

**The rural in 1999:  
Who are they and where do they come from?**

*Since the end of the 70s, the demographic development of the rural dominant areas has no longer been negative and this favourable development emphasized during the last 30 years. It is due to a positive balance of migrants, which fully compensates for the natural deficit of these areas. Conversely, a natural positive balance allows the urban hubs to preserve a positive demographic evolution, while departures from these areas are higher than arrivals. In rural areas, the natural deficit, associated to non random crossed migrant flows (departures of skilled young people and arrivals of retired people) leads to an overrepresentation of workers and old people.*

**Between a natural deficit and a positive balance of migrants: a rural ageing population...**

If we consider the Urban Area Zoning typology on 1990 data, the demographic developments of the urban and rural dominant areas, both positive since 1975, are supported by different mechanisms. However, though slightly lower compared with that of both previous inter-census periods, the natural balance of the urban hubs (variation between the number of births and deaths) between 1991 and 1999 is the highest (+ 0.55 per year) by comparison with the other types of area (table 1). The periurban municipalities also show a positive balance of limited scope. It is quite different for municipalities from rural dominant area for which the natural balance has been negative for the last 30 years. Balanced in the rural areas, it is all the worse since municipalities are far from the influence of the town. **Associated with the selective mobility that we shall see later, this movement leads to a continuous ageing of the rural population.**

So, in 1999, almost one third of the people of 75 years old and over who live in France live in the rural, against only a quarter of the overall population (table 2). Moreover, more than a quarter of the population of the dominant rural area is over 60 while this age bracket only represents 19% of the urban dominant area. It is the case of more than 30% of the population of the rural municipalities, the farthest-off from the towns, essentially concentrated in the Centre and North-West of France (see map 1). As for people under 20, they are overrepresented in the periurban municipalities and the young working population (20-39 years old) form a third of the population of the urban hubs against only a quarter of the population from the farthest-off rural areas from the towns.

**The second component of the demographic development - the positive balance of migrants - is the sign of a renewed attractiveness of the rural areas.** In fact, the balance of migrants (the difference between

arrivals and departures within a area category), negative in the urban dominant area because of important departures from the urban hubs, is positive in the rural dominant area and increasing over the last 10 years. The spatial heterogeneity noted in the natural balance also exists in the balance of migrants. The employment areas of the rural area little profit from the surplus arrivals which mostly concern the other municipalities of the rural dominant areas. Within these municipalities, the extent of the phenomenon is very strongly influenced by the distance and characteristics of the nearest urban hub, especially its size and dynamism, as much demographic as economic. So, the farthest-off municipalities from the urban network only saw their migrant flows become positive during the two inter-census periods, while, between 1990 and 1999, the rural under urban influence shows a migrant surplus over 0.5% per year, to be compared with that listed by the periurban municipalities over the same time. Let us note that, between 1990 and 1999, the periurban migrant surplus, the driving force of this type of area lowers, dropping by almost half compared with the 1982-1990 time. The combination of both these mechanisms: the development of the rural nearby urban areas and the slowing down of the growth of the periurban areas, illustrates the continuum of the periurban movement, through a continuous development of the periurban territories and not through a densification of the territories already placed under the influence of the towns.

**Crossed flows between types of area explained by residential logics varying during life cycle**

Beyond this heterogeneity, **we must underline the importance of the crossed flows between the various types of area** (figure 1), masked if we only take interest in the sole balances. Over the 18 million moves from residential municipalities, between 1990 and 1999 (except for flows from overseas French departments and territories and foreign countries), we must remind that 45% are moves between urban hubs. However, let us note that more

than 1.8 million persons moved of residential municipality, while staying in the rural dominant area. Over the few 7 million mobilities (42%) implying a change in the type of area, 88% have an urban hub as a starting or arriving point. That shows the weight of the urban structure in the French people's movement. Over 4 million French people left an urban hub between 1990 and 1999. This movement is comparable in size to what it has been between 1982 and 1990. For 100 people who leave an urban hub for a periurban municipality, 62 persons do the reverse mobility. Likewise, for 100 people leaving the town for a municipality of the rural dominant area, 68 leave the rural for the town.

How explain these commuting movements which are at the basis of the contemporaneous rural dynamics? **The logics of the residential localisation and their variability according to the position in the life cycle provide a key for analysis.** The individuals are facing arbitration between job, services and housing requirements to meet, taking into account the constraints linked to goods prices and access costs to these goods. With the population concentration, the housing-cost assessment represents a dissipation force and the starting point for the urban hubs and of the periurbanisation. However, the employment and in a lesser measure the services have a tendency to gather, what forms an agglomeration force for the population. The individuals' needs changing according to their position in the life cycle, such type of area will be more adapted to the demand from such type of individual.

Thus, for professional motivations, the young ones from the rural areas leave those to go to urban centres, all the more since they had a vocational training. The same goes for the children of the periurban people. This mechanism leads to an overrepresentation of the young ones at the start of their working life in the urban hubs. Moving in with someone and giving birth to children lead to a modification of the individuals' preferences: without changing job, they will choose to live in the town outskirts, at a longer or nearer distance: they become periurbanized or migrate towards a rural municipality from which it is still possible to commute. When children are of school age, we assist to a coming back of some periurban people to the centre, motivated by a better accessibility to services. In the end, at time of retirement, when there are

no more constraints linked to employment, the rural areas look attractive again, the retired people live big metropolies, especially, the province of Ile-de-France to live in rural municipalities.

...A population with a low qualification level

These movements of population have two large consequences on the constitution of the population of the rural area. On the one hand, the departure of the young ones and the arrival of the retired people lead to a reinforcement of the rural population ageing. On the other hand, the departure of the most qualified ones results in the maintenance of a low qualification level of the rural manpower. (figure 2).

The analysis of the social constitution of the different areas highlights these three big characteristics: We already insisted on the ageing population which results in an overrepresentation of the retired people (16.5% of the population of the urban dominant area against 23.6% of that of the rural dominant area). The inexorable fall in the number of farmers went on between 1990 and 1999 at a more elevated rate than between 1982 and 1990: 36.6% against 31.1%. Nowadays, farmers represent 2.5% of the overall working population and 8% of the rural dominant area. In the end, the share of non-skilled workers in the working population, farmers excepted, is almost twice as much higher in the rural dominant area (18%) than in the urban dominant area (10%) and the number of workers remains steady (1.7%) while it fell by 9% in the urban areas. In compensation, skilled employees concentrate in town: the executive share is twice higher in the urban areas than in the rural. However, the number of executives increased quicker within them (+26% against +16.5%).

If the overall rural area saw its demographic development restored during the last thirty years, chiefly because of the surplus of the arrivals over the departures, the impacts on the social constitution of these areas differ a lot according to their distance to the urban net. The nearest municipalities of an urban hub adopted the modes of development of the periurban municipalities while most far-off municipalities saw their population ageing and the number of workers remain steady.

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#### For further information

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**Table 1- Demographic development by category of area from 1975 until 1999**

Category of area*	Rate of annual variation (%)			Among which natural population change (%)			Among which migratory balance(%)		
	75-82	82-90	90-99	75-82	82-90	90-99	75-82	82-90	90-99
<b>Predominantly urban area</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>0.42</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.58</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>-0.09</b>
Among which urban hubs	0.21	0.38	0.27	0.64	0.62	0.55	-0.43	-0.25	-0.28
Among which periurban municipalities	2.38	1.75	0.98	0.26	0.39	0.38	2.12	1.35	0.60
<b>Rural dominant area</b>	<b>0.09</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>0.20</b>	<b>-0.14</b>	<b>-0.11</b>	<b>-0.14</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>0.34</b>
Among which rural employment centres	0.37	0.13	0.16	0.24	0.15	0.00	0.13	-0.02	0.15
Among which other municipalities:	-0.01	0.10	0.22	-0.28	-0.20	-0.19	0.27	0.31	0.41
- with 20% or more alternating migrants towards an urban centre	0.40	0.53	0.50	-0.19	-0.07	-0.04	0.60	0.60	0.54
- with less than 20 % alternating migrants towards an urban centre	-0.34	-0.26	-0.03	-0.35	-0.31	-0.33	0.00	0.06	0.29
<b>Metropolitan France</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>0.37</b>	<b>0.40</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.01</b>

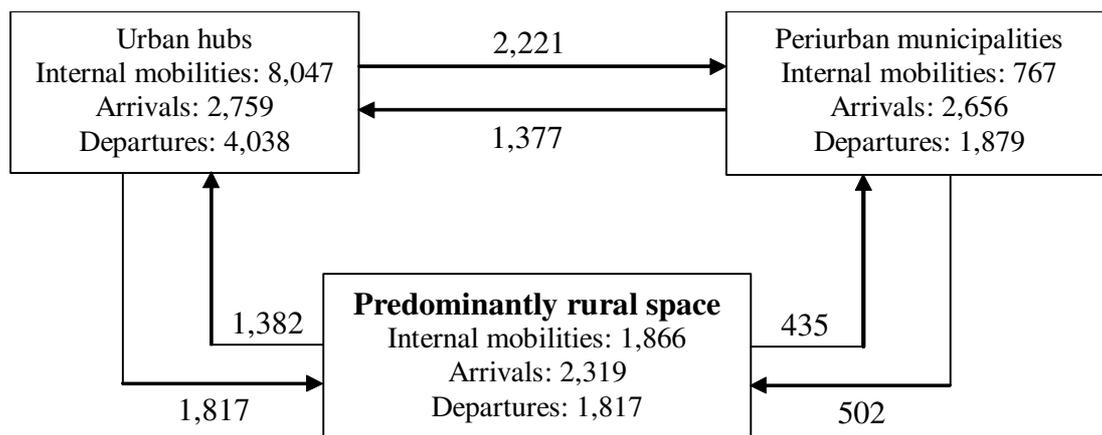
Source: Insee, population census of 1975, 1982, 1990 and 1999 - (\*) Delineation with population census data of 1990 after the definitions of 2002.

**Table 2 - Population structure by age in 1999**

Space category*	Distribution(%)						Numbers (in thousands)
	0 to 19 years	20 to 39 years	40 to 59 years	60 to 74 years	74 ans and over	Total	
<b>Predominantly urban space</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>44, 889</b>
<b>Rural dominant space</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13, 631</b>
Among which rural employment centres	6	6	6	8	8	6	3, 738
Among which other municipalities:	16	14	16	22	23	17	9, 893
- with 20% or more alternating migrants towards an urban centre	8	7	8	10	10	8	4, 747
- with less than 20 % alternating migrants towards an urban centre	8	7	8	12	13	9	5, 146
<b>Metropolitan France</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>58, 521</b>

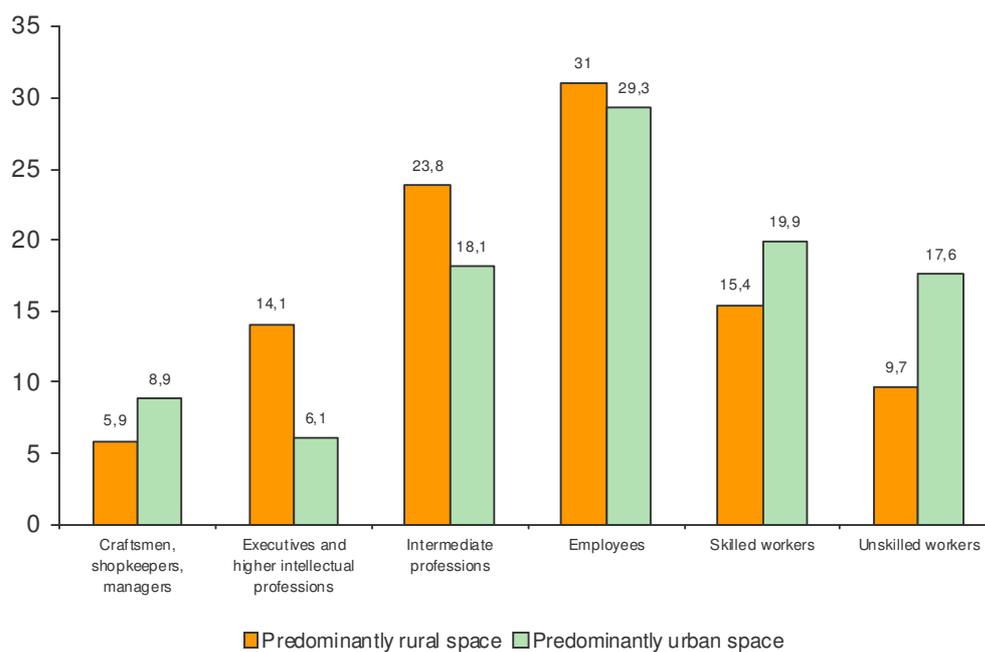
Source: Insee, population census of 1999 - (\*) Delineation with population census data of 1990 after definitions of 2002.

**Figure 1 - migrant flows from and towards different space categories between 1990 and 1999 (in thousands)**



Source: Insee, population census of 1999

**Figure 2 - Active population except for agriculture per socioprofessional category in 1999**



Source : Insee, population census of 1999

# Map 1 - Distribution of the people of 60 years and over in the municipalities of the rural dominant space

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Source : Insee, population census of 1999

