

Abstracts

L. ALLIE and C.R. BRYANT: "Regional Natural Parks in France: A Model of Governance and Spatial Planning for Peri-Urban Areas?" This article deals with the potential contribution of Regional Natural Parks (R.N.P.) in the search for a model of 'good' governance and 'coherent' spatial planning at the regional scale. Several observers have recognized the necessity of developing mechanisms in metropolitan areas to control for the negative impacts of development on citizens and the environment. Given their missions of economic and social development and conservation of natural and cultural heritage, as well as their organizational structure that has been judged to be flexible and original, to what extent can the R.N.P.s be considered models of governance and spatial planning capable of controlling metropolitan sprawl?

To respond to these questions, three points are developed. First, five challenges for governance and spatial planning to manage urban sprawl are discussed: 1. the fragmented nature of the political and administrative territories of these spaces; 2. they cover large areas and have fuzzy limits; 3. they are areas where a large variety of spatial and territorial interests are found; 4. the urbanization of the countryside takes place discontinuously in time and space; and 5. planning resources are inadequate. Then, a geographical and historical portrait of the R.N.P. is provided. Finally, five arguments either for or against using R.N.P.s as a likely model of governance and planning for peri-urbanization are discussed: 1. the moral commitment of the signatories of a park Charter; 2. the authority of the Charter over the various urban planning documents; 3. the renewal of the Charter every 10 years; 4. the plan for a R.N.P. developed at a minimum scale 1 : 100,000; and 5. openness to participation to civil society and the political scene.

In conclusion, the R.N.P.s remain models of administrative and political organization at the regional scale in terms of their founding principles of development and conservation, training and education. However, in relation to the question of governance and urban planning, the R.N.P.s have been slow to rally all of their signatories behind their Charter. For many mayors, the Charter appears as a threat with its orientations and its plan being seen as useless to deal with the issue of urbanization given the municipal and inter-municipal responsibilities in these domains.

M. BERGER: "Peri-urbanisation and Social Division in Île-de-France". Since the end of the 1960s, a radical transformation has been observed in Île-de-France in terms of housing choices, with a substantial increase in single family homes both in the outer suburbs as well as in peri-urban and rural areas. Half the individual houses in the region have been built in the last 30 years, and this represents a major shift in relation to the urban policies of the immediate post-war period that favoured the construction of large multi-unit social housing complexes.

The reinforcement of the process of metropolization that has benefited the capital, with the increase in qualifications and incomes that come with it, has contributed in no small way to the increase in the number of 'new villages' and other 'hamlets à la française'. Peri-urban expansion has been stimulated since the end of the 1960s by a large clientele with the financial capability due both to public policies that encouraged access to private property and to the dominant socio-economic context in Île-de-France. In relation to the rest of the country, the capital region is characterized by a very clear over-representation of people in upper management, which has increased in recent decades, but it has also experienced an important increase of people in intermediate management positions. Builders and developers have targeted both these categories.

While it may only represent about 10 % of the regional supply of housing, recent single family homes that are concentrated mostly in the outer suburbs have largely contributed through the departure of better-off households to the 'ghettoization' of the large complexes of social housing, especially in the nearer northern suburbs. Peri-urbanization is reflected in new forms of social division of space and a progressive reduction in the differences between city and countryside in terms of the socio-professional composition of the resident population.

The further one goes from the centre of the agglomeration, the more the share of the modest categories of households increases: the zonal structure in Île-de-France is related as much to the social characteristics of space as to the demographic structure of households. However, the sectoral structure by quadrants is also strongly linked to the distribution of social groups, whether we are dealing with the Paris agglomeration, small or medium-sized towns or rural areas.

Peri-urbanization thus appears as one of the ways in which distinctive practices are played out, as part of the search to constitute relatively homogeneous communities. The increase in the number of people becoming property owners within the private housing supply and the decrease in the mobility of households related more and more often to loans they have contracted, constitute a factor in the radicalization of social contrasts in the residential space of Île-de-France.

L. BOURNE, M. BUNCE, L. TAYLOR, N. LUKA and J. MAURER: "Contested Ground: The Dynamics of Peri-Urban Growth in the Toronto Region". The urban margin or peri-urban fringe is the interface or transitional setting where processes of rapid growth and change often intersect with the pressures for rural preservation. As such, it can be contested ground that is perhaps the least well understood component of metropolitan regions. Drawing on an extensive body of research currently underway in the Department of Geography at the University of Toronto, this paper offers an overview and discussion of recent trends and tensions in the Toronto metropolitan region. It focuses on peri-urban growth now taking place in

the outer suburban margin, the rural and exurban fringe, and the surrounding recreational and retirement hinterland. This extensive area - in previous lexicons often called the urban field - represents the living space of metropolitan-area residents. It has expanded dramatically in geographical scale in recent decades, also becoming more diverse, complex and eclectic. In the paper, the changing character and geography of growth in the region are first briefly described, introducing a contrasting conceptual lens through which these transformations and the tensions they produce can be interpreted. An examination of the underlying dynamics of urban expansion is then given, contrasting the view from the urban core and the view looking in from the rural, agricultural and recreational fringe. The final section outlines some of the recent policy responses, notably smart growth proposals, and the likely future trajectories of urban growth and form in the region.

J.-P. CHARVET: "The Conditions for Maintaining a Dynamic Agriculture in Île-de-France". Agricultural areas still cover today half of the territory of the Île-de-France region. In the 1950s, these were still considered simply as land reserves for development; but since the 1970s, they have become recognized as productive spaces and, since the 1980s, as 'natural' spaces that deserve protection. After presenting the most recent changes, this article examines the conditions of 'sustainability' of these spaces.

The agricultural areas in Île-de-France have receded over the last decade at what appears to be a moderate rate - about 1,000 ha per year for a total agricultural area of 583,000 ha. However, the decline of market gardening and horticultural areas, meadows and animal raising - all components of the rural landscape that are highly valued by the urban population - has been much more marked. The type of agriculture that has resisted the best has been that of large scale arable production (cereals and sugar beet) that are still largely dominant on the plateau areas in the centre of the Paris Basin.

Planning tools that are currently available and which have been significantly improved and refined since the end of the 1990s currently permit a more effective protection of agricultural areas as soon as a willingness to do so is shown. However, in order that this effectiveness can be fully utilized, other conditions must be present. In particular, this involves recognizing more systematically the value of a geographic location for agriculture in the peri-urban zone. Above all, it is essential that farms can generate sufficient income - eventually including that from pluri-activity - and that succession to take over the management of farms is encouraged by adequate measures and incentives. The quality of communication that can be established between farmers and peri-urban residents who are primarily of urban origin will constitute an important cornerstone for the future of agricultural areas in Île-de-France. This is doubtless true elsewhere too.

W.J. COFFEY et D. TRÉPANIÉ: "The Spatial Distribution of Employment in the Greater Montreal Region, 1996-2001". In North America, the intrametropolitan decentralization of employment from the central city towards the suburbs has become a major research and public policy issue. A major limit of many studies, however, has been the nature of the study area used. Most often, research

has examined the metropolitan area, in the strict sense of the statistical unit, without taking into consideration the larger region that surrounds it. The goal of the present study is to broaden our knowledge of employment location within the Greater Montreal Area (the Census Metropolitan Area plus the non-metropolitan zone surrounding it) for the period 1996 - 2001.

First, in spite of a growth rate of 8.87% over the period (representing 19,015 jobs), the non-metropolitan area saw its share of employment in Greater Montreal decline slightly from 12.81 % to 12.57 %. The share of Greater Montreal's employment growth captured by the non-metropolitan zone (10.44 %) is proportionately less than its share of employment in 1996 (12.81 %), representing a ratio of observed growth / expected growth of 0.81 (versus 1.19 for Montreal Island, the core of the CMA). The polarization between the CMA and the non-metropolitan fringe is thus increasing. The decentralization of employment that is a major characteristic of the 'new suburbanization' does not seem very strong once we go beyond the limits of the CMA.

Second, in terms of the internal structure of the non-metropolitan area, a major share of employment growth has occurred outside its six major employment poles. These poles, which contained 39.18 % of non-metropolitan employment in 1996, only accounted for 21.25 % of per-urban employment growth during the 1996 - 2001 period, a ratio of observed / expected growth of only 0.54. On the other hand, the portion of the non-metropolitan area outside of the employment poles underwent growth more than proportional to its employment share: a ratio of 1.29. Finally, the employment structure of the non-metropolitan zone is relatively different from that of the CMA. In particular, the share of employment in the primary and manufacturing sectors and consumer services sectors is higher in the non-metropolitan zone. On the other hand, the share of employment in the business services and financial services sectors is higher in the CMA.

Our results indicate that, for the period 1996 - 2001, employment dynamics differ significantly between the metropolitan and non-metropolitan zones. In the latter, employment growth mainly occurred outside of employment poles. On the other hand, in the CMA, growth occurred primarily in employment poles. In sum, while the non-metropolitan fringe seems to be undergoing a process of 'scatteration' (a general dispersion of employment across the territory), the metropolitan area is in a period of polycentricity in which employment is continuing to concentrate in a small number of employment poles.

H. DESBOIS: "Farmers and the Land Question on Tokyo's Periphery". Urban sprawl has taken on significant proportions as a phenomenon in Japan. The growth of cities occurs mostly through a very discontinuous process of chewing away at the countryside adjacent to the metropolitan centres. In the Tokyo and Osaka regions particularly, rail companies encouraged this type of development right from the 1920s (even as early as 1910 in the case of Osaka) by undertaking residential development operations beyond the agglomerations and by promoting a life-style based on a modern habitat, located far from the over-populated central city areas (and incidentally, thereby imposing long journey-to-work distances as the norm). After the Second World War, this strategy of the rail companies became systematic.

The planning operations of the rail companies were accompanied by a spontaneous sprawl that developed as the network was extended. The strong growth of the Tokyo agglomeration and the rapid increase in real estate prices in the central areas tended to increase the radius of the journey-to-work even more. The preference of many Japanese for individual family homes, a large space consumer, contributed to pushing sprawl even further out. But it is especially the real estate context that amplified the phenomenon. The new urban extensions took place essentially at the expense of farmland. Remember that the agrarian reform of 1947 considerably fragmented rural properties: the land became divided between many very small landowners (less than a hectare on average), and their land was divided into several, often dispersed, parcels. Until the 1960s, the conversion of farmland into building land was, to all intents and purposes, not regulated. Individual initiatives by property owners were responsible for the significant fragmentation. The 1968 law, in instituting a zoning system, ought to have encouraged a more compact urban growth, but the extent of the zones that were effectively developable limited the effectiveness of this.

Over the years, owners perfected strategies for managing their real estate portfolio. Initially, they were simply sellers, but then they became increasingly builders. The real estate bubble of the 1980s gave them the means to undertake ambitious projects, especially in the domain of multi-unit collective housing schemes. The combination of high land prices and a particularly lax credit policy for housing allowed farmers to finance the construction of many 'manshon' (apartment buildings with high standing). Supported by their professional organizations and encouraged by municipal authorities, many of them particularly from the 1980s grouped together to form development cooperatives. Prohibitive land costs often prevent municipalities from providing adequate roads, without speaking of other public spaces. Owners from a given neighbourhood were thus encouraged to consolidate their lands and contribute voluntarily to putting roads in place. The increase in value of serviced lots should thereby compensate for the reduction in land area developed.

An important proportion of peri-urban farmers gain important profits from urbanization and the active role that many of them have played requires us to modify the discourse by which farmers are made out to be victims of urban growth.

M. DOYON and S. FREJ: "Recreotourism and the Natural Environment in Protected Areas in Periurban Areas: The Metropolitan Region of Montreal". This article deals with the natural environment dimension of recreotourism activities, i.e. recreation ecology) in peri-urban areas. It seeks to establish the influences of the peri-urban context on the ecology of recreation activities, influences that act as much on the recreotourism dynamic as on the natural environment.

Peri-urban space is defined in relation to the space between the central city and the peripheral rural zone. It is a space where the components of the city and the countryside intermix to varying degrees. The result is a multifunctional space in which for instance agricultural, commercial, industrial and recreotourism activities, as well as conservation, function side by side.

The demand for recreotourism in the peri-urban area is characterized essentially by: 1) its high intensity; 2) activities of short duration; and 3) a product that

is defined more by activities than by accommodation. Thus, an important proportion of recreotourism and leisure activities can be pursued in the peri-urban area given its proximity. Leisure and daily recreational activities, excursions and weekend trips take place very often within the limits of the peri-urban zone. Thus, the demand of recreotourists is basically oriented towards activities of relatively short duration such as climbing, hiking in the forest, cross-country skiing and pick-your-own activities. The tourist product in demand is more often oriented to the activities pursued than accommodation. This is partly explained by the time available for recreotourism practices.

For many types of tourism, the environment plays an important, and sometimes central, role. In other cases, it has practically no role at all. The tourism industry product is in many cases the environment, either directly or indirectly. However, their interaction is not limited to the role of the product. Recreotourism activities can have a negative or positive impact on the environment. In effect, they can have a positive influence by facilitating nature conservation efforts. But, more often, they can also have negative effects. Recreotourism activities left to themselves can have harmful effects as can any other industry. Thus, since the 1930s, there has been an interest in the impact of recreation activities on the environment. However, it was not until the 1960s that this literature became relatively abundant. This higher level of interest corresponded in effect to an increase in outdoor recreation activities, as well as simultaneously to a degradation of resources in protected areas such as national parks and nature reserves. The areas of interest of this preoccupation cover basically the identification, assessment, understanding and management of impacts of visitors in parks and protected areas.

With a theoretical background dealing with the concepts of peri-urban, recreotourism and the natural environment, an attempt is made to deal with the following question in this article: Can we speak of an ecology of recreation activities in the metropolitan context of Montreal? The examples used deal principally with Mont Saint Bruno and Mont Saint Hilaire. Mont Saint Bruno is a national conservation park and the park managers must adjust to a recreotourism demand for this area, especially for activities such as hiking in the forest and cross-country skiing during the winter. The Mont Saint Hilaire context is quite different. It includes a private nature reserve, belonging to McGill University. The reserve is only partly open to the public for activities of research, education and awareness building. However, there is also quite an important unofficial visitation that takes place, and this is sufficiently significant that certain impacts have been observed and strategies adopted.

Without careful planning, without a broad education and awareness campaign and without careful and sustained observation of the natural environment, the sustainable positive spin-offs remain illusory. The question is not so much knowing how to construct a sustainable tourism, or how the recreotourism industry can be maintained. Rather, the central question is how recreotourism can contribute to sustainable development. Thus, recreotourism should be envisaged as an economic, social and environmental development tool, and not as an end in itself.

O. DUMOULIN and C. MAROIS: "The Emergence of Development Strategies for Peri-Urban Agricultural Areas: The Case of the 'Suburban' Municipalities in the Montreal Metropolitan Region". In the context of a peri-urban agriculture that is increasingly complex and multi-functional, this research reveals the emergence of different development strategies for agricultural areas in the metropolitan region of Montreal at the level of the municipality. The research reveals the specificities of peri-urban agricultural areas around Montreal and underscores their heterogeneity. A first objective is to reveal different agricultural development strategies (or their absence) at the municipal level. In this case, the aim is to understand the development logic of municipalities and to identify the role that agriculture occupies in the preoccupations of municipal authorities. A second objective is to understand the conditions that are favourable to putting in place (or not) strategies or measures for the development of agricultural spaces by putting the emphasis on the role of local actors, particularly those responsible for urban planning. A third objective is aimed at identifying the variety of means and strategies put in place in order to create a typology of the actions currently underway in the metropolitan region at the municipal level.

The role of urban planning professionals appears to be very important for a municipal level analysis, hence our research focused on interviewing them. Because of their functions, they are often implicated closely in the development and setting up of initiatives at the local level.

Based on the interviews conducted, it appears that the Agricultural Land Protection Act for Quebec is no longer adapted to the current reality, certainly in relation to peri-urban spaces. Several municipalities with specific types of issues are confronted with an application of the Act that is not very sensitive to local realities. The case of Saint Lazare and its project for an agro-equestrian zone illustrates this well. Agriculture has always been marginal in this area; on the other hand, equestrian activity is flourishing because of the wooded character of the municipality. Recognizing this particularity would permit an unused agricultural zone to be developed. Similarly for Mont Saint Hilaire where the municipality identified a 'green zone' which the Commission for the Protection of Farmland refused to include in the green zone because it was considered too far gone to be able to support viable agriculture. The Town has wanted to maintain this area intact in order to maintain a landscape unit to use as a 'green' entry point into a road corridor that is intensely used from the agro-tourism perspective.

The issue is not to relax the zoning regulations to allow greater speculation and urban pressures on agricultural zones, but to introduce a certain flexibility to permit adaptation to the specific circumstances of different types of agriculture in the Montreal metropolitan region. At the same time, it is evident that several municipalities have acquired the necessary maturity to participate in the management and development of their agricultural spaces, and some of the initiatives are particularly innovative. The upcoming development of a master plan at the level of the Montreal Metropolitan Community represents a golden opportunity to improve the management of agricultural space, not just by 'protecting' it but by encouraging its development in ways that are adapted to local circumstances.

D. GRANJON: "Multi-functionality of Metropolitan Space and Agrotourism in Peri-urban Areas (Montreal)". The peri-urban context is difficult to define because of its multiple characteristics related to its position between two worlds: urban and rural. Located at the periphery of the city and its suburbs, it is a space that has experienced profound transformations in several respects: demographic, economic, social, political and cultural. These influences are reflected in a modified landscape and the activities it contains, by a different utilization of this space hitherto devoted to agricultural production functions. In particular, it has become a space in which various leisure and recreation activities are pursued, that are based on an already existing activity: agriculture. This article considers the role occupied by the agricultural function in peri-urban spaces.

First, it is essential to identify the characteristics of this particular space in order to better understand its evolution and the interrelationships that have developed between urban and rural. The phenomenon of peri-urbanization is also situated in the context of the dynamic of localities, to the extent that it presents a major challenge to the development planning of rural territories in a metropolitan region. The distribution of activities and the spatial organization of the areas are superimposed, creating a peri-urban space that is a complex territory with multiple functions. This multi-functionality leads to interpenetration and juxtaposition of several activities that have often been perceived as incompatible by those responsible for managing land use and local municipalities; this has given rise to an increasing concern for effective planning.

By way of example, a specific yet characteristic function of the peri-urban zone next to the City of Montreal is the object of this article: apple production. The original agricultural function of this space has experienced significant changes. It is no longer simply limited to the production of a food product, but has also developed new avenues particularly through tourism emanating from the nearby urban agglomeration. The characteristics and the role of agrotourism are studied, both generally and in two municipalities located in the periphery of the Montreal region.

G. HALSETH: "Attracting Growth 'Back' to an Amenity Rich Fringe: Urban Fringe Dynamics around Metropolitan Vancouver, Canada". The 2001 Census highlighted that most of non-metropolitan British Columbia had experienced population declines while population growth had contracted 'back' into the Vancouver-Victoria metropolitan region. In particular, growth was now active along the amenity rich frontiers of its rural-urban fringe. This paper documents some of the characteristics of rural-urban fringe growth around metropolitan Vancouver-Victoria in the 1991-2001 period. It begins by setting a context for recent growth, including the 'suburbanization' of previous rural fringe areas. It then examines some of the parameters of growth, including in-migration rates and changing population age structures. This is followed by discussions which touch upon key rural-urban fringe themes, including conflicts over: spill-over externalities, rural community commodification, and house price pressures. Each of these conflict topics is reviewed with respect to a specific rural-urban fringe location. At this point in its development, metropolitan Vancouver-Victoria's rural-urban fringe appears to be dominated by 'suburban growth' pushing into the agricultural areas of the Fraser Valley and a set of amenity rich rural and small town locations

to the north of Vancouver (Whistler and Pemberton) and along the east coast of Vancouver Island. Together, these changes to the organization and extent of 'Vancouver's rural-urban fringe' highlight an opportune time to re-examine its geography.

L. LAURENS: "Montpellier's Urban Fringe or the Great Upheaval". By choosing Montpellier (an agglomeration in the southern Mediterranean region of France) as a regional context for discussing peri-urban zones, the decision was made to focus on a type of space that has undergone for the last several decades some major changes, even upheavals. Since the beginning of the 1960s, demographic growth has accelerated in all the Mediterranean regions, especially around the large metropolitan centres. The arrival of new inhabitants diffused progressively throughout space to such a point that it is difficult to define with precision where the peri-urban zone commences or ends. Montpellier's zone of influence today covers half of the département of Hérault and spills over into the neighbouring département (Gard). The annual rate of demographic increase is around 1.2 %, and poses a challenge for all the actors regarding the decisions they must take in order to preserve the attractive capital of this region. Concerns are appearing regarding a possible decrease in the attractive factors of the region, and at least, there is a real awakening to the need to reflect on the future of this space.

These questions focus on two aspects of the socio-economic reality of these peri-urban spaces. They function based on a capital of attractiveness, linked for the most part to the rural spaces. These rural spaces are still defined by a predominance of agricultural areas, especially vineyards, and green spaces, notably the garrigue. However, both have experienced and continue to experience major upheavals. The area under vineyards has declined over the last few decades under the combined effect of urbanization and the evolution of vineyards, which have been moving from a mass production system to a production system based on quality. The garrigue has to a large extent lost its agricultural vocation that was related to sheep rearing. Today, it is only considered as a recreational space that is open and accessible to all, while at the same time, privatization processes are at work. In this context, local municipalities have intervened to acquire green spaces, motivated by a desire to defend a public good. The interpenetration of rural and urban also appears in the development of certain agrotourism activities on farms, but these still remain quite marginal. The significant proximity between urban and rural has led to a number of initiatives that have been overall well interpreted and well received.

The same thing cannot be said for the political management of these peri-urban spaces. We are still in a context marked by the commune (local municipality) scale, even if intercommunal experiences have become more frequent since the beginning of the 1980s. These never seem to possess the appropriate size, in relation to the sphere of influence of Montpellier or even its peri-urban space. The challenge today is a political one to the extent that elected representatives in peri-urban communes are wary about the different forms of cooperation with the central city. Should we see only the contradictions in this, or does it simply represent a stage in the process of reformulation of the limits of functional management of these spaces? Resistance, prudence, affirmation of local identities - all of these probably characterize the reactions. But in the meantime, the

upheavals continue at a very rapid pace, likely imposing on decision makers in the near future new partnerships that are rejected today. The peri-urban zone will therefore be an excellent laboratory to study territorial debates, and the formalization of partnerships and agreements between municipalities. The Montpellier example is typical of this type of situation.

M. POULOT and T. ROUYRES: "Open Space in Île-de-France: What Issues for Which Actors?" Open spaces in Île-de-France were forgotten for a long time in planning for the region. Considered as a simple land reserve to house the 'triumphant' urbanization in the post-war period, they gradually acquired official recognition to the point where today they have become one of the major issues in the emergence of a new regional identity. This change has been supported by the regional authorities who have used the environment and landscape as a way of standing up to the omnipresent State in the capital region, a State that has been preoccupied just by urban expansion. But it also reflects the aspirations of the new inhabitants that have located in the urban fringes, and they have become more and more concerned about amenities and landscape - however ordinary they might be - offered by the countryside.

Planning documents have reflected these changes. Seen as empty 'white' spaces in the Regional Master Plan of 1965, rural areas became spaces needing protection between the new towns to act as a counterpoise to urbanization in the Regional Master Plan of 1976; then, in the Master Plan of 1994, they were promoted to having their own roles, both in terms of production and heritage protection. This slow progress marked the birth - or the recognition - of a new category of space at the gates of the city in the Green Belt; this was peri-urban space par excellence, which because of its hybrid nature - half-urban, half-rural - necessitated unique planning solutions to link the interests of urban citizens and rural residents.

The delimitation of protected zones, appended to planning documents, remains a decisive tool; stabilizing the land issue is in effect essential for agricultural activity that must 'think' long term. These zones, which appeared during the 1970s, have kept increasing in number to the point where they often overlap and frequently generate conflicts of responsibilities given the variety of overseeing organizations. They remain however necessary in the most vulnerable spaces in the Green Belt, as seen in the first Zone of Protected Agriculture created in 2000.

But this zoning only acquires real significance if they are taken up and supported by all citizens: their success requires the support of the whole community for a territorial project (vision) in which agriculture is recognized and, more generally, open spaces are seen as a constituent component of its identity. For the last ten years or so, there has been a tremendous growth in the number of charters or action plans in which the commitments of the different partners in peri-urban spaces have been formalized: for farmers, the promotion of an agriculture that is environmentally friendly with gardens open to the public, for urban citizens, the respect of an economic activity, and all under the auspices of exchanges and transfers of knowledge under the eye of the public power.

Almost 40 years have been necessary to integrate rural space into the global planning and development project for the Île-de-France region. If the actual documents envisage for the first time the continuity of these spaces in a dialogue

with urban citizens, this integration has occurred just when the market gardening and horticultural belt has practically disappeared, and when the economic base of many open spaces in the Green Belt is no longer guaranteed. No doubt, these interventions will be effective in the rural periphery, but in the immediate peri-urban zone, the issue is no longer one of maintenance but one of re-creating the activity base.

N. ROUGET: "Agricultural Dynamics in Peri-Urban Areas. The Case of the Northern Fringe of the Agglomeration of Lens". The Lens agglomeration (319,000 inhabitants) lies at the heart of the former mining basin in northern France. The last mines were closed in the north of France in December, 1990. The agricultural dynamic and the relationships between agriculture and the city in this peri-urban context are assessed through a study of 10 communes in the Plain of Gohelle located immediately north of the Lens agglomeration.

The end of mining saw the release of 5,000 ha of arable land that the mining company owned. The industrial reconversion also permitted the location of a McCain production unit, representing an important outlet for potato production. From the mining period, the farmers had retained a certain experience and practice of direct selling ('selling from the cellar'); they would supply miners directly throughout the year with potatoes. The study area also retained from the mining period a dense and varied communications network.

For the whole study area, a refocusing and simplification of production systems has taken place. The average agricultural area per farm has increased considerably and has encouraged the development of large scale arable production. Currently, a large number of farms have become oriented completely towards cereals and sugar beet production. It has been vegetable production, endive production and cattle raising that have suffered from this reduction in the range of production types.

The use of various forms of direct marketing is very widespread. For some farms however, especially those that are based on a simple mixed farming system, these forms of marketing are only of modest importance and are declining. The majority of sales points are quite modest and have not been compensated for by the development of agrotourism activities or farm accommodation. Agriculture has therefore tended to ignore the urban potential and to separate itself from its marketing space. Nonetheless, it remains attached to a territory that is quite threatening (uncertain land market, fragmentation of the agricultural land base ...).

However, at the commune scale, the small town of Loos-en-Gohelle has taken an original development path, opening up to the urban world: the farms have retained a certain diversity of production, the farmers are interested in various more or less direct marketing forms and are also interested in the potential represented by providing services to the urban population.

The diversification of the production units and the process of constructing a territorial identity for the farms are the result of a synergy that has developed between the farmers who have developed a real spirit of cooperation and mutual self-help, and also of a municipal policy that has encouraged agricultural development. This dynamic character has its origin in the determination of the agricultural community to remain and evolve despite the important (former) mining

activity in the commune (the commune had six mining shafts) and from the determination of the town to differentiate itself from its neighbours of Liévin and Lens. The maintenance of the commune's identity depended upon and still depends today on the maintenance of an agricultural identity.