

**STUDY PROGRAMME IN EUROPEAN
SPATIAL PLANNING**

**STRATEGIC STUDY
"TOWARDS A NEW RURAL-URBAN
PARTNERSHIP IN EUROPE"**

**2.3 Selected issues of relevance for a partnership on rural and
urban development**

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Report Produced by:
Portugal
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Portugal (sub-theme 2.2)
Centre for Geographical Studies (CEG) - University of Lisbon

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Spain (sub-theme 2.4)
Instituto de Recursos Naturales y Ordenacion del Territorio (INDUROT)

Universidad de Oviedo

Italy (sub-theme 2.5)
Department for National Technical Services of the Presidency of the Council of
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Luxembourg (sub-theme 2.6)
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1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of urban-rural relations is not a new one in geographical investigations and discussions on regional development. Historically, the city and the countryside have always maintained strict relations of interdependence as they have presented specialisations which complement each other: the countryside produced agricultural goods, wood, hydraulic resources, whilst the city, due to its centrality, served as the marketplace and offered services. Furthermore, the relations that were established between the city and the respective rural *hinterland* were not necessarily unstable in favour of the cities, there being cases, namely in small rural cities, where the urban elite was made up of a land-owning bourgeoisie.

During the last decades, with increasing mobility and the intensification of the flow of information, changes in the production process and increasing globalisation of markets, changes in the city-countryside relationship have been noted. Articulations at the local scale have lost importance in favour of relations between more remote areas, namely through network integration. This may result in -- and in some cases the signs are manifest -- the risk of dissolution or the end of traditional urban-rural relations, like the "displacement" of cities from their territories.

Well, exactly because we cannot or should not dissolve the relations between city and countryside, under risk of increasing disparities between territories and diminishing territorial unity/cohesion, the rethinking of urban-rural partnerships is urgent, in view of revaluing and strengthening these, without, however, losing the spirit of the time.

Hence, the aim of this report is to present a summary of the more pertinent issues that are currently raised on the subject of good relations between city and countryside, identifying the domains in which greatest possibilities for new

partnerships are envisioned. Another aim which was present in the development of this study was to put forward proposals or policy suggestions aiming at the strengthening of these partnerships, in a context of balanced or sustainable development, in other words, the point where responsibilities and advantages are equally shared by the intervening territories. This component will be analysed in more detail in the summary report of Point/Item 2.4.

2. BRIEF REVISION OF CASE STUDIES AND RELATION WITH THE TYPOLOGY OF REGIONS

The identification and discussion of aspects which may be more pertinent to the strengthening and valuation of rural-urban partnerships in the European territory was based on the analysis of 36 case studies developed by the various NFP's which participated in Item/Point 2.3 (all EU countries except Austria). The objective was that of identifying the major issues raised between urban areas and rural areas in the European space -- in all its diversity -- and also examples of innovative practises and success stories from which lessons could be drawn for the formulation of policies/measures towards territorial unity/cohesion.

In accordance with the proposed methodology, the case studies should illustrate diverse territorial realities, both in respect to its internal organisational structure, and its location and insertion in the European space. It was believed that, out of the examples drawn from regions with distinct characteristics, a summary capable of mirroring the European reality in its diversity would be more easily attained. Considering this aim, an initial typology of European regions was defined, based on five categories: *Metropolitan areas*, *Polycentric areas*, *Urbanised rural areas*, *Deep rural areas* and *Peripheral areas*.

In general, it can be said that the adopted methodology produced positive results, seeing as it provided for a rather holistic image of the European space in all its variety to be reached and to place different situations of urban-rural relations into contrast. Some disequilibrium, however, was noted in the distribution of case studies by the different type of regions: 17 cases were classified in the category of *Rural and Peripheral areas*, whilst only four corresponded to *Metropolitan Areas*. This may suggest that the pertinence of study on rural-urban partnerships is not equally understood in the various types of regions.

The Case Studies



The crossing of the different case studies with the typology of the regions raises, however, some problems which should be reflected upon and that should eventually be corrected in a further development of this work. The first problem arises from the fact that there is no common understanding of the concepts *Metropolitan area*, *Polycentric area*, *Urbanised rural area* and *Peripheral area* by the different NFP's. It is noted, in effect, that the territories which appear associated to each one of these types of regions are, in many cases, too differentiated, because the classification of each case study into categories depends on the understanding of metropolitan, urbanised, rural, periphery, etc by each of the different national contexts. This is illustrated by the case of the South East Region, in Ireland, and of the central border area, in Portugal, which both appear classified as *Urbanised rural areas*, yet represent different understandings of the concept in question. From this case, the fact that these concepts are difficult to operationalise should be concluded, and that it would certainly be convenient to work towards the definition of these concepts and the actual typology of European spaces.

Another problem arises from the scale of analysis considered in the case studies. The fact that in some case studies there are very extensive geographical areas, raises difficulties towards the classification in identified categories, as they include spaces which superimpose territories with distinct characteristics: this is the case of, for example, Jämtland, in Sweden, which covers 8 municipalities and an area of 49.000 km², and which, in virtue of its dimension, ends up covering spaces which may be classified as *Urbanised rural*, *Rural* and *Peripheral*. Also noteworthy is the existence of great disparity in the dimensions of the different case studies, which is confirmed by contrasting the previously mentioned case to that of the Haute-Sure Natural Park (Luxembourg), which corresponds to an area of only 2,7 km².

CASE STUDIES

	Metropolitan	Polycentric urban	Urbanised rural areas (accessible rural)	Rural (deep rural)	Peripheral
SPAIN					
OCAÑA				X	
SOMIEDO NATURAL PARK				X	
CALVIÀ		X			
NETHERLANDS					
GRONINGEN			X		
ZUID-HOLLAND		X			
ITALY					
MILAN	X				
CREMONA			X		
JUBILEU ITINERARIES			X	X	
OCCITAN SPACE					X
BELGIAN					
MEETJESLAND			X		
RIVER AGREEMENT "HAUTE-MEUSE"		X	X		
PORTUGAL					
RAIA CENTRAL			X	X	
LUXEMBURG					
HAUTE-SURE NATURAL PARK			X		
FINLAND					
HELSINKI			X		
JOENSUU					X
UNITED KINGDOM					
LONDON, BERKSHIRE, SUNEY	X				
CENTRAL BELT- SCOTLAND		X			
CAMBRIDGE AND EAST MIDLANDS		X	X		
WEST OF NORTHERN IRELAND			X		X
SOUTH WALES AND AVON/BRISTOL		X			
FRANCE					
SICOVAL	X		X		X
"MECANIC VALLEY"			X	X	
HAUT-LANUEDOC NATURAL PARK			X	X	
JAZZ IN MARCIAC				X	
LOUDEC-MENÉ AREA				X	
IRELAND					
SOUTHERN AND EASTERN REGION			X		
BORDER MIDLANDS AND WESTERN REGION					X
DENMARK					
BALTIC SEA COASTAL PLANNING			X		
BORNHOLM				X	
SWEDEN					
STOCKOLM-MÅLAR REGION	X				
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN JÄMTLAND			X	X	X
TIDAHOLM			X		
GREECE					
THESSALY REGION			X		
GERMANY					
SÜDRAUM LEIPZIG	X				
MECKLENBURG LAKES REGION				X	
SUTTGART REGION		X			
LAKE CONSTANCE / UPPER SWABIA			X		

3. RELEVANT ISSUES FOR A PARTNERSHIP ON RURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT-- AN OVERVIEW

Urban-rural relations can be analysed under a great variety of viewpoints, depending on the choice for one or another type of desired objective.

For this study, the guiding objective of which is to define the bases of what may be a new strategy for territorial development, based on the reformulation and the strengthening of relations between rural and urban spaces, six *main issues* were considered relevant by the various NFP's:

- 1) Settlement structure and accessibility of infrastructures;
- 2) Diversification of the economy in a wider rural-urban context;
- 3) Territorial impacts of agricultural structural change;
- 4) Natural heritage: conservation and development;
- 5) Cultural heritage: culture in economic development strategies;
- 6) Local administration: prospect for co-operation between rural and urban authorities.

What follows is a report of the main observations drawn from the case studies, according to the main issues selected.

3.1 Settlement structure and accessibility of infrastructures

One issue that is still open to debate is the delimitation of the rural and the urban. The multiplicity of urban forms of expansion (infield, expansion, linear, sprawl, big projects) may complicate this delimitation/demarcation.

One conclusion which arises from the analysis of the case studies in relation to the structure of settlement and accessibility is that the increase in accessibility has the

double effect of, on the one hand, valuing centrality and, on the other hand, increasing the exclusion of more remote areas. A strengthened centrality also promotes a diffused pattern of urbanisation springing from urban poles, thus generating conflicts on the use of old land, namely rural use. The fact that regulation of urban and non-urban land use is distinctly more flexible on the second, also strengthens the tendency towards the dispersion of settlement and activities, placing the balance between rural and urban areas at risk (as in the case of the Thessaly Region in Greece).

A last observation is that this growth of diffused urbanisation has made it even more complicated to differentiate the complex differences between urban and rural, hence contributing to the continuance of the debate around these concepts.

3.2 Diversification of the economy in a wider rural-urban context

The case studies prove that there has been a growing diversification of the economic base of rural areas, greatly due to the valuation of its role in articulation with urban areas. Among the tendencies that support this, the following are highlighted:

- the growth in industrial activities, through deconcentration (decentralisation) and relocation from urban areas, as in the case study presented by France (Sicoval and Mecanic Valley);
- the growth of tourism and leisure activities, which is in many cases is already a reality, and indeed for most is an opportunity to diversify the economic base of rural areas (Somiedo Natural Park and Ocaña in Spain, Haute Meuse in Belgium, etc); occurring at the same time as efforts in development of thematic tourist routes crossing rural and urban areas emerge, of which the Jubilee Itineraries in Italy are an example;

- the emergence of agricultural production niches, allowing rural areas to opt between diversification or specialisation in function of the distance to the market (the recent urban demand for eco-friendly products have created the emergence of explorations specialised in biological agriculture in certain rural areas, like the central border area, in Portugal, and in Haute-Sure Natural Park in Luxembourg);
- the development of activities making use of new information and communication technologies; a situation illustrated by the case of Bornholm (Denmark), although there are not yet many other success stories in the case studies analysed.

It can thus be concluded that the opportunities open to urban areas vary significantly in relation to their geographical, economic and cultural context.

3.3 Territorial impacts of agricultural structural change

Agriculture and forestry should be seen as an important element of the economic base, although both play differentiated roles in relation to their accessibility to urban agglomerates.

In more urbanised areas there are successful cases of rural space integration as a tool for urban physical planning, working as a “buffer” where agriculture, leisure and nature are combined. South Holland (The Netherlands), in particular, demonstrates the advantages of maintaining rural spaces in densely urbanised areas. With the same aim, large forest areas and lakes have been preserved in the Metropolitan Area of Stockholm-Mällar.

Another observation is that large-scale farming should take place in certain areas, especially in *Deep rural*, whilst the industrialisation of agricultural production may proceed in the more urbanised areas.

In short, adequate policy measures may allow diverse types of farmed areas to play a positive role in their respective regions, as long as they are articulated on the one hand with urbanisation strategies and, on the other hand, with natural resource conservation policies, thus being within a context of sustainable development.

3.4 Natural heritage: conservation and development

Areas with natural resources should be considered from two perspectives. They must, on the one hand, be seen as fundamental foci of the preservation of biodiversity, namely in the case of peripheral or ultra-peripheral areas (Joensuu in Finland, Jämtland in Sweden) and, on the other hand, they should be instruments for a sustainable form of occupation in social, economic and natural aspects.

With respect to Natural heritage areas it is necessary to distinguish those that represent “fortresses” against threats caused by proximity to dynamic foci (urban growth, tourism growth, etc) from those that are located in peripheral areas. In the case of the first, a policy of strict control is fundamental, both for usage and ownership -- as illustrated by Haute-Sure in Luxembourg. In the second case -- the more peripheral, they may constitute useful tools for the maintenance and valuation of humanised landscapes, thus requiring distinct policies.

Particular situations, which require specific policies and measures, are those attached to the management of hydrographic basins and the use of coastal strips. The Haute-Meuse Agreement (Belgium) is, in this respect, a noteworthy example, as it provided a solution for the management of a fluvial basin, where the involvement of the various intervening actors in the area was sought in order to reconcile the various uses and functions of the waterways and their surroundings. This same type of strategy, but with an international dimension, is being applied in the management of the Baltic Sea Coastal Zone (Denmark).

3.5 Cultural heritage: culture in economic development strategies

The view that cultural heritage constitutes a valuable element in the European space and that it may constitute a factor of development and even territorial unity/cohesion has become generalised. Alongside the more conventional vision of valuation of monumental patrimony/heritage, which today takes new forms due to the increasing effort of integration of urban and rural spaces -- cases of the Jubilee Itineraries, Italy and Central Scotland (United Kingdom) -- interest in valuing the cultural heritage of the countryside, which is recognised as a common patrimony of Europe, is also arising. This heritage has two aspects which should be preserved: on the one hand, the material aspect, of which built heritage is an example, from the cathedral to the simplest of water mills; on the other hand, the immaterial, this being the traditional know-how. Many of the solutions adopted in the management of natural parks are an example of this new awareness.

Another aspect worth mentioning is the introduction of culture as a new activity in many rural areas; the aim is to lure urban tourists to the countryside whilst at the same time stimulating such consumption by the younger, local population. The examples of the Raiano Cultural Centre, in central Portugal, or the Jazz Initiative in Marciac (France) illustrate this reality.

3.6 Local administration: prospects for co-operation between rural and urban authorities

In comparison to the other main issues, the issue of co-operation is transboundary, as it can be applied to the policy domains of the previous sectors.

From the analysis of the case studies, the promotion of narrow co-operation between local, urban and rural administrative authorities as with other relevant actors, seems indispensable, in order to both adjust territorial planning policies

(conflict of uses, urban development,...), and to stimulate feelings of mutual/common ownership.

It is on the regional scale that most territorial management problems, infrastructure development, etc can be best resolved. Inter-municipal co-operation may be considered, therefore, as a promising strategy and an instrument for obtaining high levels of co-ordination in regional development, namely in the field of infrastructures, diversification of the economic base and management of natural heritage. The German case studies provide some of the most stimulating examples of new forms of governance and of solutions in regard to co-operation between local and regional actors (especially the Stuttgart Region and Südraum Leipzig).

It is equally noted that the institutional density, thickest to thinnest, of regions depends strongly on the administrative model of each country (federalism, centralism, municipalism, etc.), seemingly suggesting that in systems with federalism and municipalism, administration is strongest. It is not, in any case, possible to establish rules or norms that are constant.

4. RELEVANT ISSUES ACCORDING TO THE TYPOLOGY OF REGIONS

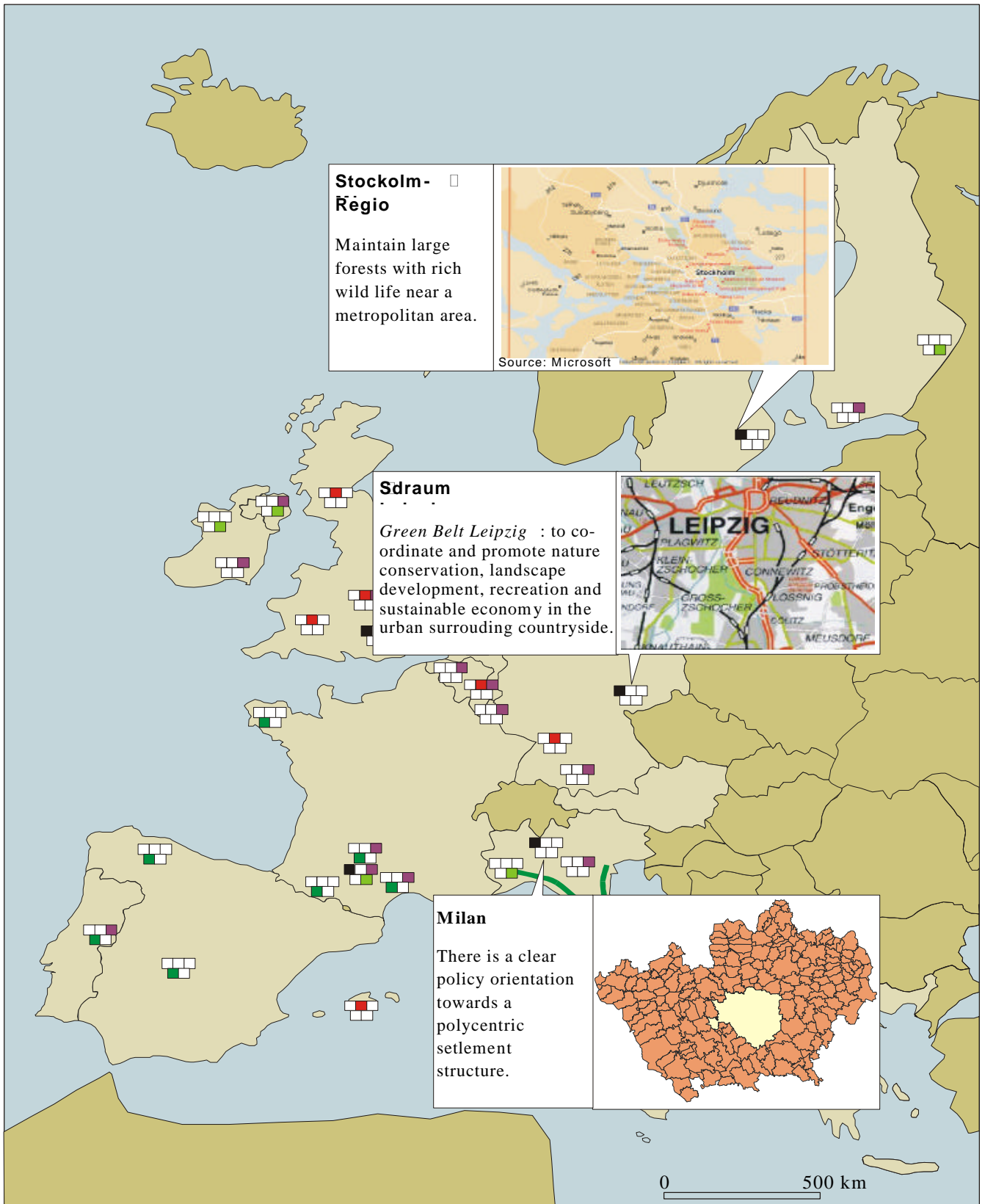
Many of the problems that affect each one of the identified main issues, as well as the type of solutions that can be recommended, vary in respect to the characteristics of each region. Urban-rural relations and the possibilities devoted to the valuation and strengthening of rural-urban partnerships differ in dense and scarcely populated areas, as -- for example -- from some cases where the regions are under strong pressure to urbanise, with all the usual collateral effects (pollution, traffic,...), while in others, ageing and human desertification are more pressing worries. This justifies an analysis that cross-references the main issues with the typology of regions initially adopted.

4.1 Metropolitan areas

The main problems, placed on rural-urban relationships in Metropolitan areas, occur due to urban sprawl, with all the conflicts it generates between land uses. The Milan case reflects the complex problematic that affects this type of regions, where permanent confrontation occurs due to competition between urban and rural land use, but in this case it is aggravated by the debility of regulation of rural spaces. This results in a disordered expansion of urbanisation with negative environmental repercussions. It can be concluded that it is in these type of spaces that the development of rural-urban partnership forms is more threatened, seeing as urban growth, especially when not repressed or regulated, may extinguish rural areas, doing away with an important asset that can be economic (good agricultural land), but which is also a natural and cultural heritage.

It is, however, possible to think of successful partnerships between urban and rural space both in the interior of Metropolitan Areas, and with Metropolitan areas and

The Metropolitan Case Studies



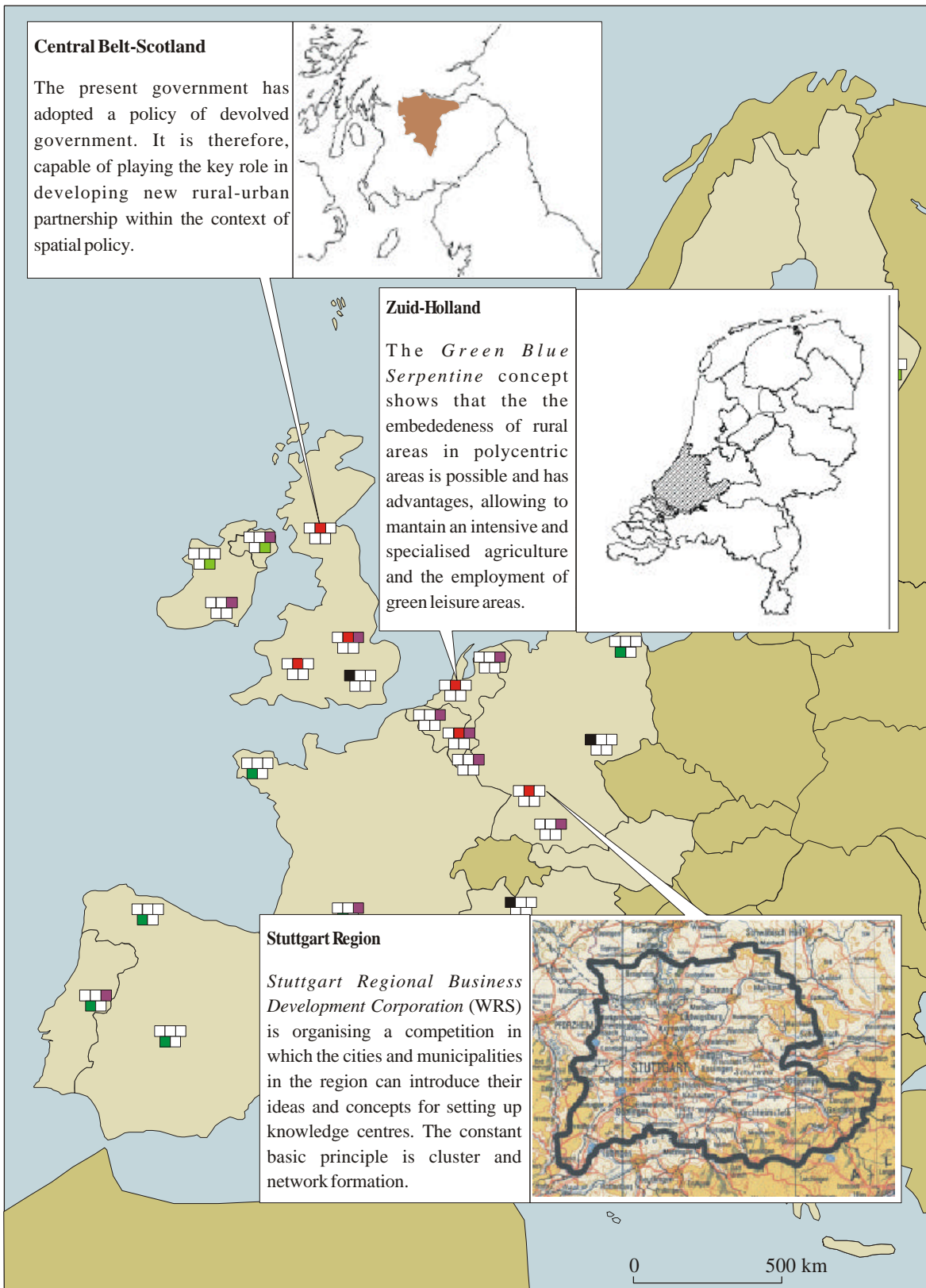
exterior rural spaces. The existence of diverse and exigent urban demand may lead to the valuation of rural areas, from those closest or remotest, by making good quality and genuine differentiated products viable, and through the fruition of landscapes, thus justifying measures which encourage their preservation and conservation. The Milan Case (Italy) is a good illustration of such a type of a more positive relationship, seeing as the valuation of rural/green areas has since been noted, either superimposed on the urban fabric, or in the surroundings, due to demand associated to leisure activities.

Although the entities responsible for the management of Metropolitan areas are not yet sufficiently sensitive to the advantages of partnership with rural spaces, there are some cases where important steps have been made in that direction, forming examples that should be followed. The Südraum Leipzig (Germany) case is especially interesting, as valuable lessons can be drawn from the chapter on inter-municipal co-operation and governance: relating to an agreement involving rural municipalities and the Leipzig urban area that was established in 1996 with the aim of constituting a “Green Belt”, thus enabling the co-ordination and promotion of the conservation of nature, the valuation of the landscape and a sustainable economy.

4.2 Polycentric areas

Many of the problems posed on the relationship between urban and rural areas in polycentric type regions are similar to those observed in Metropolitan areas. The conflicts between activities and different land uses, the pressure on infrastructures, the problem of commuting and its effects of pollution and traffic, are the same type, although aggravated in those cases where there is infrastructure debility or network co-ordination problems. One situation, which is mentioned in the case studies, namely for Stuttgart (Germany) is the existence of privileged connections to the main urban centre in detriment to connections between secondary centres, from which result limitations as to the efficiency of the system.

The Polycentric Urban Case Studies



The natural and cultural heritage of interstitial rural areas is one of the domains in which the most serious problems are felt due to the pressure exercised by the heightened demand generated by urban poles, and also because they serve as supports to the growth of the built-up area and the construction of infrastructures.

Another weakness found in such regions is the difficulty in constructing a common sense of identity, due not only to competition, which is established between urban poles (sometimes there are various poles on the same level, without clearly defined leadership), but also through the diversity of characteristics between the various urban centres and between these and the surrounding rural areas (different social contents, distinct elites, differentiated economic specialisation, etc.)

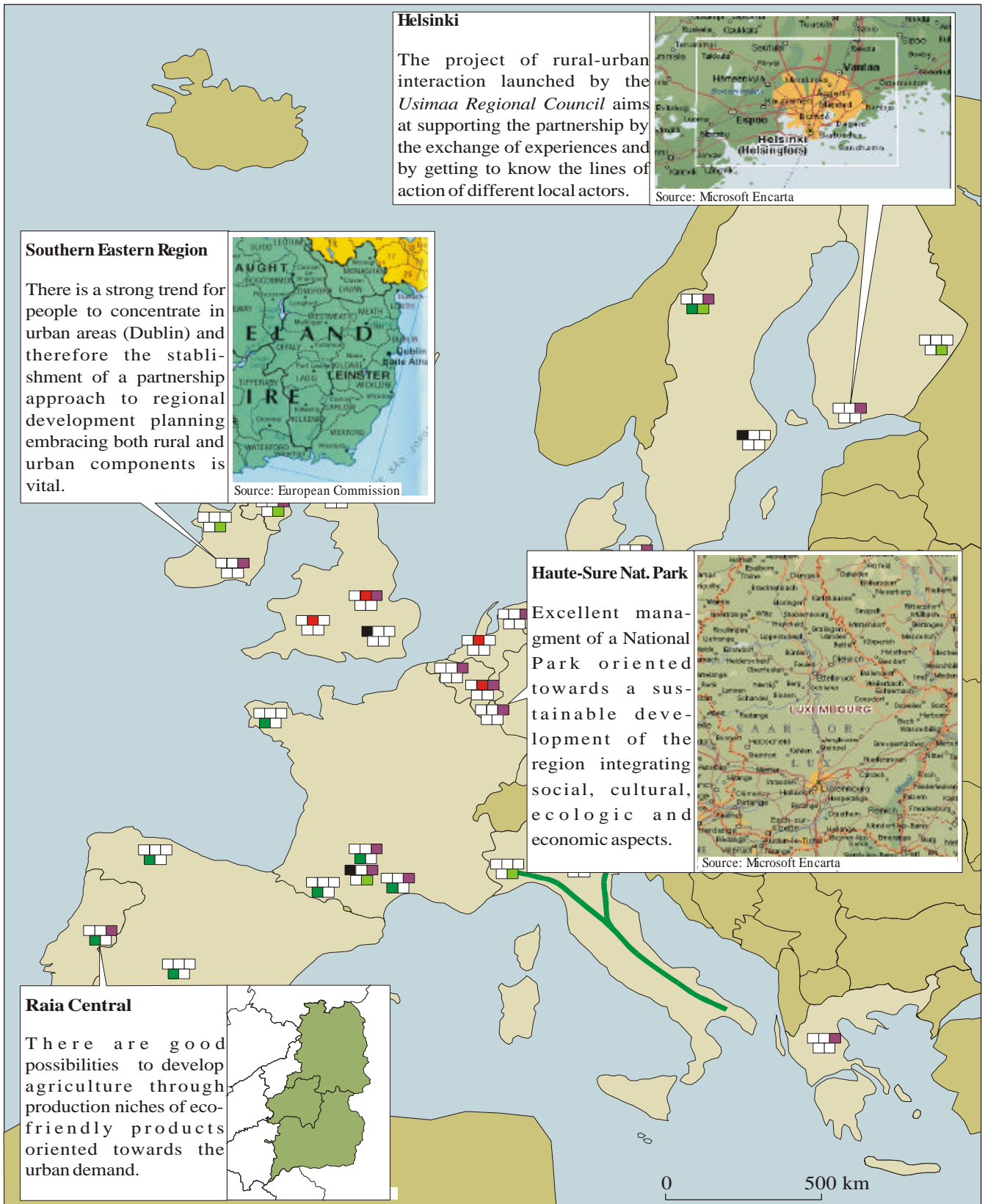
Some of the previous problems may, however, be transformed into potentialities if the complementations are positively explored, making use of the synergies which may result from the diversity of cultural and economic resources. In order to do this it is necessary to act towards the creation/sedimentation of institutional and business co-operation networks -- including urban and rural municipalities -- in order to create a "common identity", such as the strategy followed in Stuttgart.

On the other hand, there are exemplary cases which demonstrate a good understanding of what may come out of the strengthening of rural-urban partnerships in Polycentric areas. The South Holland region, with the *Green Blue Serpentine* concept, demonstrates that the imbrication of rural areas in polycentric urban areas is possible and advantageous, enabling the maintenance of specialised and intensive farming, but also spaces for the use and pleasure of nature, thus uniting leisure functions to the preservation of environmental values.

4.3 Urbanised rural areas

From the various types of identified regions, the urbanised rural areas are those with a greater number of case studies, with more diverse examples, and which

The Urbanized Rural Case Studies



make the task of generalisation much more difficult. It is however possible to identify the problems and potentialities which are more frequently mentioned.

In relation to the issue of settlement structure and accessibility, one noteworthy observation is that cities have difficulty in maintaining an intense relation between themselves, and in articulating themselves with their respective rural hinterlands, as in the case of Cremona (Italy), where low quality rail transportation systems and the absence of an interface linking rail and road hinders interaction between small rural agglomerates and their connection to the main urban centre. Yet, low quality public transportation services result from the difficulty in attaining the required level of demand for a more efficient and frequent supply.

The fact that levels of demand are often insufficient not only hinders the provision of infrastructures, but also the supply of other urban facilities, namely of commerce and social services. The result is that in these types of region, urbanity becomes more visible in the modes of being, in the styles of life and through the activities of the population rather than through the quality of the urban space.

One aspect which clearly demonstrates the pertinence of rural-urban partnerships in this type of region results from the allegation that the stronger or weaker vitality of the economic base of urbanised rural areas depends, greatly, on the dimension and “quality” of the urban centre through which it is polarised. In the case of less dynamic or smaller, more peripheral poles, the economic base may have more difficulty in modernising itself, basing the maintenance of its competitiveness on traditional factors such as younger, cheaper labour or the supply of specific natural resources (as in the central border areas in Portugal). On the other hand, in the case of dynamic urban poles with qualified activities in the regions (r&d, agrobiology, remote sensing, etc.) like in Helsinki (Finland) and Toulouse/Sicoval (France), their respective hinterlands benefit from the presence of these activities and may develop a more diverse and modern economic base.

Occasionally, there may be environmental problems related to traffic, due to the insufficiencies of the public transport network, as well as due to the pressure exercised on natural areas through urban expansion, through the exploitation of primary-resources for industry (the case of Groningen, The Netherlands, with the exploration of natural gas), and also, increasingly, through the demand of spaces for tourism and recreation (as in the case of Lake Constance/Upper Swabia, Germany). In spite of these problems, the natural environment of these regions remains positive: the natural environment is and should be capable of constituting a resource to value and contribute to economic diversification, namely as an infrastructure for tourism and as a factor of the attraction of qualified activities which attract activity away from more congested urban areas.

Together with the valuation of natural resources there is the valuation of the cultural heritage, since, in these regions, mainly in more rural areas, culture and nature appear as two strictly related elements. The cases of West of North Ireland (United Kingdom) and Southern and Eastern Region (Ireland) are examples of regions where one of the development strategies is the investment in tourism, using as a basis an image of high landscape beauty and harmony between culture and nature, with fields, extensive green areas, a network of picturesque populational settlements, and the reconversion of old channels for tourist routes.

4.4 Deep rural and Peripheral areas

The ageing of the population and demographic desertification are the major problems that face these types of regions, as, in other aspects, it signifies a reduction in quantity and quality of human resources. On the other hand, the growing tendency of supply of equipment and services, even public, is oriented strictly by economic rationality. This demographic fall ultimately has an enormous negative impact upon the region, in the sense that there is a lesser supply of these services.

The Rural and Peripheral Case Studies



The lack of local economic resources and the reduced risk capacity has brought about a decline in traditional sectors of the economy, at the same time that there are no conditions to attract private exogenous investment of note, which compromises the diversification and modernisation of the economy. It can be concluded that in some of these regions there is a strong dependency on public investment, either related to community programmes, or with payments of pensions and retirement funds. The example of the Border Midlands and Western Region, in Ireland, illustrates this reality.

The assets and possibilities that these regions have reside in their natural and cultural heritages. The connotation of Deep and Peripheral areas as natural “sanctuaries” is important and increasingly more decisive, due to the increasing degradation -- often irreversible -- of the environment in other regions, contributing in this way for the maintenance of biodiversity of the European space, which constitutes a strategic objective of Europe’s territorial ordination/planning. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that they constitute a key role in the provision and maintenance of goods with high economic and social value, like the forests, the water resources, energy, and even traditional agriculture. The recognition of this value is clearly present in the case of the Somiedo Natural Park (Spain), where it is admitted that the role of farmers as “guardians of nature” should not only be rewarded by traditional agricultural activities, but must be seen as a service rendered to society.

The cultural values, from the built heritage to the ethnographic heritage, are also precious goods and a resource that in these regions can be valued with the aim of developing new activities. It is clear, however, that one of the main problems which is posed to its exploitation and which limits the attraction of these resources resides in the lack of a "critical mass“, aggravated by their geographical dispersion. They are therefore examples to be followed, through the solutions they propose, the cases of integration of places and monuments in networks/circuits, thematic

routes involving co-operation between different agents and municipalities, regions, or even countries, and to the integrated offer of natural and cultural elements; these measures tending to increase the attraction and competitiveness of resources and the respective regions are clearly illustrated in the cases of the Occitan Space and Jubilee Itineraries, in Italy.

One last aspect that is worth mentioning is related to the possibilities that the use of new information and communication technologies place the reduction of the peripheral nature of the regions and simultaneously reinforce their internal union/cohesion -- “shrinking the local, opening to the global”.

In conclusion, the idea that these areas are part of the natural and cultural heritage of Europe should be retained, and must be preserved if it is to be transmitted as a legacy to future generations.

5. FURTHER RESEARCH

A theme with the pertinence/relevancy such as the one dealt with in this report cannot be given as concluded with the amount of investigation developed to this day. It is fully justified that there may be a deepening of the main identified issues and that new subjects in relation to rural-urban partnerships for development in future be discussed.

The methodology adopted proved to be fruitful, having through the case studies, been possible to identify the main strengths/potentialities and weaknesses/problems which are raised in relation to city-countryside in the European space, as well as innovative solutions which are being tried out with the aim of strengthening partnerships between these types of territory. It would therefore be advantageous to proceed with the investigation, choosing the cases that prove most exemplary for future monitorisation.

The advantages that can be drawn from this monitorisation, depend, however, of the fact that the case studies are or not examples of European regional diversity. Hence, it would be convenient, in the first place, to refine the criteria and precise the concepts that are associated to the various types of identified regions. Only with a full and common understanding of the meaning of the different concepts -- Metropolitan, Polycentric, Urbanised Rural, Deep rural and Peripheral -- is it possible to operationalise them. Eventually, it may become necessary to reformulate some or introduce others that better describe the diversity of the European space.

Another dimension that may necessarily be introduced is the national. The reality of metropolitan areas in South European countries is in part distinct from similar regions of North European countries, in the same form that, for example, the problems which are posed to rural spaces in the states of Atlantic Europe are diverse from those that affect the territories of the same type in Nordic countries. Highlighted from the developed analysis that, namely in respect to governance and the

type of solutions visualised to face the problems, the political-administrative organisation of each country is a variable to be considered. Thus it would be convenient to more clearly introduce this dimension into the case studies to monitor.