

NEW RESIDENTIAL USES IN RURAL AREAS OF CASTILLA Y LEÓN

Milagros Alario Trigueros
Fernando Molinero Hernando
Erica Morales Prieto

Departamento de Geografía. Universidad de Valladolid
alario@fyl.uva.es, molinero@fyl.uva.es, ericamoralesprieto@hotmail.com

There is a clear contrast between the rural population and the settlement in Castilla y León. With a regressive dynamics in population from the mid-twentieth century, villages have kept the number of nuclei of settlement and even have grown up in the number of houses. So, the permanent residential use of the villages is not their only function. In fact, much of the economic dynamics, like the implement of services and the development of construction sector, are directly related to the temporary use of space

The study is based on analysis of the Census of Population and Housing 1991 and 2011, for assessing the population dynamics and the evolution of the number and type of dwellings, and in the 2001 Census, for the characterization of the population involved («vinculada») in rural municipalities. We have completed the demographic data analysis with the «Nomenclator» (that is, the Census of Population, with the details of each unit of settlement) of these years, and we have used some other recent data («Padrón» –Census- 2013) to compare demographic and economic variables of that year, especially those concerning the employed population by sector and economic branch in September 2013, according to the Register of contributors to the Social Security in each municipality of Castilla y León. We also have processed the data from the Survey of Local Infrastructures and Equipments 1995 and 2012, published by the Ministry of Treasury and Public Administration, to study the use of temporary houses.

I. THE DEMOGRAPHIC STAGES OF THE RURAL AREA IN CASTILLA Y LEÓN: FROM THE INCREASE TO THE DRAMATIC DECLINE AND TO THE SOFT RECOVERY

In Castilla y León are distinguished three clear demographic phases in the XX and XXI centuries (see figure 1 of the Spanish version).

1. From the consolidation phase till the decline and demographic breakdown

At the mid-twentieth century begins in the region, and throughout Spain, a drastic economic, social and territorial change, based on a process of modernization, that forced to leave

the countryside to millions of rural inhabitants. This impressive rural exodus, concentrated in few years, led not only to economic and social improvements, but also to regional imbalances. There was a strong polarization, resulting from the concentration of economic activity in a few regions, compared to the depopulation of others, mainly rural, in the inner regions of the rural space. While Spain won inhabitants, Castilla y León lost them, with a deficit of 385,260 people between 1950 and 2000. If that year had 2.86 M inhb, in 2000 shrunk to 2.48, representing a loss of 13.45%. By contrast, the Spanish territory went from M inhb 28.12 in 1950 to 40.50 in 2000, an increase of 44% (12,381,918 people).

Castilla y León, as shown in figure 1 (Spanish version), suffers a sustained population loss since 1955 (although the 1960 Census does not register it yet), till the beginning of XXI century. It is the distinctive character of rural areas, which we have defined in figure 2 (see Spanish version), by applying quantitative and objective criteria, on the one hand, and qualitative, on the other. The definition of the Law 45/2007 on Sustainable Rural Development, with subsequent amendments, allows us to conceptualize as «rural municipalities» those under 30,000 inhb and, at the same time, having a density below 100 inhabitants / km². In this way, we avoid the uncertain threshold of 2,000 or 10,000 inhb, which in the peri urban fringes qualifies to numerous municipalities as rural, despite its peri-urban character.

2. The path to an uncertain recovery

In fact, we can see that in the decade 2001-2011 occurs a change in demographic tendency unknown until then in the countryside. So, compared to the period 1950-2000, in which only the cities, their suburban fringes and about twenty regional centers won population, in the recent years of the XXI century there has been 423 rural municipalities that increased its population, in 61,085 inhb, even though the rest of the countryside (1,770, including 19 with neutral balance) has lost 97,817, giving a general loss of 3.3% compared with the population at the beginning of the century.

If we consider the region as a whole, a small growth is produced, but considering only rural municipalities, the balance remains negative, although if we analyze the distribution of gains and losses, we can see some significant phenomena that reveal a very singular spatial evolution, as shown on the map of population balances between 2001 and 2011 (figure 3 in Spanish version).

But can we talk about new dwellers in countryside of Castilla y León? «New resident people» is understood as the person performing a migratory movement from urban to rural, and, having lived in urban areas, decides to change his residence, and, as far as possible, his work to the rural areas, driven by the search for a better quality of life and environment, employment opportunities and a different model of the housing than that of the cities, thus generating new settlements or modifying the existent ones (Morales and Alario, 2012: 215). The arrival of new settlers is interpreted as an overcoming of the lack of dynamism, but it does not compensate for other outputs and much less the losses due to the vegetative balance. Although the arrival of new settlers, foreign or domestic, has supposed an incipient change, has not been able to correct the negative demographic imbalances, among which highlights the high aging (map-figure 4), which, in certain sense, looks to a negative image of the growing municipalities (map-figure 3, in Spanish version).

II. THE MAINTENANCE OF THE SETTLEMENT NETWORK AND THE INCREASE OF THE NUMBER OF BUILDINGS AND HOUSES

In front of the regressive dynamics of the regional population, that of the villages is, however, stable, and even positive. Between 2000 and 2013 the number of municipalities has only been increased by one, from 2,247 to 2,248. Furthermore, according to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2013 there were in Castilla y León 8,315 population units, just over a quarter of it was disperse, and the rest, 5,911, concentrated, with differentiated spatial personality.

The network of villages represents the fundamental number of units of settlement (71%) and people (99% of the population). The villages of very small size dominate clearly, with over 11% under 10 inhb and over 90% below 500 people. Only 22 nuclei can be considered, according to statistical criteria (INS), strictly urban, with more than 10,000 inhabitants. These are the provincial capitals plus some important industrial cities non-capital, like Ponferrada, Aranda de Duero, Miranda de Ebro, or relevant services centers like La Bañeza, Astorga, Benavente, Medina del Campo, Béjar and Ciudad Rodrigo, which include traditional industries, and some suburban towns such as Laguna de Duero, Arroyo de la Encomienda, Trobajo del Camino and Santa Marta de Tormes; meanwhile the demarcation conducted for this study includes thirty other dynamic suburban municipalities. The countryside, or the rural municipalities as a whole, continues to lose population, but earning temporary residents.

III. THE RESIDENTIAL TEMPORARY USES: SALVATION OF RURAL SPACES OF CASTILLA Y LEÓN?

The tradition of the rural leisure of the «sons of the village» justifies the temporary return of emigrants from the 1960s, who constitute the main support for the maintenance of the village or even for the construction of new houses. However, they are accompanied by new rural tourists, moved by the chlorophyll mentality and the tranquility of the rural environment. Some professionals join them, also attracted by the chlorophyll ideology. Nevertheless, the consolidated growth in some rural municipalities is mainly due to the inhabitants residing in outer peri urban environments and in some counties and dynamic axes. It is in this privileged rural countryside where new professionals are registering themselves and fixing their residence as a way of life option. The entity and meaning of each group is very different.

1. The value of the seasonal or floating population

The floating population reaches a regional average of 221% (according to the Survey of Infrastructures); this means that the inhabitants of the months of July and August, plus other holiday periods, multiplied by 2.2 the number of resident inhabitants. But this average hides the fact that the population increase of the most attractive villages arrives to multiply by 10 and up to by 22 the number of usual residents. Just take a look at figure 5 (Spanish version) to check that are the smallest villages those that have the higher seasonal increase, compared to the resident population, although this fact does not allow to see the spatial distribution of temporary residents, which largely coincides with the «strong» spaces (figure 6).

So, it is producing a specialization in second homes, which, in the villages more dynamic, have become first homes; the same process has occurred in the outer fringes of the area of influence of Madrid, which goes beyond the southern slope of the Central Cordillera and jumps to the northern provinces of Ávila, Segovia and Soria. It is also evident in the NW of Zamora and a good portion of the N of Palencia and Burgos and NE of Leon. Generally, they are seasonal residents, that provide temporary resources and dynamism to the villages in which, for its attractive, are proliferating suburbs in some cases, or are being rebuilt old houses, or constructed new ones, in others, with the detail that those closer to Madrid and provincial capitals are often converted to principal residences and their inhabitants in new rural residents, although far from the suburban fringes of the cities.

2. The magnitude and meaning of the new constructions

The shapes, location and characteristics of these dwellings (type, age, equipment ...) have clear effects on the organization of the settlement, notably the creation of new suburbs at the periphery and the abandonment of the central sectors of villages. The renewal affects a total of 183,495 households, built after 2002, representing 18% of total houses of municipalities under 20,000 inh, which exceed one million (table 3, Spanish version). This means a considerable dynamism all over rural Spain, and, particularly, over rural Castilla y Leon, that have made a large investment effort in the renovation of their homes, and this fact has produced a higher proportion of employed people in the rural construction sector than in the urban one. Nevertheless, many houses are empty, as befits the status of non-resident owners. Next to these, another type of constructions are increasingly having more importance: the rural houses and other tourist lodgings

3. New impulse of the «rural houses» and other type of accommodation for rural tourism

Castilla y León, with its territorial vastness, has the largest number of rural houses of Spain. The rural tourism places (beds) are available primarily in smaller municipalities, as the client looks for the tranquility that waits to find more easily in this type of villages (figure 8, Spanish version). So, for a total of 65,560 places of rural tourism accommodation, 69% are in the under 2,000 inh municipalities, although the hotel rooms tend to concentrate more on the larger municipalities, especially in those bigger than 2,000 inh, which account for almost half of such places in less than one hundred villages.

The observable distribution of the rural lodgings confirms the tendency to a certain densification in the rural most attractive regions, especially when they are close to large urban centers, which are issuers of «tourists», i e, of potential customers. Again, the southern slopes of the mountains of Avila and Segovia, followed by Salamanca and Soria, are those that have higher density, but the Cantabrian Mountains, in particular the Eastern Mountain of León, or the Mountain of Palencia, or Merindades of Burgos, in relation to Asturias and Bilbao, also show its importance. We must add to this a general dispersion, corresponding to an increased value of the countryside; we can also see the growing role of the Camino de Santiago in offering rural accommodation

All these aspects have an impact on rural employment and economic activities. It is very clear that Castilla y León is a rural region, where agricultural employment has fallen to very low limits, but that is not what has happened in the countryside, since its economic diversification is more related to a decline in agricultural employment than to a growth of the rest of jobs. The weight of agricultural employment is overwhelming over a large part of the territory, although that the new professionals, spread by the most unexpected places, are slightly modifying the dominant situation.

4. The meaning of the new professionals

The contraction of the labour market in the rural areas of Castilla y León has been so strong that any slight movement produces a new configuration. Thus, the structure of the nearly 264,000 rural workers can be modified by the addition of a few thousand jobs, such as occurs during the summer periods, specially in the branch of restoration and rural tourism. The 3,872 «rural houses» and rural lodging centers (in 2012), although many are rented without any service, contribute to increase the employments.

However, what is striking in the segment of new professionals is the arriving of new settlers, very few, but that tend to grow and to diversify their businesses, which, nevertheless, concentrate on services and, for women, in education, healthcare, and on the branches of the restauration and hotels.

IV. EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESIDENT WORKERS AND OF THE NEW PROFESSIONALS

The analysis of employment in rural areas shows the weight of the agricultural activities, much higher in the smallest villages.

1. Occupational and territorial hierarchy in the rural municipalities of Castilla y León

More than a half of the regional municipalities exceeds 40% employees in agriculture. In addition, these 1,167 municipalities are spread across nearly 40,000 km², in which does not live more than 9% of the regional population, so that we can delimit and identify to 41% of the territory of Castilla y León as agricultural region, or deep rural.

Indeed, analysis of the structure of the employed population in the rural areas of Castilla y León confirms that the overall average is over 20% in farming, giving its highest concentration in the vast central plains of extensive farming, kingdom of the dryland cereal and live-stock sheep: Tierra de Campos, the Cerratos and the western peneplains reach the maximum values in agricultural employment, together with the eastern and southern platforms of Soria, in addition to Tierra Llana in Avila or the Bureba in Burgos. It is observed a less weight of agriculture in mountainous regions, specially in those of León and Zamora, and even also in those of Segovia and Avila in the Central Cordillera, and in the Mountains of Burgos.

This striking fact is derived from the loss of agricultural weight of those areas, because the rural exodus has been so great that the agricultural employment has dropped dramatically in favor of that reached by other activities, mainly those related to the temporary use

of space, and more specifically, with the proliferation of tourist services, accommodation and restaurants, which both in the Cantabrian Mountain and in the Central one, and W or NW of Leon and Zamora, employ over 20% of workers. They are the two sides of the coin: the agricultural plains have specialized more in agriculture, while traditional livestock and forestry mountains have lost weight in their activity and now emerge as «territories of functional diversity» based on the general scarcity of employment and, singularly, on the reduced employment in agriculture (see and compare figures 9 and 10 of the Spanish version).

So, the employment structure reveals and confirms these ideas, since two-thirds of those employed in regional rural municipalities are working in agriculture, trade and repair, construction, tourism services and food industries (figure 11, Spanish); the activities of newcomers have very little value.

2. The uniqueness of the new settlers in rural areas

Newcomers are located primarily, although not exclusively, in the areas of influence of the cities, where they have a diverse range of occupations, essentially related to personal or cultural services. Thus, in the southern towns of Segovia or Avila, there are plenty of horse farms offering touristic sightseeing, enterprises that develop nature trails, others for gardening and pet care, various sports ... This cohort of new rural people is the most significant in number, because many of them live in the countryside, but work in the city, as it happens in the case of many professionals in the branch of the culture or leisure. Joining them is the case of the vocational rural newcomers, which, though few in number, are growing. They are the neo-rural, who have decided to live in rural areas, voluntarily and knowingly, in terms of residence and work.

It is clear that the services sector is the major one for the activity of these new settlers, since over 80% of them work in it; by contrast, only 14% is devoted to farming, 2% to industry and 2% to construction. But, within the services, an expressive distribution is observed, given that exists some balance in all the branches, except in that of health and tourism, although with more weight in the trade. It is interesting to view that women do not want nor agriculture nor construction, as they double the men in the field of administration and management and there is a trend to a certain balance in the others (Figure 12).

V. CONCLUSION. THE NEW SETTLERS: BETWEEN THE URBAN INFLUENCE AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF A NEW RURAL PARADIGM

The rural space of Castilla and Leon, like others, has known a deep transformation over the last half century. The rural exodus of the 60s and 70s was accompanied by the modernization of countryside, which resulted completely disorganized. However, the loss of people was not followed, except some exceptions, for the loss of villages. The settlement network, dense and ready for a much larger population, has remained, and has even grown in number of population units.

These contradictory aspects are mainly explained by the change of use of rural areas, which, after undertaking an economic and technical modernization since the mid last century, have known a clear specialization process, so that the old cereal plains have reduced

their activity to an increasingly technological and less demanding labour agriculture, which has led to a functional poor diversification and a clear demographic constraints, only surpassed in some areas, stripes or «zones» of irrigated land or of vineyards, because these cultivations are more exigent in labour force. By contrast, mountainous areas, devoted to forest and livestock, where farming has had more trouble adjusting to a very competitive modern market, have known not only a population depletion but also a loss of agricultural or livestock enterprises. So, the mountainous areas have been precisely the territories most benefited by these new activities and new uses of rural space.