RURAL GENTRIFICATION AND AGEING: A CASE STUDY FROM FRENCH COUNTRYSIDES

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Like in most developed countries, French rural areas have been repopulating since the 1980s. The analyses of the last 2006 population census even reveal a larger diffusion and positive trends far away of cities, in remote countryside districts (Laganier *and al.*, 2009). These spaces used to symbolise archaism and social confinement, whereas today they represent new ways of life. Many heterogeneous populations settle there for family, environmental or economic reasons. Urban-rural migrations clearly constitute the main processes of socio-demographic changes in French countrysides, and in many international contexts (Jentsch *and al.*, 2009).

Rural gentrification can be defined as forms of migrations towards rural areas. Undertaken by middle and upper classes populations from cities, they take part in deep demographic, socio-economic and housing transformations. These processes have first been analysed in British cases (Philipps, 1993 ; Philipps, 2005 ; Smith *and al*, 2007 ; Stockdale, 2010). Can we identify same situations in French countrysides? According to life course analyses (Détang-Dessandre C. *and al*, 2003), French rural areas are also characterized by high proportions of retired people. Indeed, they are structurally more aged and they increasingly welcome elderly people by retirement migrations. Which role do they have in the repopulation of rural areas ? Which spaces are particularly concerned ?

We propose statistical and cartographic treatments through an exploratory data analysis and we will use several data resources (demographic, income, housing). We will highlight signs of rural gentrification forms in French countrysides and their interactions with ageing process. One of our main aims is to realise spatial analyses of urban-rural relations and intra-rural situations. Our researches are also part of works on rural residential economy in context of post-productive countryside (Davezies, 2009). Indubitably, retired people are one of the key actors of economic development in French countrysides (Volley *and al.*, 2005).

From urban gentrification to rural gentrification:

Usually, gentrification means transformation of cities central districts - historically rather poor districts - by newcomers of middle and upper classes (Fijalkow *and al.*, 2006). Since this neologism was launched (Glass, 1963), it has become one of the most important research object in urban studies. From the 1980s, it has especially triggered strong theoretical and methodological debates (*cf.* N. Smith, D. Ley, C. Hamnett, A. Warde, D. Rose, L. Bondi). Since the 2000s, researches on gentrification have experienced new ways and problematic focus with the will to extend its meaning (Lees, 2000 ; Slater *and al*., 2003 ; Butler *and al.*, 2007). New developments match deep evolutions of gentrification processes, with specific types "emerging". They are linked to some economic activities (*tourism gentrification*, *commercial gentrification*), to some populations (*studentification*, *black gentrification*) or to some intensity degrees (*super-gentrification, new-build gentrification*) (Lees *and al.*, 2007).

The increase of rural studies on gentrification wholly corresponds to this conceptual trend. Even if they emerged in the 1980s (Parsons, 1980 ; Little, 1987), they have mainly been developed from the 1990s and 2000s in Great Britain (*cf.* M. Philipps, D. Smith, P. Cloke). However, some recent studies were also conducted in the United-States (Friedberg, 1996 ; Darling, 2005), in France (Raymond, 2005 ; Guimond *and al.*, 2008 ; Richard, 2010) and in other European countries (Hjort, 2009 ; Solana-Solana, 2010).

According to M. Philipps, analyses and reflections produced in urban contexts have to be used in rural contexts to allow a better understanding of countrysides transformations (Philipps, 1993). Whatever geographic situations, gentrification process report the same changes in social population structures, the same economic investments in housing structures and the same actors strategies. Nevertheless, rural situations have their own specificities. For example, the nature/environmental factor is particularly relevant. That is why D. Smith has created the neologism of *greentrification* (Smith, 2001).

Therefore, we use gentrification concept as a framework to analyse contemporary transformations of French countrysides. We assume that it could be news forms of rural areas revival, after usual suburban processes. Moreover, it would be a mistake to unify very different situations and trends that we could call rural gentrification. So, following British researches, our aim is to identify different forms of gentrification by their involved populations (age, socio-professional groups) and spaces. Finally, like most of rural researches on gentrification, our goal is to develop an "integrative approach" (Hamnett, 1991) which uses at the same time housing, demographic and economic indicators.

How can we define French countrysides?

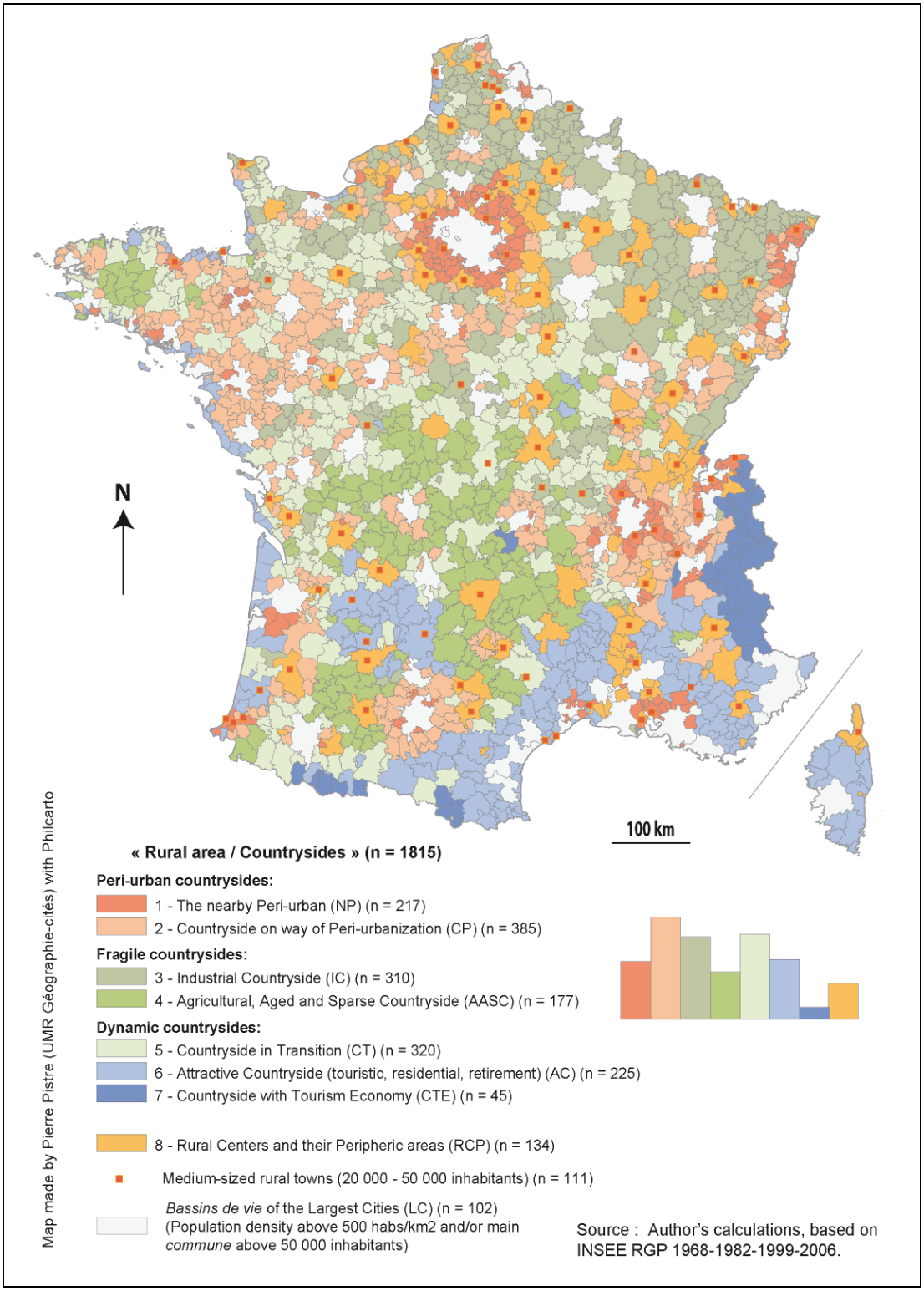
In order to realise precise spatial analyses on metropolitan France, we will use two geographic zonings: on the one hand, the *commune* which is the smallest administrative French area (more than 36 000 spatial units), and on the other hand, the *bassin de vie*[1] which is a statistical zoning (more than 1900 spatial units).

We will also use a personal typology, made from demographic, social, economic and housing indicators (Document 1). First, it allows to better understand the heterogeneity of French territory and to get a "multi-spatial definition" of French countrysides. Space types identified will be used to analyse and to compare the urban and intra-rural trends. Then, document 1 already highlights interesting regions profiles which could be concerned by gentrification processes.

Type n°7 (entitled Attractive Countryside) includes *bassins de vie* from south and west of France which are characterized by positive demographic trends - particularly due to retirement migrations - and typical economic activities of post-productive countryside (tourism, residential). At this stage, type n°7 appears as the most conducive space type. Nevertheless, forms of rural gentrification could certainly be identified in other ones, such as types n°3-5-6.

[1] It was developed in 2003 to analyse French rural areas, as part of a research program involving INRA and INSEE. It mainly corresponds to the geographical distribution and accessibility of services (*cf.* Rapport INSEE/INRA (2003). *Structuration de l'espace rural* : une approche par les bassins de vie, Paris, 114 p ; Julien P. (2007). « La France en 1916 Bassins de vie », *Économie et Statistiques,* n°402, p 25-39).

Document 1 - Typology of French *bassins de vie*[2] (2006)



[2] This typology is made from a hierarchical clustering (HC) method, using 40 statistical indicators. The main ones are: demographic balance, natural increase, net migration, in 1968-1982-1999-2006 ; density ; an ageing index ; rates of the main socio-professional groups in 2006 (8 types) ; rates of assets by economic sectors (agriculture, industry, service) ; unemployment rate ; rates of main housings, secondary housings, vacant housings ; rate of foreign residents. This classification is partly based on the previous work of J-C Bontron (*cf.* SEGESA) who made a *canton* typology of French territory (*cf.* DATAR. (2003). *Quelle France rurale pour 2020 ? Contribution à une nouvelle politique de développement rural durable*, La Découverte, Paris, 70 p.).

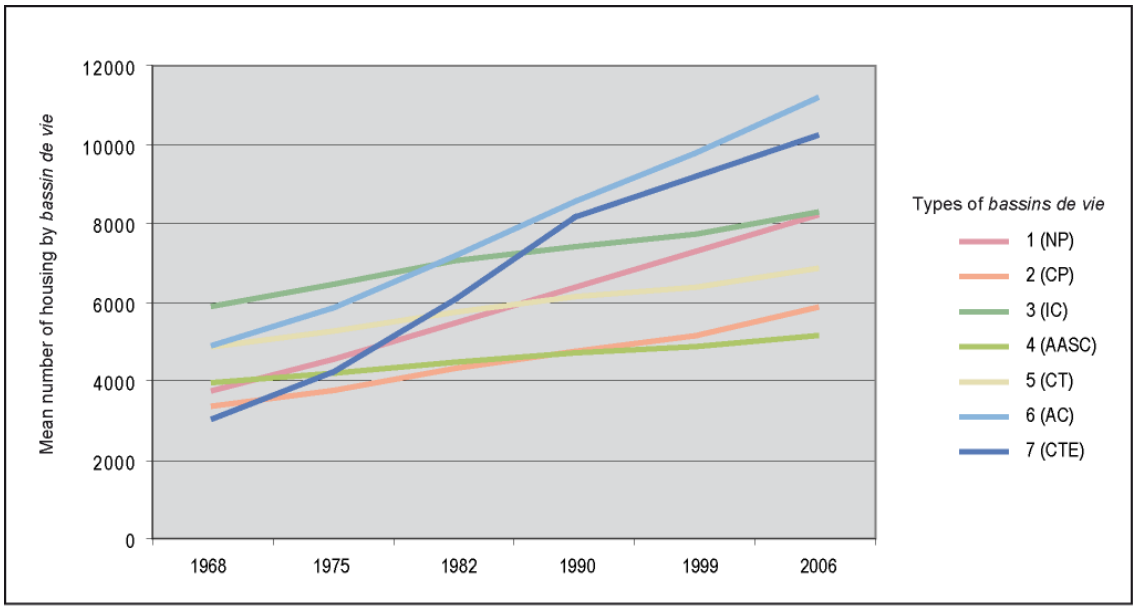
Evolutions of housing structures: some signs of rural gentrification?

Through the analysis of housing structures, we propose to look into the countryside transformations and to identify global processes, which could lead to local gentrification forms. So first, we will focus on a "productive approach" of gentrification (initiated by Smith, 1979), essentially using housing and economic indicators.

Framework elements: amount of dwellings and tenure status of housings

First, document 2 shows the evolution of housing volume since 1968, among rural types of spaces previously identified. It tells us about the dynamism of different French countrysides, even if each *bassin de vie* has very different sizes. So, we mainly have to focus on trends of each type of countrysides. Between 1968 and 2006, two groups are more increasing than the other ones: on the one hand, the peri-urban types (mainly NP) ; on the other hand, types AC and CTE which are characterized by residential and touristic economy.

Document 2 –Evolutions of housing volume by types of French countrysides (1968-2006)



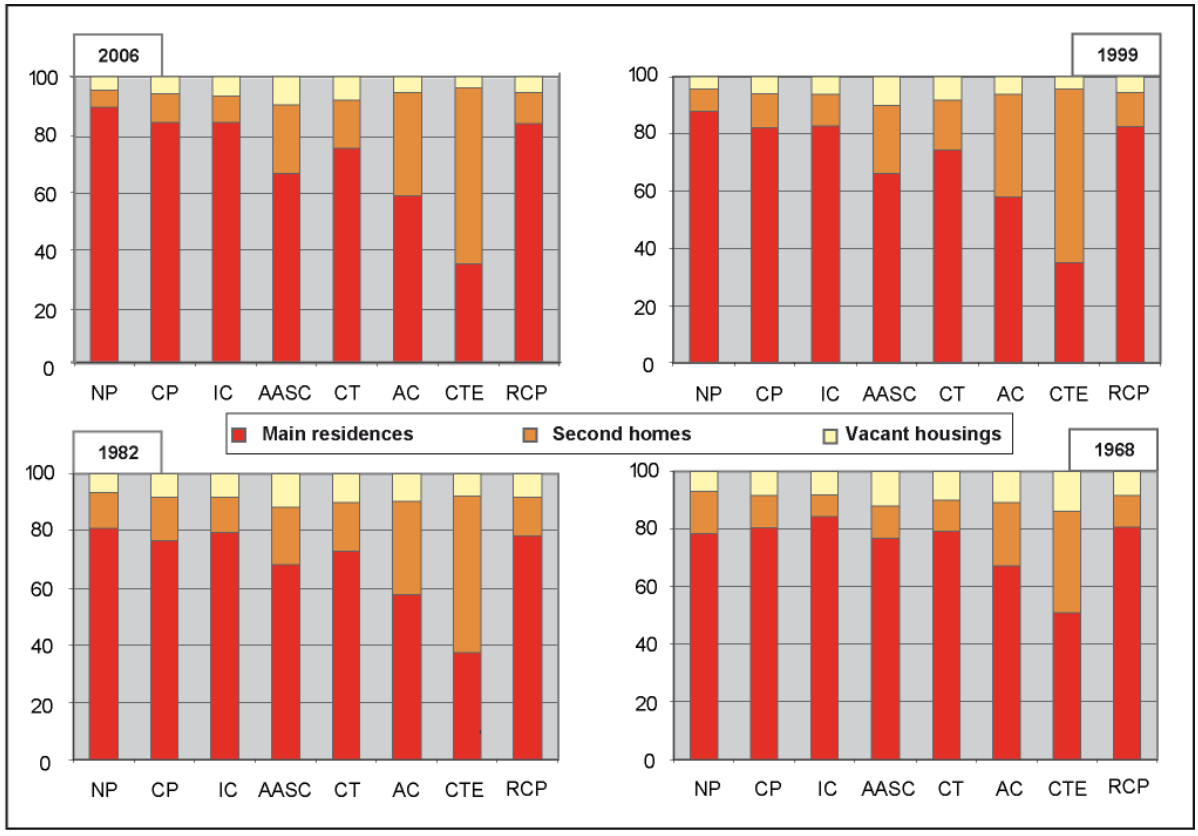
Source: Author's calculations, based on INSEE RGP 1968-2006

AC and CTE types are also those which have the highest proportions of tenants, with respectively 27% and 31%. Other types have about 20% of tenants for 80% of owners and so France globally appears as an important country of owners. A comparative analysis of tenure status also shows a relative temporal stability of the rates among French countrysides. These first indicators reveal spaces particularly dynamic and confirm the previous observations. We can also assume that some high space proportions of tenants could introduce some kinds of "renting and occasional gentrification" processes (*cf.* secondary housing indicator).

Categories and vacancy of housings

Secondly, the following documents allow us to analyse housing structures according to three main categories registered in the French census: main residences, second homes and vacant housings. We will insist on vacancy index to deepen our analyses of potential rural gentrified places. However, document 3 enables us to first study proportions of each housing categories in types of *bassins de vie,* between 1968 and 2006.

Document 3 – Rates of housing categories in French types of spaces (1968-2006)



Source: Author's calculations, based on INSEE RGP 1968, 1982, 1999, 2006.

First of all, we note the importance of second homes in many countrysides types since 1982, mainly into residential and touristic ones (AC and CTE). This trend could confirm our assumption of "occasional gentrification" forms in specific rural places. Doc 3 also shows rates of some second homes have been replaced by main residences in peri-urban types (NP and CP). Finally, it reports a national decrease trend of vacant housing rates, mainly in historic and residential/touristic countrysides (AASC, CTE, AC and CT).

To deepen this last point, documents 4 and 5 present a study of dwellings vacancy by period of housing construction. First, the oldest ones – built before 1949 - are the most vacant (French local mean = 9,2 %), but we observe a general decrease among all types of *bassins de vie* during the 1990s. The new 2006 census rather shows a stabilisation and/or an increase in most of spaces types. However, AC type is still in a strong downward. We can assume the renovations of old houses are the main explanatory factor. Then, document 5 indicates strong declining trends in *bassins de vie* of centre and west of France which rather belong to AASC, CT or AC space types.

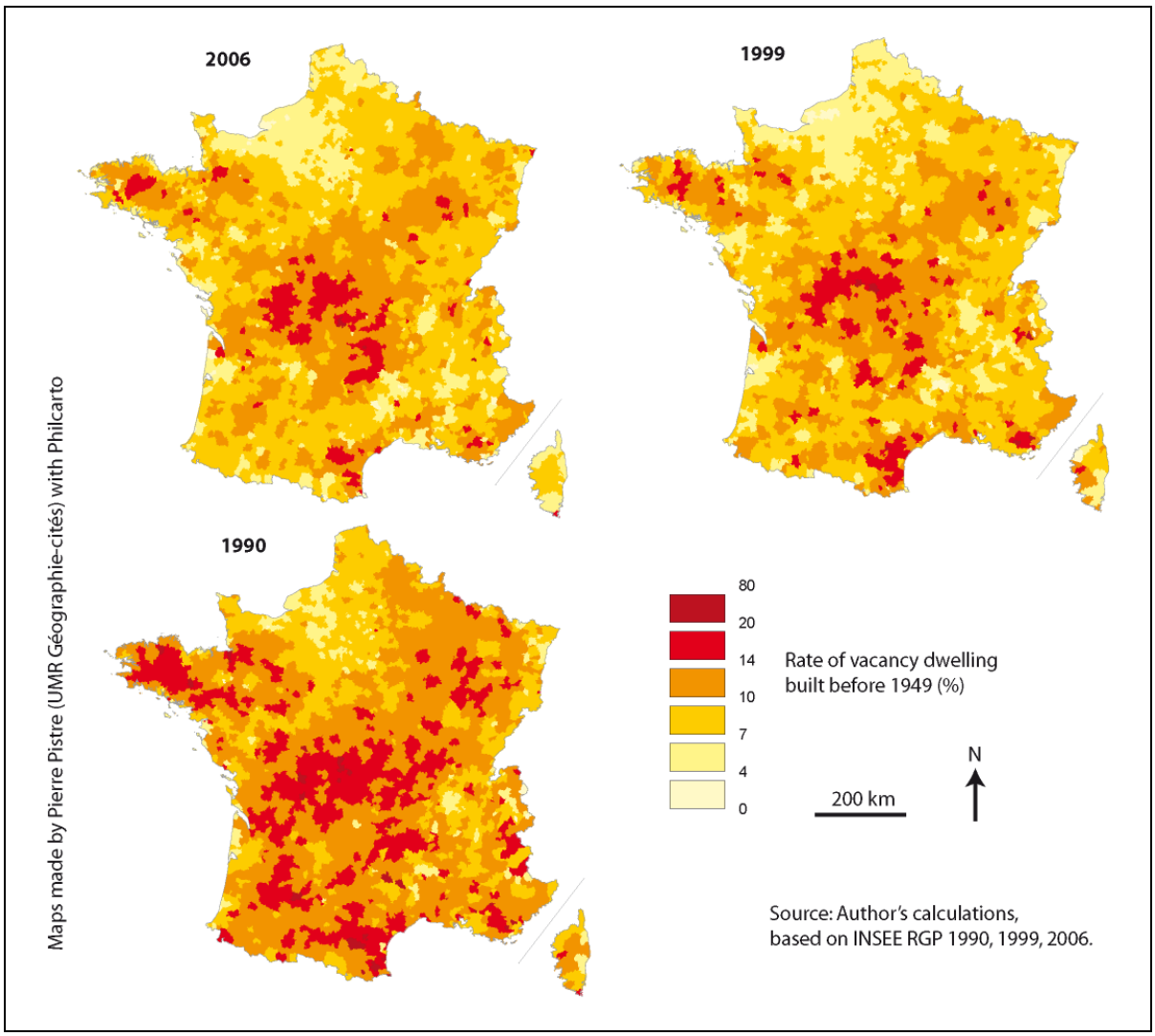
Finally, the same stabilisation and/or increase trends can be observed with more recent dwellings (built between 1949 and 1989), in most of spaces. However, these vacancy data are nevertheless lower than the previous ones. Moreover, we can still notice specific downward trends of touristic types (AC and CTE) which report its real demographic and housing dynamism.

Document 4 - Evolution of dwellings vacancy according to their building periods, in French types of *bassins de vie* (1990-2006)

	Types of French *bassins de vie*									
	Census	**NP**	**CP**	**AIC**	**AASC**	**CT**	**AC**	**CTE**	**RCP**	**LC**
Rate of vacancy dwelling built before 1949 (%)	**1990**	8,9	11,2	10,8	14,6	12,8	11,4	9,9	10,3	9,5
	1999	7,4	8,7	8,6	12,6	10,4	9,3	8,3	8,5	8,2
	2006	7,8	9,1	8,9	12,2	10,6	8,4	8,4	8,6	8,0
Rate of vacancy dwelling built between 1949 and 1974 (%)	**1990**	3,2	3,9	4,2	5,4	4,6	4,4	3,6	3,9	3,7
	1999	3,4	3,8	4,0	5,5	4,9	4,5	4,1	4,0	3,8
	2006	4,0	4,6	4,6	5,9	5,4	4,3	3,7	4,4	4,2
Rate of vacancy dwelling built between 1975 and 1989 (%)	**1990**	2,9	3,2	3,5	4,4	3,8	4,3	4,2	3,4	3,5
	1999	2,0	2,2	2,3	4,0	3,0	3,1	2,5	2,4	2,5
	2006	2,3	2,6	2,5	3,4	3,0	2,8	2,1	2,6	2,6

Source: Author's calculations, based on INSEE RGP 1990, 1999, 2006.

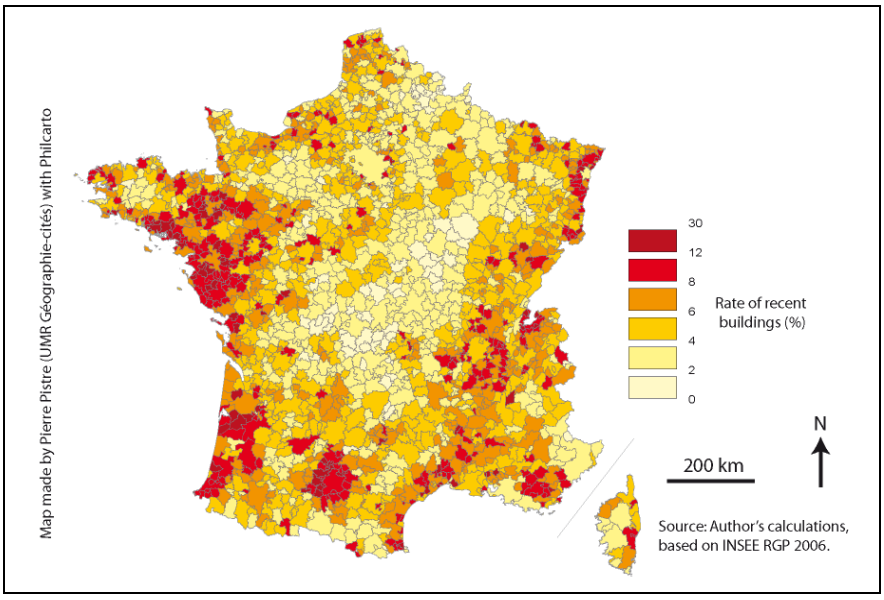
Document 5 – Dwellings vacancy built before 1949 in *bassins de vie* (1990-2006)



New buildings and purchase mean price of housings

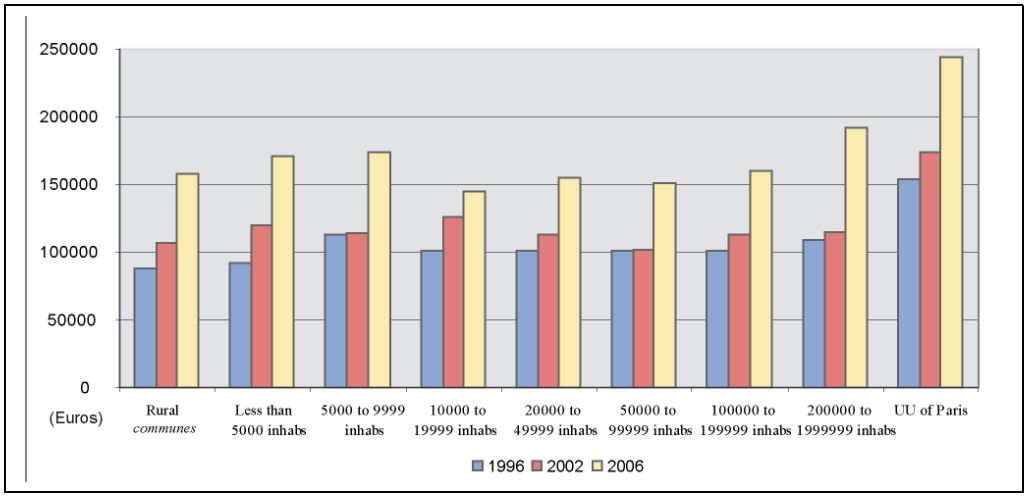
Two housing indicators can still be used to identify signs of rural gentrification. In the continuation of urban researches on new-build gentrification (Lees *and al*., 2007 ; He, 2009 ; Rérat *and al.*, 2009), we can imagine same kinds of processes in rural places. So, we can analyse the geographical distribution of recent housing constructions (Doc 6). Some regions such as western around Nantes and Rennes, south-west close to Toulouse and Bordeaux, and south-east around Marseille and Lyon are mainly concerned. Thus, the highest proportions of recent buildings are first of all located in peri-urban spaces. *De facto*, we could think about some connexions between peri-urbanization process and some forms of rural gentrification.

Document 6 – New housings built in French *bassins de vie* (1999-2004)



Secondly, we use an indicator of average purchase price of housings analysed from 1996 to 2006. This classic index to study geo-economic transformations reveals the highest increases and levels prices are located in the most populated urban units, mainly in Paris. Besides, rural *communes* and towns less than 10 000 inhabitants also have important increases from the 2000s which demonstrate their attractiveness.

Document 7 – Purchase mean price by recent owners (INSEE typology of urban unit [UU]) (1996-2006)



Source: Author's calculations, based on INSEE Housing survey 1996, 2002, 2006.

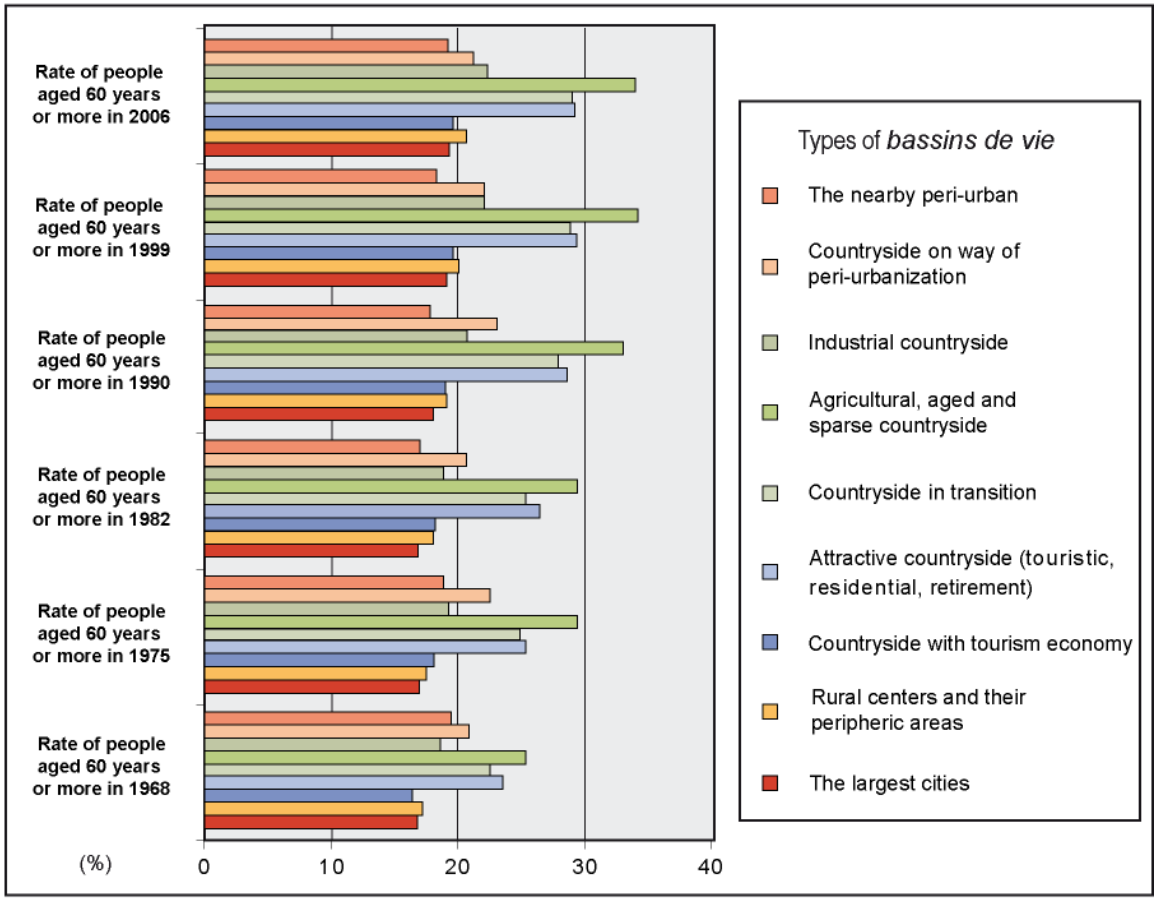
Retired people and rural transformations: actors of gentrification processes?

Next to a housing structures analysis which reveals several signs of gentrification in some French countrysides (decrease of vacant dwellings, increase of purchase prices, significant rates of second homes), we propose to deepen our research by study spatial ageing processes. So, we will mainly focus on a "consumption approach" of gentrification (initiated by Ley, 1986), essentially using demographic and socio-economic indicators. We will show the retired people are particularly significant in French countrysides and we assume some of them are main actors of local gentrification processes.

Unequal geographic distribution of retired people

Metropolitan France had about 12,7 millions of retired people in 2006 which represented 20,6% of its whole population (They were 10,6 millions in 1999 equivalent to 18,2%). France is really getting older and the rate of elderly is increasingly high. Document 8 allows noting this trend in most of countryside types. Moreover, we observe the rural spaces are structurally and historically more aged than the urban ones which anyway include the largest volume of retired people. This document also reports an amplitude increase - between the highest and lowest values - from 1968 to 2006 which means growing spatial inequalities about their "local marks". Centre and south-west countrysides have the highest rates of retired people, well above the national mean (until to 35-40%). Finally, if we mainly focus on the last 2006 census, we however observe a moderate decrease in several rural types. Some changes in the statistical accounting could be a first explanation, but we also assume that the larger and larger demographic recovery of French countrysides lead to a decrease of retired people rates.

Document 8 – "Spatial marks" of people aged 60 years or more by types of spaces (1968-2006)



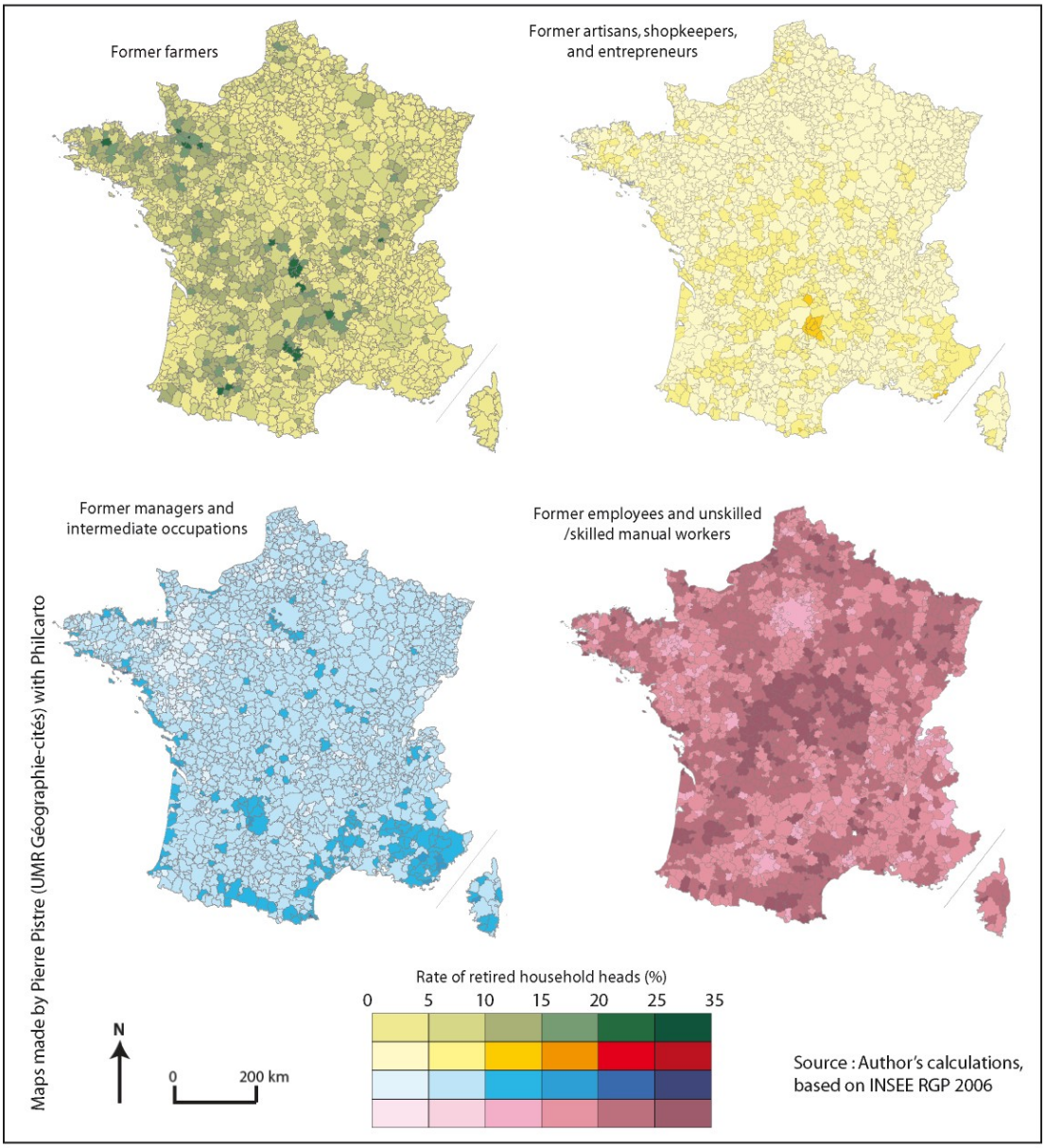
Source: Author's calculations, based on INSEE RGP 1968, 1975, 1982, 1990, 1999 and 2006.

Geographies of retired people according to socioeconomics indicators

With the analysis of two socio-economic indicators - the former socio-professional groups and the local means of retirement incomes -, our aim is first to insist on the heterogeneity of retired people. Then, they allow us to identify interesting spatial trends which undoubtedly take part in forms of rural gentrification.

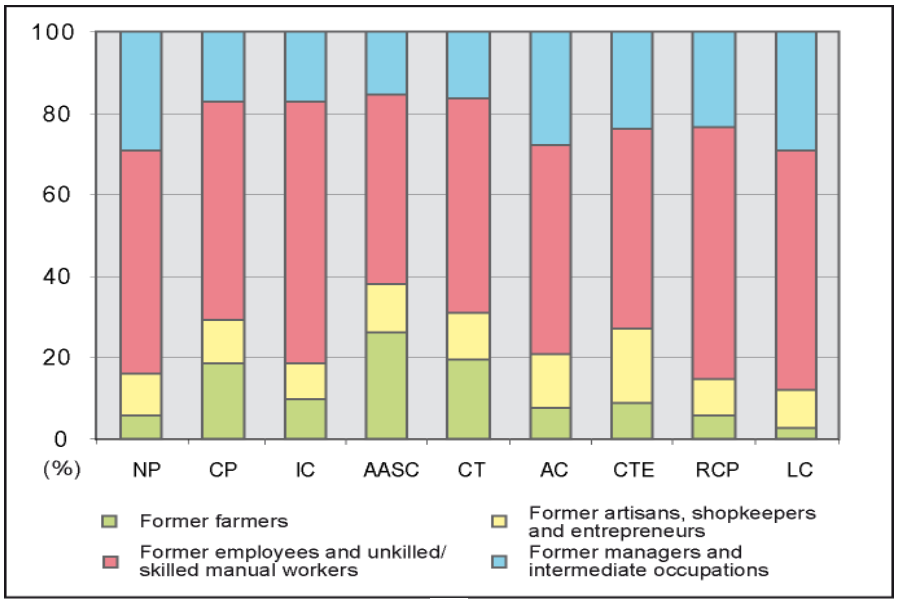
Documents 9 and 10 present the spatial rates of household heads according to their former socio-professional groups, among the 2006 local populations. They report unequal proportions. The former farmers have the highest "local marks" in Brittany, in Normandy and in the *Auvergne* region, while the former employees and unskilled/skilled manual workers have ones in the *Alsace* region, in the *Languedoc-Roussillon* region and in the *Centre* region. The former artisans, shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, and the former managers, intermediate occupations have lower proportions which reflect on their low rates in the French population.

Document 9 – Geographies of retired household heads, according to their former socio-professional group (2006)



Moreover, a specific focus on the former managers and intermediate occupations spatial distributions notices higher rates on the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts. They also have their most important proportions in the urban/peri-urban types (LC and NP) and in the residential/touristic countrysides (AC and CTE) which are mainly concerned by retirement migrations. We can consider that they have a high potential – income, mobility usualness - to be involved in rural gentrification processes. Other socio-professional groups could also be concerned as former artisans, entrepreneurs and/or former employees, mainly present in centre and south-west of France, in AASC, AC and CTE space types.

Document 10 – Rates of former socio-professional groups of retired household heads in French types of spaces (2006)

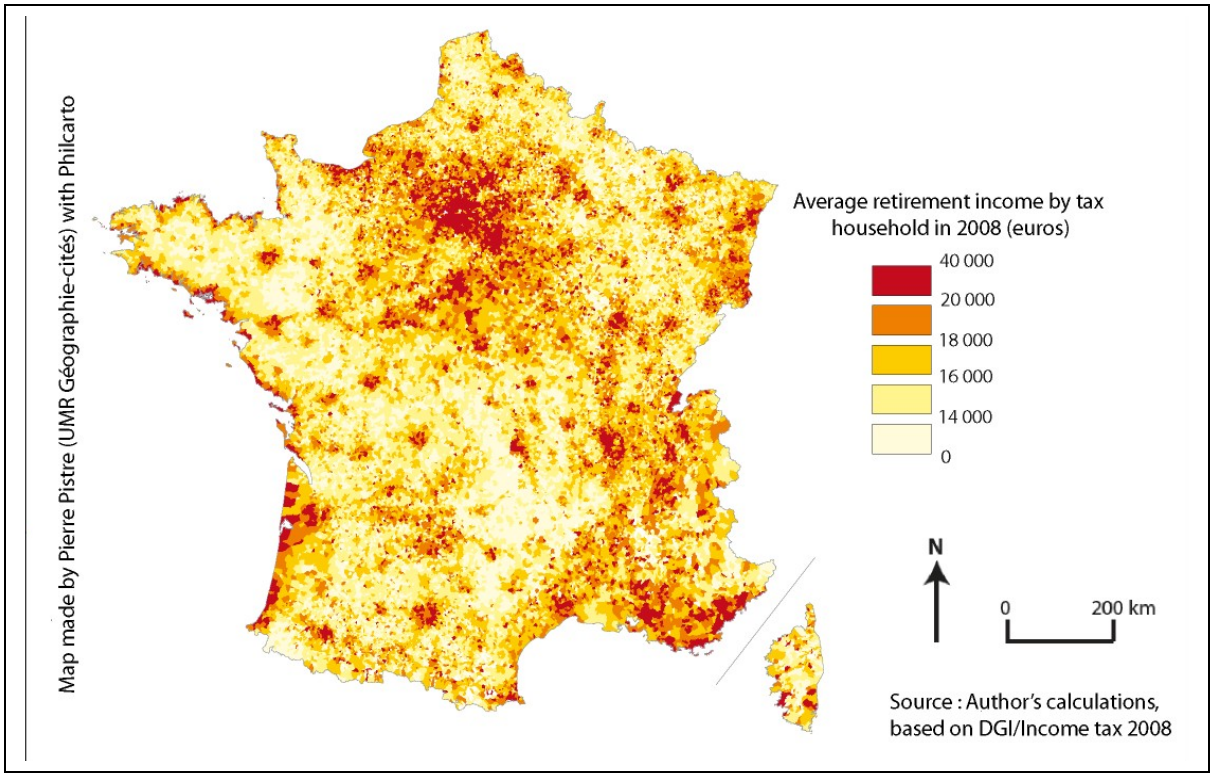


Source: Author's calculations, based on INSEE RGP 2006.

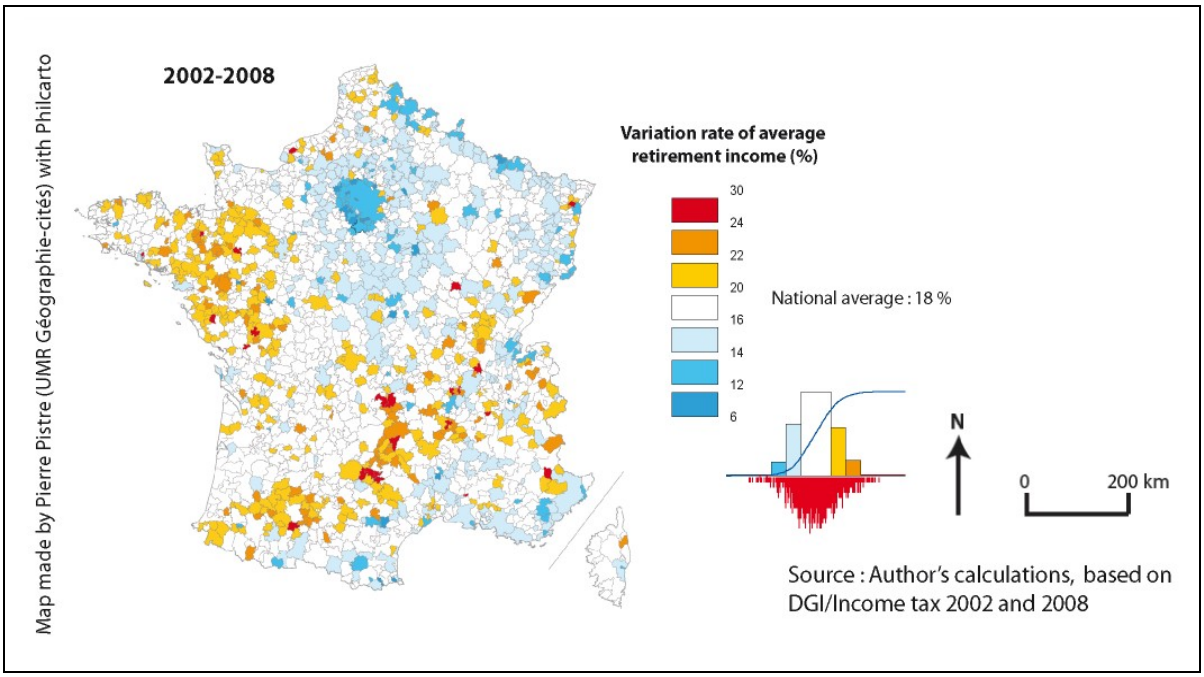
To improve these first socio-demographic analyses, we can also use *DGI* data (French tax office). They allow us to realise cartography of retirement incomes and to study their contemporary dynamics in a national scale. Document 11 represents the mean retirement incomes by French *communes* in 2008. It reveals unequal distributions among the regions and the local territories. Paris and its suburbs have a prominent place as well as cities of *Côte d'Azur*. Some regional structures are also evident: the Paris area, the Lyon area, the Rhone Valley and a significant coastline effect on the Atlantic coast – in the *Aquitaine* region and along the English Channel. Conversely, a large majority of French countrysides has average retirement incomes structurally weaker. Nevertheless, we can observe exceptions, mainly in the north of *Massif Central*, in several *communes* of Corsica and in the *Lot*, *Dordogne* and *Corrèze* areas which reinforce their potential to be concerned by gentrification processes.

The following map (Document 12) represents the evolution of mean local retirement incomes during the 2000s. It completes our first structural analyses and it reflects quite different geographies. The average retirement incomes have been raising in all *bassins de vie*, but very unequally distant of the national average (+18% between 2002 and 2008). Two main regions stand out by their increases: some western territories around Nantes and Rennes, and several areas of south-west in the *Midi-Pyrénées* region and the *Auvergne* region. It's mainly concerned rural areas which seem to catch up a pronounced structural deficit. They certainly welcome new retired people - better-off than the local elderly populations -, but they are also in a natural replacing process by younger ones who are richer than the oldest ones.

Document 11 – Spatial distribution of retirement incomes in French *communes* (2008)



Document 12 – Evolution of average retirement incomes in French *bassins de vie*



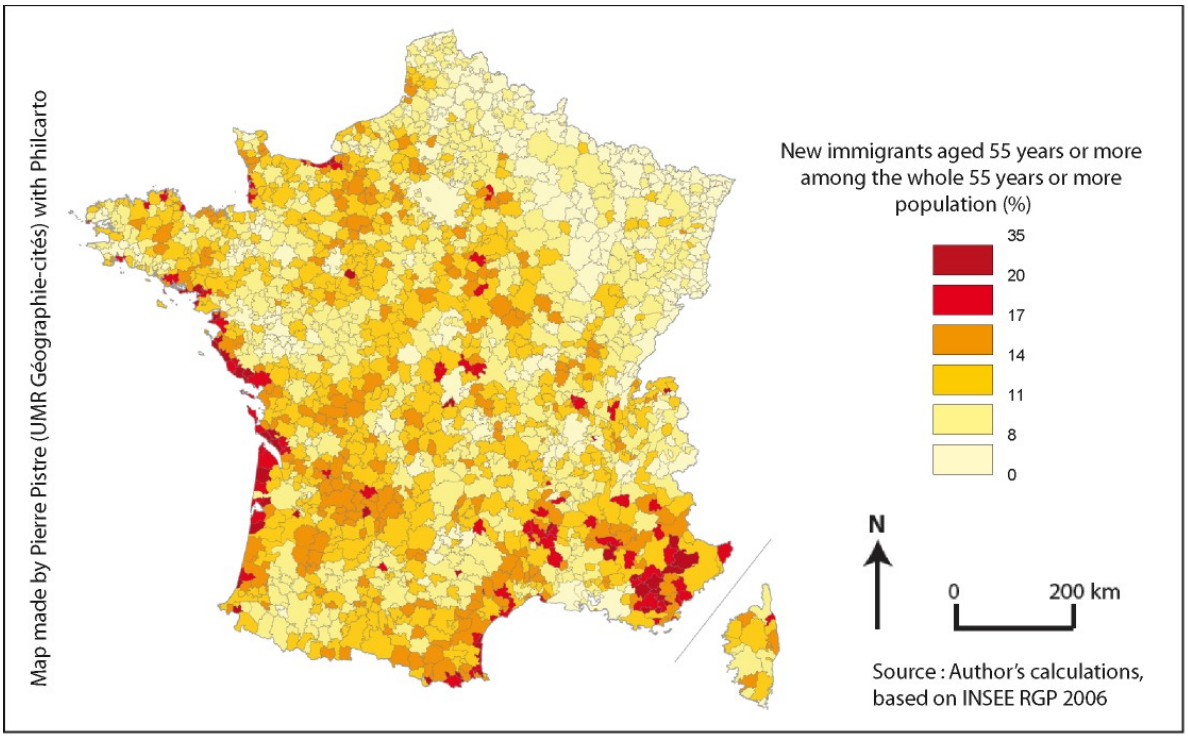
Retirement migrations in French areas and countrysides

In the last part, we examine the migration processes lead by retired people: Which locations and space types do they favoured ? What are those corresponding to places and areas already highlighted with high potential of rural gentrification processes ?

Residential migrations researches reveal higher change rates among young adult populations (20-40 years), while people aged 60 years and over seem less mobile: 20% have change of housing between 1990 and 1999 (Desplanques, 2005). However, their migration propensity has been growing up since the 1982 census, mainly among the younger retired people (60-64 years old: 25% in 1999). They are also more likely to make a long-distance migration to another region (6% of the 60-69 years old in 1999). Accounting for migrations change with the 2006 census, but we can still note more than 10% of retired people have changed of residential *commune* in the last five years.

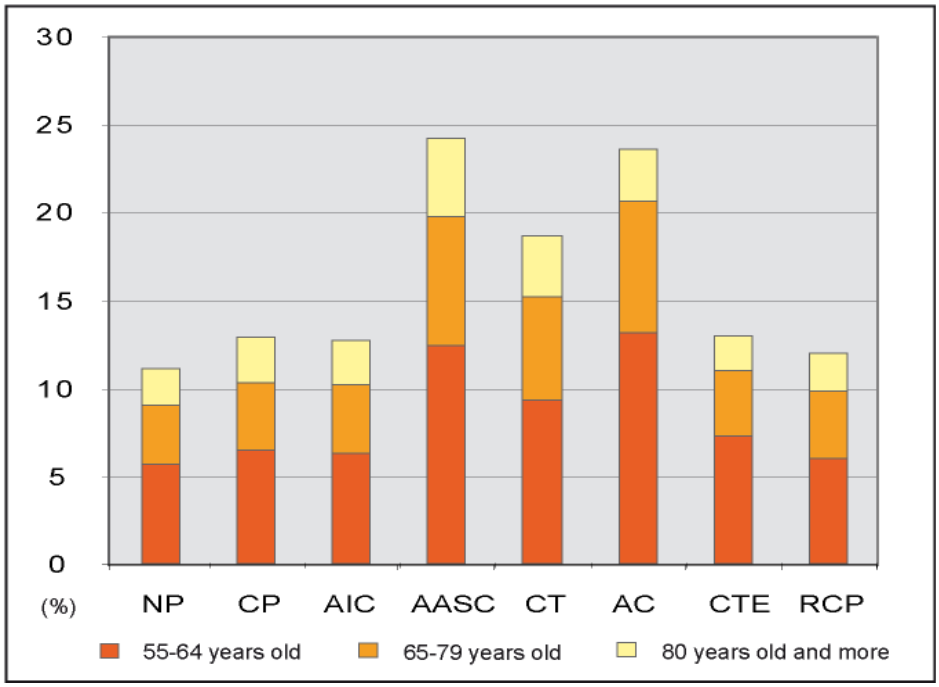
Document 13 proposes a first geographical focus on retirement migrations. As the following documents, it's based on people aged 55 years and older to include some forms of early retirement migrations, especially to rural areas (Stockdale, 2006). It represents the rates of new immigrants aged 55 and over among the same age local population. So, we can observe the most attractive regions for retirement migrations and identify the significant areas. First of all, the coastal areas are particularly concerned: the Mediterranean and the Atlantic coasts. Within the country, some regional groupings also stand out. South and west regions of Paris welcome people leaving it, while maintaining a geographical proximity. Then, significant retirement migrations can be observed in south-west of France, in the north of Toulouse, and to a lesser extent in Brittany and in Normandy.

Document 13 – New immigrants aged 55 years or more in French *bassins de vie* (1999-2006)



Moreover, retired people migrate mainly to French countrysides (Document 14) - and proportionally more than other categories -. Among the whole immigrants during the period 1999 to 2006, the highest rates of new immigrants aged 55 years and older can be noted in the historic countrysides (AASC and AIC types) and in the attractive countrysides (AC and CT types). Conversely, the urban and suburban space types appear less attractive or at least they attract many other groups. Thus, recent retirement migrations trend to reinforce the existing demographic structures and to confirm "spatial life course" processes. The importance of retired immigrants in countrysides - whatever the age brackets - makes them main actors of rural revival processes and certainly of more specific rural gentrification forms.

Document 14 – New immigrants of 55 years or more among the whole new immigrants in French space types (1999-2006)



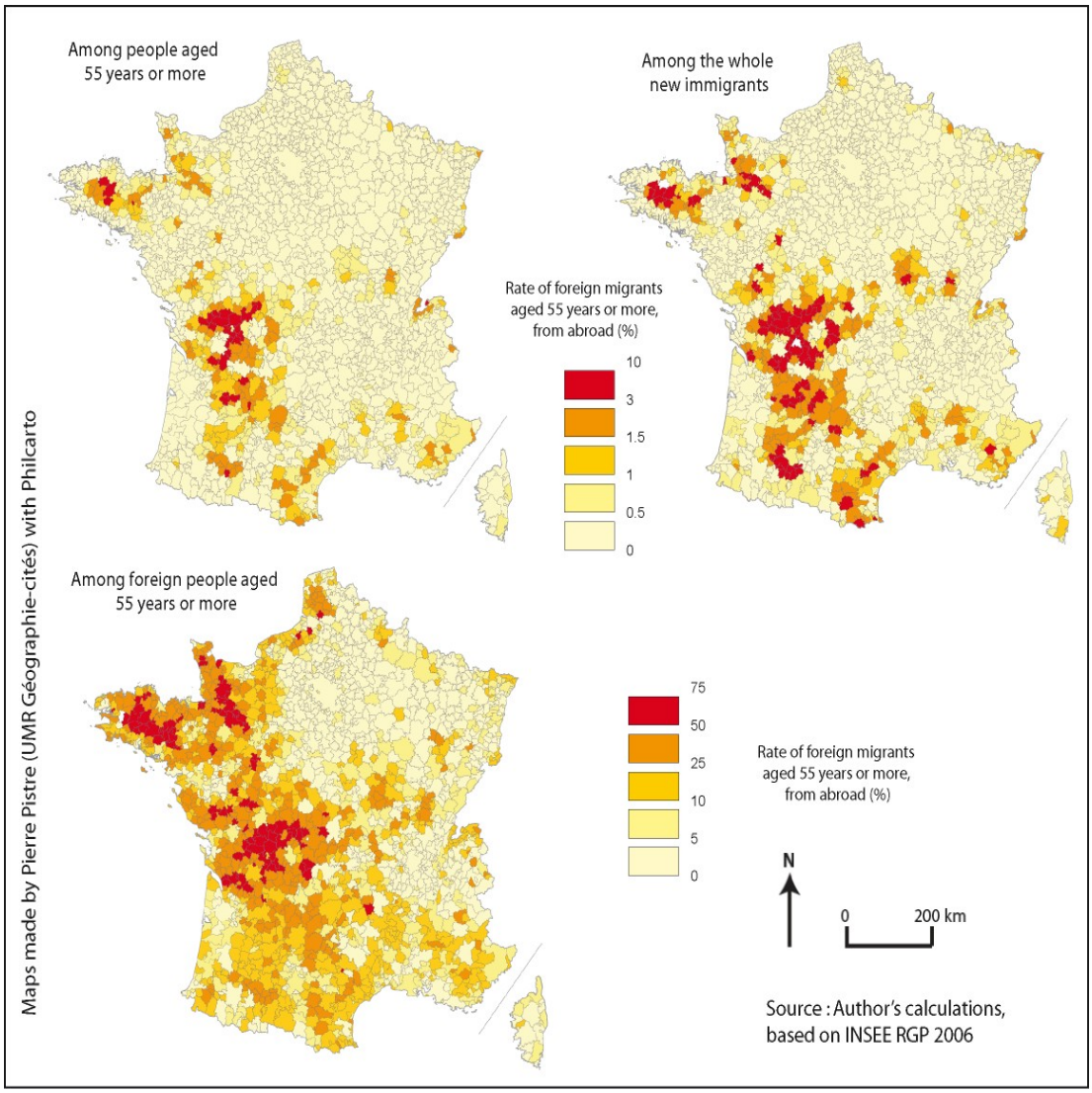
Source: Author's calculations, based on INSEE RGP 1999, 2006.

Finally, doc 15 represents the "local marks" of specific new retired immigrants since it is foreign retired people. So, we focus on an accurate retired profile which has got high visibility including in media and which is often considered as an important vector of rural transformations and gentrification forms.

French countrysides had welcomed Spanish, Portuguese…Polish immigrants. In recent years, they are rather British, Scandinavian, German or Dutch (Barou *and al.*, 1995). According to statistical data, they may represent from 2 to 4% of the local populations. They tend to settle in small areas of south-east (in *Ardèche*, *Drôme*, *Vaucluse*), of south-west (in *Dordogne*, *Lot*) and of central regions (in *Limousin* region) where proportions of EU nationals can reach more than 10% of local populations (Perrier-Cornet *and al.*, 2002).

If we focus on retired foreign populations with document 15, the same regions are globally concerned by recent migrations with three main ones confirmed: the Mediterranean coast from *Pyrenees-Orientales* to *Alpes-Maritimes*, a large south-west from *Limousin* to the *Pyrénées*, and the Brittany and the Normandy regions in the west of France which are also part of today's most attractive regions for foreign retirees.

Document 15 – New foreign immigrants of 55 years or more in French *bassins de vie* (1999-2006)



The today's French countrysides are being transformed, mainly in their housing structures and in their populations. Among our statistical and cartographic treatments, many signs trend to confirm us the importance of rural gentrification processes. Our analyses are still to develop by new indicators and a spatial typology of synthesis. However, it makes no doubt that some specific rural spaces (AC type, some south and west areas of France) are concerned by actual gentrification processes. It makes also no doubt that some retired people (among the highest former socio-professional groups, among the highest retirement income levels, among the new retired immigrants, among the foreign retired people from north of Europe) are at least involved in revival processes of many French countrysides. We even assume that they are main actors of one or several specific rural gentrification forms which are still to identify and to analyse by new statistical treatments and local surveys.

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