

# **Sustainable development in mountainous areas: The case of the department of Lozère, France**

Gérard Miclet

ENSAM, Montpellier

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Miclet@ensam.inra.fr

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The study case presented in this report is the French département<sup>1</sup> of Lozère. A particular interest of this case is precisely the fact that since the sixties, a number of development operations and actions have here been implemented on the whole department, and not on smaller homogeneous areas, as it was generally in the same time in France and other European countries. This is the consequence of the awareness by a majority of Lozère politicians and economic actors, especially in the agricultural sector, which still represents a large part of the local activity, that the risk of economic and social marginalization was high in all the department, and that it was necessary to define common principles for the development of the whole area, and to build a local identity and common knowledge and will for action.

Lozère was the subject of many studies and research actions done in cooperation with the local institutions, generally aware of the interest of such collaborations for the continuation and improvement of their reflex. In spite of the particular importance of department in the French political and economic institutional framework, all local development actions benefiting French or European funds are organized at smaller geographic level, and there are strong incentives to do so. Most politicians and economic actors of Lozère decided to oppose this tendency, arguing that this department is a particular case, due to its small population, small number of farms, particular physical constraints, geographic isolation, and relative economic and social homogeneity. They considered that defining different policies for different areas inside Lozère would be a source of disparities, and they alleged a notion of lozerian solidarity to justify their policy.

Priorities were explicitly defined for the department's development, which evolved during the period. The mobilization of local and national funds and programmes was done according to these priorities. Later on, and especially since 1980, an active search of information and lobbying actions by the department's institutions and actors in Brussels allowed Lozère to be chosen as

a pilot area for an Integrated Development Programme, for Agro-environmental programmes, and other European programmes.

It is also noteworthy that in the same period, the creation in 1970 of the National Park of Cevennes in the southern part of Lozère was an important source of funds and reflexes for a particular model of development of the area, which was to some extent adopted in the whole department.

In fact, this policy proved some efficiency; the decline of population was stopped in the '90, professional farms provided incomes not far from the national average, there was a real development of a sustainable form of tourism, and of forest and wood-related activities. But this "lozerian model " also shows some signs of fragility. The population is still growing older, and a large part of newcomers are retired persons ; agriculture uses the less productive pastures less and less, in spite of Common Agricultural Policy incentives, and the recognition of quality of local farm products is still at stake. The development of touristic activities seems to have reached some limits, and new technologies are still at their starting point.

The priority given to actions at department level is also questioned in the rural development actions developed after Agenda 2000 ; the French Rural Development National Plan and the Objective 2 programmes, as well as Leader + seem less adapted than the previous frameworks to this particular lozerian strategy. Most of the political and professional leaders of the study period have now retired, and their successors have now to face new challenges, with a global vision of the questions at stake which seems to be less clear. It is to be noted that the new environmental issues, like Natura 2000, the classification of sites, the importance of landscape for tourism and the role of agriculture in their preservation, or the regulation of hunting, seem to be considered in a defensive way, rather than positive.

## **1. DIVERSITY, IDENTITY AND DYNAMICS OF A "FRENCH DESERT"**

Lozère, in the South-East of Massif Central, is very specific amongst the 5 departments of Region Languedoc-Roussillon, and it has some characteristics which make it unique in France. It is the least populated of all French departments, with 73 500 inhabitants at the 1999 census, i.e. 14 per square km. It is also the only one whose territory is entirely classified as "mountain area ", and its average altitude is the highest in France (more than 1000 m). Nevertheless, it is mainly formed by plateaux and medium high mountains (maximum 1700 m at Mont Lozère), cut through by deep valleys.

For that reason, the communications were not easy until recently; anyway the distances to major cities in the region are important (200 km to Montpellier and Clermont-Ferrand). A great change occurred in the '90, when motorway

A75 crossed Lozère North-South, and joined it to Paris and Montpellier, with sometimes risks of snow, and, more often, fog.

**Map 1 - The department of Lozère in France and Languedoc-Roussillon [not included in this version]**

**Map 2 - Lozère and Languedoc-Roussillon: Relief and rivers [not included in this version]**

### 1.1 Natural milieu

A particular feature of the area is the diversity of geological and climatic (from Mediterranean to Atlantic) situations, and therefore of fauna and flora, as well as landscapes. This diversity is part of the touristic attractiveness of Lozère ; it also has consequences on the diversity of the agricultural systems, and it does not make communications easy.

**Map 3 - The natural regions of Lozère [not included in this version]**

Four small natural regions can be distinguished:

**Margeride, North**, representing half of the department's total area, an ancient granite plateau, with poor soils. Its south end, Mont Lozère, is the highest part of the region. The main activity is cow breeding.

**Aubrac, West**, is much smaller. It is a part a volcanic region, the major part of which is in the neighbour department of Aveyron. This region is famous in France for its high pastures, and moors, with a very typical landscape, its production of quality cow meat (" Aubrac" breed), and AOC cheese, and handicraft. In fact, most of the spillovers of these activities go to Aveyron, and Lozerian Aubrac does not have a particular image or activity.

**Causses, South**, is a series of limestone plateaux, cut through by deep gorges, the most famous, Gorges du Tarn, being a major touristic attraction since the 19th century. The higher part of Causses, East, is mainly bare, and covered by rough pastures, the western part has more cultivated areas, and forests ; the main activity is sheep breeding, mainly for Roquefort cheese.

**Cévennes, South-East**, on a schist substrate, is a region of narrow ranges and deep valleys, with a strong cultural identity, linked both to this particular landscape and specific historical features (Protestant religion and tradition of opposition to central powers) <sup>2</sup>. The lozerian Cévennes are a part of a larger region, spreading on two other departments (Gard and Ardèche), and the communication are easier with these regions than to the rest of Lozère. The activity in Cévennes is diversified, with a tradition of industry and mining, which has declined during all the 20th century, and diversified agriculture. The

National Park of Cévennes covers the highest parts of Cévennes, Mont Lozère and Causse Méjan.

## **1.2 Demography**

Lozère is a very rural area, with only 5 small towns above 2000 inhabitants (Mende, the capital, 13 000, Marvejols, 8000, Langogne 5000, St Chély d'Apcher and Florac), all of them set in the valleys.

There are a total of 183 communes, and 2000 inhabited places, villages or isolated farms. The population is spread on all the territory, with very few "deserted " parts (some forests, and the top of Mont Lozère, exclusively devoted to transhumance grazing and sporty walking).

The population of Lozère reached a maximum at the end of the 19th century, around 150 000 inhabitants, at a time when most part of the area was cultivated, and it has constantly declined since, till the '90s. As most of mountains areas, it had a high birth rate, and a very negative migration balance, and it is said that "Lozerians " are now much more in Paris than in their mother department.

The loss of employment in agriculture was not compensated by the creation of new jobs in other activities, and the population fell to the current level around 1980. The migration balance became positive at that time, but the natural rate of growth was then negative, and is it only in the '90s (population census of 1990 and 1999) that the population was stabilized around 73 000.

**Map 4 - Population density: Lozère and Region Languedoc-Roussillon [not included in this version]**

**Map 5 - Evolution of the population: Lozère and Languedoc-Roussillon, 1982-1999 [not included in this version]**

The evolution was slightly different from one region to the other, the southern parts, Causses and Cévennes, being more dynamic since the '70 (with a noteworthy flow of migrations to the Cévennes, including agricultural migrations), while the population in most parts of Margeride is still clearly declining. On the other hand, Causses are the place where the population density is the lowest (for instance, 3/km<sup>2</sup> on Causse Méjan).

## **1.3 Economic activities: importance of agriculture and tourism.**

### **1.3.1 Agriculture**

It is particularly important in Lozère, with 14 % of total employment (i.e. 4100 in 1999). The agricultural used area represents (agricultural census 2000) 54%

of the total area (almost constant: 55% in 1988), and only 18 % is cultivated. Collective lands and especially transhumance pastures account for 6%. Climatic and soil constraints are strong, but most of the area is relatively flat, and the land structure (except in Cévennes) is not too complicated<sup>3</sup>.

**Table 1 - Number of farms in Lozère**

*Agricultural census*

Year	1955	1970	1979	1990	2000
Total	11660	7120	5320	4220	3080
Full time *		4200	3240	2200	2160

\*1990 and 1999: “professional farms”

The number of farms is declining (4220 in 1988, 3080 in 2000), but the rate of decline is lower than the French average (2.6% in the same period, compared to more than 3% in France), and it must be noted that the number of professional farm remains constant between the last two censuses (2200 in 1988, 2160 in 2000). The average area per farm is now 82 ha (30 of which cultivated).

As in most mountainous regions, it is specialized in animal productions, half of total number of farms are specialized in cow breeding (1000 for meat, 500 for milk<sup>4</sup>), 1000 others specialized in sheep and goat. The other farms are mixed, and only very few of them are specialized in crops (and are generally small non-professional farms). In terms of production value, animal productions account for 72 % (meat 45 %, milk 24.5), the rest being essentially forage productions.

An important feature is the importance of on-farm touristic activities: 190 farms provide accommodation, 80 meals, and 50 other activities. On-farm processing of food products is also important (250 farms). All these activities have developed since the sixties, but it must be noted that the number of farms concerned has declined recently, due to the retirement of early adopters, and the development of off-farm jobs for of farmers' wives (or husbands).

Lozère is also much above french average for organic agriculture, with 120 farms (4%), and 3.6 % of the agricultural area (France: 1.5%).

The area under forest is 43% of the total area, most of the forest are low productive, and a large part of the production is used for heating or paper

(processed in the Rhône valley). The industry of wood processing and furniture is nevertheless active in Lozère, and most of the wood used is imported from outside the department;

### 1.3.2 Industry

Lozère has no special tradition in industrial production, apart from some parts of Cévennes. Industry only accounts for 2600 jobs, only 9 % of the total active population (1999 census), and is mainly composed of small units. A steel factory in St Chély d'Apcher is still working, but the number of persons employed fell from almost 1000 in the '50s to 150 now.

In the last 10 years, the number of persons employed in industry increased by 400, i.e. 16 %, a modest progression, but much higher than the French average in the same time. The most important sectors are wood and furniture, metal processing, electronic computers, and agro-food, which recently progressed especially for meat and milk processing, and specific quality products. Nevertheless, agro-food only accounts (in 1998) for 27 units, and a total of 439 persons employed, while the jobs generated by wood and forest activities is estimated at 2000.

### 1.3.3 - Services

Services represent 67 % of the total employment. Two sectors are particularly important, tourism, with about 3000 full-time posts, a figure increasing since the sixties, but with a lower growth in the recent years, and social and medical activities, which has a constant and rapid growth. Lozère, as a country with preserved environment and low density, has a tradition of welcoming disabled persons, young people in social difficulty, and a network of such institutions has been developed, with many qualified jobs, especially for women.

Also to be noted the setting up in the '90 of small University departments specialized in tourism, which attracted 400 students, and a few permanent staff to Mende and St Chély d'Apcher.

**Table 2: Number of persons employed**

Population census 1999	Number in 1999	% of total	% variation 1999/1990
Agriculture	4100	14	- 30
Industry	2600	9	+ 20
Building	2400	8	+ 19
Trade	2800	10	+ 11
Other services	17 000	59	+ 10

Total	28 900	(100)	+ 5.6
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The department of Lozère has to face the main problems of an isolated mountain area, with tough natural conditions, very low population, and the absence of development poles. After a century of decline, the demographic situation is now stabilized, and many activities are developing. Among them, agriculture, still loses employment, of course, but has now solid structures, the age of farmers is below the national average, and it provides normal incomes.<sup>5</sup>

In particular, the lozerian agriculture was touched by the crisis of beef meat market due to the BSE, but most of the farmers were able to resist. Fortunately, no animal in Lozère was touched by the disease, and it was a strong incentive to improve the conditions of marketing of local meat and animals.

The current situation would have been perfectly unpredictable in 1960, a time when the situation seemed desperate to many local leaders, and some economists suggested lowering expenses for the equipment of the area, to incite the inhabitants of certain villages to leave them, and to abandon large parts of the territory to afforestation and “ranch ” farming.

This change was certainly the effect of the development of communications (but the major equipment, motorway A75, did not cross Lozère until the '90s), of new demands for “natural” tourism, and more generally, of the attractiveness of southern areas for educated and younger professionals. It was also the result of a locally defined explicit and consistent policy, the evolution of which will be presented here from its starting point in the '60s.

Two periods can be distinguished. From 1960 to 1980, local politicians and professionals realized the risk of desertification of the area, and this reflex met the French “Aménagement du Territoire “policy, i.e. national actions in favour of the deconcentration of activities and reduction of development inequalities between regions. After 1980, Lozère became a pilot area for European programmes, with a stronger support by the Region, in the context of French decentralization policy. The reflex of local institutions on the development of specific activities, with better use and preservation of local resources then became deeper and more autonomous.

## **2. 1960- 1980: POLICIES TO FIGHT THE LOGIC OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REGRESSION.**

### **2.1 The origins: breaking the vicious circle to desertification**

After World War 2, to accompany the reconstruction and growth, two particular national economic policies were set in France:

The agricultural policy, previously mainly consisting of market regulation (now taken into account by the CAP), was completed by a structural policy (Farm Orientation Law of 1960/1962), aiming at developing bigger and more efficient farms.

“Aménagement du Territoire ” was a voluntary policy for spreading activities (mainly industrial) on the whole territory, later completed (see 2.4) by rural development policies to fight development disparities between urban and rural areas inside each region.

In Lozère, in spite of the long period of rural exodus, and the low density of population, agriculture still represented 40 % of the active population in 1960, and a big number of small farms remained (on a total of 10 000 farms), with very little access to market, low income (partly provided by public social aids) and bad living conditions. In the same time, as a symbol of the decline of local activities, large surfaces of land, were abandoned, and afforested, with public aids<sup>6</sup>, and in Margeride, a big reservoir was projected, flooding the village of Naussac and 1000 ha of good farming land; it was finally built in 1971.

Till that time, in the contrary of the general French situation, the representatives of local farmers were not specially active, and local politicians (particularly in Margeride) only “managed votes ”, without any special strategy.

Things changed around 1960, firstly with the arrival of a group of young farmers, more educated, and trained in Christian movements who became the local leaders of the newly created “ Center of Young farmers ” (CDJA), with the help of the local administration of agriculture, then in charge of farm extension activities. In the same time, visits by President de Gaulle and Minister of Agriculture Edgard Pisani revealed to the media and also to the local population the situation and the image of “French desert “of the area. The young farmers met Pisani, and they concluded that desert was not a fatality, and that the tools provided by the two national policies presented above could help to make resistance possible. They already put stress on the interest of tourism, quite a new idea at this time, and especially of on-farm tourism as a means of developing new sources of employment and income in the region, to compensate the necessary loss of farm jobs. From this time, these farmers, in charge of the main professional farm organizations, and, for some of them, later on elected as members of the Conseil Général or as mayor of rural communes, took part in an informal group, which, with the help of a group of executives in the same institutions, the same age as them, acted as a pressure group to allow Lozère to benefit all national aids available for economic development. In this period, there was little institutional innovation, but a strong will of developing economic activities and fighting despair and exodus.

## **2.2. A first condition for development: Basic equipment**

Low population, isolation, natural constraints and also probably a lack of clear demand from the local politicians and administration had made Lozère an underequipped area. Roads were poor, rail communication to Paris or Montpellier were slow and complicated, only main roads were on tarmac, all main villages and commune centers had electricity, but rarely telephone and on-tap water, and smaller villages had nothing of these, and could often be isolated during winter.

The first action was on roads. The new (and partly self-alleged) “lozerian lobby”, without opposition or sometimes with implicit support by the traditional politicians, obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture special credits, and in a few years (in 1975 it was completed), all villages of, say, more than ten inhabitants, could easily be reached by cars (with some exceptions in Cévennes). Electricity reached all farms around 1970, and a special effort was made for telephone, with all villages equipped at the same time, while in there of France, many people even in town still had years to wait until they get it! All of these were highly subsidized, thanks to remaining national funds that could be quickly mobilized. The hardest and most costly of all was water conveying, especially on the Causses, where no local sources were available. This was completed in the '70, through very complex networks, and it gave way to an important increase of the sheep flock in Causses.

### **2.3 Farm structural policy**

The first necessary goal was to allow farmers to get normal income and living conditions, through the modernization and mechanization of farms. The tools provided by the French Farm Orientation Law of 1960, mainly aimed at increasing the size of farms, through aids to the retirement of older farmers (at the condition that their land remain used by agriculture), and to land restructuration. It was actively used in Lozère, and a particularity was the creation of a local SAFER<sup>7</sup>. (See below), whose role overpassed its “normal” competence, and became the core of the agricultural development system in Lozère. Lozère also benefited aids for the setting of new stables and milking machines, a necessary condition to allow farmers to work in normal conditions.

Till the '80s, the priority for structural policy remained the enlargement of the size of farms, rather than setting up young farmers or newcomers (with the exception of Cévennes, where farm exodus had been earlier and more intense). The risk of abandonment of remote or less productive land in some regions, remained, and afforestation continued in Margeride especially, with public subsidies. The local leaders realized that risk early, and since the late '60s, action for grubbing abandoned land, removing or breaking rocks in the fields, with national subsidies, were implemented by the SAFER. From 1963 to 1972, 4000 ha, in 1200 farms, were set back to cultivation, essentially in high places and plateaux, easier to work mechanically than valleys. Since 1970, the area used by agriculture is almost stabilized.

The policy developed in the '70s, by France, and later, on the same basis, by the European Community in favour of mountain agriculture had positive effects on the Lozerian agriculture. The creation of Natural Handicap Compensation premia, was of course great news for Lozerian breeders, and all farmers in the area could get it. It allowed many small farms to resist until the farmer retired, and their land to be recovered by another farm later, instead of being abandoned.

On the other hand, the European Development Plans were very few in Lozère ; they were targeted to farms already relatively well structured, and they seemed to most of Lozerian farmers too selective, because farmers had to commit themselves to reach a reference income level far above that of most Lozerian farms, and complicated. This unsatisfactory result was later the source of local reflexions which gave way to the Integrated Development Plan.

## **2.4 Special actions for rural development**

In the late '60s several successive policies in favour of rural development appeared, and were managed in Lozère by department institutions level. Their concrete effects were not important, but studies were done at this occasion, and the local leaders used them as ways to make their development project more precise, and to spread information.

Rénovation rurale (1967) relied on the principle of national solidarity to less-favoured areas; concretely, in each large region (Massif Central was one of them), development priorities were set, and actions in those fields benefited increased public subsidies. In these regions, where agriculture employed a part of the population much above average, a priority was given to developing new sectors able to employ the farm population in excess, and aids mainly aimed at encouraging non-farm activities, with special attention to agro-food and tourism with aids to the modernization of hotels and professional training.

It must be noted, in the case of Lozère, that these aids to touristic development were very little used, because of the low size and level of equipment of local hotels and restaurants, and the touristic development mainly relied in this period on subsidies to on-farm activities, which probably prevented Lozère from any mass equipment, and preserved the natural and sustainable character of the sector.

In the same period " Secteurs d'Aménagement rural "<sup>8</sup> were set ; all the department was divided into 10 homogeneous zones, and a study of the particular constraints and assets of each region done by the local administration of agriculture, with the help of consultants. The result was mainly the definition of priorities for the demand of subsidies for rural equipments. In Lozère it was the occasion of the publication of a big document

published and widely spread to the actors in the department, which presented the main issues, and defined concrete priorities for the public action.

Local programmes were then set in the '70s: two successive policies in favour of self-defined (" bottom-up ") development actions in small regions: Plan d'Aménagement Rural, then Contrats de Pays. In Lozère, due to the already systematic lozerian habit of working at department level, these actions did not get a great success.

The only Plan d'aménagement rural in Lozère concerned a small zone: Causse Méjan and adjacent valleys (Tarn and Jonte). In this procedure, the stress was put on local concertation and information of the whole population; after an initial study (in this case, relying on the results of the " S.A.R. " previous studies), local groups of actors met, with the help and expertise of the administration (of agriculture in this case), and define long term goals for the development of the region, and more immediate sets of actions, with no special funds or guaranties of actual financement. The study and management of the procedure was commissioned to SAFER, and the agricultural part of the study was important, but in cooperation with National Park of Cévennes, a great importance was also given to the preservation and management of natural areas and resources.

The study was the occasion of the setting of an Association of Farmers and Inhabitants of Causse Méjan, independent of all official institutions, but with the active support of the local farm extension officer, which played an important role for the animation of this area, and a reflex on all aspects of its development, one of the rare cases of a local development process not induced by the departmental institutions. This association was particularly involved in the development of local typical and sustainable form of touristic activities.<sup>9</sup>

The "Contrats de Pays", normally a follow-up of Plan d'Aménagement Rural to allow the objectives defined then to be fulfilled through the availability of particular subsidies, did not have particular effects, and there was no special mobilization in Lozère, despite some were signed. It is the same with "Chartes Intercommunales de Development et d'Aménagement", introduced after the Decentralization Law of 1983 to develop intercommunal cooperation, which in some regions or neighbour departments opened on original development actions. Six of them were signed in Lozère, but without special department support. They were essentially satellite structures of intercommunal unions (structures allowing communes to put resources in common to develop common activities, like water conveying, garbage processing, school busing, activity areas etc...), to define their action priorities, with a limited range of possible actions.

## **2.5 First innovative actions and institutions**

In the sixties and the seventies, the action of a new generation of leaders, through the implementation of national development policies in Lozère, broke the vicious circle of exodus and economic regression.

It allowed the local agriculture to improve its situation by far, with a priority to the development of bigger specialized farms, the productivity of which became comparable to that in other regions, specialization. A majority of agricultural development and extension actions remained "classical", i.e. with a priority to the increase of production by the cultivation and mechanization of better lands, with a risk of abandonment of others, and to more use of inputs. In the same time, many smaller farms remained; they generally had specialized in a few productions, they used tractors, but they still had low yields and incomes, and the condition for their sustainability was hard working conditions, and low household expenses. They had very few possibilities of enlarging or investment, they were not touched by development actions, but their role in the management of land and in keeping up a population in villages was important.

The development of tourism, handicraft and small industries was real, but still slow, and the new jobs were not enough to induce a change in the regressive demographic evolution.

The new generation of leaders had now come to power, they were aware of the integrated nature of economic development and the relations between all sectors, and through the implementation of the development programmes, they had developed working habits with politicians and representatives of other sectors, and contacts with the national and European administrations in charge of these questions. They were in search of a development model adapted to the lozerian particularities. Though their action was still classical in its goals, and in its use of national programmes, and could be considered as defensive, they set some priorities which can be considered original, and they also shaped and used some local institution to make them play a wider role than what they were normally created for. Therefore new forms of action and of coordination of sectoral development programmes already started in this period.

### *2.5.1 Welcoming new population.*

Considering the demographic situation of the area, a great deal of empty houses is available. Many of them are holiday residences, but they can also dwell newcomers. The most important flow is retired persons; often with family origins in Lozère, whose income is often higher than the locals'. No special decision or explicit policy was implemented to incite them to come, but the department council ("Conseil Général") has an active policy to help the renovation of habitat, which proved some efficiency.<sup>10</sup> As noted before, some migrant farmers also came to Cévennes in the '70 and later, but in the other regions, they were very few until around 1985, when the lozerian farm organizations stated in favour of these arrivals.

Lozère is also, as already said, since the '60, known for its active policy of welcoming for disabled persons and young people with social difficulties. A number of collective institutions were founded in this period. The local administration of education also has a clear policy of attracting pupils from the bigger cities in the region, and so could keep small high school (public and private) open, for the benefit of the local population, and so this is a factor in favour of the stabilization of population outside the towns.

### *2.5.2 Specific handicraft activities.*<sup>11</sup>

A network of small and individual units remains a characteristic of rural areas, it is adapted to low densities of population, and many of the industrial activities which develop in remote or mountain rural areas come from the growth of a small unit. In Lozère, the number of handicraft units is very high, with a density of 1 to 37 inhabitants (1963 units in 1999), which is the French record in all departments.

In Lozère, the number of classical service craftsmen decreased at this period as a consequence of the decrease of the local population. Building activities kept some importance in towns, thanks to the improvement of habitat, and also to the setting of touristic equipment, but globally, in the department it goes on declining. The local professionals then imagined a possibility of art and tradition handicraft, which already existed, with a certain commercial success, and they stated that new outlets were possible with the development of touristic activities. A particular problem was that very small handicraft units (generally one person, often part-time) cannot invest much for their growth, and ensure some of the necessary activities (accounting, marketing, expedition of products) by themselves.

In 1958, a group of individual craftsmen, and farmers wishing to improve their income by diversifying their activity, created the "Cooperative des Artisans et Paysans de Lozère"; which, after a few years, grew up to 168 members, one third of them being full-time craftsmen, and two thirds farmers with complementary activity, from some days per year to more than half-time. With an active and original marketing policy (expositions, shops in Paris and Montpellier), outlets increased and some farmers-craftsmen could no satisfy all their demands.

Later on, the cooperative got aids from the Leader 2 programme, and completed a new set of furniture, all made by local production units, from local materials (wood, straw, and slates), marketed in two shops in Mende and Paris. Unfortunately, these new economic orientations caused the end of the experience, the cooperative not being able to manage with such growth with its initial structures; farmers and craftsmen also had to specialize to remain competitive. The cooperative finally failed after 40 years of activity, and an average of 100 members over the period. The experience had nevertheless

positive effects, for the most active members went on working in the same spirit; they set smaller specialized structures or groups, and it played a part in the construction of a "lozerian" image.

### 2.5.3 SAFER Lozère

The Sociétés d'Aménagement Foncier et d'Etablissement Rural were created by the Farm Orientation Law of 1960. They generally are regional, but in Lozère, due to the particular will of local professionals, who considered the land structure problems were by far different from those in the rest of the region (mostly characterized by vine farms), a local SAFER was set.

The local SAFER did the interventions on the land market that were in its normal role, with, as indicated before, a priority to farm size enlarging. But its intervention quickly extended, on three other fields of activity.

- Works for the physical improvement of land, grubbing of abandoned land, and farm equipment. The intervention on farm buildings or fences is a normal role of SAFERs, but here it was more frequent, because of the nature of the farms. For all heavy actions of land improvement (grubbing, rock removing and breaking, permanent drainage), a special association, in fact a branch of the SAFER, was created, ASTAF (Association Syndicale de Travaux d'Amélioration Foncière), which did all necessary studies and administrative work, in particular for demands of public subsidies.
- Studies on land equipment and rural development. The SAFER hired at the beginning young engineers with high capability, who were able to do technical and economic studies, on wider topics than the strict activities of SAFER, and the role of the company as a study office for the department became rapidly important. In fact, due to the personality of its executives<sup>12</sup>, SAFER was in all the period, along with Chambre d'Agriculture, at the core of the agricultural and rural development institutional network of the department.
- Land restructuration for local collectivities (especially communes). SAFER Lozère also worked on the equipment and distribution to farmers (through very long-term lease) of "sectional" land (which represents a total of 70 000 ha in the department), and thus contributed much to the rehabilitation of abandoned land. This was also the occasion for a reflex on the role and place of forest in the rural areas of Lozère.

### 2.5.4 Parc National des Cévennes

The National Park of Cévennes was officially founded in 1970; it is a public institution<sup>13</sup> depending of the Ministry of Environment. Its creation comes from a demand by local scientists, politicians and other actors, since the '50s.<sup>14</sup> at that time, the region of Cévennes faced a drastic rural exodus, natural and

planted forest progressed much, and its remarkable sites and habitats were considered at risk. The goals of the Park were the preservation of the "natural" environment, which in fact had been created by centuries of man's work. The region had a strong cultural identity, and the preservation of nature could not be considered independently or against human activities. Compared to all other National Parks in France, Cévennes was a particular case, since its central zone is inhabited. Thus a new concept of preservation was set, managing natural, patrimonial and human resources altogether, with the participation of all local partners.

Along with its action for the preservation of landscapes and biodiversity, the Park develops and funds interventions to support and orient farm activities in its Central Area, to incite farmers to manage land to keep the typical character of local landscapes and preserve habitats, and in the same time to modernize their farm, and get incomes allowing the long term viability of these farms.

Several kinds of subsidies are therefore available from the Park:

- Aids to animal local breeds supposed to be better adapted to the local milieu, and to the production and marketing of typical local productions using natural pastures :
- Agro-environmental contracts for the protection of very particular habitats.
- Contracts with farmers working on the keeping up of footpaths, stonewalls, terraces, etc...

The actions of the Park contributed to keep a number of farms in the area (-23% in the central zone of the Park, compared to -45% in Lozère between 1979 and 2000), and therefore to keep open landscapes and habitats.).

PNC also had actions towards tourism, the results were spectacular: in the last 15 years, the number of tourists doubled, and it has been calculated that the economic spillover of this frequentation induced 1500 permanent jobs (about half of them in Lozère). In the same time, the population in the Park (Central Area) raised from 400 to 600, in spite of the drastic constraints already mentioned on building. The actions managed by the Park since its creation were observed and discussed by the agricultural leaders of Lozère, the Park's executives participated in these discussions, and later actions at department level, for example the agro-environmental measures, or actions in LEADER programmes were inspired by actions by the Park (keeping in mind, of course, that the Park could mobilize relatively important funds for a small numbers of farms, which was not possible elsewhere).

### **3. SINCE 1980: AN EXPERIMENTAL FIELD FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES.**

#### **3.1 An Integrated Development Programme for Lozère**

In the '70, like any other mountain area with a remaining active agriculture, Lozère had benefited European funds, through the agricultural structural and regional policies. The lozerian leaders stated that, on the agricultural side, only larger farms had really been helped, the risk of elimination of others was still high in the years to come, and the main issue in the department was demography. The regional aids by the European Regional Development Fund, those in favour of main roads being apart, it has also been spreaded without a clear local development strategy. At the end of the decade, agricultural representatives set the idea of putting these aids together, through an integrated rural development programme.

At the same time, European Community officials came to Lozère for a study on the assessment of the effects of the Mountain policy, then lozerian representatives went to Brussels, and with a clear support of the French administration, they proposed Lozère as one of the experimental areas for a new integrated development programme then being discussed, and they took part in the discussions for the definition of these programmes, through a report written mainly by the SAFER executives. Lozère was actually chosen for the programme<sup>15</sup>, which lasted from 1982 to 1989. For the first time, the three structural European Funds<sup>16</sup> were used together to finance specially tailored programmes concerning agriculture, all other industries, road equipments, and training programmes in favour of the development of these activities.

In this "Programme de development Intégré "(PDI), a priority was given, in agriculture, to investments in small and medium size farms. For each farm, a "Farm Improvement Plan " was set, similar to Development Plans, but easier to complete by these farmers ; it lasted 3 years, and was accompanied by aids to training and extension. The local agricultural institutions, in particular the Chambre d'Agriculture did a very important work of information, with local meetings in all parts of the department, and strong mobilization of all extension officers, and in 7 years, 1500 farms, i.e. half of the professional farms of Lozère benefited the programme, for a total of 75 million F of subsidies (30 from FEOGA/EAGGF), the total amount invested in the programme being 131 million, i.e. 65 000 F per plan, a rather low figure compared to Development Plans. A total of 600 farms were subsidized for the improvement or building of stables, for a total 20 million of subsidies and 45 MF invested. Most of the farms also were funded for the purchase of selected animals, and accompanying advices by the extension services.

A large part of the works also concerned land improvement:

- Drainage, irrigation : 3800 ha (18 MF subsidies)
- Land recovering : 4800 ha (14 MF)
- Pastoral improvement, fences: 12 600 ha (9 MF). It was the first time that an important programme of subsidies was provided to rangelands, now considered as an important part of the productive system of most breeding farms.

Other aids also concerned integrated land restructuring (" remembrement "), on the whole territory of 6 communes, and other actions in woodland and chestnut grove.

Despite all quantitative objectives set at the starting point were not fully completed, the programme was generally considered a complete success, especially because it allowed, with limited expenses and administration costs, the development of farms which had been forgotten in all previous programmes.

Other actions concerned the development of industrial activities, of transports, purchase of microcomputers by small industrial units (a total of 3 MF for ERDF) , and actions for the development of rural tourism for 12 MF. A particular stress was put on innovative projects, and quality products, with for instance aids for an action of labialization of selected touristic accommodation.

The PDI Lozère was locally managed by a special ad-hoc structure, the Association pour le PDI Lozère, based in the premises of SAFER, in which professionals, politicians and representatives of local State administrations actively participated. This structure was the outcome and a symbol of the common work of all local energies in the previous years, and it set and formalized common working habits between all institutions, which lasted up to now.

The success of PDI Lozère opened the way to the reform of the Structural Funds of 1988. Lozère was entirely classified as "5b " zone, and then benefited a Rural Zone Development Plan (PDZR) from 1989 to 1993, and then a Rural Development Plan (PDR) from 94 to 99. These programmes were defined at regional level, but it is important to note that, in Languedoc-Roussillon, some measures were specially defined in each department. Lozère could so go on using the FEOGA funds for further programmes of improvement of smaller farms. In this period, new development axes were set, as wood industry, agro-food, and in the farm sector, a new stress was put on quality products in the PDR 1994-99 programme: Fleur d'Aubrac, certified meat of heifers fully fed on grass, Eloveil, for lambmeat, or organic farming. In fact, the interest to quality products appeared late; the often extensive production conditions in Lozère are a serious argument in favour of particular quality, but there was a lack of traditional specific production (apart from Roquefort), the local leaders seem

not to have been fully aware of the question until the late '80s, and this can be considered a weakness of the local agricultural development policy.

LEADER Lozère - Leader was another programme the Lozerian institutions put a stress on, and, as usual, it was implemented in the "Lozerian mood".

Again, Lozère applied to LEADER programme with the whole department as LEADER area, and created a Local Action Group "Entreprise Lozère" ("The Lozère Company"), which this time was managed by SELO, (Société d'Economie Mixte pour l'Équipement de la Lozère), a semi-public company mainly owned by the department, but with the participation of all the institutions involved in PDI Lozère. The project was accepted, and through LEADER I and II, a total of 74 small innovative projects were coordinated and funded. The main objective was keeping up activities and wealth in all parts of the department area, especially in villages, and give help to actors willing to create new activities and jobs. It was mainly centered on tourism, handicraft and processing and marketing of quality farm and agro-food products. The quality of communication actions between the different institutions within the department, and the cohesion between all institutions was again the main strength of the operation.

Some particularly original projects can be quoted:

- Creation of a "European buffalo" park in Margeride, involving 10 neighbour farmers for breeding, and guiding visitors. The park now welcomes 45 000 visitors per year, and the equivalent of 12 persons are employed full-time. Buffalo meat and processed products, a large part of which is sold to visitors, represent also a financial flow for the region.
- Development of organic farming in Lozère: the association "Agribio Lozère" set special terms of reference (organic + special quality products), and took care of marketing the products, through a special marketing unit.
- Rehabilitation and launching of a small spa, built and operated at the beginning by SELO, in a little village of Aubrac (La Chaldette), proposing a new concept: "green" balneology in a resort built and decorated by famous architects and designers.

In LEADER II, a particular stress was put on actions using traditional local know-how to make specific quality products: handicraft (see §252), wood productions, and "new versions" of traditional farm products from meat, chestnuts, fruit...all of them taking part in the building of a specific image of Lozère.

The total of investments in programme LEADER I was 5.8 Million Ecus (38 MF), with 2.6 European subsidies (17 MF), in LEADER II, the figures are very similar (36 MF invested with 15.5 MF from Europe).

### 3.1.2 - Agri-environment: a revolution for lozerian agriculture?

Article 19 and the first agri-environmental measures;

Not surprisingly, the “lozerian integrated network ”, which now was in permanent contact with Brussels administration, had a quick reaction after the article 19 of Regulation 797/85 concerning agri-environmental actions was published. In november 1987, before the French Government actually decided to implement these measures, the Chambre d'Agriculture of Lozère already claimed that Lozère because of its low density and risk of land abandonment, had to be classified in its whole as “environmentally sensitive area ”.

In fact, in this proposal, they put forward two ideas:

- Many farms, due to their still extensive production, and low use of inputs, could be considered as naturally farming in environmentally friendly conditions, and could therefore deserve aids to help them go on working as they did, or diversify their productions, instead of intensifying their production through the use of more inputs.
- There were in some areas real risks of land abandonment or underutilization. These measures would then allow a better management of pastures, give incentive to the use of all of them, and prevent their invasion by scrubs.

This proposal was not accepted, since the principle of the measure was to apply only on areas with precisely defined environmental issues, but East Margeride and Mont Lozère were finally accepted as one of the first experimental areas in France, from 1989 to 1994, as this areas was considered as particularly threatened by land abandonment, due to its specialization in milk cow breeding: less and less cows because of milk quotas, and less and less use of natural pastures.

Beyond this action, was also considered the issue of landscape and tourism, and to some extent, risk of fire. The measures proposed mainly concerned the land rehabilitation, use of mobile fences for a better management of pastures, and the adoption of pastoral practices proposed by the extension services. “Accompanying “measures were also proposed, with aids to investments in fences and land rehabilitation. The uptake of the measure was good: in 1995, 146 farms, on a total of about 1000 in the area had contracted, for a total area of 7000 ha, i.e. 12 % of the farmed area of the region. In accordance to a now common local habit, a special departmental institution was set up, COPAGE Lozère (Comité pour la mise en œuvre du Plan Agro-Environnemental ) which was in charge of setting the terms of reference and precise areas concerned, managing advices to farmers and valuation of the effects of the measure. All agricultural institutions, and Conseil Général, took part in COPAGE, which employed extension officers, in close relations to Chambre d'Agriculture.

### *Agro-environmental measures*

When Regulation 2078/92 was published, and the national French proposal for its implementation accepted by Brussels in July 1993, projects for Lozère had already been prepared, taking into account lessons from the Article 19 operation, and the COPAGE remained in activity. Therefore, new programmes were proposed, for East Margeride again, then for West Margeride, and later on for all regions of Lozère. Languedoc-Roussillon benefited a large amount of credits for “local” agro-environmental programmes, and all of them were finally accepted.<sup>17</sup>

Lozère finally appeared as the only French department with its territory entirely covered with such programme. In all regions, a general “pastoral management ” programme was proposed, with a menu of 2 or 3 contracts according to the types of land, with different levels of requirements and of premia per hectare possible. The objective was again to fight the invasion by scrubs, and thus preserve the landscape quality, biodiversity, limit the risks of fire, but also improve the pastoral value of land. In the Cévennes, a special contract concerned the pastoral use of chestnut groves, and in Causses, sylvopastoralism under scarce natural pine cover. Some other specific contracts also were set for the protection of rare habitats (steppic pastures with birds, like bustard, in the Causses, peat-bogs and other wetlands in Aubrac)<sup>18</sup>.

The uptake of the measures was again very high. In 1999, 800 farmers were part of the programme, for a total area covered of 25 000 ha, 10 % of the total area used by farmers. Generally, the cost of implementing the measure was much lower than the amount of the premium, and the incentive effect of the premium was high. Most of these farms improved their pastoral production and economic results after this action; they generally went on working the same way after the operation was over, and they got no more premia.

The importance of these programme was widely used in public communication (for instance in a brochure by the Chambre d'Agriculture) as a sign of the natural character of Lozère's agriculture (and of its products), its exemplary respect to environment, and its role in the preservation of typical landscapes. It must be recognized that many farmers were mainly convinced by the level of premia, and the perspective of a better valuation of their pastures, and the change in their practices and attitudes towards environmental issues was difficult to assess. The current tough opposition of their representatives to the implementation of Natura 2000 somehow contradicts this official image.

The French Plans de Development durable. Lozère also participated since 1992 in another experimental programme in favour of a reorientation of agricultural development: the Plans de Development Durable (Sustainable Development Plans). The programmes concerned in France a total of 1200 farms, in 37 small regions. In Lozère it was 25 farms, chosen on a voluntary basis in the four

natural regions of the department. The principle was to do on each farm a comprehensive study of the situation of the farm, and its relations with its natural and economic environment, and then propose a plan, or scenarii for a better adaptation of the farm system, ensuring economic, social and environmental sustainability. The Plans de Development Durable had in fact important effects in France ; they were used as a model for the Contrats Territoriaux d'Exploitation, the French framework for the application at farm level of most of the measures of the Rural Development Regulation of 1999.

The public funding of the programme concerned essentially studies, and in Lozère an extension service officer (from Chambre d'Agriculture) was employed full time during 2 years for the programme. It was the occasion of an in-depth work of reflex on the local farming systems, and in the proposed actions a link was done between improving the quality of products and diversifying activities and a better management of all kinds of land. Unfortunately, the programme did not really open on concrete actions, and the reflex did not spread much out of the persons directly concerned.

### **3.2 An integrated inter-institutional network.**

In France, in agriculture as well as in the other sectors, the number of institutions working with and around the basic economic actors is very high, their roles frequently overlap, and from one place (i.e. department) to another these roles can differ. This is true also in Lozère, and we have seen that specific ad-hoc institutions have been set here, making the system even more complicated. This could be, or could seem here a source of inefficiencies, because of competition between institutions for the control of information or programmes, the management cost of the institutions themselves, or the number of meetings necessary for their coordination, especially in a low density area like Lozère, where the leaders and executive in these institutions are necessarily few. In fact, in Lozère, the evolution described here has as a main effect induced habits of working in common and sharing information, which were efficient for subsidy picking, indeed, but also for the definition of development axes. After the first experimental programmes, and their success, the networks created at this occasion remained active, and people of different institutions are used to communicating with each other about their own initiatives, or each time a new field for action, or a new source of funds appears.<sup>19</sup> Of course, the successive European programmes of rural development, and the " State-Region Planning Contract " defining priorities for public investments over a period of 6 years (in coordination with the European programmes, and for the same time period), are major occasions to multiply such common actions, and general reports and action programmes were then published in 1988 and in 1999, with the participation of all institutions, as guides for the action for the next contract period.

In the years 70 or 80, this was the effect of the emergence of a new generation of professional and political leaders in reaction to the traditional "notables". Later, generations of young executives was hired, and were incited to stay in Lozère by the success of some actions, but also by the new attractiveness of the area.<sup>20</sup>

It is so possible to quote examples of coordinated actions done by several institutions normally working in different sectors, but putting together their means and their innovative ideas. Some of them are not really original, since there are such examples in other departments, like the recent actions of promotion of the wood sector which were set by Conseil Général, in association with agriculture, trade (Chamber of Trade and Industry - CCI), and Chambre des Métiers. The same institutions, with a help by the local antenna of DATAR<sup>21</sup>, created a local institution (MIDEL) with permanent staff in charge of prospecting and giving companies support to their investment projects in Lozère.

In our analysis, we do not consider him an active member of the "lozerian network", but rather as a "godfather" (with no depreciative meaning here), under the authority and control of whom the actions were possible, because he backed them in Paris or Brussels, chaired meetings or groups (for instance, he was the President of the Association for the PDI Lozère). He rarely proposes himself new orientations, but has a great ability to leave active people work and propose actions in their fields of competence, with the condition that they do not contest too much his rather right-wing and conservative political orientation and philosophy (which is also that of a majority of the local population, apart from Cévennes), even if it was not exactly their own. For this reason, some of them were left aside (it is acknowledged that the region of Cévennes benefited less subsidies than the others, but there was a compensation because of National Park), or preferred to leave the department, but in the other hand, the local political competition was less active in the shadow of this man than in other places, it made cooperation easier, and it can also be considered as an explanation for these decades of absence of apparent conflicts.

Much more original and specific was the action in the '90s about the definition of local certified labels for farm products: for example, a common action of Chambre d'Agriculture and Chambre des Métiers (with representatives of local butchers) set terms of reference for certified quality beef meat (Fleur d'Aubrac) and its local marketing. More generally, a local certified quality label, "De Lozère" was defined, and is now active, for quality food products, essentially beef and lamb meat from pastoral systems, through a process initiated by Conseil Général, in association with agriculture, trade (Chamber of Trade and Industry - CCI), and Chambre des Métiers. The enlargement of the range of products concerned is still being discussed, considering the mean results of the action, and questions asked about the target markets.

In the same way, actions for the promotion of touristic activities often took into account both “classical” infrastructures and agro-tourism, but also the promotion of others activities (food and craft quality products), and thus “touristic products “with a lozerian charcter and specificity could be proposed.

#### **4. WILL THE “LOZERIAN MODEL ” SURVIVE IN THE NEW CENTURY?**

As stated before, the systematic action at department level in Lozère was in many cases (SAFER, LEADER, Agro-environment, PDD...) an exception in the French and European system, which gave a priority to Regions or to actions on smaller homogeneous regions. We have presented justifications of this exception here, and this choice generally seems to have been efficient, but it was not simple to keep this orientation in all circumstances. In the case of Agri-environment and LEADER, for instance, the lozerian leaders had to do intense lobbying in Paris and Brussels to have their strategy accepted; some facts or arguments show that this orientation is now seriously questioned.

##### **4.1 Quality products**

As indicated before, a turning point was the decision, around 1990, to privilege quality products, and to develop incentives to farmers, in coordination with agro-environment and touristic promotion. While in tourism and handicraft this choice seemed normal to actors used to making products individually marketed, with competition on quality, in agriculture, the previous policy was not in this direction; the necessary collective action on production and marketing was implemented with a participation of several institutions, at the department level was chosen, with the already quoted trade mark " De Lozère "<sup>22</sup>. The issue was that there was no special tradition for specific quality products, or special image. Until then, most efforts were done in the improvement of farm productivity, and even the question of marketing local products and keeping the value added locally never was a priority. For instance, in the '60s a cooperative was created by a group of young farmers for the processing of cow milk, making fresh products like yoghurts, and trying to develop a marketing strategy on “mountain products ". It failed, with very little support from the agricultural organizations (and especially Crédit Agricole), and now it is considered that 90% of the cow milk in Lozère is processed outside the department. For meat, since the '70s, the main production was young animals exported as stores to Italy to be fattened in feed-lots.

Therefore, selling local quality products was quite a new idea, and the definition of production requirements and marketing strategies had to be elaborated ex-nihilo. Farmers, used to selling products without particular problems, and who have been convinced in the years before that their products are good products by nature, because they are made in mountains, with preserved environment and low productivity, are not easily ready to

understand that they must apply special practices for their product to be recognized as a quality product.

Institutions in charge of the marketing had to build a "lozerian " image for these products ; local marketing through local shops and restaurants worked, but new markets outside Lozère were harder to open. In the same time, a competition could exist between lozerian producers, from different small regions or with slightly different products on the same market.

The last problem rising from this absence of special tradition for quality products were the difficulty (also due to the small quantities of product available) to obtain european recognition as officially protected quality products. Presently, only Aubrac heifers (actually half-bred Aubrac-Charolais) produced under trade mark "Fleur d'Aubrac "(common with Aveyron) got a label as Protected Geographical Indication. Globally the results of this policy are clearly disappointing.<sup>23</sup>

#### **4.2 Agenda 2000**

The implementation of the Agenda 2000 reform in Lozère is another issue. The Regional "Objective 2 " Operational Programme was this time set at a strictly regional level , with the agreement of Brussels, and the Lozère lobby was not strong enough to impose once again its own actions (and in particular the renewal of aids to the restructuration of smaller farms they had asked for again). In the same way a LEADER+ programme for the whole of Lozère was this time impossible, homogeneous small regions became a strict rule, and finally Lozère had to split in two Local Action Groups (GAL): Gévaudan (from the the name of the ancient province including most part of Lozère), still managed at Mende by the SELO, with a priority to the valuation of local products and resources, and GAL Cévennes, including the whole of the Cévennes region, which is based in Nîmes. The programme of GAL Cévennes, and its priority to welcoming new populations, takes the lozerian point of view into account, indeed, but is far from what Lozère alone would have defined.

Another consequence of Agenda 2000 is the French CTE (Contrats Territoriaux d'Exploitation). The experience of the management of agri-environmental contracts by Chambre d'Agriculture was not useful for the definition of these new contracts in Lozère<sup>24</sup>; after hesitations and several different proposals, the final decision was to propose " collective CTE " i.e. the locally proposed measures included in the contracts signed in a given area, for each specific production, managed by agro food units or groups of farmers making the same product. The consequence is a stress put on quality issues, with the weaknesses already quoted, and less attention to specific environmental or local development questions. In the same time, the institutional coordination was not as good as it used to be before, the information and incentives to farmers were not active as they were for PDI Lozère or Agro-environment, and it is

clear that CTE are a rather complicated procedure, with much coordination costs. Therefore the results are rather disappointing, since Lozère is one of the French departments with the least contracts signed (presently 100).

### 4.3 Regional development: the "Pays ".

The support for local development actions in the new French Orientation Law for "Aménagement du territoire" of 1999 will privilege homogeneous small regions, called "Pays ". Most French subsidies to local development will be reserved to projects presented by pays. The lozerian leaders again naturally proposed Lozère as a Pays, but it was refused, and the question is now postponed to further discussions.

The only proposed pays is Aubrac, both in Lozère and Aveyron, but with its activity poles are mainly in Aveyron.

Since 1960, Lozère has escaped the regressive evolution that was then foreseen, and experienced a remarkable economic, social and even demographic evolution, while keeping its preserved environment. Of course, in France, with its high level of global growth and of compensation aids for less developed regions, no rural region really knew the regressive evolution that could be imagined then, but in the particular case of Lozère, we have showed the great influence over these 40 years of a " model " of integrated development set at department level at this time, with a permanent coordination between different institution which often compete elsewhere, and ability to anticipate the economic and political evolutions and to catch all aids proposed at national an european level.

At the turn of a new century, things are so clear anymore, and the lozerian leaders seem now not to have foreseen all the reasons which now question this "development model" and this organization.

Most of these actions a posteriori appear to have had a defensive logic, and they were set in a framework of general quantitative growth; for instance, actions in agriculture (even the exceptional implementation of agro-environmental measure) were adapted to logic of the pre-Agenda 2000 C.A.P. When new kinds of actions were put forward, like the promotion of quality products, it was lte, and these actions partially missed their goals.

A weakness of these development actions was also the lack of an identity for the department, recognized by the inhabitants and able to attract new activities. Low density of activities and unspoiled environment are not sufficient, in spite of active communication campaigns. The small regions of Lozère are in the contrary very different, with marked identity, but this has not really put forward.

The young leaders of 1960 are now retired; the new politicians seem to go back to a more traditional view on politics.

A new impulse for development action in Lozère could therefore come from local rather than department level, but the prevalence of the model is such that this cannot be foreseen in the short run. The situation of the Lozerian economy is not critical now, for instance, the income of farmers allows them to resist crises; and the rate of unemployment remains particularly low (but with a level of qualification of jobs lower than the region's average, as stated in the latest population census of 1999), but some effects of the previous efforts could nevertheless be affected.

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<http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be> (LEADER)

<http://www.lozere.chambagri.fr> (Chambre d'Agriculture)-

<http://www.lozerefrance.com> (" The portal site of Lozère ", a partnership of Conseil Général and Consular Chambers of Lozère)

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Département, NUTS 3 in the European classification of administrative levels, ruled by a Conseil Général elected on a territorial basis, is since the French Decentralization Law of 1983 mainly in charge of education, social action, roads and infrastructures. It has a normal competence in agriculture concerning land restructuring, but can also decide to do more.

<sup>2</sup>And a strong tradition of left-wing political preference, opposite to the rest of Lozère.

<sup>3</sup>In many cases, the availability of collective lands can make the structural improvement of farmland easier. It is particularly true where there are " sectional " properties, i.e. belonging to all the inhabitants of a village, who have altogether the right to use it ; after a decision of the inhabitants, or in certain cases, of the communal council, this land can be given on long-term lease to local farmers (see below the action of SAFER).

<sup>4</sup>Milk farms now account for only one third of the number in 1979 ; in Lozère, the main effect of milk quotas was the elimination of smaller non-professional or non-specialized milk farms.

<sup>5</sup>Most of the farmers' income coming from CAP subsidies, indeed, but it is the case for all regions specialized in herbivorous breeding in Europe.

<sup>6</sup>A particular case on Causse Méjan was a shock for many local farmers ; in the late '50s, a paper company bought three big farms, the farmhouses were destroyed, and 3000 ha of pasture were planted in pine at the same time, creating a new (dark and geometric) type of landscape in the most typical " steppic " part of the department.

<sup>7</sup>Société d'Aménagement Foncier et d'Etablissement Rural, a private company publicly funded, managed by farmers' representatives, which buy and sells farms and land, with special privileges when it acts in favour of the restructuration of farms. SAFER are generally set at regional level.

<sup>8</sup>Aménagement rural is a French term difficult to translate in foreign languages ; it generally means setting equipments and collective development actions adapted to the local situation, but can also be limited to equipments, depending of the context...

<sup>9</sup>The local development actions of Causse Méjan in agriculture and tourism, and the role of this association was the subject of several research actions in the '70s and the '80s; there are still research actions now on the use of different types of vegetation by sheep flocks, and the effects on the vegetation and landscape.

<sup>10</sup>More anecdotic: in these low population areas, cases are often quoted of communes which offer free dwelling to families with several children and modest income, in order to keep the local school open; there are cases in Lozère. In the late '70, several (large) families of refugees from Laos mountain tribes also came to Lozère, in small villages, but despite they were proposed jobs as woodcutters, they quickly rushed to Paris to join members of their community working in oriental restaurants!

<sup>11</sup>In France, " artisanat " (handicraft) is defined by official texts, as all individual of small-scale (under 10 persons) activities of transformation of products and services implying technical skills, and is represented and organized in each department by a Chambre des Métiers, while all trade and industrial activities are represented by local Chambres de Commerce et d'Industrie (only one for all Lozère). These " consular " Chambers, as well as Chambres d'Agriculture, managed by officially elected representatives, benefitting public funds and " quasi-taxes " paid by all professionals, represent the professions officially, organize many collective service (in France, most airports are managed by Chambres de Commerce !), and in particular training, communication, economic, law and fiscal advices to professionals.

<sup>12</sup>Particularly two successive managers, one of which was one of the main political leaders of the department, and finally was elected President of the department's Conseil Général after he retired.

<sup>13</sup>" Etablissement Public ", i.e. an administration with its own budget and Board of Administrators.

<sup>14</sup>For instance, the Chambre d'Agriculture voted in 1959 a motion in favour of the setting of a National Park in Cévennes.

<sup>15</sup>Along with Belgian Ardennes and the Western Isles of Scotland.

<sup>16</sup>FEOGA/EAGGF “Guidance”, European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund.

<sup>17</sup>The reason why these credits were so important were of course objective calculations : a large number of farms in a region where environmental issues were considered important, but also the quick reaction of local professional, in Lozère as well as in other departments of the region.

<sup>18</sup>As seen before, the Parc National des cévennes also proposes and funds contracts of the same kind, in its central area, with specific terms of reference set by its scientific advisers.

<sup>19</sup>The quality of communications between these development actors is also made easier by the urban structure of the department’s capital, Mende, with its very small historical center where all important institutions are concentrated, and where anybody can physically meet anybody in a few minutes.

<sup>20</sup>In fact, this description must, to be completed, take into account the presence, in the department, of an important politician, member of the French Parliament for 30 years, Minister in the '70, and who had several national responsibilities until he was elected President of the Region Languedoc-Roussillon in 1992 (and was also the first President of the European Union's Comitee of the Regions from 1994 to 1998).

<sup>21</sup>Délégation à l'Aménagement du Territoire et à l'Action Régionale. Founded in the '60s, it is the permanent inter ministerial agency in charge of regional policy ; its role recently increased, after years with fewer activity.

<sup>22</sup>Another local trademark was also set for organic farm products: “Agribio Lozère”

<sup>23</sup>In the same time, Aubrac cheese, and meat were real success stories....in Aveyron.

<sup>24</sup>And the level of requirements from farmer in CTE is generally higher than in the “agri-environment for everybody “lozerian policy.

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**Notes to readers**

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The author may be reached at:

G rard Miclet  
INRA  
Ecologie et Sociologie Rurales 2  
place Viata  
F-34060 Montpellier  
France