “without which,” recalls Fernanda Silva, “no rural development is possible” and this is sometimes lacking, as José and Sabine Sousa found out to their cost?

All the entrepreneurs we met complained about this shortage of labour: “the accelerated transformation of Portuguese society is diminishing traditional activities, seen as ‘out-dated’, dirty and unprofitable,” says Sabine. However, she forgets to mention one detail in her analysis: José was not a potter before meeting her but a civil servant at the Ministry of Finance! “I took unpaid leave... for life,” he adds. <

[*] Nickname given by the people in Portugal to white people from the former Portuguese colonies of Africa.

Manpower

José is an “African” [*] from Mozambique while Sabine is German from Eutin in Schleswig-Holstein. Both are ceramists and run a shop where they sell pottery and other terracotta objects in Lagos. In 1995, they bought 8 ha of unused land in the hinterland. The place was entirely deserted but had the particular feature of offering a view of the western coast (“Costa Vicentina”) and the southern coast of Algarve. They built their house there, and then with the help of LEADER erected a vast workshop (EUR 50 000). Unfortunately, the reservoir that was supposed to supply the property with water was insufficient and a well had to be dug, thus considerably increasing the cost of the project. “Little by little, we solved the infrastructure problems,” recalls José from the top of his hill which looks out over the tip of Europe. “We’re proud to think that in addition to us, two families earn a living with our business. Because you know, the hardest part is to find people who will work for you and to keep them. A cashier at the supermarket where we shop has already participated in a training course we organised, but she preferred the job as cashier because it is more prestigious here than pottery.”



LEADER ENTRE LOUSÃ E ZÊZERE

Surface area: 729.35 km²
Population: 48 012 inhabitants
LEADER II funding: EUR 3 308 000
EU: EUR 2 481 000 – **Other public funds:** EUR 247 000
Private: EUR 580 000

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LEADER SUDOESTE

Surface area: 2 368 km²
Population: 61 393 inhabitants
LEADER II funding: EUR 2 921 000
EU: EUR 1 998 000 – **Other public funds:** EUR 129 000
Private: EUR 794 000

VICENTINA
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Directorate-General for Agriculture: reorganisation of the Directorates for Rural Development

To take account of the orientations of the new regulation on rural development, the directorates of the Directorate-General for Agriculture directly concerned by this sector have been reorganised.

Rural development, which directly depends on one of the four Deputy Directors-General, is now divided between two Directorates:

Directorate F.I comprises three units – one responsible for the rural development programmes of Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom, the other for the programmes of Greece, Italy, Portugal and Finland; a third unit is responsible for forests, the environment and residual actions under Article 8 of the EAGGF;

Directorate F.II also has two geographical units – one for

Belgium, Denmark, France and Austria, the other for Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. A third unit is in charge of coordinating rural development with the other sectors of DG Agriculture (called DG “AGRI” internally) and with the general regulation as well as the coordination of LEADER+. A fourth unit is in charge of the “SAPARD” regulation for the Central and East European countries.

The new Director General of DG Agriculture is Jose Manuel Silva Rodríguez, previously Deputy Director General in charge of rural development.

Contact: European Commission, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels. Tel: +32 2 299 11 11.

New LEADER publications

Rural innovation series
“Developing rural services”

Profound changes – economic, demographic, institutional, technological – are under way today, with sometimes detrimental implications for rural services. Given the magnitude of the challenges, this dossier offers a general analysis of the problem, a few methodological points for the introduction of local services and some examples of the tools needed for their various phases, namely, the analysis, implementation, monitoring and assessment of local services. (Price: BEF 300 taxes included/about EUR 7.5).

Methodological guides series
“Sources of renewable energy, sources of sustainable development”

This document is intended for local development players to serve as a practical reference tool for assessing the local potential for renewable energy, for studying the impact of a project in this field on the economic, ecological and social situation of an area, and finally, in certain cases, for simplifying the implementation of this project. (Price BEF 300 taxes included/about EUR 7.5).

Observatory dossier series
“Mainstreaming LEADER in future rural policies”

This dossier is the outcome of the debates that took place during the two LEADER seminars organised in Wallonia (Belgium) and Valencia (Spain) in June 1999 and attended by representatives of national and/or regional government agencies from most of the Member States. At a time when the new programming period (2000-2006) is being prepared, discussion of possible ways to mainstream LEADER in future policies is at the top of the agenda.

LEADER+: indicative allocation of funds [*]	
MEMBER STATE	LEADER+ (MILLIONS EUR)
Belgium	15
Denmark	16
Germany	247
Greece	172
Spain	467
France	252
Ireland	45
Italy	267
Luxembourg	2
Netherlands	78
Austria	71
Portugal	152
Finland	52
Sweden	38
United Kingdom	106
Networks	40
EUR-15	2020
[*] allocation proposed by the European Commission on 13 October 1999	

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“Rural Europe”:
LEADER on line
in 6 languages
The publications (LEADER Magazine, INFO-LEADER, technical dossiers, etc.), the programme of activities, the updated list of all approved LEADER beneficiaries as well as various databases can be consulted on line in 6 languages (French, English, German, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese) on the Internet. Several forums are also open.

Name: LEADER

("Links between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy")

Programme type: Community Initiative

Target areas: Objective 1 regions (development lag), Objective 5b areas (fragile rural areas) and Objective 6 areas (Nordic areas of very low population density) of the European Union. However, up to 10% of the allocations in Objective 5b areas can be granted to non-eligible contiguous areas.

Objectives: providing continuity with LEADER I (1991-1994), LEADER II is intended to:

- > encourage model local rural development initiatives;
- > support innovative, demonstrative and transferable measures which illustrate the new directions that rural development can take;
- > increase exchanges of experiences and transfers of know-how;
- > support transnational development projects proposed by those active at local level in rural areas and which express their solidarity.

Recipients: LEADER II can assist two categories of final beneficiaries:

- > principally, "Local Action Groups", i.e. a combination of public and private partners jointly devising a strategy and innovative measures for the development of a rural area on the scale of a local community (less than 100 000 inhabitants);
- > other rural collective bodies, public or private, (for example, chambers of agriculture, industry, commerce or crafts, cooperatives, business groups, local authorities, non-profit-making organisations), provided that their more specific activities relate to a plan for the rural development of a local area.

Types of measures: acquisition of skills in rural development, rural innovation programmes (vocational training, rural tourism, support for small firms, increasing commercial value locally and marketing of agricultural, forestry and fisheries products; improvement of the environment and living conditions, etc.), transnational cooperation.

The various elements of LEADER II are organised around a "European Rural Development Network", permitting wide dissemination (through seminars, meetings and publications) of innovative measures implemented for the benefit of rural areas and fostering transnational cooperation. The network is coordinated by the "LEADER European Observatory".

Duration of the programme: 6 years (1994-1999)

Community grant: around 1 755 million ECU, of which over 1 000 million ECU are for Objective 1 regions, financed by the three Structural Funds.



**LEADER
European Observatory**



**European Commission
DG Agriculture**

LEADER magazine is the quarterly journal of the rural development programme LEADER II. **LEADER** ("Links between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy") is a Community Initiative launched by the European Commission and coordinated by its Directorate-General for Agriculture (Unit F.1.1.). The contents of LEADER magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union Institutions. - **Editorial board:** A.E.I.D.L. - **Person responsible at law:** William Van Dingenen, A.E.I.D.L., chaussée St-Pierre 260, B-1040 Bruxelles - **Journalism:** Jean-Luc Janot - **Contributors to this issue:** John Bryden, Yves Champetier, Corinne Legrand, Minna Silander - **Photos:** LEADER groups, Francisco Botelho, John Cogill, Claire Lelièvre, Yves Ronzier **Cover photo:** Yves Ronzier - **Production coordination:** Christine Chartier - **Graphic design:** Kaligram - Printed in Belgium - **LEADER magazine** is published in the eleven official languages of the European Union and has a print run of 30 000 copies - **For further information:** LEADER Magazine, A.E.I.D.L., chaussée Saint-Pierre 260, B-1040 Brussels. Tel: +32.2 736 49 60. Fax: +32.2.736 04 34. E-Mail: leader@aeidl.be - WWW: <http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be>