

[Cèilidh music]

PAT JESS

Although Southwest Donegal is economically disadvantaged by its relative remoteness, it's culturally rich. With other residual pockets of Gaelic culture in the West of Ireland, this area is central to the survival of Irish as a living language.

Poverty and a lack of jobs led to decades of emigration which decimated the Irish speaking community. Agriculture, even modernised agriculture could not by itself stem the flow of emigration. To retain what was left of an Irish speaking culture, employment was needed, and that meant bringing in manufacturing industry. But wouldn't this undermine the unique culture still further? Would the cure kill the patient?

In this programme we look at how the local synthesis of the economy and culture has been reconstructed around new types of industrial development. Cathal MacSuihbne is the local representative of Udaras Na Gaeltachta, the state authority charged with promoting industry in Irish speaking areas. What are the problems of industrialising in a peripheral region?

CATHAL MACSUIBHNE

Well the economic-based area was built on subsistence farming, small fishing, homecraft industries, which basically was very weak, supporting a lot of both young and elderly people. That base had to be developed by trying to promote returned emigrants who got their skills and obtained their skills abroad in England and Scotland and in the States, developing existing industries such as the tweed and the spinning here, promoting industries from outside the area that came in to give employment and that gives skills. It's along those lines starting from a very weak base, trying to get marketable products, that is the exercise basically.

[End of recording]