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LAND REFORM AND RURAL MODERNIZATION IN SPAIN
A Galician perspective

With 1 figure and 1 table

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Zusammenfassung: Landreform und ländliche Modernisierung in Spanien

Abwanderungen und die Entvölkerung des ländlichen Raumes, zunehmende Land-Stadt-Beziehungen und steigende Nachfrage nach und Preise für Agrarprodukte gehören zu den wesentlichen Antriebskräften, die das Gesicht des ländlichen Spaniens zur Zeit verändern. Die Entwicklung des ländlichen Raumes ist jedoch weitgehend ein ungeplanter, autonomer Prozeß, und somit sind Tempo und Art des Wandels im ländlichen Raum keineswegs gleichmäßig. Dieser Aufsatz überprüft die Wirkungen und Folgen einer geplanten Entwicklung des ländlichen Raumes in Galizien vor dem Hintergrund der normativen Planziele. Die Fortschritte des Planes werden an Beispielen dargestellt und hierauf aufbauend ein allgemeiner Überblick und eine Kritik an dieser Art Planung in den übervölkerten ländlichen Gebieten Spaniens gegeben.

Rural Spain is either on the brink of, or, actuelly experiencing a period of unprecedented change. Among the factors promoting this change are rapid industrialization in a series of widely separate but localized areas, a general rural to urban drift of the population, the intensification and commercialization of agriculture in some areas and a greater mobility of people in areas brought about by increasing levels of car ownership and a massive programme of motorway development *(Obras Publicas,* 1972). Many hereto now isolated rural communities are suddenly being jolted into closer contact with cities by the permeation of different values chiefly by means of television and they are influencing the formation of aspirations and expectations particulary among younger age-groups. 'Successful' migrants are returning brimful of 'prosperity' extolling the varied opportunities of the world outside. Many of the traditional institutions of land and society in rural Spain are entering a period of profound instability. Many of the edifices of rural Spain, including the *Caserios* of the Vascongadas, the solid *Masias* of Aragon and Cataluña and the once luxurious *Cortijos* of La Mancha, Extremadura and Andalucia are all faced with extinction as waves of uncertainty sweep across the peninsula. The crusade culminating in the 'victory' of 1939 was itself an all out attempt to prevent the occurrence of reform of any kind. The short term effect of the Civil War was stagnation rather than development, a condition prolonged for at least twenty years. In Galicia, high population densities in rural areas associated with an autoconsumptive rural economy on minescule holdings, an unchanged situation since the 19th century, has engaged most people simply in the production of food to remain alive and hold on to their farms. Migration and remittances, as well as the startling capacity of the land to yield so much, in spite of the unremitting demands placed upon it, have together combined to buoy up the traditional mode of subsistence. Nevertheless, many of the general problems of rural Spain so aptly delineated by DOBBY (1936) and P. CARRIÓN (1932) have remained substantially unchanged as reported by the recent work of AÑLLÓ VAZQUEZ (1966) CAMPOS NORDMANN (1971) MALEFAKIS (1970) GARCIA FERNANDEZ (1975) ABAD FLORES (1977) and O'FLANAGAN (1980).

The objectives of this review are to examine some of the leading problems confronting rural development programmes in Galicia, as well as to assess and evaluate the spatial impact of the plans in the context of their scope and limitations. To achieve these ends a micro-study is undertaken of the activities of a change agency – the *Institute de Reforma Agraria y Dessarollo Agraria* (IRYDA),[1] in the province of Pontevedra, in south western Galicia. It is an intention of the paper to utilize this micro-study in an effort to monitor the general impact of the reform policy throughout Galicia. Cross-Iberian comparisons and contrasts are invoked where appropriate if feasible; and to provide a national background of reform, the study commences with a review of rural planning in Spain. Severe constraints are placed on such objectives by a number of factors, not least, the general dearth of reliable data or sometimes of any data at all, and also by the fact that rural development programmes have only been seriously implemented over the last 20 years, thus, providing an extremely weak temporal dimension, as far as evaluation is concerned. Field work, supplemented by detailed field reports of change agents, however, does provide a modest insight into the nature of some of the problems being tackled as well as offering a limited prospect for assessment. It is a fact that this kind of approach to modernization studies, albeit, somewhat tedious and descriptive, draws its stenght from micro-level analysis which gives a more comprehensive insight into the spatial implication of planned socio-economic change (CONNELL, 1973). Data simply referring to the presence of elements of modernization informs us concerning its supply, but does not indicate demand and usage, surely crucial measures of the impact of change (LUNDQVIST, J.)

Rural planning in Spain

Since the turn of the century Spain's many agrarian problems have been tackled by planners and politicians in various

[1] I.R.Y.D.A. is a relatively new Authority and it constitutes a merger between Spain's two major rural reform agencies. The S.N.C.P.O.R. (Servicio Nacional de Consentración Parcelaría e Ordinación Rural) and the older I.N.C. (Instituto Naciónal de Colonización).

ways, ranging from attempts at conscious oblivion to phrenetic efforts to confront such constraints. Invariably the main concern has revolved around methods of increasing output either by bringing new land into cultivation or intensifying production by means of irrigation. Physical rather than structural constraints have thus been given most attention. Hence up to 1960, areas recognised as having severe physical handicaps, such as parts of the Meseta and Andalucia, noted for their monocultural systems of dry farming, witnessed some enormous transformations (NAYLON, 1975). The vast largely untapped water resources of some of Iberias' great rivers, such as the Tagus, Ebro and Guadalquivir, were perceived as mana for such problems.

For these areas irrigation offers boundless opportunities permitting as it does the introduction of a more varied range of crops and land-uses, facilitating an overall intensification of agriculture and releases such areas from the shackles of monoculture. It also offers the potential of giving access to new land for agriculture and settlement besides providing possibilities for internal colonization so as to ameliorate the conditions of congested areas, besides allowing increases in overall output to occur.

Such schemes as those on the Ebro basin, the *Plan de Badajoz* and schemes on the Duero revitalizing the *comarcas* of Tierra del Pan and Tierra del Vino are instances of ambitious regional schemes embarked upon by the *Instituto Nacional de Colonización* (INC) (NAYLON, 1973). By comparison official change agency activity in promoting rural change in other parts of Spain such as Cataluña, Valencia, Vascongadas as well as, Galicia and the remainder of Cantabria has been insignificant. In these areas private capitalistic endeavours both in industry and agriculture have played an important role locally in promoting rural change; an instance of such intervention has been the activities of Nestle's creameries in Santander (GARCIA FERNANDEZ, 1975).

It could be well argued that structural elements of Spanish agriculture, such as, farm size, fragmentation, traditions and local institutions modulating access to land, pose far more serious constraints to change and modernization. These kinds of constraints, whose gravity has been recognised for a long time, have been awarded far less attention than they indeed warrant. A number of factors are responsible for this situation, they are namely, the political implications of meddling with the larger estates, the enormous variation and complex nature of each major regions' problems and also the absence of reliable data concerning these conditions (MARTINEZ ALLIER, 1971). There was not, for example, any detailed agricultural census published until 1962 and this limited achievement was more noteworthy for its deficiencies and unreliability (*Presidencia del Gobierno*, 1964 and 1973).

As AÑLLÓ VAZQUEZ amongst others has pointed out, the small fragmented farm is by the numerically most dominant type of holding in every corner of Spain. It is only since the establishment of the *Servicio Nacional de Consentración Parcelaria y Ordinación Rural* (S.N.C.P.O.R.) in the early 1950's that the implications of this fact were tacitly recognised by the state (GARCIA DE OTEYZA, 1967). As its official designation implies, the primary objectives of this authority were to consolidate fragmented holdings and provide a general transformation of rural infrastructure, as well as offering an extension service. This agency was responsible for relatively successful transformations in parts of Castile, such as, in the province of Guadalajara which prompted the planners extend their activities to other parts of Spain including Galicia in the mid-1950's (GARCIA DE OTEYZA, 1965).

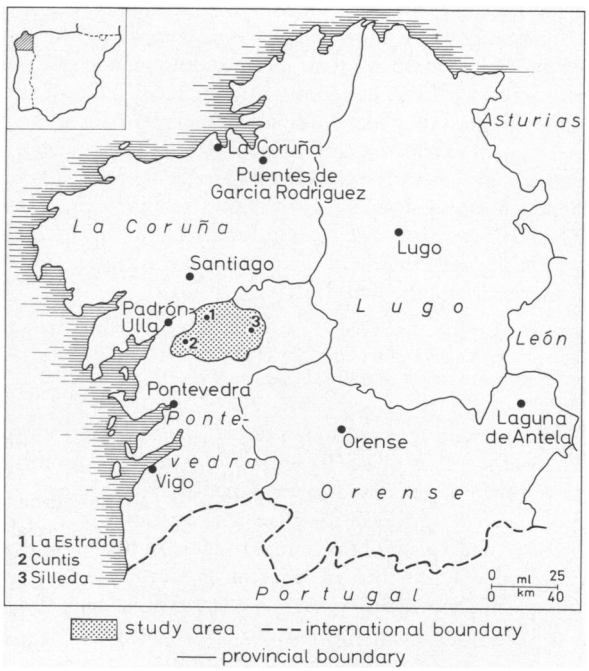

Fig. 1: Galicia – study area

Galicia: A region with diverse rural problems – some Indicators

Rural Galicia manifests nearly all the classic attributes of a 'problem' region. Amongst some of the leading indicators of its malaise are, an average farm size of c. 3.00 ha, most farms being pulverized into an average of c. 25 separate parcels (O'FLANAGAN, 1974). Intense autarkical *polyculture* reigns supreme, the potato, maize and grass being its principal components. *Silviculture* including the vine, as well as, *mariculture* on the coast provide relief from tillage pursuits. In addition, nearly one-third of the entire region is grossly underutilized consequent upon traditional resource perceptions (A. BOUCHIER, 1979). Cattle in small numbers are retained on most holdings more for the energy contribution for land working than for any commercial considerations.[2)]

[2)] There are many useful analysis published in Gallego and Castellano which deal with farming and land-working in Galicia. Various issues of the Revista de Económia de Galicia 1962–1968 carry extremely valuable local studies. The work of L. GARCIA DE OTEYZA and F. GARCIA FERNANDEZ is also essential in this regard.

Rural Galicia supports a population of c. 2 million; nearly 70% of the entire regional population and rural densities in some coastal regions when adjusted soar into a thousand plus level. The population is scattered into 30,000 odd small clusters whose individual population rarely exceeds two hundred (O'Flanagan, 1978). Migration from the region has been endemic for more than a century, and in spite of this the rural population has steadily increased. Social problems are legion also; income from farming is both low and not always reliable, illiteracy rates are high, rural housing and sanitation are poor, and social provision is appallingly inadequate, malnutrition is by no means unknown and diseases associated with this condition are rampant.[3] Educational opportunities after first level are non-existent for poorer sections of society. Unemployment and more particularly underemployment is widespread, there being few off-farm opportunities besides migration. Life remains for many in rural Galicia pivotted upon the extended family and extends within the wider world of the parish but it is largely closed from the rest of the world (Ettema, 1979).

Intervention and progress – a macroview

Government intervention in rural Galicia has been active for twenty years todate. Its initiation witnessed a momentary flurry of activity as exemplified by the opening of S.N.C.P.O.R. offices in the provincial capitals as well as in Santiago and a plan for the reform of agrarian structures was hastily devised for the province of La Coruña. This plan though implemented, remains to a large degree uncompleted. Up to December 1975, I.R.Y.D.A. and its predecessors had invested 2¾ million pts. transforming rural Galicia (Abad Flores, 1977). 405 out of a total of slightly less than 3,000 parishes were partially or entirely concentrated and 1,200 kms. of third class – *comarcal* – roads were constructed. Annually an average of 9,169 ha is concentrated, so judging by present progress it will take a century to complete the process in Galicia (IRYDA, 1973).

In terms of capital inversion, the greatest proportion has been devoted to removing or modifying physical constraints in Galicia and hence four projects have taken the lions share of the money available. Such schemes at Montforte de Lemos, Cabecera del Ullá at Padrón – Puentecesures, and the Laguna de Antela in Orense, as well as, some smaller schemes on the river Eo in Lugo have had limited and local impact and they have not contributed to significantly reducing the general burden of stagnation in the region.

I.R.Y.D.A.'s current brief is enshrined in the Ley de Reforma y Desarrollo Agrario (1972), a revision of an earlier directive – Decreto de Ordinación Rural (1962), whose close inspection reveals a trenchant economic bias. The three basic areas of its activities are, concentration of fragmented holdings, establishing correct titles and providing access to holdings when consolidated. It is noteworthy that in an area where minute farms dominate directives aiming at increases in farm size are totally absent (IRYDA, 1973). The dangers of implementing such fuzzy and limited objectives are clearly evident if assessed upon a microscale.

A microscale panorama: La Estrada, Pontevedra

One of the major difficulties attending the study of the geography of land reform is that they have often been conducted in the recent past and this example is a case in point. The zone in question, the largest area in Pontevedra currently experiencing a process of rural transformation consists of three *municipios,* namely, Cuntis, La Estrada and Silleda and it is located in the north western sector of the province (Fig. I). Most of the area concerned forma a lowland gently rising is an easterly direction and it embraces a total area of 519 km^2.[4] (Table 1).

A wide variety of soil types with a diverse potential use range occur there. Locally, steep slopes and water shortage in summer matched by water logging in winter constitute the major physical constraints to farming. In socio-economic terms, the zone is broadly representative of western Galicia. Overwhelmingly it is a rural region. Less than 10 per cent of the population live in settlements with the functional status of towns. More than twenty thousand people are scattered into 700 separate clusters varying in population in the *municipio* of Cuntis, for example, from 7 and 243. 14,522 hectares of improved land give an adjusted population density figure of 327 persons per hectare. Many of the problems already outlined are endemic in this area and three major types stand out[5]. They are, namely, structural problems of agriculture and their implications, social problems and finally, infrastructural deficiencies. The following figures neatly summarize some of the structural difficulties. Only 28 per cent of the land is improved; a further 65 per cent is unimproved but potentially improvable and the remaining 7 per cent is beyond improvement. There are nearly 7,500 holdings with an average of 30 strips each in the area; 25 per cent of which are less than 5 hectares; a further 11 per cent lie between 5 and 10 hectares and a further 6 per cent lie above the 10 ha. bracket. Yet a further 48 per cent of the farms are less than 2 ha. in extent, but the owners officially are classified as having secondary employment. Such a classification seems to be inordinately inflated though it is possible that migrants are included in this group. Evaluation of conditions in this area is again severely limited by the dearth of data both for the situation prior and subsequent to implementation of the reforms.

[3] In some of the remoter rural areas of Galicia, particulary in Eastern Lugo and Orense it has been estimated that it may take a doctor up to fifteen hours to reach a patient. See, for example, Lisón Tolosana. 1971.

[4] *Lugar*; means a place or settlement or both in Galicia. In practice it refers to a unit of enclosure consisting of a joint farm with an average population of 80 people in the study area. *Aldea,* possesses the similar connotations in Galicia.

[5] Data from I.R.Y.D.A. Field Office, La Estrada and Field Survey of 1978 and 1979.

Table 1

	Cuntis	*La Estrada*	*Silleda*	*Total*
Area (km²)	79	281	159	519
Population (1976)	7,282	27,550	10,493	45,325
Population Density (km²)	92	97	66	85
No. of People Resident in Chief Municipal Centre	669	4,167	758	5594
No. of Parishes	8	52	33	93
No. of Lugares/Aldeas[5] (small rural settlements)	78	459	231	768
No. of Villas (medium sized rural settlements)	1	1	1	3

Sources: Nomenclator (1973), Banesto (1977), I.R.Y.D.A. 1973 and data from Field Survey and Field Office 1978 and 1979

Implementation and responses 1967–1977

The leading objectives of the reform programmes, however, are extremely confined both in scope and in scale. The plan seeks to achieve (i) a massive reduction in the number of parcels per farm, (ii) grouping together of holdings of legally recognised landholders who belong to the same house, (iii) an increase in the total amount of improved land; achieving this only by removing old boundaries and trackways, (iv) zoning of some land for public utilities or agri-industries. To date, only 30 parishes have been 'transformed', 12 remain unaffected and 'reform' is in progress in the remainder. By 1973, in 28 parishes the total number of plots was reduced from 98,102 to 21,625 upon 11,002 holdings belonging to 2,800 holders. The average number of plots per farm was reduced from 30 to 5 parcels but average farm size remained stable at 4 ha.

A more composite view of the reform can be attained by examining it at the level of each settlement and its worked land. The average size of each *lugar* is c. 50 ha., of which 16.5 ha., is improved and a further 30 ha. is unimproved but with an improvable potential, (Field Survey 1978). The reform thus witnessed a concentration of the improved land and less than 2 per cent of the unimproved land was transformed, clearly indicating the fact that no increase in farm size took place. In terms of land-use no change transpired upon 60 per cent of the worked land, a fact which clearly emphasises the limited desire for, and response to reform. Upon the improved land some minor changes in land-use occurred, there was a 10 per cent increase in the amount of land under forage crops and a similar increase in land under grass. Traditional low yielding crops, such as, rye have disappeared and have been replaced by higher yielding hybrid maize straints but no cash crops of significance have been adopted. The only area in which significantly increased yields have been recorded is in higher milk yields, c. 30% linked to a 10 per cent increase in cattle numbers – the average number being raised to c. 6 head per holding – and to the intensification of forage crop production. Better breeds of cattle also have contributed to achieving increase.

Associated with these interventions have been efforts to improve the infrastructure for both agriculture and settlement and the main stress has been placed upon improvements in communication for both settlements and holdings, 159 km. of *comarcal* roads have been laid out, as well as, 472 kms. of service roads. Rural electric services were improved and a piped water supply became available for most settlements. (Field Office, 1979). A significant response was registered to these developments; there was a 60 per cent increase in private car ownership and a 65 per cent increase in the number of televisions and electric domestic equipment, such as, washing machines. Remittances from abroad no doubt played a significant role in such purchases rather than extra income occurring from increased farm productivity. In addition, the level of inputs into the land of both fertilizers and insecticides has risen by 50 per cent and there has been a slight increase in the number of tractors.

Assessment and critique

Many land reform policies are Utopian in theory but rather distorted when implemented in the sense that the perceived products of reform seldom transpire. The factors responsible for such shortcomings are extremely diverse: they may stem from faulty initial assumptions and failure to recognise the core of the problems to be tackled; thus, attempts are often made to rectify symptoms rather than causes. False notions concerning the nature of what needs to be 'reformed' may be evident especially if reliable data is in short supply. Furthermore, external developments such as a national or international recession might impair the realization of objectives. In Galicia, the following have contributed to the present impasse; the scale, scope and timing of the reform, the actual concept of the reform and finally the total segregation of land reform an overall regional development plan for the entire region (O'Flanagan, 1979).

As far as csale is concerned some serious shortfalls are evident. First of all, no general plan exists for the entire region; there appears to be an assumption that sooner or later, in a slow progression, every parish will be 'reformed'. The manner in which the plan for La Coruña is being implemented is symptomatic of this kind of uncoordination. Less then one-third of the worked land in each parish or *lugar* is actually being restructured, but vast areas of land, which are rarely enclosed and managed jointly, whose potential use is limited, are being ignored and becoming increasingly underutilized even in the traditional rural economy. This is mainly consequent on the adoption of fertilizers.

In terms of land-use the main change being sought is to secure an intensification of cattle production above all else but little consideration has been given to the consequences of overproduction and the possible collapse of the rural economy. It is paradoxical that the brunt of effort in Galicia is being directed towards creating monocultural economy while elsewhere in Spain the development of a more diversified crop-livestock enterprise system is being actively encouraged! Allied to this policy of intensification is a desire to raise living standards but the fact that migration rates in some 'reformed' zones remain at the same level as prior to intervention indicates serious shortfall.

Clearly the scope of the reform is too narrow, its scale is exceedingly restictive and its implementation in time and space is both sluggish and patchy. The creation of a stable and satisfied rural society, by these means, on holdings of less than 10 ha. in size is simply not on in Europe today and especially not so in Galicia where cooperation between farmers upon a contractual bases is a rare and capital and technology are more noteworthy by their absence. Indeed, it appears that capital gains from the land and migration are being ploughed into domestic devices and home improvements rather than into the land.

In contrast to the Italian reform experience, the Galician example has been fuzzily conceived and its implementation is abandoningly lax (KING, 1970). There has been no succinct adumbration of its leading aims nor its potential benefits. It seems to rest upon a notion of its being an all embracing corrective palliative to the socio-economic malaise of the region. Consolidation alone has been invoked as a method of destroying *minifundismo* and simultaneously strengthening the family farming tradition.[6] Subsequent developments in the study area show that minimal farming responses have transpired and *minifundismo* is as vital as ever. No serious attempts have been made to encourage cooperative ventures to emerge and advice from an agricultural extension service is not a substitute for the almost total absence of residential agricultural educational facilities (ALAD FLORES, 1977).

Galician land reform policy is by no means an indigenous creation of local planners. It was formalized initially to tackle problem areas in the Meseta, such as Guadalajara, and because of its relative success in these areas, in conditions very different from those of Galicia, it was transferred without modification taking no cognisance of variations within Galicia or between it and other parts of Spain. These land reform policies were devised for very different socio-economic conditions than those prevailing today. Spain at mid-century was a highly institutionalized authoritarian state but strangely rural land reform policy was and is distinctly 'democratic' in execution. A two-third majority of holders approval must be secured prior to initiation, slackening the pace of reform and producing a highly differentiated reform 'surface', both spacially and temporarily.

In spite of its democratic aspects land reform policy in Galicia has no strictly social objectives apart from the notion of the family farm goal. Most of the holders are both socially and psychologically unprepared for reform and hence, it can gain no real momentum. The fact that still c. 20 per cent of children do not attend primary schooling centres is not a good portend for the future (ALONSO MONTERO, 1973). As a corollary the programme does not contain any political objectives; maintenance of the *status quo* through structural modification appears to be the desired result and thus, the influence of the *caciques*, a distinctive group of brokers is not threatened.

Most change agencies attempting to instigate reform in rural areas embark upon an exercise of public relations to create a demand for the supply of reforms; here too, I.R.Y.D.A. is no exception. Although no detailed situation studies have been conducted by I.R.Y.D.A. it does publish a lavishly produced information sheet to report upon progress. Such efforts are designed primarily to instigate a demand for reform in an adjacent 'unreformed zones', and propaganda of this kind can indeed play a vital role but if it is misleading and rising expectations are not satisfied, alienation may ensue and create its own problems. Catch phrases such as the creation of a community spirit and the easing of the role of women by freeing them from onerous tasks ring hollow since with continuing high migration rates the burden of womens responsibilities is not ameliorated, especially in the temporary absence of their spouse. There is an overriding requirement for thorough and frequent evaluative analysis to be expedited so that both the change agency and the wider public may be kept abreast of the general progress of the reforms. Such studies would identify shortcomings and thus, facilitate modification of the planning parameters.

Reform or entrechment

Galician land reform programmes as they are currently conceived and executed are potentially not a palliative to the malaise now endemic in rural areas. Entrechment rather than reform is occurring consequent upon the kind of reform programme being expedited, there is a general misconception of what needs reform and the failure to incorporate a rural reform programme within a general regional planning strategy.

It is clear that the brief of I.R.Y.D.A. is far too restrictive to achieve the kind of reform which is urgently required in the region. As it is presently constituted I.R.Y.D.A. is understaffed, undercapitalized and too much pressure is applied on it to achieve rapid results. In the absence of an integrated regional development plan for Galicia various authorities are working to achieve basically parallel reforms and consequently serious duplication and wastage occurs. There is, for example, a separate national agency, I.C.O.N.A., whose charge is afforestation and forest management which operates separately. Of greater concern is the fact that there

[6] Minifundismo is a term connoting the numerical dominance of small holdings, that is holdings of less than 5.00 ha. In reality minifundismo has significance embracing the entire fabric of social and economic organization of zones which are dominated by an autarkical rural economy.

are few linkages between rural development agencies and industrial development bodies. Such lacunae have led to bizarre developments such as massive infrastructural investments in land zoned for industry.[7] A rural reform plan requires to be devised urgently linked to a programme of rural industrialization instead of growth pole stimulation.[8] Until a statutory authority is established whose brief should be wide ranging to include not only data collection and analysis but also the formulation of a coordinated development plan for the region whose objective should be the achievement of certain goals within specific time periods, it is unlikely that the regions problems can be confronted and modified. Reform programmes and planning are basically devices to extirpate inequalities and in Galicia, no less than elsewhere in Iberia, where social and economic inequalities are extremely severe (RICHARDSON, 1975). Galicia unlike many other Iberian regions possesses a massive range of internal resources and a genuine programme of development should seek the least dislocation of population and would be therefore less costly to achieve in human or economic terms. An opportunity for such a departure today is greater than at any other time this century with the advent of a decentralized regional government for the region.

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[7] This occured in the early 1970's when large investment was made to provide an irrigation network in the lower Ulla valley beside Padrón. The network today lies idle.

[8] In the last three years a number of institutions have been established to formulate and expedite sectoral planning policies for the region. They inculde G.A.E.I., which manages the so-called Gran Aréa de Expansión Industrial; Sodiga, Sociedad para el Desarrollo Industrial de Galicia, and O.E.R.G.A., Observatorio Estadistica para Galicia. To date, however, formal linkages between these organisations are tenuous, see for example, O'FLANAGAN, 1979.