

International Conference Meanings of the Rural – between social representations, consumptions and rural development strategies

28-29 September 2015, University of Aveiro, Portugal

Theme 2

***ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR POLICIES TOWARDS URBAN-RURAL
MIGRATION***

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A shift is starting to emerge, with rural areas in non-metropolitan areas attracting especially urban population. In Portugal this is a recent phenomenon when compared to other Western European countries. Consequences are still difficult to perceive and to compare with international cases, particularly in terms of rural intervention driven by rising consumption demands.

Literature review points out that new social demands and consumptions in Portuguese rural areas by urban people are mainly through residential, country estates and recreational/lifestyle activities (Figueiredo, 2003). Some urban dwellers return to their land of origin, bringing new consumption patterns connected to leisure and recreation (Krannich et al., 2011) contributing in several regions to the enhancement of the local economies (Baptista, 2010). Rural migration can be an opportunity for the renewal of rural areas through the inflow of new ideas, influences and skills (ECORYS, 2010). It plays a key role not only in maintaining population but also in the diversity of activities delivered by rural areas (Wilson, 2001). Despite these changes, most rural development initiatives and projects conducted by local governments in Portugal do not seem to privilege actions that enhance the rural character and are rather more directed at the provision of services, such as small

industries and other urban commodities that generate immediate revenues (Baptista, 2010). Patterns of social and demographic change and resource demand can bring forth feedbacks between communities and their resources with unpredictable outcomes (Alessa *et al.*, 2008). In addition the interactions between social groups whose activities and decisions affect the local ecosystems may be critical to cope with changes.

Areas affected by urban-rural migration and new development are likely to witness the emergence of new types and forms of social interaction and organization (Krannich *et al.*, 2011). Migrants may contribute to maintain a certain level of service provision – both in the public and private sector. However, some authors point out housing affordability, gentrification, local service provision and community cohesion as problems due to in-migration processes.

That said, development policies need to take into account the migration processes in rural areas, creating economic opportunities to encourage return and in-migrant flows as well as develop retention policies (Stockdale, Findlay, & Short, 2000; Stockdale, 2006). Sectors like tourism, agriculture and tertiary industry have been stimulated by policy intervention (ECORYS, 2010). However policy measures such as vocational training, support for setting up businesses in rural areas and the provision of social services for migrants have been left behind. For Stockdale (2006) policies need to assist migration processes in rural areas namely through financial assistance and training initiatives.

In the extensive literature on rural in-migration there is very little evidence of a link, either direct or indirect, of the role of the policies fostering urban-rural migration phenomenon. Furthermore national indicators for rural areas indicate that the population continues to decline, qualification does not improve and unemployment increases, not reflecting recent trends. In the Portuguese case, the investment made by municipalities to counteract depopulation is based on the promotion of initiatives such as “attractiveness of companies that create jobs, or reducing taxes, such as IMT, with the purchase of home, provide scholarships, payment of the nursery tuition, land with infrastructure at reduced prices to household arrangements, birth subsidies or discount cards for young and senior” (Negócios Online, 2012). Despite bearing in mind that it is important to attract people, municipalities do not seem to have the notion of full potential that this change may bring, or the means to make it possible.

So how can policy-making and planning instruments lead change and improve the sustainability of territories, and attract people? Such a study may be important to inform local governants and help identify the means they require.

Previous research on this phenomena in Portugal revealed that urban-rural movements seem to be driven mostly by lifestyle conditions rather than by economic conditions (“Urban-rural migration - motivations and attraction factors” presented in 2014 at the “International Conference Southern and Mediterranean Europe: Social Change, Challenges and Opportunities in a Time of Crisis” Évora, Portugal). In Greece family networks and housing availability lead recent urban-rural migration (Gkartzios, 2013). In the Spanish case for example (Sáez, Ayuda, & Pinilla, 2011) observed that the demographic regeneration of the rural areas from the end of last century up to recent times is a result of spontaneous migration. Furthermore after installation migrants find several blockers as reported in literature some of them related to weak regulation regarding their needs.

To further research and improve knowledge on this phenomena a gap policy analysis is needed relating to context specific aspects. Results of a questionnaire to urban-rural migrants (completed on November 2014), interviews to local actors (currently ongoing) and a review of initiatives and mechanisms that enhance the recent movements towards rural communities by newcomers will support this analysis. Other relevant aspect is to analyse policy integration with the purpose of identifying policy conflicts and overlaps.

This presentation shares initial results of this policy analysis and attempts to advance a proposal for a framework that will enable deepening the gap analysis of existing national, regional and municipal policies that are relevant to the study of urban to rural movements in Portugal. The aim of the proposed framework, based on key relevant criteria, is to investigate if existing policy determines conflicts, and creates blockades, or instead if it enhances, and consequently attracts people’s interests in rural areas.

This framework will consequently aim to understand if policies contribute to promote collaboration among agents, namely with respect to the management of ecosystems in connection with socio-ecological systems, and to what extent newcomers represent additional gains. Future outcomes of this research aim to contribute to the improvement of existing policies, and the creation of new policies that may enhance the sustainability of rural territories based on a new population dynamics.

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