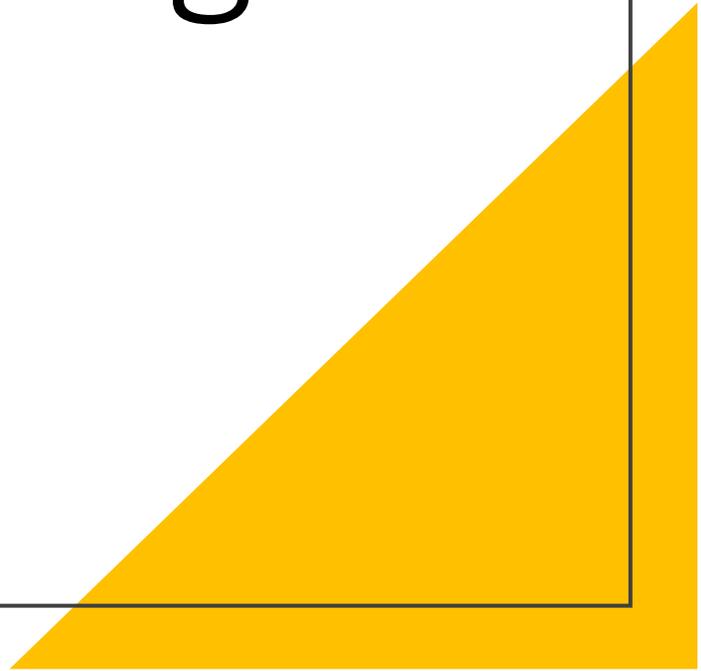


# The role of the cooperative in creating a rural renaissance.

Rural-Pact policy Lab on rural depopulation.

Brussels, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2023.



# Recognising the potential of a cooperative.

- Farmers first met in 2016.
- The Irish Hemp Cooperative was registered May 2018.
- It was set up to address the many issues facing small farmers. It addresses legislative and logistical barriers.
- The work of the hemp Cooperative is encouraging young farmers, and rural actors to solve their own problems by providing them with a channel to take action.
- Kate Carmody, Organic farmer, Biochemist/Biomedical Scientist, Social Scientist, EU Expert in Agricultural Productivity & Sustainability.

# Depopulation and socioeconomic deprivation.

We aim to drive a rural renaissance, supporting a Just transition for our communities recognising the challenges of climate change.

We are developing a sustainable network for hemp, flax and MAPS. There was a tradition of growing these crops in Ireland.

Struggling farms can stack enterprises. With local processing providing meaningful employment.

At a local level we are working on the “People’s Transition” which is run by TASC. This encourages empowerment of the local community.

Image source: Aalen, F. H. A., Whelan, K., Stout, W. (1997). *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Cork: Cork University Press.

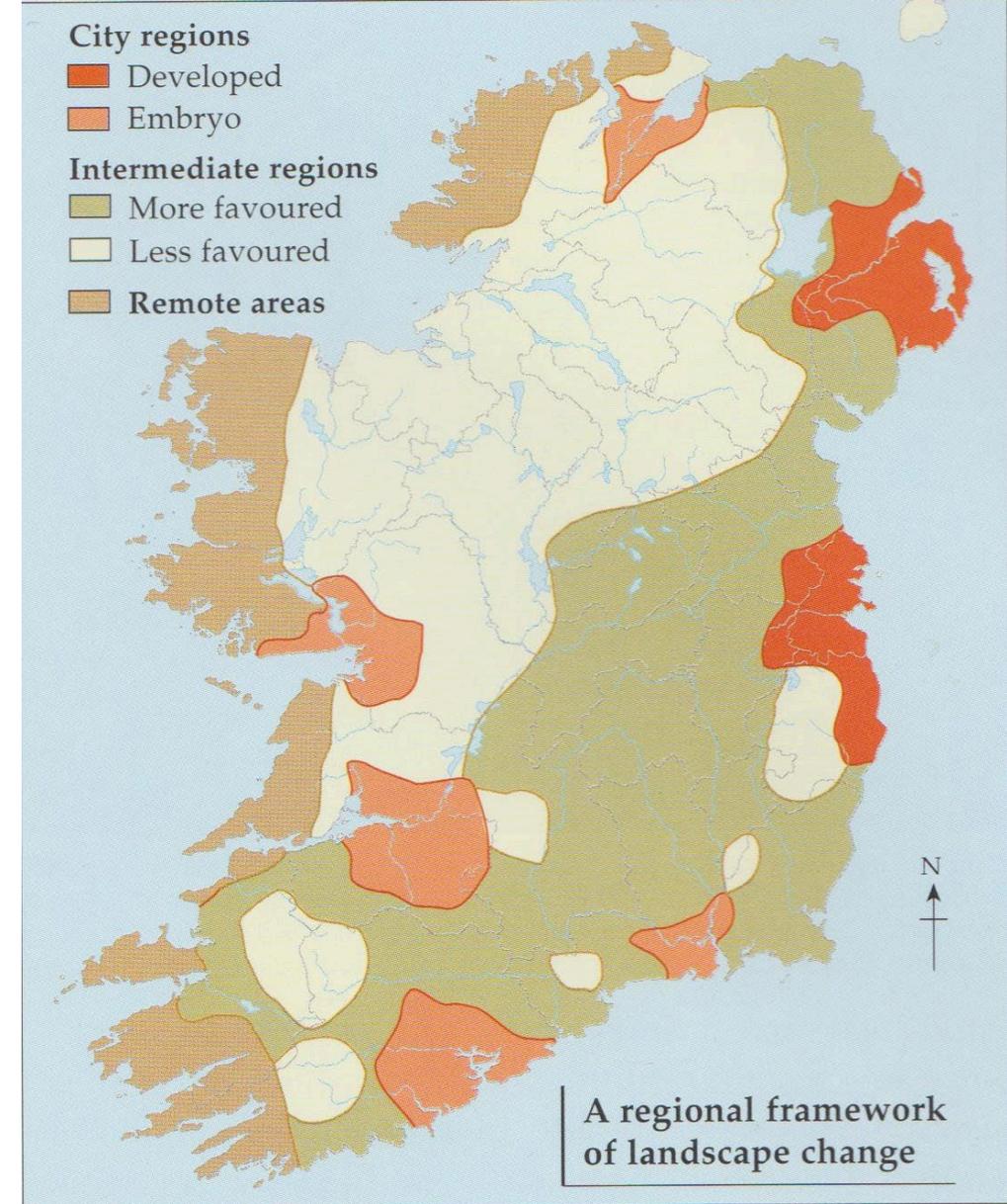


Fig. 3 The nature of landscape change varies substantially in different types of region, ranging from strong urban encroachment in city hinterlands to rapidly evolving agricultural land use in intermediate areas and depopulation, tourism development, land abandonment and afforestation in remote areas.

# Needs and Barriers.

- The Co-op needs support and policy changes to achieve our potential. Current policy means we are locked out of funding.
- Rural areas like North Kerry are written off and designated as in decline, services and infrastructure are being withdrawn. We need funding to support the disruptive potential of co-ops to save our communities.
- Do we need to enshrine a value on social capital across Europe?

# Rural Renaissance needs to be social.

- Formation of social cooperatives which register as social (charitable) trusts, to facilitate funding.
- A social cooperative (not for profit) will invest surplus into the community thus allowing new ideas to flourish.
- Keeping communities knitted together and encouraging disruptive thinking to repopulate depleted areas is needed now.