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Mobility and household forms as adaptive strategies of rural populations¹

ABSTRACT

Social and territorial inequalities take on new dimensions in times of economic recession. The impact of the crisis on policies aimed at achieving equity in access to opportunities and the provision of public services has been particularly acute in rural areas of Southern Europe. This article analyses the role that mobility, household composition and family networks play in the strategies that social groups use when facing such periods of uncertainty. We first analyse the changes in the forms of rural governance and in policies aimed at rural territories and societies. Second, we look at the role that mobility and rural households have historically played in strategies of resistance in times of crisis. The plasticity that family and household forms offer in shaping relations of intergenerational solidarity – caring for dependents, material assistance, etc. – is an essential resource in these strategies. These issues are illustrated with examples from fieldwork carried out in the Pyrenees in the region of Navarre. In contrast to the traditional equivalence assumed between the family as a kinship group, the home as a domestic partnership and the household as a space of single residency, our analysis sees them as independent. Our research shows that, in the adaptive strategies of family groups, mobility, networks between homes and the advantages of territorial localization play an essential role.

KEYWORDS

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INTRODUCTION: CRISIS, TERRITORY AND FAMILY STRATEGIES

European reports on rural poverty distinguish between territorial and social inequality (European Commission 2008). Thus, they differentiate 'the poverty of rural areas' (rooted in territorial disadvantages in relation to urban areas) from 'the poverty *in* rural areas' (referring to social groups at risk in these areas emphasis added). The territorial inequality in rural areas in accessing opportunities has been analysed in relation to social inclusion (Higgs 2003) and future scenarios regarding the provision of services (Moseley 2008). But these two forms of inequality can be related and reinforce each other in vicious circles of economic and social decline affecting rural demographic structures (ageing, masculinization), basic services (transport, health care) and human capital (unemployment, deskilling), ultimately creating, reproducing and increasing rural poverty. These processes have acquired a particular importance in certain rural areas in Southern Europe. For example, Greece and Spain had the highest proportion of populations at risk of poverty in the EU15 (European Commission 2011). And along with certain Eastern European countries subsequently incorporated into the European Union, Portugal, Greece, Italy and Spain are the most vulnerable demographically, as evidenced by the high proportion of their rural population living in areas of difficult accessibility and economic precariousness. Greece and Spain were also the EU15 countries with the highest proportion of aged rural populations at risk of poverty and of rural women at risk of poverty.

Periods of economic crisis mean reduced opportunities and a decline in living conditions. One of the most evident consequences is the increase in social inequalities. The current crisis is characterized by the shifting of a financial crisis to the public sphere by reducing spending and cutting social programmes. The decline in public protection for an increasingly vulnerable population worsens social inequalities. The decrease in public resources aimed at fighting social inequality leads to the activation of other defence mechanisms in the face of the effects of recession.

In this context of reduced public support and declining economic conditions, the role of the extended family as an economic unit and system for redistributing resources among its members through family solidarity is strengthened. The strengthening of family bonds, particularly in the countries of Southern Europe, has been a traditional defence mechanism against the impact of crises. As Rodríguez has pointed out, 'individuals and families face a series of risks that cannot be dealt with within the nuclear family' (2009: 184). These periods of economic recession increase both social inequalities and territorial differences. In the most vulnerable regions, another way of addressing crises has been migratory movements. In this sense, both transcontinental migrations and migrations between the country and the city have been important in different periods of history.

In this article we examine the role that mobility and household composition play in the configuration of family strategies to adapt to socio-economic environments. Our starting hypothesis is that the changing conditions provoked by the crisis – increased socio-economic and geographic inequalities – have effects on mobility, leading to migrations and commuting, and on the residential strategies and household composition of family groups. Mobility and household composition are not independent of each other. The shape of households is a function of the possibilities their members have to be mobile, but this mobility is also related to the division of domestic responsibilities and

productive activities among household members. A binomial is established between household composition and mobility, which is an essential instrument in the development of family strategies for subsistence.

The strong relationship between both factors – mobility and household composition – can be clearly seen in different situations. On the one hand, at a global or transnational level, space–time compression has reduced the rupture of family bonds caused by migratory projects (Harvey 1989). The growing importance acquired by mobility has permitted the emergence of so-called transnational families (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Guarnizo 2003); these are family groups that are organized around and distributed across destinations in function of their different migratory strategies. Transnational families can be defined as primary kinship groups – parents, spouses and children – that physically reside separately, even thousands of kilometres from each other. They are authentic households because they develop strategies for economic subsistence together but with multi-local residences. They are family groups that have taken advantage of and incorporated opportunities for long-distance mobility.

On the other hand, in regional environments, recourse to private transport permits the establishment of multi-residential strategies for a single family group. Primary and secondary residences in a village or in the city, property of the parents, children or other family members, can be occupied during different periods – seasonally – or even during different times of the day – temporarily. Within these strategies we can consider the totality of residences shared within a geographic area as an extensive (multi-residential) family home. Throughout the year, during different periods or phases of the life cycle, family members distribute themselves with different compositions between the different residences. A particular configuration of this model are couples referred to as LAT – living apart together (Duncan and Phillips 2010). This combination of residences and distribution of family members permits, in some cases, the establishment of complex strategies for providing care and the reduction of costs related to the well-being of the family. For example, children are taken to the house of a relative so they can be cared for; a member works in the family business in the residence of a nearby relative; family members cyclically commute to be cared for or to be caregivers between the different residences of the family group.

Research often implicitly considers family, household and residence as coinciding with domestic and habitational units: one family, one home, one residence. However, although in many cases this is the reality, it is not necessarily so. These are clearly differentiated dimensions of the forms of domestic habitation: a family is a kinship group (not necessarily related by blood); a household is a group of domestic partnership; and a residence is a home. As we will see, the analytical distinction between these terms permits us to study and understand mobility practices in relation to family strategies.

Different studies have revealed the need to separate family and home for the correct analysis of family economic activities. In the case of Spain, for example, the study by Moreno Pérez (2012) revealed the importance multi-family farms have gained in horticultural production. Other studies have shown the importance bi-residential households have in Spain, through combining first and second residences (Del Pino 2015).

Rural–urban environments, such as those constituting the focus of this study, are locations for paradigmatic cases of multi-residential family organization. In the geographic area of our study we have found different cases of

bi-residential homes: rural and urban, temporary as well as permanent. We have also found extended families organized in a network of closely linked homes distributed across different localities. The combination of urban and rural homes for a single family group permits the group to deploy alternative employment, caregiving and domestic arrangements. These strategies have developed to take advantage of different opportunities for services, quality of life and residence, all related to the cost of living and the need to meet obligations for the subsistence and care of family groups.

As a consequence of the current grave economic crisis and changing public policies, rural populations find themselves in a changing socio-economic environment. Family groups assume the impact of the changes produced at the local level – for example, by absorbing employment uncertainties or internalizing the reduction in social resources. In this sense we can consider family groups as resilient. In other words, they act to minimize the effect of the changes taking place in their environment. In this respect, Adger's notion of the resilience of social and ecological systems is of great interest (2000, 2003). He emphasizes the adaptive capacity that social systems have: resilience is a systemic function that permits the persistence of systems in the face of changes produced in their environments.

Within this function of adapting to the environment, we are going to interpret the reconfiguration of family bonds, the establishment of networks between homes and the connection of these networks across the territory for the simultaneous use of the different advantages that urban and rural localities have.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This analytical differentiation between family, home and residence cannot be analysed statistically with current sources. As a result, we have turned to a qualitative enquiry based on in-depth interviews with individuals of certain sociological profiles chosen on the basis of their family and social conditions in a remote rural area of the Navarran Pyrenees (the valleys of Aezkoa, Roncal and Salazar). This is a mountainous area with low population density and major demographic imbalances, and characterized by small and dispersed villages, which on average are 90 kilometres from the regional capital and can only be reached by mountain roads. It is an area that borders France and covers 925 square kilometres, includes 25 municipalities (some composed of various disperse districts) and has an official population of 3879 according to the 2014 census (14.6 per cent fewer than in 2001). Residents 60 years of age or older constitute approximately 39.5 per cent of the total population and the index of masculinization is 117 men for every 100 women (147 for the age group between 30 and 44).

The area includes several protected natural spaces and is a pioneer in offering rural lodging and services for 'nature and adventure' holidays in Spain (Oliva and Camarero 2013). Opportunities for local employment are limited, however, and often seasonal: livestock farming, production of wood and lumber, cheese-making, camping, guides, restaurant and hotel services, etc. In addition, winter, which can last for five or six months, makes daily commuting to the regional capital difficult: 70 to 80 kilometres typically require 90–120 minutes by car under favourable conditions. Furthermore, the impact of the crisis on the area has been significant, especially in terms of cuts to services (in emergency health care services, schools, bus routes, etc.) and in

Code	Sex and age of the respondent	Born in the village	Family situation	Occupation of the respondent	Occupation of the spouse/parents
E01	Male, 50	Not local	Married	Teacher	Unemployed
E02	Male, 56	Local	Single	Ex-farmer and lottery seller	-----
E03	Male, 32	Not local	Unmarried	Orderly and owner/manager of rural lodging	Social worker
E04	Female, 32	Local	Single	Office worker	Retired, ex-farmer
E05	Male, 44	Not local	Married with children	Tourism agent	Teacher
E06	Female, 38	Local	Married with children	Teacher	Self-employed
E07	Male, 22	Local	Single	Student and bartender	Farmer
E08	Female, 39	Local	Married with children	Housewife	Self-employed
E09	Female, 38	Local	Married with children	Nursery school teacher	Self-employed
E10	Female, 56	Local	Married with children	Nurse	-----
E11	Male, 43	Local	Married	Farmer and taxi service	Housewife
E12	Female, 47	Local	Married with children	Nurse	Farmer
E13	Male, 45	Local	Married	Farmer	Teacher
E14	Female, 57	Not local	Married with children	Technician	-----
E15	Female, 54	Local	Single	Nurse	-----
E16	Male, 52	No local	Single	Doctor	-----

Table 1: Sociological profiles.

related employment (social workers, teachers, ski monitors, etc.). The closure of factories and other businesses in the city has also led to unemployed young people returning to their family homes in rural villages.

The methodological design of our study is based on an analysis of a sample of family cases chosen for their different household structures, the sociological profiles of their members, the forms of their connection to the local (are they local, from outside, returnees) and their activities, with the aim of investigating their residential and mobility strategies. The documentation for these cases was gathered through in-depth interviews with household members and can be seen in Table 1. Through the interview script, respondents were asked about their employment histories and the residential history of their family group, family strategies to care for dependent members and daily mobility.

In addition to identifying family positions, the design attempted to reflect the great diversity in positions and roles in the functioning of local community life (rural taxi drivers, nurses, teachers, doctors, technicians, etc.) so that the situations and general social problems in the valleys that form the area of study could be documented.

During the fieldwork we documented a wide range of strategies that combine mobility and multi-residentiality, resulting in the construction of different forms of rural–urban hybridization. For example, some respondents worked during the week in the city and during the weekend in their village

(e.g., secondary school and university students, industrial and service workers, those with secondary residences, etc). Others have developed the opposite strategy: during the week they work in the village and on weekends they move to the city (e.g., teachers, social and health care workers, pre-school teachers, etc.). But a mixed formula is also common, in which a part of the week is spent in the city and a part in the village (e.g., people with businesses in the city, owners of rural holiday homes with jobs in the city, those employed in tourist services, monitors in recreation, etc.).

In addition, we not only find these strategies based on rural secondary residences, but many families also maintain secondary residences in the city to be used by family members depending on the situation: for instance, for doctors' visits, education, temporary jobs, etc. For example, many elderly rural residents move to the capital during the coldest months of the winter. This seasonal move to the city can be to their own home or to that of their children, and when they return to their village their home can also welcome other members of the extended family during certain periods of the year and on weekends. Finally, another example of how these hybrid rural-urban relations appear is seen in the organization of traditional local holidays and commemorative events by the 'sons' social capital, collective action and adaptation to climate change and daughters of the village', who live in the city but maintain an ongoing relationship with the area.

With the aim of analysing the organization of forms of subsistence, four family cases have been selected: E03, E01, E08 and E09. These cases clearly reveal the diversity of forms and combinations established between family, home and residence. They are cases with a high illustrative potential to the extent that they depart from the unity between family, home and residence, while they also incorporate mobility within family strategies. These cases permit a reading of the opportunities that distinct habitats offer in shaping family strategies and their contribution to the resilience of social systems.

In what follows we first explore the role played by the rural world as a refuge in family strategies during periods of economic crisis. Then we analyse the plasticity acquired in the forms of family households in these contexts and their function in previous strategies. In the penultimate section our cases provide various examples illustrating our approach. Finally, in the conclusion we summarize and discuss our main findings.

FROM RURAL PATERNALISM TO THE 'DO IT YOURSELF' SOCIETY

To understand the role of the social strategies we analyse in resisting social and territorial inequalities, we need to place them within the context of recent changes experienced in forms of rural governance and policies. For example, one of the processes illustrating recent rural change is the rationalization and closure of public and private services in rural areas (Woods 2005). Such policies have had noticeable effects on the competitiveness of rural areas, but they have also created internal social divisions within rural populations between those with their own resources to make up for losses in services and those that do not: for example, between family groups that have cars, time and drivers, and those that do not have control over their own mobility.

Policies aimed at combatting social and territorial inequality have developed in response to processes of modernization over the last century. In the traditional rural world, social inequality was determined by the structure of

land ownership: the main resource of agrarian societies. Local elites adopted a paternalistic power in a context of general isolation and little mobility. Their dominance over local labour markets led to political and social control. However, during the process of Fordist modernization (Harvey 1989) the state assumed responsibility for the administration, planning and management of territorial development and for combatting inequality.

Nevertheless, it would not have been possible to shape a mass consumer society without an implicit Keynesian pact between labour and capital that favoured the orderly development of the market and social well-being. As a result, the welfare state came to play an essential role in stabilizing labour relations, in the reproduction of the industrial labour force and in the creation of an internal market regulating consumption and wages. Policies of economic modernization favoured widespread access to increasingly affordable goods (cars, domestic appliances, etc.) and the ideal of the universal provision of essential services (health care, education, housing, transport, etc.). Public services, investments and sectorial subsidies, provided through centralized policies and policies against social and territorial inequalities, then became agreed-upon objectives under this form of organized capitalism (Lash and Urry 1984) or heavy modernity (Bauman 2000). Rural infrastructure development, agricultural protections and modernization, the fight against depopulation, etc., all became essential policies. As Woods (2005) explains, the reasons behind these policies were political (the state should provide a basic level of well-being and foster equality among its citizens), economic (facilitating access to the exploitation of rural resources) and demographic (avoid depopulation and regulate migrations).

The end of dictatorship in Southern Europe during the 1970s meant that the consolidation of the initial rudiments of the welfare state in many of these countries coincided with a wide economic, political and social restructuring: a crisis in the Fordist industrial model, the delocalization of production, the collapse of the bipolar world of the Cold War, new patterns of consumption, etc. Since then we have seen a gradual process of economic deregulation beginning with the neo-liberal policies of the 1980s to reduce the size of the state. The old models of governance have been gradually transformed through the collaboration of state agencies, private organizations and businesses and the establishment of public-private partnerships. These are strategies in which, as Woods says, the borders between the public, the private and the voluntary are increasingly blurred. As a result, rural governance:

has moved through a transition from a 'paternalist' era in the early twentieth century, to a 'statist' era in the mid-twentieth century, to a new era of 'governance' at the turn of the twentieth-first century. This transition has both reflected and been part of rural restructuring.

(2005: 160–61)

Neo-liberal rhetoric, embedded in the ideology of the consumer industry, placed individuals and their motivations at the centre of its referents to delegitimize the welfare state among the middle classes (Curtis 2002), who were determinant at that time in elections. Criticized as ineffective and burdensome, the dismantling of the welfare state was accepted by a society, that doubted its own existence, as the only policy possible. Europe's social democratic governments participated in this task without the possibility of protecting the

welfare system through adequate fiscal policies. Basic social gains could only be sustained with increased indebtedness.

Thus, two processes were consolidated that would completely transform the aim of policies to combat inequality. On the one hand, a continual evolution of policies from welfare to the methodologies and philosophies of workfare (work + welfare) took place (Peck 1998, 2001). These policies, converted into a real challenge to the existing welfare system at the turn of the century, transformed social rights into personal obligations and responsibilities: for example, community service in exchange for unemployment assistance and the establishment of health care copayments. Their aim was not fighting poverty, but rather 'dependency on welfare' (Peck 2001). The further intensification of this process during the current economic recession has resulted in policies that harm the most vulnerable: pressure to accept poor jobs, health care copayments, etc. This is hypocritical if we consider the corporate welfare involved in saving banks, and that no country in the European Union could avoid the repercussions of doing so: a public mortgage paid for with cuts to benefits and services. On the other hand, this evolution towards the governance and fostering of an 'active' citizenry, who not only have rights but also the obligation to find their own solutions to problems, means, as Woods suggests, a 'change in the style, rhetoric and discourse of governing. The state is no longer assumed to have a monopoly on governing, but rather there is a blurring of the responsibilities' (2005: 168).

As a result, the gradual retreat of the state, the dominant ideology of individualism, the growing substitution of on-site services for virtual ones in all spheres thanks to new technologies, the impact of the crisis on social policies, the solution of self-employment as the response to the collapse of the labour market, etc. are processes that have converged to form a kind of 'do-it-yourself' society. This is a context in which family groups and networks must continually respond to the uncertainties rooted in the destruction of the Fordist modernization project.

THE GRADIENT OF SPATIAL ADVANTAGES: THE RURAL AS REFUGE

Different perspectives in recent years have analysed the connections between the global and the local, between flows and mobilities, and the growing trans-local configurations of places (Castells 1996; Massey 1994; Sheller and Urry 2006; Cresswell 2006; Urry 2007; Bell and Osti 2010; Hedberg and Carmo 2012), contributing a vision of socio-spatial processes in which territory, far from being reduced to a static and spatial reality, is understood as a relational process. Understood in this manner, places are produced by flows, interconnections and mobilities that continuously shape their economies, populations and representations. As Hedber and Carmo say about the concept of trans-local ruralism, 'central to this idea is the understanding of mobility as a way of connecting and transferring places' (2012: 3). To understand the social strategies we analyse here we must focus our attention specifically on these hybridizations of urban and rural places through which they are organized, and which they also shape and produce at the same time. For example, consider the decisive role that family residences in villages have historically played to cope with uncertainties resulting from the social inequality experienced by those who have emigrated to the city, or the long-distance rural commuters that gather in metropolitan labour markets, the university students from rural areas, the return migrations of the retired, etc.

In the Spanish case, the integration of the huge number of migrants from the countryside to the cities during the period of Fordist modernization would not have been possible without the safeguard of family connections with the village of origin, networks for exchanging products and information, periodic vacations or visits on weekends for the emigrants to industrial cities (Moya and Vicente-Mazariegos 1991: 104). Some decades later, with the advent of the 1973 oil crisis that hit western economies, many young people of rural origin expelled from urban labour markets found a refuge in which to survive the recession in their family homes in their villages of origin, which also allowed them to integrate into national seasonal circuits of employment: tourist services on the coast in the summer; agricultural harvests; and urban construction (Sánchez López 1980).

While general insecurity and infrastructure deficits in the 1950s and 1960s imposed a definitive change of residency on rural emigrants, during the following decades commuting strategies began appearing, which allowed workers and peasants to remain in rural villages, taking advantage of both urban wages and rural life. First, this was through weekly commutes, which in subsequent generations and with the development of new roads would become daily long-distance commuting (Oliva 1995).

The impact of the current crisis on social and territorial inequality in Spain seems to have acquired special dimensions: multiplication of structural employment, decline in wages, cuts in public services and benefits, tax increases, etc. Thus, the latest report of the International Labour Organization (2014) on the global evolution of social protection placed Spain among the European countries in which social coverage has suffered the greatest cuts, particularly in regard to unemployment assistance and public spending on family benefits. The consequences of these measures on the composition of family households are significant: tens of thousands of evictions and obstacles to the emancipation of young adults. In this context, family networks attempt to respond to the uncertainty resulting from the recession, preventing exclusion through strategies based on regrouping families, members returning to the parental home, etc. For example, nearly 20 per cent of rural inhabitants aged 50 or older live with someone from an older generation (Camarero and Del Pino 2014). Laparra and Pérez (2013) have noted the importance of retirement pensions in maintaining a growing number of households in which all members are unemployed, as well as the significant increase in the number of these households during this period of crisis.

In this context, the compression of space and time fostered by new means of communication and transport, as well as by the spread of personal transport, has allowed old family strategies of resistance to be sustained in the context of the hybridization of life in villages and cities. Vulnerabilities rooted in the economic recession, from cutbacks in social protection or the needs of different family generations, can now be faced by synchronizing times and spaces within the family network: for example, through periodic visits to the family's village, which allow collaboration and the transfer of resources or assistance between different generations. Those members affected by the decline in the labour market (youth unemployment, layoffs, temporary employment, early retirement, long-term unemployment, etc.), or who are not economically active (pensioners, housewives, students), can become resources to meet family responsibilities (taking care of the elderly, children and other dependents), in this way avoiding situations of latent poverty or taking advantage of local opportunities (exchanging products, occupying second residencies, maintaining family gardens, reducing the cost of living).

The intensification of private mobility can make dual residences profitable: second homes temporarily become primary homes and family groups regroup or subdivide in function of time (holidays, weekends) or group needs, reinventing strategies that are not quantified in statistical registries. Spatial variables and mobility become fundamental aspects of strategies for avoiding the new risks of poverty and exclusion.

THE GRADIENT OF FAMILY ADVANTAGES: ADAPTATION OF HOUSEHOLD FORMS

The increase in mobility increases opportunities and diversity in types of livelihood. Both livelihood and mobility are managed within the family. Domestic groups, to the extent that they incorporate mobility as a resource, have a greater capacity to adapt to their environment and, as a result, greater flexibility regarding possible forms of household composition. On the one hand, through mobility, domestic groups extend their employment and economic space; on the other, the capacity for mobility also increases the domestic space for subsistence and care beyond the home. Mobility offers multiple forms of organization to households: in other words, mobility is both an economic support and allows different forms of family cohabitation to arise, which are better adapted to the socio-economic conditions of the local environment. Despite the importance of households in shaping the socio-economic strategies of rural areas, there has been little research on forms of cohabitation in rural areas. As a general rule, it has been assumed that the specificity of the agrarian family has been gradually disappearing, and for this reason not enough attention has been given to the possible emergence of other types of household composition.

Within the process of the modernization of rural areas and the convergence in lifestyles and living conditions between rural and urban areas it seemed logical to expect rural living structures to progressively lose the extended nature that characterized agricultural families and to come closer to the model of the nuclear family that is dominant in urban areas. If we address this issue based on Wood's (in Wood and Kroger 2000) periodization of forms of governance and organization of rural societies, we can relate the transition from a patriarchal model of organization to a statist one to the shift from the extended to the nuclear family. The nuclear household, because of its reduced size and the simplicity of the kinship relations within it, constitutes both a homogeneous – and more or less standard – household unit and a fiscal and administrative unit of an elementary character that permits the distribution and control of resources. The 'statist' model of governance that has been accompanied by the shift from peasant organization to agricultural economies and complementary activities strengthens the model of the nuclear family characteristic of the welfare state. The nuclear model – a couple with few children – is the model of residential organization on which consumer society has been established.

However, this model has been losing strength in rural areas due to the increasingly aged population, the continuing decline in fertility and changes in the forms of family reproduction associated with changes in values, such as the delay in the birth of the first child, the lengthening of the period prior to the formation of couples and the increase in the proportion of single adults and single-person households. In Spain, for example, studies on the family highlight the growing diversity of household forms (Iglesias de Ussel and

Flaquer 1993; Jurado 2008). And in the case of rural areas, the reduction of nuclear households has been even greater (Camarero and Del Pino 2014).

In addition to the widespread increase in single-person households as a result of ageing, we also see an increase in households in which nuclear families cohabit with persons outside the nucleus, and, above all, an increase in intergenerational cohabitation (Camarero and Del Pino 2014). Specifically, we find an increase in what were called ‘stem families’ in traditional societies (Ruggles 2010). The stem family made sense within the model of agrarian family, which guaranteed the transmission of property to descendants in exchange for offering care and subsistence to older generations: but today, far from the conditions agrarian societies imposed on family forms, in rural areas the number of elderly parents living with economically-independent children is still significant. To explain this, we have to consider how the generational agreement has been updated, which now – without the transfer of property – is based on taking advantage of economies of scale, leading to cohabiting.

The organizational model of rural restructuring Woods identifies (2005) also has its correlates in forms of domestic organization, which because of their plasticity are able to take advantage of opportunities for mobility that strengthen family strategies.

FAMILY STRATEGIES OF MOBILITY, RESIDENCE AND CARE

The interviews carried out during our field work in the Navarran Pyrenees provided us with a wide range of situations with which to observe the diversity of relations between place of residence, households and family and life strategies. This study does not aim to be representative: rather, we have carried out an exploratory case-finding study to document real forms of family organization in connection with territory. Our case studies were limited to the population group between the ages of 30 and 50, defined as the support generation (Camarero et al. 2009). This was done because of the key role of this group in productive activity and the provision of care, and therefore in the sustainability of rural areas. This role is even more important due to the difficult demographic situation of these areas. Table 1 describes the selected cases.

M-32: He is a dual resident in a small village of 130 inhabitants and in the capital city, 70km away. In the village he lives in a <i>bed and breakfast</i> and in the capital he lives with his partner. He also has two jobs; he manages the bed and breakfast where he lives, and he works in a health care centre in the capital. He has organized his work schedule dividing his work with a colleague so that he spends half the week in one place and half the week in the other.
M-50: He is a commuter. He lives in a capital city. During the week he works in the capital and on the weekends he commutes with his partner to their rural home, two hours by car.
F-39: She is a returnee to her village. She lives in a village of 90 inhabitants that is 90km from the capital. Her husband has a job that requires him to travel to the capital several times a week. She, with other members of the family, is responsible for taking the children to school and being available if needed for the elderly members of the family. Many weekdays and on weekends, she has lunch at her parents’ house.
F-38: She is a returnee to her village of 100 inhabitants, 90km from the capital. She works in a school in the county seat. Her husband telecommutes and travels once or twice a week to the capital.

Table 2: Characteristics of the people interviewed.



Figure 1: Positions of the couples interviewed in the scheme of places of residence and work.

This brief description of the cases reveals the importance mobility has as a strategy within the organization of daily life and the livelihood of the household, in some cases permitting situations of bi-residentiality – residing in more than one household during the week – and in others permitting employment in more than one workplace. Note that when we speak of various residences or workplaces, these are distributed between rural and urban locations. The variations in our cases can be organized and represented in a diagram (Figure 1).

Figure 1 represents the position of the person interviewed – marked with the indicator ‘a’ – and that of their partner – marked with a ‘b’. The horizontal axis represents poles of residence (in one or two places) and the vertical axis represents the singularity or multiplicity of workplaces.

These forms of alternation and family organization between places of residence and work reveal the adaptive capacity the urban–rural territorial gradient offers and mobility provides. We can see in detail some of the strategies of the interviewees. H32 has managed to obtain, through a bi-residential strategy, an alternative source of income, while preparing what is now the family home as a retirement home. This strategy of residency-tourist business as a transition has been widely documented in studies throughout Europe (Stockdale and MacLeod 2013). His partner continues to live and work in the capital permanently.

The case of F38, although it appears to be different, can be related to that of M32 through its temporal sequence. This participant resided in the capital where she worked, as in the case of the partner of M32, who continues to reside and work there. The husband of F38, in contrast, worked between the village where his parental home was, and the capital. Once pregnant, F38 left her job because of her family responsibilities and moved to the village with her husband. Although she is currently not economically active, to a certain extent she has become a dual resident as part of a strategy to provide family care. She takes her youngest child to day care every day while receiving assistance from other family members in taking her other children to school. There are days when she returns home – which involves a total return journey of

80km in the car – but on other days, when her youngest child is in day care, she spends the day helping her parents at their home in a nearby village.

The profile of F39 is similar to that of F38. She works, although she has to commute to the county seat, while her husband commutes between the village and the capital. This is a clear example of a rural commuter household.

Other forms are more traditional, such as the case of M50, who belongs in the category of dual resident. However, his original project was the same as M32. The second residence was acquired as part of a project to establish a centre for activities related to health and nature (yoga, relaxation and outdoor activities), which in the end was not carried out, and it is now likely this second residence will become a retirement residence. Although this profile now appears traditional in contrast to the different strategies observed, it can be understood initially as a process of dual residence. It is different from the projects of the others in that both partners share residential and work forms and in that their project is built around retirement and not on the development of an economic activity.

The prior analysis leads to several reflections. First, and relatively surprising, is that the character of the autochthonous population – in other words, the family connection with this rural county – does not simplify forms of adaptation, but rather the opposite – it diversifies them. In general, the opposite was expected: that rural roots would make it possible to depend less on the outside and therefore there would be fewer strategies based on mobility. However, our cases show that when there are rural roots, there are more resources that can be combined in multiple forms and offer a greater range of alternatives. That is to say, in the case of local connections we find extended family forms superimposed on households (small households and nuclear households) but which form a territorial network that can be considered a multi-household family.

In addition, the idea of bi-residentiality is reinforced, as is its analytical importance. The difference between the first and second residence disappears when places of residence are looked at from the perspective of the subject's life trajectories. The idea that emerges from these reflections is the trans-territorial character of households. The autochthonous rural population emerges as trans-rural: the greater the roots or local connections, the greater its connectivity and the greater its possibilities for mobility. We might even suggest the term trans-urban for these new residents.

In this regard, it is useful to consider Hedberg and Carmo's suggestion (2012). These authors use the term trans-local to stress the relational networks that are established between places connected by individuals. We would add that these socio-spatial relations are also incorporated within the very configuration of household models. As we have seen, family strategies are conducted in a trans-local sphere.

CONCLUSIONS

The compression of space and time generated by modern means of communication and transport has commonly been associated with the increased flexibility and personalization of individual time and space. The functional specialization of the places of daily life – each place and activity – and the ongoing institutionalized temporal deroutinization – open 24 hours – have resulted in a greater individuation of space-time organization in contemporary life. However, as we have sought to show here, this flexibility and

space–time compression can also be applied, in a coordinated manner within social groups, to develop complex family strategies of resistance to the risks of inequality, poverty and social vulnerability.

This can be seen, for example, in strategies of intergenerational solidarity that transfer resources and care within the family, or that integrate members in vulnerable social and employment situations (the unemployed, dependent persons, etc.) into a household. In these strategies, the intensification of mobility and the possibility of synchronizing activities, times and places offered by new technologies make it possible to effectively hybridize daily spaces. In this way, some of the old strategies of resistance developed for rural societies are currently being reformulated in innovative ways: for example, combining family residencies and stays between village and city to address new needs emerging in the family group in the context of cutbacks in public services and prolonged economic recession.

The ageing of the Spanish population, along with the effects of the shrinking welfare state and the impact of the economic crisis, has reactivated these strategies that combine different forms of intergenerational solidarity, the recomposition of households and mobility as resources. It is specifically in those family groups that do not have the economic capital necessary to solve the problems they face or attain the security their members need, where caregiving strategies (for children, the elderly and the dependent), the adaptation of households to take in other family members (widowed, unemployed and divorced), the hybridization of rural and urban spaces through multi-residentiality, etc., necessarily assume greater importance.

The previous observation can be incorporated into the debate on the resilience of social systems. The changes in forms of household and in mobility are two elements that moderate the impact of inequality in rural areas, and as such can be considered mechanisms of resilience. The possibilities offered by the combination of household typologies examined – such as specialized and even trans-local multi-residential networks – are really ways of neutralizing what is lacking in the environment. For example, the increase in intergenerational cohabitation in the context of a decline in social services and increasing dependency is an obvious adaptive strategy.

In the context of the specificity of social systems, defined by the indissoluble link between agency and structure, the approach of McManus et al. (2012), which considers resilience in terms of stable adaptation, is very useful. This and other studies (Walker and Salt 2006) reveal the orientation of social systems towards maintaining their structures in circumstances of changing environmental conditions, emphasizing the important role of reinforcing the system of interaction as a mechanism of resilience. The analysis we have carried out here shows that family structures are being maintained, possibly taking the form of a multi-household or multi-residential network, specifically through the extension of family ties supporting mobility strategies.

Another issue of interest emerges around adaptive strategies that take advantage of the hybridization of rural and urban territories. These territories acquire interchangeable functions: they can be the place of work or of residence, individual strategies determining the character of each. Recently, Milbourne and Kitchen (2014) have stressed the role of local moorings in the context of a rural life that is, by necessity, hyper-mobile. These authors ask about the contradiction that exists between ‘roots’ and routes’ – in other words, for the tension that emerges in searching for outside elements – for example, work – that demand constant mobility to maintain the very character

of rural life, which is precisely its attraction. This paradox reveals the intrinsic relationship existing between roots and mobility. The cases we have analysed specifically construct their strategies combining both factors. Some of the cases studied are of returnees, of a return that takes advantage of family and local roots and the opportunities of mobility. The important alliance that is established between roots and mobility as a factor in configuring family strategies must, of course, be analysed in much greater detail.

These forms of rural–urban hybridization are not usually analysed or linked to rural areas that are relatively isolated and characterized by low population density, such as found in the rural mountain environments we have analysed. In contrast to a metropolitan connected rurality, which is a location for residential dispersion, its traces are not as visible. It has no major economic impact, nor does it deeply transform the landscape. In addition, the existing processes of ageing and depopulation continue to persist. However, in terms of social strategies (residential, caregiving, mobility, etc.), it exercises a determinant function for the sustainability of this rural world. The enquiry developed here should also be tested in relation to other rural typologies – for example, in more remote areas with less accessibility, or in peri-urban areas shaped by a strong demographic dynamic, intensified mobility and the tensions that underlie the productive and post-productive activities in the area.

In addition, the role that these hybridizations play in periods of prolonged crisis, such as the current one, has not been sufficiently analysed. In contrast to the classic ‘worker-peasant’ strategies during the process of industrialization, characterized by long-distance commuting and seasonal migrations, current hybridizations establish formulae that are not reduced to the work sphere (such as in caregiving), nor are they necessarily based on rotations around a primary residence, as often the functions of the primary and secondary residences are confused or interchange based on necessity and throughout the life cycle of the group that forms the extended family.

The different cases analysed show precisely the constant use of the gradient of changing opportunities that emerge from differences between rural and urban territories. In this sense, we can suggest that rural–urban hybridization does not refer to an ongoing territorial mixing and equalization, but rather to the fact that they are equally possible choices for individuals. The different livelihood strategies affect differences in opportunity and in this way highlight these differences as relative, and not as absolute. Hybridization does not mean that territories become more similar, but that subjects place opportunities over the nature of the territories. The earlier considerations lead us to suggest that urban–rural differences are not only related to territorial inequalities but also to differences that contribute to reducing social inequalities.

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