

URBAN-RURAL INTERACTION



Report of the Working Group
on Urban-Rural Interaction
Finnish Report in Autumn 2000
English Translation in Summer 2001

Contents

1	Starting Point	1
2	Division into urban and rural regions	3
3	Common prerequisites for urban-rural interaction	8
	3.1 Framework for regional development and planning	8
	3.2 Programme work on regional development	11
4	Fundamental interaction themes	12
	4.1 Promotion of knowledge and skills	12
	4.2 Business services	14
	4.3 Functioning labour market	15
	4.4 Commuting, settlement structure and housing policy	16
	4.5 Telework	19
	4.6 Services for residents	20
5	Interaction themes with surplus value	22
	5.1 Strengthening of local initiative	22
	5.2 Co-operation between villages and urban neighbourhoods	25
	5.3 Locally produced food	27
	5.4 Culture	28
	5.5 From leisure housing to second homes	30
6	Towards more vigorous interaction	33

The members of the Working Group on Urban-Rural Interaction

Chairmen

Heli Saijets, Committee for Urban Policy, Ministry of the Interior

Eero Uusitalo, Committee for Rural Policy, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Members

Matti Heikkilä, National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health

Mika Honkanen, Ministry of the Interior

Anne Jarva, Ministry of the Environment

Petri Kahila, University of Helsinki / Seinäjoki Institute for Rural Research and Training

Pirkko Liisi Kuhmonen, Ministry of Education

Risto Matti Niemi, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Kari Pakarinen, The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities

Päivi Piispa, Uusimaa Regional Environment Centre

Kaarina Saavola, Maunula Residential Association

Matti Vatiilo, Ministry of the Environment

Riitta Vesala, City of Lahti

Olli-Pekka Väänänen, Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners

Secretary

Kaisa Schmidt-Thomé, Helsinki University of Technology /Centre for Urban and Regional Studies

URBAN-RURAL INTERACTION

Report of the Working Group
on Urban-Rural Interaction
Finnish Report in Autumn 2000
English Translation in Summer 2001

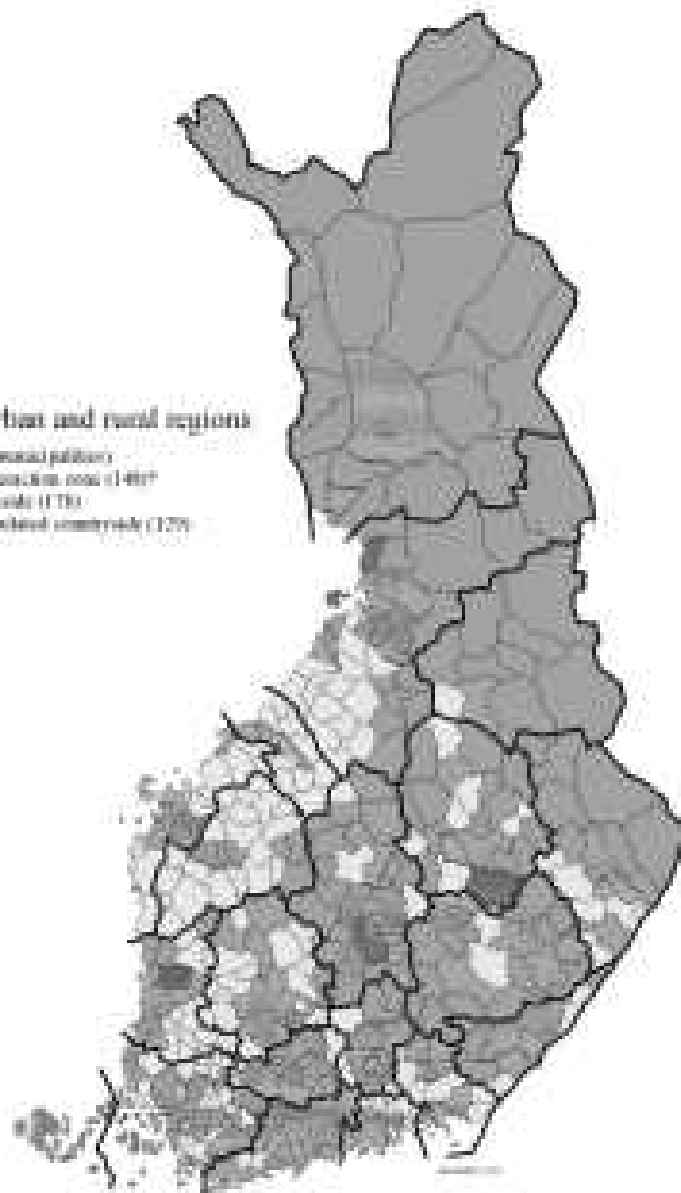
1 Starting Point

The Working Group on Urban-Rural Interaction was formed in 1999 based on a joint decision of the Finnish Committees for Urban and Rural Policies. The goal of the Working Group is to promote the common aims of the urban and rural policies by fostering dialogue and initiating projects. The Working Group started to draw up an agenda of the issues of urban-rural interaction. This report introduces the central themes of interaction and formulates some concrete proposals for further work.

Although the contents of urban and rural policies are different, they are both horizontal compared with other policies. They emphasise the bottom-up-approach and underline the community actions and local initiatives. Also the methods of the urban and rural policies are close to each other. However, different contents need different actors and focusing in policy making. There is no reason to combine the urban and rural policies. On the other hand, if common issues are not brought to mutual discussions, a needless antithesis may emerge. A functioning whole consists of urban and rural policies in interaction, working side by side.

Division into urban and rural regions

- Central (44 municipalities)
- Common transition zone (140*)
- Core countryside (170)
- Sparsely populated countryside (120)



*The common transition zone shows 17 municipalities with the core countryside. It also the sparsely populated countryside. The common transition zone and core countryside - the population was as high as in the common transition zone.

2 Division into urban and rural regions

Rural and urban regions have been defined on several different grounds. For policy making the definition is important, as the rural and urban policies can only be specified if their target areas can carefully be agreed on. This is also the case in the regions where both urban and rural policies are implemented.

The standard list of characteristics of the rural regions is the following: scattered settlement, higher share of primary production than in the average production structure and distant location from big centres. One definition of rural areas is to include all areas with scattered settlement and dense settlements up to the size of 500 inhabitants. In a wider definition all municipalities under 30 000 inhabitants are considered rural areas. In accordance with this definition, 57% of Finnish people belong to the rural population.

A trisection of the Finnish rural areas has been used frequently in studies as well as in policy making. The three categories are: 1) countryside close to urban areas 2) core countryside and 3) remote countryside. E.g. in the Regional Rural Development Programme of the programming period 2000-2006 this categorisation guides public funding in a way that the core countryside and remote countryside get the highest support. However, this is not enough for the territorial

division of rural policy - a sub-regional level needs to be considered, too. This refers both to the development of common industrial and trade policy within urban regions and to the work of the local action groups.

The definitions of urban areas have also been made on several grounds: administration, population density and functional system. The administrative existence of an urban centre is only a matter of the label: any municipality may start to call itself a town or city. In the year 2000 there were altogether 109 towns and cities in Finland, with 65% of the population living in them. The Statistics Finland divide the municipalities according to the population density to be either cities, densely populated areas or rural areas. According to this definition the Finnish population is 58% urban. Most essential in the making of urban policy are the functional urban regions. Urban policy is not only aimed at the central cities but at the whole functional and commuting areas. An urban network study made for the Committee for Urban Policy examined towns as living neighbourhoods for the inhabitants, as centres of economic activities and as places that produce services for the surrounding areas and offer international connections. According to this ranking there are 35 urban regions in Finland, having 78% of the population living in them.

The Finnish Environment Institute and the Ministry of the Environment have defined Finnish urban regions in order to monitor the settlement structure. The basis used for the examination refers both to the physical and functional settlement structure of the regions. An ur-

ban region is defined as a physical-functional urban thickening that includes a uniform densely populated area, that stretches onwards from the city centre, and nearby densely populated areas together with their fringe areas. Further criteria includes population density and the number of inhabitants working in the central city. In this definition an urban region is not bound to the municipal boundaries.

The Working Group on Urban-Rural Interaction proposes a division into urban and rural areas and into a common interaction zone. The urban and rural policies have their specific geographical reach, but the zone on the borders of these two is a key area for urban-rural interaction and should thus be addressed by both policies. The indicators needed for defining the interaction zones include statistics on commuting, labour force, migration, education level, land use and traffic volumes. The Working Group wishes to emphasize that despite the definition of the separate interaction zone, the urban-rural interaction principle should be implemented throughout the whole country.

In the interaction context it is justified to define the urban and rural regions by municipalities, not by any smaller units such as postal code areas. The Finnish municipalities have a very large autonomy and municipalities are also the basic statistical units. In the future there might also be reasons to consider a finer division so that the special features of the areas come out in a better way. Then one could take into consideration the fact that within one municipality it is possible to find both rural and urban areas as well as urban-rural interaction zones.



Regions present themselves in summer 2000 at the Senate Square, Helsinki

The proposed classification is: centres (44 municipalities), common interaction zone (148 municipalities), core countryside (178 municipalities) and sparsely populated countryside (129 municipalities). The common interaction zone was defined so that one municipality may belong to the interaction zone and to the rural areas at the same time. The common interaction zone shares 37 municipalities with the core countryside, 14 municipalities with the sparsely populated countryside. Two centres, Jämsä and Uusikaupunki, belong to both centres and core countryside - the compromise is to include them in the common interaction zone. The Working Group recommends that the classification should be used by policy makers, researchers and other parties, always when relevant.

3 Common prerequisites for urban-rural interaction

3.1 Framework for regional development and planning

Finland's Regional Councils are statutory joint municipal authorities operating as regional development and planning authorities. The main planning tools are the regional scheme, the regional plan and the regional development programme. The strategic approach to regional development is of special relevance in fostering urban-rural interaction. The urban-rural interaction within a region draws from the different roles of the region's areas, and should benefit all parties. The principle of interaction is visible in the documents of some Finnish regions, but is mostly still lacking contents and implementation. A separate wave of getting organised on the urban-rural axis is necessary on the regional level.

On the international level the urban-rural interaction has aroused attention especially through the ESDP-document, the European Spatial Development Perspective. One of the ESDP aims is to promote urban-rural partnerships. The idea is that a polycentric urban system would guarantee the balanced development of European regions and that the balance within the region is found via urban-rural partnership. Although the ESDP is a non-binding document, only an ex-

pression of a common will among the EU member states, it can contribute to keeping the urban-rural dimension on the European agenda.

According to the new Land-Use and Building Act that entered into force in January 2000 regional planning has to consider the National Land Use Goals defined by the Council of State and fit them together with the regional and local aims. The national goals comprise e.g. main infrastructure networks or natural and built-up areas of national importance. They also list the urban-rural interaction in connection with the developing of a balanced settlement structure. This refers to village networks, leisure housing, tourism etc., the development of which shall contribute to more efficient use of the existing structures, better availability of services, preservation of environmental assets as well as diversifying rural industrial and commercial activities. The work must integrate the inhabitants into the development work of the regions. This can take place through village action, especially the regional networks of the villages.

Land-use planning must carefully consider the issues of ecologically significant and popular recreation areas from the interaction perspective. The uniform green areas should be preserved as well as possible, especially in the urban areas and their vicinity. This also applies to the rural areas, where fertile fields should not without special grounds be given for housing production, and where rural landscape should not be split in vain.



New housing on the border of urban and rural areas

3.2 Programme work on regional development

Both the national and EU-level programme work on regional development have brought up the importance of urban-rural interaction. During the new programming period especially the Objectives 1 and 2 of the Structural Funds have been promoting the idea. This is of major importance as the programmes are an important source of project funding that can support urban-rural interaction. The partnership required in the programme work may also strengthen the commitment.

The Working Group for Urban-Rural Interaction has supported and observed the ongoing process of the national Urban Programmes, especially by evaluating the three programmes that run under the theme of urban-rural interaction. Within the means of the programmes the urban regions of Forssa, Lahti and Lappeenranta have been searching for best practises of urban-rural cooperation by implementing a number of interaction projects. On the rural policy side, the interaction is especially called for in the work of the local action groups, financed both by the Leader+ or other EU means and national sources.

4 Fundamental interaction themes

4.1 Promotion of knowledge and skills

Promotion of knowledge and skills is an essential element for the creation and adoption of innovations. Knowledge and skills are an outcome of failures, corrections, false conclusions and changed perceptions, that finally result in functioning procedures. Adequate knowledge and skills are prerequisites for the creation and adoption of single products or production processes – innovations. However, innovation can also be defined as a regional phenomenon or process. This is the case especially in the rural areas.

The origins of innovation processes are also attached to collective and social learning. Community demands a common knowledge base to be active; i.e. common knowledge is the strength that holds a community together. This means that the local operational environment must pay attention to, as comprehensive as possible, its various components, such as social capital (e.g. culture, training, entrepreneurial spirit, strength of community spirit), interplay between institutions, and invisible interdependencies (e.g. mutual and specific networks of enterprises and training organisations). Knowledge, skills and innovation form a process, to which all local and regional actors are attached, in one way or another.

Urban-rural interaction in promoting knowledge and skills can be viewed at different spatial levels. The most essential methods of collaboration are the co-operation of municipalities within an urban region and the connections between the urban regions and the surrounding countryside. In addition, the role of external, nationwide and international networks are of major importance. Regarding urban-rural interaction in practice the promotion of knowledge and skills in many regions is based on polytechnics and second level educational institutions and not on university-level top excellence. Furthermore, it is possible to establish concentrations of multi-level expertise to strengthen regional knowledge and skills. Their importance can be remarkable at local level. It is important to aim towards interactive models, to urban-rural exchange that takes into consideration regional characteristics of knowledge and skills.

Primary measures are:

- creating of functioning networks of authorised representatives to promote technology and training
- bringing together municipal, regional and other authorities and also enterprises to formulate broader and more influential regional development projects
- establishing a network of centres of knowledge and skills that will co-operate with centres of expertise
- recognising the kind of knowledge and skills that derive from the local level traditions and "high-touch" and combining the with the other kind of know-how of the urban centres

4.2 Business services

Urban-rural interaction should be an axiom for business services. The increasing specialisation of the industries requires very specific information that can be made more easily available when acting within a larger region. Another aspect calling for the rise of regional services is the abundance of different development programmes that require inter-municipal and multi-actor cooperation.

At the moment there are various programmes and projects in the field. The business services are no longer based merely on local but increasingly on sub-regional and regional actions. The tendency is towards integration of services to one-stop shops, to serve the needs of both urban and rural business. However, the integrated model of business services is not based merely on a common physical location but also on continuous development of working methods. The purpose is to create synergy by bringing different sectoral experts together. Also state authorities can be relocated in these offices in order to better coordinate the interventions of different levels. The establishment of multi-service information centres that serve larger areas is of common interest for the urban and rural policies. The ongoing efforts to improve rural advisory system and experiences from the Urban Programmes support the process.

4.3 Functioning labour market

The main reason for present urbanisation is that new jobs have sprang up in the centres. A parallel trend has been that the number of jobs in agriculture has been decreasing. The major part of new jobs have been created to the biggest growth centres and often in the field of information technology. One factor fostering present urbanisation is the fragmentary nature of the labour market, the fact that short contracts have become common. Young adults creating a career migrate to the urban regions that are big enough for finding a new job quickly, after the previous one has ended. In rural areas the fragmentation often means that people earn their living from different sources at the same time. Multi-source work is increasing all the time.

The rising unemployment rates in the cities as well as the persistence of long-term unemployment have been significant characteristics in Finnish labour market since the early 1990's. Unemployment rates are the highest in Eastern and Northern Finland but the rates of some big cities are also above the national average. Although new jobs spring up in the growth centres, the supply of labour force increases parallelly due to migration, and the unemployment rates stay high. At the same time the fastest growing centres suffer from a lack of skilled labour force, as the supply and demand do not meet.

In Finland the labour market and the possibilities of rural areas have been examined as long as there has been rural policy. Research on urban labour markets has only recently started, e.g. in the Urban Research Programme of the Academy of Finland. It is also necessary to study the differences between urban and rural labour market, as the different settings require different kinds of policy measures.

4.4 Commuting, settlement structure and housing policy

Commuting, which means relatively long distant daily travelling between home and work, has a special relevance in urban-rural interaction. The fact that jobs agglomerate in the city centres and workers find their way to surrounding rural areas creates commuting. Presently people with jobs in the centres make up the largest group within employed rural population.

In Finland the pressure of housing is concentrated into a few growth centres that suffer from a shortage of land for new housing construction. The prices of flats and houses have risen out of many people's reach. The areas surrounding centres may offer potential for housing market – especially as the characteristics that persistently attract Finns in rural housing are the possibilities to live in a house of one's own, in peace and close to nature. At the same time that the commuters are able to choose a preferred location, they also contribute to easing the pressure: the need to build new infrastructure in the cities diminishes and the abandonment of rural areas slows down.

Commuting has also negative effects. Uncontrolled scattering of housing in urban peripheries and in the surrounding municipalities causes fragmentation of the settlement structure. Uniform nature and landscape areas may be shattered causing damage to natural and cultural assets, as well as limited possibilities for recreation. Low density housing increases needs to construct infrastructure and heightens the costs of e.g. municipal services. Commuting increases vehicle kilometrage, especially when it is dependent on private cars. In large urban regions where commuting distances can be as high as 100 km, commuting also causes through-traffic.

Commuting may become a threat to rural jobs and services if those who commute buy their services from their working areas. On the other hand, especially shopping malls situated on the outskirts of densely populated areas cause reduction of small scale services, decentralisation of the settlement structure and growth of private car traffic – both in rural and urban areas. Commuting can also impoverish the social environment in the rural areas, if commuters' social contacts are limited to working places and rural areas become mere anonymous dwelling places. The decay of lively rural landscapes is also a loss for the urban dwellers.

It is possible to reduce negative consequences of commuting by guiding new housing to be situated within the existing settlement structure. This reduces the need to build new infrastructure. The compact form of settlements and villages helps to preserve services and the local communities. Available public transport reduces

problems of commuter traffic. Especially railway connections provide natural directions for housing to expand. It is also possible to diminish the traffic problems of commuting by promoting telework and by providing guidance for those who are planning to move to the countryside.

Regional plans, common master plans of neighbouring municipalities and structural models of city regions are the planning tools for guiding the community structure. In addition, a regional housing strategy and housing policy are needed. The housing potential in the whole commuting areas of the growth centres should be taken into account when dividing housing resources. Such a co-operation document for years 2000–2003 has been accepted in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Ministers and mayors have agreed about the measures of the metropolitan area and the surrounding municipalities to improve the housing situation and to develop land policy and traffic in connection with housing. Corresponding procedures could also be used in other urban-rural interaction zones.

Telework and commuting can be promoted in co-operation with municipalities and authorities of labour affairs, possibly also with public-private agency networks, which are especially efficient in reaching labour force for short contracts and subcontracting. This can be connected with organising collective commuting and public transport and with transmitting services to rural experts. Internet market shall be expanded to sparsely populated areas. Special service points in the urban centres can offer information about ru-

ral housing markets, services and infrastructure, as well as guidance to avoid further scattering of the settlement structure.

4.5 Telework

It is in the common interest of both cities and countryside to increase the number of people who do telework. From the cities' point of view commuters from other municipalities are often considered "free passengers" who take the jobs from the local inhabitants but pay taxes to their places of domicile. Telework enables many people to work at home instead of moving elsewhere. Decreased migration eases the lack of housing in the cities and controls the rise of prices. Telework enables people to live near nature which, according to several studies, is a very important factor especially for young families. The commercial and industrial life benefits from the increase of telework through better work efficiency. Decreasing office expenses bring cost savings.

The Committees for Urban and Rural Policies have together established a theme group in order to promote telework in the whole country. The opinion of the theme group is that technology is no more an obstacle – the attitudes are. In order to promote telework the emphasis should be laid on influencing policy making. The aim is to increase the welfare of people through telework. The Theme Group for Telework has defined telework in a wide manner. It can mean working as an employee or an independent entrepreneur, the whole of working contribution or just a part of it.

In Finland there are no juridical obstacles to telework although there is no exact term for it in our legislation. In practise contracts for telework have been made case by case with the employer. Nowadays the highly developed information technology enables new working methods to be introduced but this requires changes in the set of values. Although according to some studies there has been some development in this perspective during the last years, there is a big amount of unused telework potential – although we consider ourselves as a pioneering country in this field.

The Theme Group for Telework widened its assignment in the autumn 1999. Telework should be connected to a larger development of labour market, such as the organisation of work as well as working hours. Some advertising is not enough to promote telework. One possibility for promotion could be to get telework recommendations from the trade unions. Telework could also be mentioned in the employment contracts according to profession. Taxation should also be considered as an important element in promoting telework.

4.6 Services for residents

The majority of public services is organised by the municipalities or their joint organisations. Private services are mostly regulated by the franchising groups. The trend in both spheres is towards larger service units in a thinning network. This can be considered acceptable as far as the accessibility of services remains good and the structural change opens up new kinds of services. Recognition of these factors is an evident task in developing urban-rural interaction.

One way to provide improved services is to develop hiring systems. One Finnish project worked on founding and marketing regional hiring services. The idea is that the hiring services provide experts and skilled labour in a flexible way for both rural and urban residents. For example, an urban citizen can order help for renovating his/her summer cottage in the countryside. Another kind of initiatives with special relevance for urban-rural interaction include the networking of entrepreneurs offering services of tourism and handicraft, providing local synergy and an easier access for the urban citizen searching for leisure-time services. Much is also expected from the e- or www-services in providing high quality services throughout the country.

A special theme group on care services was established by the Committee for Rural Policy. The purpose of the group is to improve the quality and accessibility of care services in the Finnish countryside and to arouse public discussion about the future options. The prospect is that the age structure of the Finnish rural population will quickly become older and that there might be shortage of affordable services in the future. The group tries to promote entrepreneurship in the sector and contribute to networking of the related actors – there are still only a few research and development projects in the field. However, the potential for urban-rural interaction under the theme is big, as the approach is new and through lacking routines potentially open for partnerships.

5 Interaction themes with surplus value

5.1 Strengthening of local initiative

A starting point of the urban and rural policies is the strengthening of local initiative. This is challenged by globalisation and economic integration, as the macro-level changes affect the ways of acting at the local level. Traditional local development work has to constantly renew itself and search for new practises and even organisational forms. The late 1990's saw a rise in instruments for local initiative which has considerably increased the possibilities to initiate interaction projects.

One of the new actors is the village action movement. It started in Finland at the end of the 1970's as a powerful movement against rural depopulation. The network of village action committees is remarkable, 3 268, over 1 000 of which have organised themselves as associations. Almost every region has a regional village union which is responsible for the biggest network projects. The goal is to get Finland covered with regional village unions, 19 at the moment.

Another way to strengthen local initiative has been the work on local partnerships for employment carried out by the Ministry of Labour in late 1990's. Some of the projects were chosen as pilot-pro-

jects by the EU Commission, but independent partnerships ran alongside. The purpose was to approach the long-term unemployed with the help of partnerships between employment authorities, social workers, unemployed and their associations, entrepreneurs and local residents. This new way of working for local employment seems to have come to stay.

The European Union has given new instruments to local initiative. The LEADER II rural community initiative emphasised local level decision making and project initiatives. The state and the municipalities were engaged in funding with as big a share as the EU, or actually a bit more. In three years the 22 Finnish LEADER II -groups carried out over 2 800 projects covering a third of the Finnish countryside. The national POMO-programme extended the LEADER-way of work by 26 local action groups on another third of the Finnish countryside. Even most of the Finnish towns were inside the programmes because only some areas of the biggest towns (over 20 000 inhabitants) were left outside. Due to their coverage and their way to work through multi-actor partnerships the local action groups formed a very good forum to carry out urban-rural interaction. In the new programming period altogether 58 local action groups are being formed, half of them with LEADER+ funds, half with financing by the local authorities, the Objective 1 -programme and Regional Rural Development Programme. Eight of the action groups will work with urban-rural interaction as their main theme.

The URBAN-Initiative and partnership groups have brought, especially for urban residents, new possibilities to influence their own residential environment, to act and to get employed. Also the Local Agenda 21 -programme has been an efficient way to promote local development. In spring 1999, 272 municipalities had started the local agenda work. This work can also be a way to carry forward the urban-rural interaction. For instance in Nurmijärvi the management of natural and cultural heritage as well as everyday environment and promotion of entrepreneurship have been key proposals for action.

The Committee for Urban Policy started in 1997–1998 Urban Programmes in 22 urban regions. Three of the programmes started to run under the theme of urban-rural interaction. The purpose of the programmes is to stimulate the actors in the urban regions to form wider entities, to deal with the common challenges. The urban programmes generate projects that can be implemented as urban policy actions in regional programmes funded by the EU's Structural Funds. The successors of the urban programmes, the Regional Centre Programmes, will also have to take their position on the urban-rural dimension.

The new Land Use and Building Act supports local initiative by emphasising the transparency and interactiveness of planning processes. Open information and conversations are meant to create interaction. Besides land use planners, the residents and land owners, different administrators, entrepreneurs and representatives of civic or-

organisations should have possibilities to influence planning already in its early stages. The environmental impacts of the plans, including economic, social and cultural impacts should be clarified. The participants have a central role in the evaluation of impacts that emphasises the competence of local actors in questions related to their residential environment.

5.2 Co-operation between villages and urban neighbourhoods

The promotion of urban-rural interaction between villages and urban neighbourhoods aims to a fruitful exchange of experiences. The different actors of local initiative can learn from each other in many aspects. Important questions include efficient and harmonious ways of co-operation and connections with different authorities. Meetings of the different local initiative actors have already been organised, but there is more potential for synergy.

The village action committees and their urban counterparts, residential associations, are often the actors of the urban-rural interaction. Common efforts can be undertaken in the fields of telework, subcontracting, expert exchange, job recruiting services, local food delivery chains and cultural activities. Also the local level co-operation between seasonal and permanent residents is relevant here. The best way to promote partnership is to implement joint projects to strengthen the co-operation.



Cities and countryside meet each other as land and water

Some Finnish examples of village committees' and urban neighbourhoods' common projects have been promising. In 1999 the Committee for Rural Policy financed a project for the cooperation of a couple of Helsinki neighbourhoods with some villages in Lapland. The project organised, among other things, common courses and marketing happenings and developed ways to use modern communication technology in the exchange of information. Several similar projects are being launched.

Special attention should be paid to the possibilities of children to get familiar with both rural and urban surroundings. The Finnish 4H Federation organises exchange programmes for urban schoolchildren in order to let them spend their work training period of the lower secondary level in the countryside, working on a farm.

5.3 Locally produced food

Locally produced and consumed food uses local resources and productive inputs and can thus contribute to local labour market and diversify local economies. In the local food production chain the environmental, ethical, social and economic aspects can be analysed in a detailed way and the production chain and system becomes more transparent for consumers. It also makes the urban-rural interconnection visible in the everyday life.

The key area in increasing local food production is the development of traditional or local-labelled food products, also for the usage of local tourism. The availability of locally produced food in retail shops can be increased through development of special logistical chains for local-labelled food products. In municipal food procurement locally produced foodstuffs can be promoted through contracts between municipalities and farmers.

In comparison with Finland other European countries have far longer traditions in locally produced and consumed food. The model cannot be copied as such for the Finnish use as the production volumes and population densities keep the local markets rather small. However, food delivery is also a matter of customer service. In Finland delivery costs are increasingly being paid by the customers and less by the delivering shops as the distances for shopping food have increased continuously during the last 20 years. This is also in

conflict with the demographic development in the cities showing an increase of households of one person, many of which are car-less and/or face motion limitations.

The traditionally or regionally specific food products should be gathered in product families, such as "the Best of the Regions". The most peculiar products should also be registered under the EU system of Registered Product Names.

5.4 Culture

The ways to classify Finnish cultural life are multiple. The urban-rural dimension stresses the meaning of local opportunities. One part of cultural life is tied to cities or to the urban way of life. Helsinki has a special status as the key institutions in the field of arts and culture are located in the capital. However, in smaller cities cultural life can be very vivid. The Finnish network of state-funded cultural institutions is extensive. It consists of 13 regional arts councils, each of them supporting the activities in its own region. The rural areas can find their own position in these cultural networks. As it is of no use to compete with the cities, the rural areas have to develop their own profiles that are able to attract both rural and urban audience.

Culture is both directly and indirectly important for the economic life. Cultural life attracts enterprises, employs people and contributes to education and general well-being of the citizens. It is also an important factor of the region's image. Cultural activities and hap-

penings together with the immovable cultural heritage serve as assets in the positioning of the regions.

In everyday life the cultural urban-rural interaction is also a matter of different generations. The connection of younger urban dwellers to the rural heritage is far weaker than that of their parents. For children living in the cities rural areas might become familiar on summer holidays, often as experiences of nature rather than culture. Different kinds of urban-rural networks can be encouraged in order to let them know better the rural cultural heritage. Same kind of networks are welcome for the elderly, often thinking back to their rural roots.

High quality cultural environments are attractive living surroundings and important assets for the development of tourism. The Finnish Regional Environment Centres have started to elaborate cultural environment programmes that describe the values of regional built heritage and landscapes and serve as operational schemes for conservation. Also several municipalities have elaborated such programmes. These form a good base to continue, to build networks with the cultural events and services in the region. Another opportunity is to apply for state-funded regional architects that provide expertise for small municipalities in this field.

Altogether, the emphasis on urban-rural interaction can further deepen the significance of arts and culture in regional development, by providing for new options. The first prerequisite is the support for

regional and nation-wide networking, both within and between different sectors of cultural life. Another necessity is the prudent management of cultural heritage, appreciation of the environment as an asset of development.

5.5 From leisure housing to second homes

The character of leisure housing is changing – the border with permanent housing is becoming blurred. The time that people spend at their "summer cottages" has doubled within the last ten years. In practise many of the leisure homes have turned into second homes or even more permanent dwellings. The phenomenon is especially visible in the rural areas in the vicinity of urban centres (see the common interaction zone presented in chapter 2).

On the average the leisure homes are being used 80–105 days per year. The growing number of the elderly, the increasing leisure time and the rising standard of living further rise the utilisation rate of the cottages. The improved communication and commuting possibilities enable the use of leisure homes even outside the holiday seasons. One third of the cottage users say that they have carried out some telework at their leisure homes, half of them say that they have commuted between work and cottage. As many jobs are less tied to a certain place and time, the residential environment can increasingly be chosen according to the preferences of one's residential environment.

In the end of 2000 Finland had 450 600 leisure homes. Their general feature has been the rising standard of equipment – half of them are fit for winter habitation. Three out of four have been built outside of zones requiring rigid plans. Near the urban centres the conversion of leisure homes into second homes has been rapid. This can have negative impacts on the environment if precautionary measures are not followed in land use planning. The appropriate management of water systems and waste is of special importance. A set of common principles is needed. The already existing cottages and other sometimes abandoned buildings should be offered for new temporary and permanent residents. In order to avoid the uncontrolled sprawl and to contribute to vividness, the new housing can partly be directed to existing villages. Guidance and financial support for the renovation costs can be made available for the upgrading of older cottages.

The more and less temporary residents of leisure homes are estimated to be 1,7 million people. They are of vast importance for the host municipality as they are more than the amount of permanent residents, which is around 900 000. The temporary residents contribute with a major share to the local economy, but also use several public services in the host municipalities. Although they pay some fees for the services, a set of common rules for the municipal taxation of the temporary residents is needed in order to give them an improved access to the major local services. Important services for the cottage dwellers include land-use planning, building permits, road infrastructure, environmental protection including water and

waste management, library facilities and other cultural services and health care. The conversion of the cottages to permanent homes, which also changes the taxation address of the resident increases the needs of services such as care for the children and the elderly. A crucial role is also played by the provision of information about the available private and public services – for example in the form of guides or internet platforms.

The different skills of leisure-time residents are becoming harnessed resources. An example is the recruitment of temporary residents as entrepreneurial godparents for local firms. The godparent, often an urban resident, can offer important connections linking the urban and rural entrepreneurs and act as a catalyst for increasing local co-operation. There are around 300 such godparents presently active.

Another kind of new actors are the so-called cottage deputies. They have been hired on project basis to develop leisure housing as a local or regional strength and as a form of urban-rural interaction. Some municipalities have named one civil servant, alongside with the former duties, responsible for the leisure home issues.

6 Towards more vigorous interaction

The most difficult problem in developing the Finnish urban-rural interaction policy, is the thin political understanding and support. At the local and regional levels, the picture is only being pieced together. However, a number of experiments and projects already exist. It is important to learn from them and to develop the interaction practises further. At the moment the local action groups, village action committees and their counterparts in urban neighbourhoods look like important future practitioners in this field. Regional cooperation between municipalities can also be developed into this direction.

This report made by the Working Group on Urban-Rural Interaction is only an agenda of the issues related to interaction and needs to be further worked on. The Working Group wants also to take more responsibility for the actions in which ministries play a significant role. The central part is to bring the development guidelines of different ministries and other sectoral authorities closer to each other. The aim is to introduce the principles and practises of urban-rural interaction as essential constituents of both urban and rural policies.

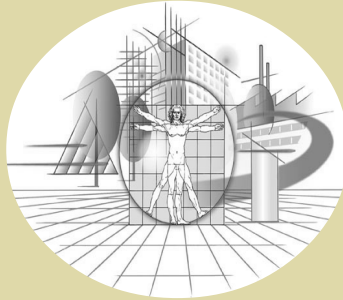


Summer resident – permanent resident in the future?

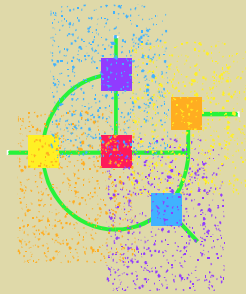
Layout and photos: Mika Honkanen, except page 26 Tiina Rantakoski
Cover photo: Herring market in Helsinki 1999

ISBN 951-734-438-4

Gummerus Printing
Saarijärvi, Finland 2001



COMMITTEE FOR URBAN POLICY



COMMITTEE FOR RURAL POLICY

Orders of the publication
Ministry of the Interior
Tel. +358-9-1604 4094
Box 26, 00023 GOVERNMENT, Finland

ISBN 951-734-438-4