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Theme 1

***BETWEEN UPROOTING AND RESISTANCE. EMERGING MEANINGS
OF THE RURAL***

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Since the theory of modernization the rural exodus has proven itself to be a logical and inevitable consequence of the process of industrialization, so much so that the model of urban society has established itself uncritically as the ideal of modernity, as the supreme paradigm of civilization (Entrena, 1998:127), and rural uprooting seems inevitable, desirable, logical. According to Bourdieu (2004), the social order functions as a vast and subtle machine that tends to reproduce and to naturalize domination. Gender and rurality are social constructions. The rural was born and has grown in parallel with the development of the cities. Villages become old-fashioned and are masculinised; city centres are feminized. In the literary classics expositions abound based on the objective factors of rural expulsion (*push*) or urban attraction (*pull*) described by Wirth as a “spell” (1938:5), and by Bourdieu as “urban fascination” (2004), a consequence of the symbolic domination associating modernity and urbanization with the emancipation of the individual.

Physical, social and cultural mobility, and, above all, the “willingness to change” (*habitat and habitus*) are related to the position occupied in the social territory and hierarchy. The structures of domination determine the distribution of employment, economic, cultural and social opportunities between the centre and the periphery. Those who have fewer opportunities migrate more, although, migration is, in addition, an effect of cultural colonization. In accordance with Bourdieu (2004:226) the “hypnotic power” of the city, like

rural uprooting, is the accumulated product of innumerable individual conversions which favour or trigger stages of psychological distancing from the land and the family home (Bourdieu, 2004:227). However, in modern societies, the intensity of the mobility of people, merchandise and messages (Ibáñez, 1991:98) modifies the framework on which rural space is constructed. Today images and representations of rurality are fragmented and transformed in post-industrial societies. “The country and the city lose their previous meanings, which are definitively disrupted. The old identities are left meaningless” (Vicente-Mazariegos in Camarero, 1993:3)

The purpose of this paper is to show the diversity of images of rurality, categorizing the fragmentation of meanings, through the observation of the attitudes and social representations of women uprooted from their small towns.

The migrations illustrate the relations of conflict and subordination of the country to the city. Whoever migrates interiorises “and displays, in turn, this conflict of attitudes and objective behaviours in the country (...) in terms of rooting and uprooting” (Pérez Díaz, 1971:36). The internalization of the dominant values, willingness to migrate or resistance are variables, mental categories of perception. The structures of meaning, whether these are conceived as discourse, social representation or *habitus*, do not refer to a micro phenomenon, but to a social phenomenon observable by means of qualitative techniques for capturing meaning. Knowing the reasons for the uprooting entails observing the interiorized social representations; therefore the means of observation must be essentially qualitative.

The duality of meanings of rural uprooting (objective, physical; subjective, disaffection) makes it advisable to use complementary methodology (Bericat, 1998:114), since rooting or “objective attachment” (Bourdieu, 2000:219) is manifested in the family and social ties maintained; in behaviours, whose intensity and frequency are quantifiable. However, emotional uprooting, subjective detachment, is more intangible since it is “the tangible result of the force of urban attraction, which the different agents counterpose to the inertia of the *habitus* in the social fields of interaction and which is constituted by the categories of perception and social identity” (op. cit. 219).

This article reveals the results of a doctoral thesis research project, conducted on this issue in the Autonomous Community of Valencia (Spain). The methodological approach attempted to understand the discourses (from what they say), but was complemented with questionnaires measuring attitudes and behaviours (what they do), obtaining triangulated data in order to

know the emergent meanings and obtain a discursive taxonomy of village women, in contrast to their attitudes and behaviours (ties).

The population studied in this research was women uprooted from rural districts, who migrated to the city of Valencia. The units in the selected sample were between 25 and 50 years old (in 2010), with an average age of 35: there were 16 young women (from 25 to 35 years old) and 16 from 36 to 50 years old. The number of women in each group in the sample was determined according to the principle of discursive saturation, from an optimal representation of the variables age, civil status and habitat size. Between November 2010 and February 2011, forty interviews were conducted in their native language (Catalan or Castilian Spanish) and ultimately 32 cases from 12 outlying districts were analysed. The functional boundary of the rural population studied was positioned at small towns with fewer than 5000 inhabitants¹ that are outlying and are more than 50 km away from the city of Valencia. During the phase of organizing and interpreting the discourses a map of codes and categories was produced in order to categorize the 1650 quotations selected from the transcripts. In addition, two standardized questionnaires were used in order to determine the degree of rooting/uprooting, the first, in order to record the behaviours (socio-demographic variables and ties), and the second, in order to obtain the degree of *topophilia* (attitudes). In the latter case a Likert questionnaire was used, where each interviewee responded with the extent to which she agreed or disagreed with some categorical positive or negative statements referring to the rural or urban environment.

The observation of the attitudes shows the discursive profiles to be variable according to the degree of rural rooting or uprooting, consistent with personal trajectories. The results suggest that, effectively, the meaning of rurality is fragmented, between those fascinated by the urban way of life and the emergence of a discourse of resistance to the urban supremacy among the young women. The most urbanized women were already seduced by *Urbanism as a way of life* (Wirth, 1938) before “fleeing” from the village and bringing their urban project to fruition. For this group of women, the city was a hope of emancipation. Others sought autonomy and the modern style of life through a profession; they are independent, proud of “being modern and from the village at the same time” (Díaz, 2005:80); they live between two worlds; and they show high levels of ruralphilia and urbophilia. Finally, the resistant young women show a lesser degree of urban integration. It seems as if they have not even arrived,

¹ In 2010 there were 384 small towns in the Autonomous Community of Valencia with fewer than 5000 inhabitants, where some 500,000 people were living, 10% of the total population.

they are from the village and are passing through the city, resigned; they practise a kind of instrumental uprooting, due to work or their partner; circumstantial and contradictory: it is a kind of utopian rural rooting (Ribera, 2009) since they will not leave the city, though convinced of *Rurality as a way of life* (Halfacree, 1997), and they express more urbophobia and more ruralphilia, rural resistance. The meanings of the country and the city change in late modernity. The results observed in these Valencian women suggest that urbophobia is increasing in the discourses of young women of rural origin. It is a breakdown in the symbolic structures of domination, which calls into question rural subordination and secular urban supremacy.

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