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*Theme 1*

***NARRATIVES AND PRACTICES AMONGST NEWCOMERS IN RURAL SPAIN: CHALLENGES IN THREE CASE STUDIES***

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**Theoretical framework and contextualisation of research**

In Spain, in common with many other countries, diverse rural scenarios have appeared due to several interconnected processes. Specifically, the emergence of new functions of rural territory and the increasing heterogeneity of rural newcomers such as ex-urban groups, neo-rural residents or labour migrants (Camarero, 2009; Oliva, 2010; Rivera, 2007). In consequence, a more diverse and complex migration pattern brings along to rural territories the incorporation of differing practices and social representations of the rural; country-like lifestyles; new vulnerabilities or socio-spatial inequalities related to diverse power relations (Halfacree, 2008; Oliva, 2010); and a variety of motivations or decision-making processes (Bijker, 2012; Grimsrud, 2011; Stockdale, 2014).

Focussing on understanding how new rural residents' interact within different scenarios of rurality in the Spanish context, the research giving birth to this paper is based on a biographical and holistic approach (Halfacree and Rivera, 2012; Rivera, 2013). In so doing, it attempts to achieve a diversity of migration experiences not only taking into account spatial representations but also a huge range of expectations about a new life in the rural and other relevant aspects such as previous residential experience, economic restrictions or the necessary conditions for the success of migrants' life ventures.

The present research is based on three case studies contextualised in different scenarios of rurality in contemporary Spain: (1) an scenario of *hyperproductivist rurality* whose development is extremely linked to the success of its agro-industry: strawberry region (Huelva in Andalusia); (2) an scenario of *consumption rurality* characterised by a more postproductivist assessment of a remote rural area: Las Batuecas-Sierra de Francia (Salamanca); (3) an scenario of *interstitial rurality* where the evolution of metropolitan villages is connected with the proximity to the city: Metropolitan Area of Pamplona (Navarre). Each of these contexts represents a life scenario for new residents. That is, they constitute different structural frameworks to organize residents' everyday life, to make (im)possible to fulfil their expectations, and so forth<sup>1</sup>.

### **Research problem**

The purpose of this paper is double: (1) gaining an insight into different aspects such as new rural residents' representations of the rural, quotidian practices, and engagement with the community; (2) acquiring a deeper knowledge of these aspects in three different rural scenarios in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the rural diversification, and also how new residents interact with the new place and at what extent these places mobilise different opportunities for them.

### **Research Methods**

A mixed method data collection approach was adopted. Firstly, we compare data between the Spanish population censuses 2001 year and 2011 year in order to explore socio-demographic changes occurred in the study-areas. Secondly, 18 in-depth interviews were undertaken to key informants from councils, enterprises, associations and former new residents across the three study areas in order to ascertain perceptions of the newcomers and their interaction with the local community. Thirdly, we conducted in-depth interviews with about 50 rural newcomers distributed into the three rural scenarios, taking into account different criteria such as year of arrival at the municipality, residence time, gender, age, and labor situation.

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## **Preliminary results**

The project is actually at the stage of analysing interviewees' narratives. Therefore, the analysis is still open. Despite this openness that may lead to unexpected elements, the preliminary analysis reflects the necessity of understanding the trend to move to a rural place as a multidimensional and complex process. In most of the cases, the conjunction of many drivers is necessary to understand the decision to move and even the migration experience itself. Furthermore, the analysis also prevents us from looking at the phenomenon as a homogenous one. Quite the opposite, the phenomenon of new rural residents is highly heterogeneous and has different implications for the rural territory and community, as well as for the sustainability of a given model of development.

Unsurprisingly enough, in the scenario of *hyperproductivist rurality*, interviews allow us to see a clear distinction between those who move there looking for a job in agriculture (mostly under-skilled foreign workers) and those who moved there driven by a series of circumstances that came together to make the move a desirable and feasible change (mainly workers or small entrepreneurs in service sector). Consequently, while the former's narratives do not pay attention to postproductivist representations of the rural, the latter's ones reflect the assumption of postproductivist representations, at a diverse grade of relevance though. Differences between them are based not just upon their representational framework or their characteristics (formation, -lack of- economic resources, and so on) but in the way they are able to organize their everyday life in the community and the demands they have in relation to the rural locality.

In the case of the *consumption rurality* scenario, interviewees' narratives show a common representational framework to assess elements such as quality of life, rural life, community, and so forth. Nevertheless, even if new rural dwellers present a pro-rural tendency, interviews show that, for most of them, this is not enough to migrate. This pro-rural tendency seems to be '*activated*' when other factors appear in migrants' lives such as unemployment or a desire to change own life. Although the symbolic background is shared at a great extent by interviewed migrants, their experience in the new place differs due to relevant aspects such as previous knowledge of the locality or region, previous residential experience in rural places, economic resources, and so forth.

Finally, as for the *interstitial rurality* scenario is concerned, results point to three different types of new residents: those who moved to suburban and periurban villages looking for a cheaper house and, in some cases, were 'forced' to move as a consequence of a given

housing policy (council estates); those who moved to small villages (mainly to new residential developments) in search of a better quality of life, tranquility and a bigger house comprising private garden and garage; and finally, those who move as an attempt not just to get a better quality of life but also to embrace, somehow, a more rural-like living by moving to country houses in the small villages. Three of them share some representational elements of the rural, although they played a different role as drivers of the move. Similarly, in the three types, interviewees work mainly in Pamplona. Despite sharing some features of the representational background as well as everyday commuting, new rural residents may differ in the extent they wish to become engaged to the new community.

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