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## THE NEW RURAL PARADIGM AND THE PUBLIC POLICIES IN FRANCE: RURAL EXCELLENCE POLES

### ABSTRACT

The new rural paradigm requires important changes in how policies are conceived and implemented to include a cross-cutting and multi-level governance approach. Designing rural development policy for different communities or territories requires the pooling of knowledge held by a wide variety of public and private actors. Traditional hierarchical administrative structures are likely to be inadequate to administer these policies effectively and adjustments are thus needed along three key governance dimensions: horizontally at both the central and the local levels and vertically across levels of government (OECD, 2006, p. 17).

Two principles characterise the new rural paradigm: a focus on places instead of sectors and a focus on investments instead of subsidies. Thus, the main purpose of this paper is to analyse the experience of the French public policy for development of rural spaces and cities – *The Rural Excellence Poles*. Relative to these poles, we verify the lack of the literature. However, the theme is very interesting because it is conceived within the new rural paradigm and the recent preoccupations with the rural territories.

**Key words:** rural development, rural excellence poles, territorial governance, public policies.

**JEL Classification:** O18, H79, H89.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The new rural paradigm requires important changes in how policies are conceived and implemented to include a cross-cutting and multi-level governance approach. Designing rural development policy for different communities or territories requires the pooling of knowledge held by a wide variety of public and private actors. Traditional hierarchical administrative structures are likely to be inadequate to administer these policies effectively and adjustments are thus needed along three key governance dimensions: horizontally at both the central and the local levels and vertically across levels of government (OECD, 2006, p. 17).

Two principles characterize the new rural paradigm: a focus on places instead of sectors and a focus on investments instead of subsidies. Considering these observations, the main purpose of this paper is to explain the recent rural approach and analyze the experience of the French public policy for the development of rural spaces and cities – *The Rural Excellence Poles*. Our concern to explain this

experience is due to the fact that the literature on the rural excellence poles is practically null, we find a few studies namely: Alvergne and De Roo (2008); Nicolai *et al.* (2008); Constanta (2008), and reflects the recent rural paradigm.

This paper presents the following framework. First of all, we started with a theoretical classification to the new paradigm of rural development as well as the public policies directed to the development and promotion of rural territories, under points one and two respectively, and later under point three, we will present the French experience regarding the rural territories of excellence, namely the Rural Excellence Poles (REP), and we will analyze the different types of projects certified as REP in France and present 5 project types.

## 2. THE NEW RURAL PARADIGM

The new combat to desertification in territories with low density can only be sustainable if based on a productive market dynamic, based on: i) in the multiplication of activities and initiatives with relevant knowledge content; ii) in creativity or in the valuing of cultural patrimony, based on a different type of economical activity which generates more qualified jobs; iii) in the singularity of characteristics, which may generate an attractive and distinctive image of these regions (DPP, 2008, p. 15).

Without those factors it is impossible to attract new qualified residents and consumers with high income levels. With the first you can create the necessary human capital for the fixation of more advanced activities. With both, you create more sophisticated local demands that can generate productive activities that are also more sophisticated and have greater added value content (DPP, 2008, pp. 15–16).

The rural municipal districts today face challenges in terms of conditions for their future development which are very associated, in one way, to the diminution and aging of populations which reside there, and on the other hand, the relative distancing of those territories to the markets and services. This has serious implications in the survival capacity of companies located there, in the dynamics of the labour market and in the quality of the accessibilities and equipment and infrastructure, and the services and functions available in them.

The survival and the development of rural areas will greatly depend on the capacity of public policies directed to them to induce differential factors in the individual development strategies, and the solutions that are formulated in terms of generating privileged relationships in these territories (NETO, 2008, p. 23). Besides this, they are formulated in terms of helping them to go beyond the marginal situation that characterizes them.

Thus, among the great challenges of the municipal strategies for the development of these territories the following are prominent: i) the capacity to value and make

profitable the local amenities; ii) the capacity to create conditions and structures to support the companies in rural territories; iii) the capacity to assure conditions for placement or the availability of public services in rural areas<sup>1</sup>.

The new strategies for economic and social development to be promoted in rural territories directed to the rural territories, and especially for the low density areas, must also be based on the concern of assuring results in both sides of the binomial cohesion-competitiveness, meaning that on one hand you must create conditions to contain the economic and social decline, and, on the other hand, support investments and initiatives which generate economic development and, on an intervention scale, create competitive factors (Text box 1).

The new public policies paradigm directed to the direct or indirect promotion of the rural development must also be based on this principle. This means that the support to sustainable initiatives in these territories must demand, and assume, the presentation of proposals and initiatives of the rural territory in terms of competitiveness.

*Text Box 1*  
*The New Rural Development Paradigm*

	<b>Traditional Paradigm</b>	<b>New Paradigm</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	Equity and assistance; valuing of the agricultural income; increase in the agricultural competitiveness.	Increase in the competitiveness of rural areas; valuation of the local resources, characteristics and potentials; income of resources and potentials normally unused.
<b>Key target sector</b>	Agriculture	Various sectors of rural economies (ex. rural tourism, manufacturing, information and communication technology –ICT industry etc.)
<b>Main tools</b>	Subsidies	Investments
<b>Key actors</b>	National governments and farmers	All levels of government (supranational, national, regional and local), various local stakeholders (public, private, NGOs).

Source: OECD (2006) *The New Rural Paradigm. Policies and Governance*, OECD Rural Policy Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Policy makers increasingly realize that a rural development policy is needed for at least three reasons: first, rural areas face significant challenges that undermine territorial cohesion within countries; secondly, rural areas often possess largely unused economic potential that could be better exploited and thus

<sup>1</sup> Some examples and interesting solutions, among others in this domain may be found in the following Programs: i) *Regionen Actif* Program created in Germany in 2005; ii) The *Rural Pathfinder* initiative in the United Kingdom; iii) *Netherland's Agenda for a Vital Countryside* Project; iv) LEADER Program from the European Union; v) CASIMIR Technology Center Project in Auvergne (France) among others.

contribute to the well-being of rural citizens and to overall national development; thirdly, neither sectoral policy nor market forces are able to fully account for the heterogeneity of challenges and potential of rural regions and to cope with positive and negative externalities (spillovers) (OECD, 2006, p. 23).

The rural territories, especially those with low density, given their economical, social and institutional fragilities, lack special attention, in the sense that it is possible to guarantee they have economical and demographical sustainability, but also in creating for them conditions of competition which makes it possible to break their decline cycle (NETO, 2008, 21).

In such context, according to VAZ et al. (2005, p. 3), four important issues deserve attention in exploring the possibilities for sustainable development of rural regions in the future. These are first, the specific characteristics of these rural areas and the types of economic activity featured; second, the effects of the predominance of small firms, with their vital links to the external production environment, on the potential for development; third, the nature of new – sometimes green – technologies in combination with the emergence of new models of industrial production and organization and finally, the opportunities originating from various types of public policies which might promote solid rural development.

The public policy for rural territories should not force the integration or intensification which simplify or exclude the means of production. The motto of the public policy should be to “increase the diversity, reduce the disparity”. In this sense, the public policy must recognize all the means of productions, their multi-functionality and the consequent strategies of familiar plural activities. The plurality of the means of production is an indispensable condition for the rural development (COVAS, 2004, p. 88).

HOGGART *et al* (1995) define “rural” more in terms of social representation of reality, placing the emphasis upon the way people strive after a rural ideal and try to achieve this in their everyday lives. This approach is increasingly important as the traditional production functions of rural areas based on agriculture and forestry decline in importance and various consumption functions, such as recreation and leisure, become more significant, particularly in certain countries (ILBERY, 1998).

Thus, the “new rural paradigm” requires important changes in how Policies are conceived and implemented to include a cross-cutting and multi-level governance approach (OECD, 2006, p. 17).

### 3. THE NEW PUBLIC POLICIES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

In the last period the public policies, the political actors’ discourses and the scientific papers emphasize the deep changes in the territorial policies. The territories are considered to be productive environments, ecosystems based on growth, able to involve the innovation, the change and finally the competitiveness.

In such a context, the small urban and rural territories had to focalize to projects concerning the tourism turning to account and local economy optimum. In order to achieve this goal, the local administration should apply innovation strategies. (Nicolai *et al.*, 2008).

However, the new public policies directed to the rural territories cannot be random policies, but must be integrated and coordinated policies which are based in the simultaneous and articulated intervention, and guarantee results in the territory, in the following lines:

- i. Restructuring of the economical base (emerging sectors);
- ii. Restructuring of the urban-rural network;
- iii. Restructuring of the public services for the citizen.

As regards peripherality, this is a four dimensional concept. First, peripherality is understood as distance from a given point of reference, from a space that is central in terms of access to markets, information and communication. Second, it is seen as dependency, hereby the region is dependent and therefore underdeveloped. Third, it is seen as difference, acknowledging the uniqueness, shaped by history, of each region whose specific characteristics are viewed as positive, locally differentiating factors. The existence of “authentic” landscapes and cultural traditions allows the development of strategies for their exploitation. Finally, it is seen as discourse, emphasizing the importance of the specific character of each region, not only regarding its individual characteristics in objective terms but, rather, on the basis of the social meaning attributed to them (FERRÃO e LOPES, 2004).

If the destination of rural areas is to be determined mainly by external interests, that which actually is characterized as rural will suffer, therefore, a mischaracterization through the diffusion and penetration of interests, values and industrial-urban practices, tainting, therefore, the distinctions between rural and urban, and leading to the absorption of the rural in the urban (DINIZ e GERRY, 2002, p. 535).

On the other hand, the safekeeping of the sustainability of these territories will also naturally demand a selection process among territories and intervention types and strategies in each one. It is also important that, considering the new public policies and considering the previous experiences and the results reached through the political instruments used so far in these territories, may promote an upgrading of the instruments of concretization of these policies.

The future of the territorial interventions in rural territories, especially those with low density, must be based in the demand for the existence of a *territory-project*<sup>2</sup>, meaning a *project for the territory* in which the different interventions to be made be proposed and presented together to demonstrate their interdependence, relevance and global pertinence.

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<sup>2</sup> Similar to what happens in the initiatives to promote the development of rural territories in France since 2005.

This *territory-project* or *project for the territory* must also include aspects such as:

- i. Identification and proposal of territorial logic and articulation among the intervention of different agents/institutions present in the territories which are preview foreseen in the strategy desired to be done;
- ii. Options/implications on the model of administrative territorial organization of the municipal district which come from the territorial strategy sought to be implemented;
- iii. Options/implications on the model of territorial ordering of the municipal district;
- iv. The nature and type of the foreseen initiatives for the dynamics of the economic activities which are territorially more relevant;
- v. The model of government and governance of the strategy for the territory;
- vi. Options relating to the external relationship positioning of the territory in terms of the articulation of strategies and initiatives in cooperation networks with other municipal districts in a proximity logic and geographical continuity and also a logic of non geographical continuity;
- vii. Implementation model for foreseen accompaniments for the *project for the territory*;
- viii. Implicit options for the creation of contexts that are favorable to the economic development.

The selections principles in the application of future public policies directed to the rural territories must allow the support of the implantation of a dynamic to structure the rural territories starting from small cities or municipal districts which may be constituted as rural anchor territories. Around and from where it must be sought to consolidate and articulate territorial and sector development strategies in a supra municipal nature. It is important to support initiatives articulated among territories with an inter-municipal base that involve and mobilize around common strategies and designations, units of rural territories with low density.

The impossibility of, in the future, being able to continue to support generically and indifferently all the rural territories with low density, especially in cases where the same strategy is systematically supported in all of them, it is necessary to have a new time of more selective and formatted intervention for each territorial specification. A new type of intervention that is based in positive discrimination principles and that makes it possible to concentrate support to specific territories which are desired to be assumed as anchor territories for a rural territory system, which is found in its more or less ample involvement.

It is important, therefore, to reject the idea that rural territories are an indication of decline (OECD, 2006, p. 22) and recognize that there is a multiplicity of rural territories, in many countries, which are excellent examples that it is possible to reverse the Decline Cycle.

This, if this limit of decline cycle inversion may unfortunately not be at reach to all low density rural territories, it is important to recognize that it may constitute a new opportunity of development for some of them which, through their development, may also support the development, or at least help contain the tendency to decline in other territories in their environment.

A new type of intervention, in terms of public policies, particularly adequate to the concretization of this goal is the bet on supporting models of development that may constitute pilot projects of development, with sector and territorial lines, whose principles may then be generalized to other territorial contexts.

These pilot projects to support specific territories, based on the referred *project-territory*, may guarantee the defuse of new territorial processes of economic, social, institutional and relational development in the rural context, including the affirmation and support of some of these in the sense that it may come to be affirmed, in a new future, as rural excellence territories or rural excellence poles. The future recognition of some of these territories as rural excellence territories naturally demands the creation of a posterior recognition and certification process.

Exactly with this in mind, the French legislation regarding rural territories, published in February 2005, establishes a legal device which aims to make the rural spaces more dynamic, especially the fragile rural spaces, classified as rural revitalization areas, the rural spaces in cities and the mountain and seashore spaces affected by the urban pressure. One of the innovations, in terms of planning figures, written in this legislation is the figure of *Project Territories*.

The Project Territories do not correspond to an administrative dimension, but to a special intervention category in partnership, where it is sought to conjugate a geographic reality, an active participation of the civil society, a contract relationship between the state and local collectives based on the recognition of individual goal and shared priorities, and a prospective attitude in the elaboration of projects. The planning figure of Project Territories is inserted in a concern to foment the common things among them and includes four types of initiatives: i) The Regional National Parks; ii) The City Networks; iii) the Pays and iv) The Agglomerations.

#### 4. A CASE STUDY: *THE RURAL EXCELLENCE POLES*<sup>3</sup>

The “Rural Excellence Poles” (REP) were launched by the French government in October 2005. Inspiring from the policy of urban competitiveness poles, these are projects that facilitate the development of the rural territories, receiving a partial finance support from the part of the state. The rural excellence pole is a project concerning the economic development, being situated on a rural territory and based on a partnership between local collectivities and private companies (Nicolai, *et al.*, 2008). According to Nicolai, *et al* (2008) the rural space becomes a

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<sup>3</sup> Source <http://poles-excellence-rurale.diact.gouv.fr>.

part of global economic space from France, often influencing the metropolis. Thus, the new arrangements encourage the synergic links between villages and towns.

The Rural Excellence Poles program is aimed at a space (district or province) and rural inter-municipal districts<sup>4</sup>. The principle on which the REP is supported is the fertile and joined development between the university investigation and public territorial action. The rural excellence poles launched a new discussion topic: the rural territories are not condemned for the decline and desertification. This occasion emphasized that rural dimension is a favorable field for the development and an opportunity to underline the link between innovation and rural competitiveness.

In the rural excellence poles program the operational goal is threefold:

- stimulate a network of multidisciplinary investigations which favor permanent paths and results between research and action. The university investigations assume a role in the development of territorial dynamics, contributing to the renovation of the theoretical domain which conducts the public action and the evaluation of the projects and their impact on the rural development policies and, more broadly, the territories;

- capitalize the analysis to allow an evaluation with a prospective methodology. The prospective method constitutes an action guide and is formed by the constant and systematic reflection on the rural territorial demands, the policies, the actors and the practice, in the identification of opportunities to create jobs and the search for possible excellence sceneries in the rural area, in a continued, interactive and improved learning process;

- join the investigation works and evaluations to place them at the disposal of investigators and eventually the collaborators and territorial collectivity which are interested. The goal is not only to create a network of investigators, but also raise prospective discussions that allow the evaluation of its action and project it constituting a guide for the public action on the rural and/or territorial development.

According to these goals, according to Alvergne and De Roo (2008) the starting hypotheses of the REP are:

- 1) *From the competitiveness poles to the diffusion of excellence*
- 2) *From the productive economy to the residential economy*
- 3) *From of engineering to the investment*
- 4) *An interaction between the rural and the modern*

The Rural Excellence Poles policy is based on the valuation of rural territories through the recognition and identification of services and the specifications of each territory which can upgrade the differentiation and the creation of a brand image of the territory and foment its competitiveness in time. The goal is to certify the rural territories as excellence poles. To obtain a certification of the “rural excellence pole” brand the projects must respond to the following requirements:

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<sup>4</sup> And not to a well marked administrative dimension, as has been referred to.

- 1- Provide the creation of jobs
- 2- Territorial sustainable development
- 3- A strong rural anchor
- 4- Conduct multi partnerships: A multi partnership in the governance of the project
- 5- A space to affirm the innovation.

These poles are fit in the French public policies for development of rural spaces and within the new rural paradigm (OECD, 2006): where the territorial interventions in rural territories through a *project for the territory* or territory-project to be made be proposed and presented together to demonstrate their interdependence, relevance and global pertinence (Text Box 2).

*Text Box 2*

*The Certification of the REP and the Territory-project conditions*

<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Territory-project conditions</b>
1. Provide the creation of jobs	With the poles the goal is to produce economical effects on the particular territory in terms of jobs. The projects must provide the creation of direct jobs and induced jobs, while simultaneously retaining the economic activities that could possibly abandon the territory.	viii) Implicit options for the creation of contexts which are favorable to the economical development
2. Territorial sustainable development	The rural excellence poles are based on a strong concern for environmental terms, regarding the impact of the projects on the resources (water, biodiversity, landscapes) and the spaces (occupation of land) and in terms of social and territorial cohesion. The integrated aspects which contribute to the reduction of the energetic consume of the activities are privileged (economical processes of energy, substitution of renewable energy sources) or which promote the production or consuming means which are environmentally responsible.	iv) The nature and type of the foreseen initiatives for the dynamics of the economical activities which are territorially more relevant;
3. A strong rural anchor	In the creation of excellence poles the projects sustained by actors and organisms that are located in rural territories seeking the rural revitalization are favored.	i) Identification and proposal of territorial logic and articulation among the intervention of different agents/institutions present in the territories which are preview foreseen in the strategy desired to be done; iii) Options/implications on the model of territorial ordering of the municipal district;
4. Conduct multi partnerships: A multi partnership in the governance of the project	The governance of the rural excellence pole must mandatory guarantee the public-private partnership: associate public partners (local unions, public establishments of cooperation intercommunale (inter-municipal, NUTS IV), public establishments) with private partners (companies, associations). This partnership	v) The model of government and governance of the strategy for the territory; vi) Options relating to the external relationship positioning of the territory in terms of the articulation of strategies and initiatives in coop-

	does not demand the constitution of a juridical structure.	ration networks with other municipal districts in a proximity logic and geographical continuity and also a logic of non geographical continuity;
5. A space to affirm the innovation: Innovation in different aspects	<p>Innovation in the partnerships and creation of networks: the excellence pole allows new partnership forms among actors around a mobilizing project.</p> <p>Innovation in themes: the excellence poles accentuate the new and emerging concerns of a given territory (valuation of patrimony, environment, durable development, health, development of new activities)</p> <p>Organization innovation: professional training in lines, commercialization strategies for products, guarantee the quality/certification, brand etc.</p> <p>Technological innovation in the production and commercialization lines.</p>	<p>vi) Implementation model for foreseen accompaniments for the project for the territory;</p> <p>ii) Options/implications on the model of administrative territorial organization of the municipal district which come from the territorial strategy sought to be implemented;</p>

Source: Own elaboration adapted from OECD (2006) and <http://poles-excellence-rurale.diact.gouv.fr>.

The rural excellence poles privilege four priority areas in the development of rural territories:

- Excellence for the promotion of natural, cultural and tourism wealth;
- Excellence in the valuation and management of biological resources;
- Excellence in the offering of services and acceptance of new populations;
- Excellence in technology, for the agricultural, industrial, crafts and local services productions.

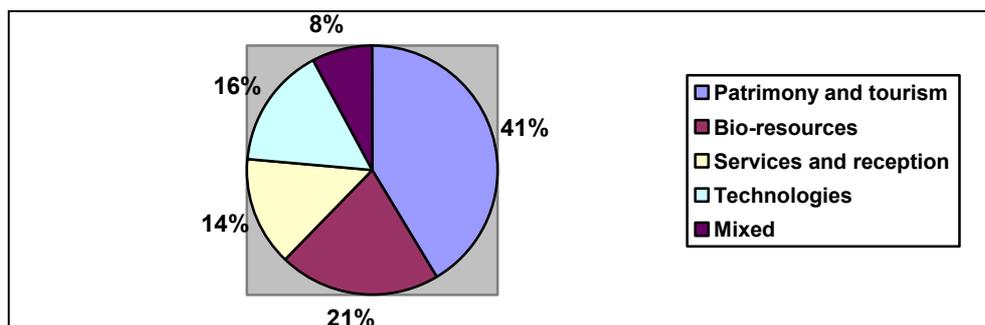
One of the main priorities is the promotion of natural, cultural and tourism resources. The larger part of rural territories has patrimony and cultural wealth and tourism potentials which have not been duly valued or explored. The promotion of these resources, supported by a *savoir-faire* and quality brands becomes a mobilization and dynamic factor in the population in rural territories and simultaneously an economical development factor. Thus, it is fundamental to develop relevance and attractiveness, the creation of new activities and professional training of lines, always supported by the ICT's.

The valuation and management of biological resources are another excellence area to promote rural poles. Increasingly the territories are considered strategic sustenance spaces in their development. A growing tendency of the cost on non renewable energies, the use of natural resources never seen before, the increase in pollution, desertification, ozone hole, acid rain, global warming and loss of habitats and the diversity of the species demand ambitious responses for the many environmental challenges. Thus, the development of economical dynamics with a demanding view in terms of environment, with renewable energy, multi activities, the non feeding valuation of agricultural production and the reinforcement of the quality lines in agricultural feeding level.

The rural poles may become an excellence space for the offering of services and reception of new populations, becoming attractive. The tendency for desertification of rural territories, in terms of populations and activities, may be changed thanks to the development of these poles. The arrival of new and/or young populations constitutes an opportunity and space for services. With the change in demographical structure, new forms of service organization and new services arise, associating public and private actors. In this sense it is fundamental to seek the coordination of the actors, the development of services that favor the insertion and fixation of populations, particularly youth, and stimulate new rural development dynamics.

The last priority area is the technological development for the agricultural, industrial, crafts and local services development. The industrial economy, particularly the agricultural industrial activity, constitutes one of the pillars of the rural economy. With traditional activities sectors, employing low qualified workers or organized in local productive systems with low innovation content, these territories face a strong international competition. To install competitiveness poles, in a local scale, the cooperation among companies and their economical, formation and investigation involving environment is fundamental. It is also important in the development of innovative actions in terms of ICT in the domain of the services to the companies in the territory, through online service platforms, which contribute to the competitiveness and to the “economical intelligence of the companies”.

The appeal to “Rural Excellence Poles” projects was launched in December 2005 with the goal of supporting 300 initiatives relating to projects which create jobs, are innovative, ambitions and structures with public-private partnerships. Faced with the dynamics of the local actors, in France 379 poles were certified, representing an investment of over 1.194 thousand million Euros, which should create 35.000 jobs, of which 13000 are direct. According to the four priority areas in the development of rural territories, the 379 REP certified are divided in 5 categories: Patrimony and tourism (157), Bio-resources (79), Services and reception (53), Technologies (60) and Mixed (30).



Source: <http://poles-excellence-rurale.diact.gouv.fr>.

Graph 1. Categories of REP Certified.

The REP are distributed in the 92 departments/communities in France (annex 1). Each community has between 1 and 8 rural excellence poles certified in diverse categories. In the different communities the predominant REP are relative to valuation of patrimony and promotion of tourism. The poles of valuation and management of biological resources also have an elevated percentage, around 21% of the total certified REP. Then come the technological excellence poles related to the agricultural, crafts, industrial and service productions located with around 16% of the total (Graph 1).

To clarify the broadness of REP, below we present the 5 types of certified REP, one in each development area. The first relating to the valuation of estate and tourism, the second regarding technologies associated to the rural area, the third referring to biological resources, and the fourth regarding the expansion of services and reception, and the last, a mixture of technology and rural estate. In the identification of specific examples, a standardized table was set out (Text Box 3–7). Within the scope of 5 REP we frame the typologies of positioning on rural paradigms relative to objectives, key target sector, main tools and key actors.

The first pole is named « **La Saône, une richesse naturelle, touristique à promouvoir ...** » **dans l’Ain (01)**. The certification of this excellence pole by the Community of “Communes du Canton de Pont de Vaux”, is based on the voluntary economical development policy and the maintenance of jobs in this rural sector in Haute-Bresse which does not benefit largely from the economical dynamism of Bourg-en-Bresse.

*Text Box 3*

*REP « La Saône, une richesse naturelle, touristique à promouvoir ... »*

New Paradigm	<b>1st REP « La Saône, une richesse naturelle, touristique à promouvoir ... » dans l’Ain (01)</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p><b>Valuation of the local resources, characteristics and potentials</b></p> <p>The certification of the excellence pole will therefore allow an answer for these two needs to increase and value a fluvial port which is totally integrated to the center of the city, near to commercial and leisure activities and the creation of a tourism house and water house destined to protect the investigations of the fauna and flora of this natural area and make them known.</p> <p>The project values the identity of this rural territory and its fluvial element will no doubt have a lever effect on the territorial dynamics of a more broadened sector then only the land of Pont-de-Vaux. Situated in the Haute-Bresse sector, far from the motor cities in the region but also frontier to the department of Saône-et-Loire and the Bourgogne region, it’s impact will benefit a non neglected part of Haute-Bresse and neighbor lands of Saône-et-Loire, where Pont-de-Vaux is the center of attraction.</p> <p>The project will create 11 direct jobs. With the increase of tourists attracted by these equipments the creation of 200 induced jobs are expected in the commerce and service sectors.</p>

<b>Key target sector</b>	<b>Various sectors of rural economies</b> (ex. rural tourism, ICT industry etc.) The commune of Pont-de Vaux, on the borders of the Saône river, is dotted of a fluvial port since the XIX Century in the center of the city and is connected to the river by a canal of 4,5 km. In this development situation, with a strong touristic connotation, this port, the only of the genre over the river, must be increased. Simultaneously, the exceptional richness of fauna and flora in the plain of Saône deserves to be more known and protected.
<b>Main tools: investments</b>	– the construction of a tourism, water and nature house – the increase of the port of diversion of the Pont de Vaux
<b>Key actors</b>	<b>Levels of governance: various local stakeholders (public, private, NGOs)</b>

The second pole is called « **Innovation Technologique en milieu rural** » **dans les Ardennes (08)**. This pole is conducted by the commune community of Trois Cantons and refers to the creation of a Center for Acoustic Training in partnership with the Faurecia Company.

*Text Box 4*

*REP « Innovation Technologique en milieu rural »*

<b>New Paradigm</b>	<b>2sd REP «Innovation Technologique en milieu rural» dans les Ardennes (08).</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Increase in the competitiveness of rural areas</b> The goal set by the commune community of Trois Cantons and it's industrial partnership is to transform the Mouzon unit (704 jobs) in a reference in competitiveness and technology, in a French level as well as European level. The impacts will be important regarding the creation of jobs and technological innovation. The creation of 5 to 7 jobs for engineers is foreseen adequate to the creation of the Center for Acoustic Training, which will be available to initiate the actions.
<b>Key target sector</b>	<b>Various sectors of rural economies (manufacturing)</b> With the development of the center, it is foreseen that the Research and Development Center (R&D) be expanded, which will lead to the creation of other jobs. The places of productions are developed equally though this line and will face the creation of jobs in the third phase. Regarding the technological innovation, Faurecia makes innovation its motor for growth. The different experiences with diverse measuring instruments which will be installed in the Center for Acoustic Training will be a technological advance for the sector for the Commune Community, but also in a department and regional level. Besides this, a constant concern of the industrial development, as well as R&D, is that the use of these new measurement instruments will allow a greater performance and be more innovative to offer the best acoustic products to the clients.
<b>Main tools: investments</b>	It means the practice of adequate measures to reduce the sound volume of vehicles (investment in a rehearsal bench which permits the testing of 4 wheel vehicles up to 500 CV and which can reach 240km/h).
<b>Key actors</b>	<b>Private actors: various local stakeholders</b> Creation of a Center for Acoustic Training in partnership with the Faurecia Company.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> rural excellence pole being analyzed is called: «**bio-ressources des Hautes terres** », **dans le pays de Saint Flour, Cantal (15)**. The country territories

which regroup 105 communes and 40.000 inhabitants, marked by a long period of demographical decline, adopted a development strategy which seeks support on the valuation of estate resources.

*Text Box 5*

*REP «Bio-ressources des Hautes terres»*

<b>New Paradigm</b>	<b>3 rd REP «bio-ressources des Hautes terres », dans le pays de Saint Flour, Cantal (15)</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Income of resources and potentials normally unused; Valuation of the local resources, characteristics and potentials;</b> The goal is to add value to the territory, through the development of coordinated valuation actions, transformation and promotion of the products of the mountain. The excellence pole must also have a leverage effect on the tourism development, reinstating the image of the territory through the promotion of its products and its savoir-faire.
<b>Key target sector</b>	<b>Various sectors of rural economies (rural tourism and manufacturing.)</b> The Pays de Saint Flour, Haute Auvergne Rural Excellence Pole develops a cluster of companies around the valuation of the biological resources of the Cantalienne Mountain. The originality of the pole is in the synergy of the lines that work independently. The pole unites, in an exemplary way, the activities regarding the forest valuation (around a sawing unit in Margeride, and the development of fabrication units in the wooden houses, valuing the local production) and the valuation of the agricultural feeding biological resources (mountain pork line, rye line and milk line).
<b>Main tools: investments</b>	Investments in a sawing unit in Margeride; Development of fabrication units in the wooden houses
<b>Key actors</b>	<b>Private actors: various local stakeholders</b> The pole supports itself in the partnership with the sector of forming and investigation, particularly for the development of new technologies (adapted cut shops, micro-filtering processes and fresh product wrapping, ...).

The «**Royans Vercors Santé » en Isère pole (38)** is associated to the services and reception. In Vercors, the community of municipal districts in Massif de Vercors (9000 inhabitants in 7 municipal districts) proposed the development of an excellence pole in the domain of care and prevention, responding originally to the needs of the inhabitants, namely an elderly population.

*Text Box 6*

*REP «Royans Vercors Santé »*

<b>New Paradigm</b>	<b>4th REP The «Royans Vercors Santé » en Isère pole (38)</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Increase in the competitiveness of rural areas</b> Over a mountain territory inscribed in different development projects and confronted with the aging of the population, the project consists in the validation of a pilot experiment, which can be amplified to other territories to: – Develop an innovative offer of services from home; – Give assistance and health and social care with quality through the coordination and connection in network among the interested parties; – Propose adequate living spaces. – Create conditions and structures to attract new qualified residents and consumers with high income levels.

<b>Key target sector</b>	<b>Various sectors of rural economies (information and communication technology – ICT industry etc.)</b> The pole focuses: – on the development of housing adequate to elderly people; – on the establishment of a reception form during the day to prevent dependence or to accompany the elderly, stimulating them in diverse activities, to support the families which help or receive, during the day, people which have lost their independence, confronted with physical, mental, psychological or social difficulties. – on the network creation, of exchange and recovery of information in the home of elderly people (equipped) and the medical office, through a safe platform with a server. The doctor and the health helper may see on the patient’s television, the information relating to its accompaniment and treatment.
<b>Main tools: investments</b>	Develop an innovative offer of services from home and the medical office, through a safe platform with a server.
<b>Key actors</b>	<b>All levels of government (supranational, national, regional and local), various local stakeholders (public, private, NGOs).</b> This innovative project for shared files among health professionals unites the concern for a greater organization of the abidance of care. This pole is also innovative through the organization of actors that it includes and the resources to new technologies. It is supported by a large public-private partnership (companies in the TIC domain, health professional, and collectivity) and is enrolled in the development project of a very rural territory.

The last presented pole is the «**innovation et production textile de Wesserling**» dans le Haut Rhin (68). In Haut Rhin, the Community of municipal districts of Saint-Amarin (15 municipal districts, 13137 inhabitants) has made an effort since 2004 in a vast rehabilitation project for Husseren-Wesserling, a former location for textile industries, with 17 ha in parks and gardens, a castle, and many living apartments and a company of 24 ha.

*Text Box 7*

*REP «Innovation et production textile de Wesserling»*

<b>New Paradigm</b>	<b>5th REP «innovation et production textile de Wesserling» dans le Haut Rhin (68)</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<b><u>Increase in the competitiveness of rural areas</u></b> The community of municipal districts aims to pursue a reconversion strategy – which has already allowed the creation of 80 jobs – through the constitution of an excellence pole consecrated to the innovation and textile production. The “innovation and textile production of Wesserling pole” aims to be, in estate and economical terms, the main house for the reconversion of the economy of the Saint-Amarin valley.
<b>Key target sector</b>	<b><u>Various sectors of rural economies (rural tourism, manufacturing)</u></b> The project regards the creation of an innovation and textile production space in a patrimonial space of exception, the Wesserling park. It aims to develop, in time, with the synergy among textile professionals, a “small local productive system”.
<b>Main tools: investments</b>	The pole will have the role of economical motor and the center for resources and services, articulated in 4 strategic axis: - the development of ateliers for textile artists and garden arts - the development of a hotel of industrial textile companies with offices - the development of a space for a textile museum and animation dedicated to the textile industry of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century.

	- the development of an estate space dedicated to the discovery of energies and the architecture of this industry.
<b>Key actors</b>	<b>Various local stakeholders (public, private, NGOs).</b> This space will receive companies, artists and textile manufacturers in restored estate apartments. To develop with the synergy among textile professionals, a “small local productive system”

The five presented poles responds to the requirements to obtain the certification like we can see in the following table (Text Box 8).

*Text Box 8*  
*The 5 types of certified REP and the Requirements to the certification*

<b>REP</b>	<b>Requirements</b>
<b>1st REP « La Saône, une richesse naturelle, touristique à promouvoir ... » dans l’Ain (01)</b>	1- Provide the creation of jobs 2- Territorial sustainable development 3- A strong rural anchor
<b>2nd REP « Innovation Technologique en milieu rural » dans les Ardennes (08)</b>	1- Provide the creation of jobs 2- Territorial sustainable development 4- Conduct multi partnerships 5- A space to affirm the innovation: Innovation in different aspects
<b>3rd REP «bio-ressources des Hautes terres », dans le pays de Saint Flour, Cantal (15).</b>	1- Provide the creation of jobs 2- Territorial sustainable development 3- A strong rural anchor 4- Conduct multi partnerships
<b>4th REP «Royans Vercors Santé » en Isère pole (38)</b>	2- Territorial sustainable development 4- Conduct multi partnerships 5- A space to affirm the innovation: Innovation in different aspects
<b>5th REP «innovation et production textile de Wesserling» dans le Haut Rhin (68)</b>	1- Provide the creation of jobs 2- Territorial sustainable development 3- A strong rural anchor 5- A space to affirm the innovation: Innovation in different aspects

## 5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The rural territories today face challenges in terms of conditions for their future development which are very associated, in one way, to the diminution and aging of populations which reside there, and on the other hand, the relative distancing of those territories to the markets and services. The rural areas must be prepared to face the many challenges in relation to sustainable rural development. The survival and the development of rural areas will depend greatly on the capacity i) to value and make profitable the local amenities; ii) to create conditions and structures to support the companies in rural territories; iii) to assure conditions for placement or the availability of public services in rural spaces. The future of the territorial interventions in rural territories, especially those with low density, must be based in the demand for the existence of a *territory-project* in which the

different interventions to be made be proposed and presented together to demonstrate their interdependence, relevance and global pertinence. The aim is create conditions and structures *to attract new qualified residents and consumers with high income levels and to increase the competitiveness in rural spaces.*

Exactly with this in mind, the French legislation regarding rural territories, published in February 2005, establishes a legal: Rural Excellence Poles. The “Rural Excellence Poles” policy is based on the valuation of rural territories through the recognition and identification of services and the specifications of each territory which can upgrade the differentiation and the creation of a brand image of the territory and foment its competitiveness in time. The goal is to certify the rural territories as excellence poles. To obtain a certification of the “rural excellence pole” brand the projects must respond to the following requirements: a) provide the creation of jobs; b) territorial sustainable development; c) a strong rural anchor; d) conduct multi partnerships and; e) a space to affirm the innovation. The rural excellence poles privilege four priority areas in the development of rural territories: excellence for the promotion of natural, cultural and tourism wealth; excellence in the valuation and management of biological resources; excellence in the offering of services and acceptance of new populations and excellence in technology, for the agricultural, industrial, crafts and local services productions.

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## ANNEX 1

## Categories of REP Certified by community

	Total	A (Patrimony, Tourism)	B (Bio- resources)	C (Services and reception )	D (Techno- logies)	M (Mixed)
<b>Ain</b>	4	2		1		1
<b>Aisne</b>	4	2		1	1	
<b>Allier</b>	3	1	1		1	
<b>Alpes-de-Haute-Provence</b>	6	4		1	1	
<b>Hautes-Alpes</b>	4	1	2		1	
<b>Alpes-Maritimes</b>	3	1	1	1		
<b>Ardèche</b>	7	2		2	1	2
<b>Ardennes</b>	7	4	2		1	
<b>Ariège</b>	4	3	1			
<b>Aube</b>	3	2				1
<b>Aude</b>	2		1			1
<b>Aveyron</b>	5	2	1	2		
<b>Bouches-du-Rhône</b>	1					1
<b>Calvados</b>	5	2	2		1	
<b>Cantal</b>	8	4	1	2	1	
<b>Charente</b>	6	3	1		2	
<b>Charente-Maritime</b>	6	2	1		2	1
<b>Cher</b>	5	1	1		2	1
<b>Corrèze</b>	8	4	1	2	1	
<b>Haute-Corse</b>	3	2				1
<b>Corse du Sud</b>	2	2				
<b>Côte d'Or</b>	5	3	1		1	
<b>Côtes d'Armor</b>	4	2	1			1
<b>Creuse</b>	4	1		2		1
<b>Dordogne</b>	4	3	1			
<b>Doubs</b>	4	2	1			1
<b>Drôme</b>	3			1	1	1
<b>Eure</b>	3	1	1	1		
<b>Eure-et-Loir</b>	2	1	1			
<b>Finistère</b>	7	3	2	1		1
<b>Gard</b>	4	2		1		1
<b>Haute-Garonne</b>	3	1	1		1	
<b>Gers</b>	5	2	1		2	
<b>Gironde</b>	5	4	1			
<b>Guadeloupe</b>	1	1				

Guyane	2	1				1
Hérault	5	3	1			1
Ille-et-Vilaine	3	1		1		1
Indre	4	3		1		
Indre-et-Loire	3	3				
Isère	6	1	4	1		
Jura	6	1	1	1	3	
Landes	3			1	2	
Loir et Cher	3	2	1			
Loire	3		1		2	
Haute-Loire	7	2	3	1		1
Loire-Atlantique	3	1		1	1	
Loiret	3		2		1	
Lot	4	2		2		
Lot-et-Garonne	4	1			3	
Lozère	8	3	3	1		1
Maine-et-Loire	5	1	2	1		1
Manche	5	1	1	1	2	
Marne	4	1	1	2		
Haute-Marne	5	2			3	
Martinique	3	1	1			1
Mayenne	5	1	1	3		
Meurthe-et-Moselle	8	2	3	2	1	
Meuse	5	3	1	1		
Morbihan	4	1	1	1	1	
Moselle	3	2	1			
Nièvre	4	3	1			
Nord	3	2			1	
Oise	3	2	1			
Orne	4	3	1			
Pas-de-Calais	4	1	1		2	
Puy-de-Dôme	3	1	1		1	
Pyrénées Atlantiques	6	3		1	3	
Hautes-Pyrénées	5	2	1	1		1
Pyrénées-Orientales	4	3	1			
Réunion	2	1				1
Bas Rhin	6	3	1	1	1	
Haut-Rhin	4	1			2	1
Rhône	3		1	2		
Haute-Saône	5		2	2	1	
Saône-et-Loire	6	2	2	1	1	
Sarthe	4	4				
Savoie	5	2	1		1	1
Haute-Savoie	3	1	1			1
Seine-Maritime	3	2			1	

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<b>Seine-et-Marne</b>	1			1		
<b>Deux-Sèvres</b>	5	2	1		1	1
<b>Somme</b>	3	2				1
<b>Tarn</b>	4	1	1	2		
<b>Tarn-et-Garonne</b>	2	1			1	
<b>Var</b>	2		1			1
<b>Vaucluse</b>	2	1	1			
<b>Vendée</b>	2			1		
<b>Vienne</b>	7	2	1	1	3	
<b>Haute-Vienne</b>	3	1	2			
<b>Vosges</b>	4	2	1		1	
<b>Yonne</b>	3		1	1	1	
	379	157	79	53	60	30