

CONFERENCE

Policies with regard to mobility and welcoming newcomers in rural territories: public action with regard to new lifestyle geographies

Lyon, 8-9 December 2011

Theme 2: Furthering the debate on 'territoriality and inter-territoriality'

Author: María Jesús Rivera-Escribano, Department of Sociology, Public University of Navarre, Spain, mariajesus.rivera@unavarra.es

Title: *Why do I move to the countryside? What do I expect from my new rural community?*

Paradoxically enough, western societies are said to be more and more urban at the same time that certain rural communities become the residential destination of a growing number of ex-urban population. This urban-to-rural migration is said to be greatly related to a new assessment of 'the rural' that emphasizes values such as: aesthetic recreation, tranquility, conviviality, safety, wilderness, and so on. However, besides the role played by these spatial representations in the move, urban-to-rural migrations are the outcome of a complex connection of diverse factors: economic resources, personal circumstances, expectations of the rural life and the new community, access to auto-mobility, amenities, and so forth.

According to the different combination of these factors, and in order to make their expectations of their life in the rural community become true, rural newcomers develop their own relation with the new territory (and its population), giving rise to new ruralities and new urban-rural relationships. In so doing, the broad labels 'rural newcomers', 'ex-urban dwellers', 'neo-rurals', etc., are broken into a 'plurality of rural newcomers', a 'diversity of ex-urban dwellers', a 'heterogeneity of neo-rurals'. These nuances become relevant for the design and implementation of policies that aim to attract and attach newcomers to certain territories.

This paper aims to discuss these issues from the findings of a case study. Although the case study is based on Spain, some of the findings may be applied (and compared) to other spatial contexts. The methodology of the study was based on the execution of diverse in-depth interviews to different profiles of urban-to-rural migrants. The findings showed that the inner driving force of their move varied between the pragmatic instrumentality and the fulfillment of migrants' existential needs. New rural residents' hopes and expectations of the new community as well as the extent new residents wished to become committed to it differed accordingly to the migrants' position between these two poles.

Short bibliography

- Bell, D. (2006): 'Variations on the rural idyll'. P. Cloke, T. Marsden and P. Mooney (eds.): *Handbook of Rural Studies*. London, Sage.
- Boyle, P. and Halfacree, K. (eds.) (1998): *Migration into Rural Areas. Theories and Issues*. Chichester, John Wiley.
- Gosnell, H. and Abrams, J. (2009): 'Amenity migration: diverse conceptualizations of drivers, socioeconomic dimensions, and emerging challenges'. *GeoJournal*, DOI. 10.1007/s10708-009-9295-4
- Ingold, T. (2008): 'Bindings against boundaries: entanglements of life in an open world'. *Environment and Planning A* 40, pp. 1796-1810.
- Rivera-Escribano, M. J. and Mormont, M.(2006): 'Neo-rurality and the different meanings of the countryside'. C. Bèssiere et al. (coord.): *Les mondes ruraux à l'épreuve des sciences sociales*. Dijon, Quae Éditions, pp. 33-45.
- Rivera-Escribano, M. J. (2007): 'Migration to rural Navarre: Questioning the Experience of Counterurbanisation'. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 98, 1, pp. 32-41.