

Chapter 2

Foreign Immigration to Rural Spain: An Exploration of the Precarious Rural Cosmopolitanism in the Post-Crisis Scenario



Rosario Sampedro and Luis Camarero

2.1 Introduction

The rural areas in Europe are characterised by a difficult demographic equilibrium. Different reports indicate the difficulties in attracting and retaining populations (Weist and Leibert 2013; ESPON 2017). Rural depopulation is associated with changes in the demographic composition, with the significant ageing of the population and a notable lack of females among the adults and the young. These demographic imbalances are a serious threat to the social sustainability of rural communities, leading to a vicious circle of economic decline, depopulation and politic irrelevance. In this sense, the Cork Declaration 2.0 alerts us to the difficulty of enacting rural development policies due to the lack of social capital.

The ageing society and especially rural ageing create new challenges and a significant change in the economics of services; added to this are the changes in the configuration of work in rural areas. Rural restructuring has meant a reduction of productive family activities and the growth of seasonal waged employment in different sectors, such as agriculture, agribusiness, tourism, hotels, and catering (Camarero and Oliva 2016). The rural job markets are currently characterised by great precariousness (Corrado et al. 2017).

In this context of ageing, demographic decline, and high demand for occasional work, the rural areas in all Europe have become places that attract immigrant

R. Sampedro (✉)
University of Valladolid, Segovia, Spain
e-mail: mariarosario.sampedro@uva.es

L. Camarero
National Distance Education University. UNED, Madrid, Spain
e-mail: lcamarero@poli.uned.es

populations. The arrival of foreign immigrants is common to many northern countries (de Lima and Wright 2009; Trevena et al. 2013; Hedberg and Haandrikman 2014; Rye 2014) and to southern Europe (Fonseca 2008; Kasimis 2008; Kasimis et al. 2010; Camarero et al. 2011). A great number of papers published focus on the role of immigrants in agrarian work, especially in intensive agriculture for export (Hoggart and Mendoza 1999; Gertel and Sippel 2014; Corrado et al. 2017; Rye 2014; Górny and Kaczmarczyk 2018). However, others have put the emphasis on the effect that these new residents may have on the survival of rural areas that have experienced serious depopulation (Jentsch et al. 2007; Pinilla et al. 2008; Kasimis 2008; Bayona and Gil 2013). The flows of transnational immigration, whose destination has been above all urban, is now directed at the New Immigration Destinations (NID) (McAreavey 2012; McAreavey and Argent 2018a).

The increasing population of foreign origin in rural communities has brought about an increase in the social diversity. In contrast to the homogeneity that has characterised rural life, new and extended spaces have opened up to a cosmopolitan and multicultural presence (Hedberg and Haandrikman 2014). The settlement of the immigrant population is an ambivalent process. On the one hand, it is an opportunity to reverse depopulation and revitalize social and economic life. On the other hand, it can be viewed as a threat to the traditional local identities and a potential source of local conflict. The local authorities and other social stake holders in the local sphere have had to take on the challenge of managing this new source of social diversity. Woods (2018) indicates that transnational migrations have favoured the emergence of a new rural cosmopolitanism. However, this new rural cosmopolitanism is characterised by its precariousness, by its vulnerability in the face of diverse economic, social, political, and cultural risks.

As such European rurality is built from the tension between the demands of the population, especially the youth and family groups, and a context of precarious, temporary work in which cultural diversity increases. It appears that this is the central issue of the relationship between new and old residents, the processes of acceptance and settling down of the immigrant population and the institutional welcoming mechanisms for this new population. In Mediterranean Europe these processes occur in circumstances that are dramatically marked by the effects of the 2008 recession; this may be in terms of reduced employment in the sectors in which immigrants work, increases in the reticent and xenophobic attitudes of the local population and in terms of significant cuts in social policies.

This article can be categorised in the line of research into the processes of accepting the immigrant population in rural areas. We focus on the role of institutions and the local elite when welcoming the immigrant population to depopulated rural areas in Spain. Through the analysis of the testimonies from mayors, social workers, members of non-governmental organisations and other key participants, we will attempt to analyse the opportunities that appear and the threats hovering over the emergence of the rural cosmopolitanism that is necessary for constructing the welcoming rural communities.

In the following sections we present our case. In the first place, we show the conceptual framework of our reflection. In the second place, we describe the case

study, as well as the fieldwork and the methodology. Thirdly, we give the results of the analysis from the conversations with mayors, social workers, and other key participants; these are in the context of matters such as their perception of immigrants' needs and expectations, the way they contribute to the repopulation and survival of the rural areas, and the capacity of the local institutions to promote the mid and long term integration of the immigrants. Fourthly and finally, we discuss the results of the research in the context of the aforementioned conceptual framework.

2.2 Conceptual Framework: The Immigrant Condition and the Emergence of Rural Cosmopolitanism

The incorporation of the immigrants into the labour market in rural areas has been analysed in different and varied contexts. From the agrarian enclaves of the Mediterranean (Gadea et al. 2017) to the fishing industry in northern Europe (Rye 2018), these studies show an important segmentation in the labour market, as the immigrants are concentrated into a limited number of occupations that constitute occupational ethnic niches (Eimermann and Kordel 2018). The working conditions are generally precarious, jobs are characterised by their awfulness, low salaries, long working days, and high levels of administrative irregularities. Pedreño and Riquelme (2006) use the term *ethnostratification* of the labour market to show the way in which foreigner status is embedded in the composition of class. Different institutional and social mechanisms contribute to maintaining the subordinate situation of the foreign workers and to reproduce the 'immigrant condition' (Balibar 1991). For example, Aure et al. (2018) show the importance of proficiency in host society language as a differentiating and stratification element in the organisation of the labour market in rural areas.

The uncertain demographic panorama boosts the value of immigration, but in general as indicated in different studies, from a strongly utilitarian perspective that considers immigrants merely as a workforce. Moreover, hierarchies are established among the different types of immigrants, according to their original nationality, work qualifications, and economic entrepreneurialism. Quoting Gilmartin, Woods indicates how the immigrants are divided up into "those who are encouraged, those who are tolerated, those who are expedient and those who are discouraged" (Woods 2018:5).

The arrival of immigrants with widely diverse provenances and cultural traditions breaks the cultural homogeneity that has characterised rural areas. Concepts such as global villages (Cid Aguayo 2008), melting pots (Oliva 2010) and translocal ruralities (Hedberg and Carmo 2011) attempt to bring together the superdiversity (McAreevey and Argent 2018a) and the conformity of hybrid ruralities (Camarero and Oliva 2016). Halfacree (2012) previously stated that, when referring to the new residents who have come from urban areas, we help in the appearance of heterolocal identities with the parallel unfolding of cultural ways that are not necessarily in

keeping with the location or place of residence. However, the importance of cultural diversity and its impact upon the capacity of development of rural spaces (Krivokapic-Skoko et al. 2018) is habitually hidden and even denied.

Along this line of research into cultural diversity in rural areas, Woods (2018) makes an interesting systematisation of the concept of rural cosmopolitanism. Woods starts by distinguishing rural cosmopolitanism as a property of individuals, as a property of rural communities and as a political or ethical project. Rural cosmopolitanism as a property of rural communities is defined in terms of “the collective practice of openness towards difference and diversity, hospitality towards others and conviviality” (Woods 2018:3). In this context rural cosmopolitanism is distanced from the practices whereby immigrants are tolerated as a workforce but are implicitly excluded from other spheres of social and collective community life. In contrast it is reinforced by the growing familiarity with the diversity that the daily dealings with people from other cultures and provenances facilitate, and also the pride with which some rural communities show their ethnic diversity and capacity in order to attract immigrants. The third type of rural cosmopolitanism has a normative component. As an ethic, “cosmopolitanism would seek to expand and politicize our sense of throwtogetherness, and to see in this a rationale for a wider net of engagement and responsibility” (Popke 2011:253). This cosmopolitanism may be promoted by the various branches of the public administration, civic organisations and other social participants. Some characteristics of rural communities favour the emergence of cosmopolitanism; for example, the lack of anonymity, the shared use of singular spaces and services, the absence of residential segregation, common workplaces, and a sense of collective interest in sustaining the community. However, Woods basically characterises rural cosmopolitanism by its precariousness, putting the emphasis on the way we cannot separate what cosmopolitanism ideally should be from what cosmopolitanism is in its imperfect everyday practice. The principal source of precariousness in rural cosmopolitanism lies in the very precarity of the immigrants’ living conditions, the utilitarian view of migration flows and the tendency of indigenous populations to identify integration with cultural assimilation.

Some studies illustrate the functioning of this precarious cosmopolitanism. Eimermann and Kardel (2018) show how the difficulty of recognising different lifestyles means that the activities of entrepreneurial immigrants in rural areas are limited to a coethnic network, and they are forced to travel more greatly; for example, in the search for suppliers. In the case of wage earners Rye (2018) indicates the maintenance in parallel of two cultures and two social classes. The immigrants may have a social status within their ethnic community that does not correspond to the one in their local community. The principal issue that Rye and also Eimermann and Kardel show is the exclusion of immigrants from the practices of local consumption. In fact, immigrants’ lifestyles and those of the local indigenous community tend to be perceived as incompatible, transnational lifestyles are inconceivable, and immigrants are not seen as potential consumers. Rye (2018) graphically indicates the relationship between divided identities due to ethnic or national origin, and its equivalent in divided societies. Sethi (2013) shows the sense of discrimination that immigrants in rural Canada have, the lack of connection with the local society, but

contrasts the importance that the coethnic help networks acquire. As Aure et al. (2018) indicate the foreigners live in surroundings segregated by work and have difficulties in participating in the generation of shared lifestyles; this is to the point that they eventually conform with the idea of temporality “we will stay as long as we have work”. The segmentation of the workplace is on occasions transformed into the segmentation of the spaces for daily activities.

The different papers published show similar realities. The utilitarian view of immigration reduces the interest in the cultural contribution of immigrants, in their conditions of life and in their social integration. Søholt et al. (2018) use the term conditioned receptiveness to describe the attitude that the local elite has developed with regard to foreigners. These writers use for their analysis a space composed of two axes. On the one hand it is binomial: retention versus reception. On the other hand, the binomial is inclusion versus exclusion. In their analysis they detect the most frequent attitudes that tend towards retention, that is to say avoiding the immigrants’ leaving, but without either improving or offering conditions so that they stay welcomed. The inclusion stays reduced to the labour market while segregated communities are produced in all the other spheres of social life. In this context the conditional reception refers to the ultimate demand for cultural assimilation. Berg-Nordlie (2018) indicates the importance of mass media in the construction of the collective imagination about the immigrants. Further to the stereotypes or the defence of local lifestyles, the recent arrivals are blamed for not taking the first step in the construction of inclusive societies.

With regard to the provision of social services in the rural environment, Pugh (2003) indicates how the growing ethnic and cultural diversity represents an important challenge, since these communities are not free from the appearance of racism and xenophobia. In rural areas ethnic minorities is much more visible. In contrast, individual members of a negatively stereotyped or stigmatised group free themselves from the aforementioned stereotypes within a reduced setting of close and face to face relationships (Pugh 2003: 81). This lack of anonymity does not remove stereotypes, since individuals are expected to adjust to a certain type of behaviour. The pressure to integrate can end up resolving itself by assimilation into the dominant culture, in that the immigrants feel it is very difficult to maintain their own cultural characteristics (de Lima 2011:212).

The pressure towards cultural assimilation is a relevant issue, if we consider the different studies that revolve around the experience the new residents have in their lives in the rural environment, and in their mid and long term expectations of settling down (Morén-Alegret 2008; de Lima 2011; Rye 2014; Flynn and Kay 2017). These studies highlight the multidimensional nature of integration, and Morén-Alegret (2008) makes three such distinctions. Social integration is related to the quality of the social relationships and the participation in community life. Systematic integration is to do with access to the labour market, to public and private services and relationships with institutions. Habitational integration refers to access to housing and the appraisal of the environmental surroundings. Along the same lines Flynn and Kay (2017) highlight the importance of the emotional and material dimension of integration and the way in which the feeling of emotional and material security

in integration play a role in the decisions to establish themselves long term in rural areas. These decisions are the result of open processes which are influenced by multiple factors, so the role of the rural environment in migratory strategies is not in some way determined for the start (Trevena et al. 2013; Flynn and Kay 2017:60).

One other fundamental point is the governance of immigration. McAreavey and Argent (2018b) emphasise the scarce social services and employment support that are offered to the recently arrived. They highlight the reductionism which the institutions and the policy-makers act with, assuming a strictly economic perspective. Frequently they fail to recognise the important deficiencies that these areas have to receive new populations. In fact the arrival of new residents with new and different profiles and requirements for social services in small, ageing communities puts stress on the capacity that the local administration has for local social attention (Aure et al. 2018). In this context the reception of new inhabitants does not bring about an opportunity so much as a source of vulnerability, especially due to the residential segregation and the lack of services.

Thus, a key issue is the role of the local institutions and regional agencies in welcoming and integrating the immigrant population (Jentsch et al. 2007; de Lima and Wright 2009; Depner and Teixeira 2012; Sethi 2013). Depner and Teixeira (2012) indicate the importance of a greater level of involvement by municipal administrations, as part of a concerted force which must include the providers of local settlement services. It must be borne in mind that even when services specifically orientated to the welcoming of immigrants exist, there are physical, economic and temporary barriers that impede their being taken advantage of. On occasions the very social workers and local political chiefs hold prejudices against certain ethnic minorities which are considered to have a lesser ability to integrate (Sethi 2013:88; Depner and Teixeira 2012:86). The lack of institutional support structures for welcoming and settling the immigrant population is a significant obstacle when constructing welcoming communities.

The question of welcoming the immigrant population and the construction of inclusive societies is central to the future of the rural world. In this sense, Woods (2018) emphasizes the need for cosmopolitanism to be actively supported, managed and resourced in rural localities experiencing immigration. Woods also indicates three important sources of precariousness in the current European context. Firstly are the effects of the 2008 recession that reinforced the utilitarian concept of the immigrant worker and that have heightened the competition for scarce employment. Secondly, the politics of austerity have caused a reduction in the resources available to groups and institutions that work for integration. Thirdly is the increase in xenophobia due to the appearance of Islamic terrorism and the so called refugee crisis.

The construction of inclusive societies and welcoming communities is fundamental to counteract the perverse effects that the utilitarian concepts of immigration produces for the future of the rural world. Nowadays we find regions with a strong multicultural capacity, with great diversity, and thanks to this, globally connected and with a high capacity for innovation. However, the precariousness of the emerging rural cosmopolitanism leads to an uncertain scenario.

2.3 Case Study: Foreign Immigrants in ‘The Empty Spain’

In this article we present qualitative research carried out in three rural areas in the autonomous region of Castile and León (see Fig. 2.1). In Spain autonomous regions have wide ranging political and administrative autonomy and constitute the second tier of state administration. The 17 autonomous regions that make up the state are in turn divided into 52 provinces and nearly 8000 municipalities.

Castile and León is located in the northern hinterland of Spain, and is structured with a very rural population; it is composed of 2248 municipalities and has a population density of 26 inhabitants/km². 94% of the municipalities have fewer than 2000 inhabitants. With a population density of 7.4 inhabitants/km² and a high degree of ageing, these smallest municipalities are home to a quarter of the region’s population. For decades the region has undergone a process of depopulation; large tracts of the territory are habitually grouped into what is called “the empty Spain”.

The depopulation has become a kind of negative identification sign for the region, and is the subject of great concern for the regional authorities who have put into place various plans and initiatives designed to reverse this trend. Beginning in 2003 with the setting up of a designated committee in the regional parliament, the so called “Agenda para la Población 2010–2020” (Population Agenda 2010–2020) is still currently in force. Foreign immigration, whose presence started to become important in Castile and León especially after 2000, has been seen as an opportunity to reverse the demographic decline. In 2001 a round table for the social and labour incorporation of the immigrant population was set up, and taking part are the regional authorities and the most representative business organisations and trade unions. Since 2003 there have been various plans of action on the subject of immigration, the latest of which corresponds to the period 2018–2021. Moreover, a law exists specifically to integrate immigrants into the society of Castile and León (Law 3/2013, 28th May 2013).

The selection of three areas where the fieldwork was carried out aims to reflect the diversity of the rural environment in the autonomous region. The first area, the *Tierras Altas*, is located in a mountainous and relatively isolated area in the north-west of the autonomous region and shows a high degree of ageing and of population loss. Its economy rotates around livestock, agro-food industries linked to the transformation of meat products and forestry. The second, the area of *Cuéllar*, shows very different traits, with a flourishing economy linked to intensive horticulture, and is situated on the axis of communication that unites two important regional urban centres. Its demographic structure is more balanced and it has managed to retain its population in the last few decades, partly due to the settling down of the immigrant population. The third area is the *Tierra de Campos*, in the north part of the province of Valladolid, and shows intermediate characteristics. Its economy is linked to extensive agriculture and livestock and its population is aged and in decline. It is located at the sides of the major routes in the region, and approximately 1 h from the city of Valladolid, the regional capital; its countryside, with its great plains of cereal, is considered typical of the autonomous region. The main group of residential

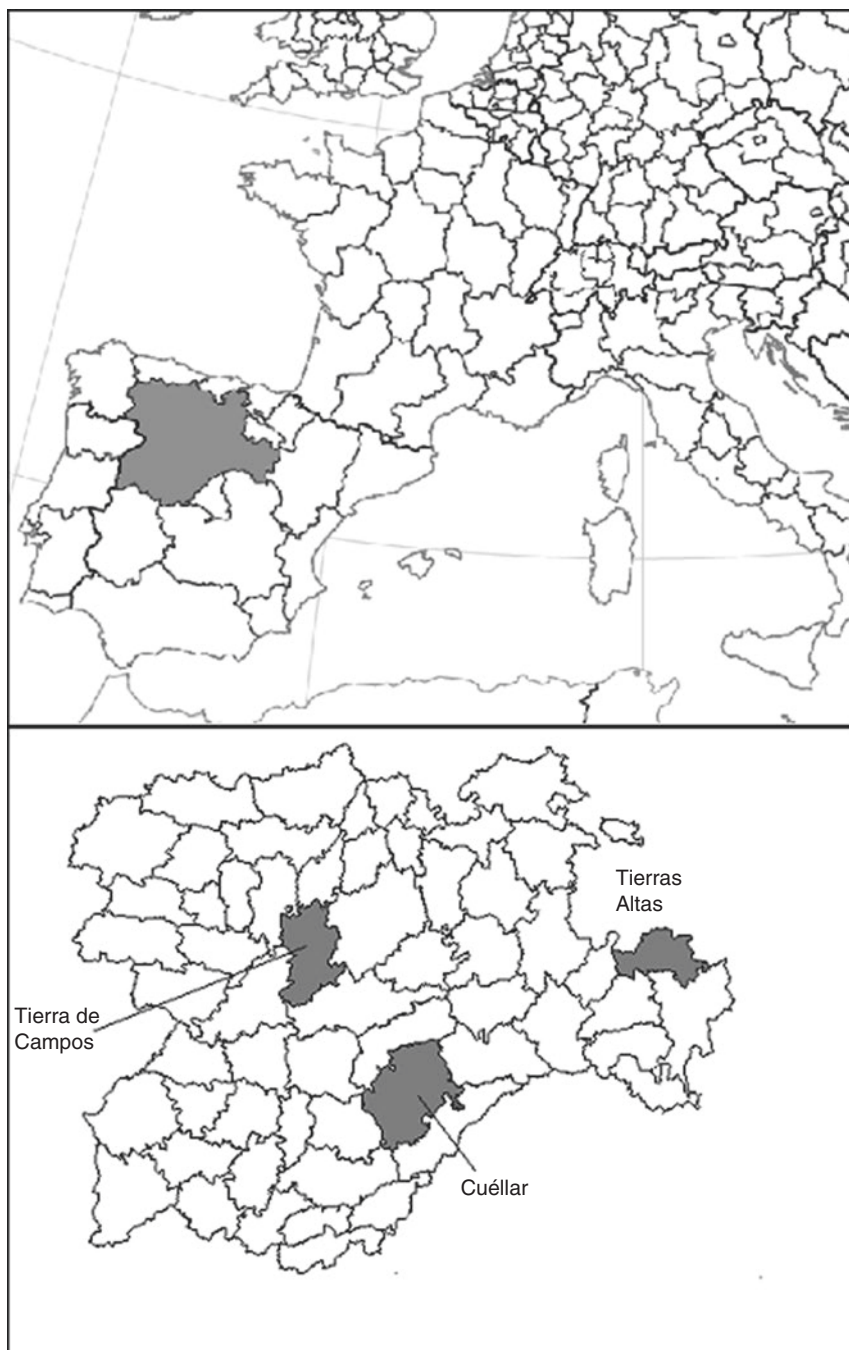


Fig. 2.1 Location of Castile and León and the areas studied

immigrants in these three areas come from Romania, Bulgaria, Morocco, and Latin America.

We carried out a total of 38 in-depth interviews in the chosen areas, 21 of those were with immigrants of different geographical origins and 17 with mayors, social workers, members of civic organisations, and other key participants; these took place between June 2017 and December 2018. In the following pages we essentially refer to the final group. They were contacted and were interviewed by members of our research team, and they were invited to freely express their visions for the immigrant population's needs and expectations, their contribution to the survival of the rural areas and the capacity of local institutions to facilitate their integration and their mid and long term residence. All those interviewed were recorded and later analysed in accordance with the aforementioned central themes.

2.4 Results: Immigrant Population in the Collective Imaginary of Rural Development

Among the key interviewees were the mayors, social workers and other employees in the local and regional administration, local development agencies, non-governmental organizations and charities that work in support programmes for migrants. All these people are important in the construction of welcoming and rural cosmopolitan communities. The extent to which these people identify with what Woods defines as ethical or normative cosmopolitanism logically reflects in the way the local community perceives and welcomes the immigrant population. By means of the statements we can also identify some on the conditions that are favourable for the emergence of rural cosmopolitanism, and some of the risks and dangers that make this somewhat precarious.

2.4.1 A Dual and Ambiguous Discourse: Welcome Neighbours Versus Transient Workers

In the most depopulated rural areas, the immigrants appear as residents, as a salvation from the real threat of the disappearance of the villages. The situation in the rural environment is recurrently described in terms of being a “dead”, “terminal”, “dying” or with onomatopoeia suggesting a collapse. There is a full awareness of the importance of immigrants to the demographic and economic survival of the rural environment.

It's the village that is dying; it's that it is dying. What can you do? Look for people, look for people. (Mayor 1)

They represent something very important that is more people [...] in the end they are neighbours, they enhance our community. And they don't damage. (Mayor 4)

It is our interest that these people stay here. Because they are, actually, citizens of [this village]. (Mayor 3)

In these villages, the technicians and politicians in charge adopt a proactive posture in the search and/or welcoming of these new inhabitants. As we have already mentioned in previous publications (Sampedro and Camarero 2018) the mayors play a key role in the provision of work and housing. They also try to mediate with the local population, who are not always aware of the needs of these new residents or of their importance to the life of the villages.

They come to ask me if I know of any job going, I help them to speak with whoever [...] and I, as mayor, am personally helping them to present the paperwork so that they can obtain a work permit. (Mayor 3)

The second discourse corresponds to the context of dynamism of the population and in the economy, and is based on our case study in intensive agriculture where large numbers of immigrant labour are used. In this case, the immigrants are basically perceived as a labour force. The immigrants are basically viewed as workers who have been useful to maintain the region's economy.

Well, at a given moment it might have been difficult to attend to some services without them. So we can't refuse them now, it's clear. They have been very necessary for us. It's not that we have used them; simply that they have become part of the economy of each of the places ... (Mayor 5)

There is a clear division within the collective imaginary between the established population and the temporary workers that come to work in the harvest. Curiously, even the settled immigrant population working in agriculture or in the agro-food industry is not perceived as completely stable. In fact the examples of the established and integrated immigrants are those not linked to agrarian activities, but those whose lifestyles are assimilated into the local middle class. Conversely, the most negative image corresponds to the temporary workers, to those that are criticised for the substandard accommodation where they live.

There are people who are very much integrated into industry or companies; for example, lorry drivers or haulage contractors and the like, who have been around for many years and are here indefinitely. I know people whose employers are very content, almost more so than with those from here. Those people won't go from here. And the families are very integrated, the wives often don't work but they are integrated. They have signed up their children for sports clubs and so forth, those, those stay here. They have bought, they have already acquired a place to live. But those working in the agro-food industry and who are here temporarily... I don't know. And there are a lot who have left. Eh? Many have gone. (Local Development Manager 2)

Of course, well is complicated to bring people, and people, and people, and they are put into houses where you can't live. That don't have water, or electricity or And what can you do? [...]. In theory someone had to come, a social worker or someone to tell them 'hey you can't live here,' 'what you've got isn't life'. (Mayor 6)

Faced with the much more active position of the mayors in depopulated areas, the local politicians show some lack of concern and adopt the posture of mere spectators. Empathy is replaced with indifference. There are repeated allusions to not knowing about the specific situations which the immigrants find themselves in, and worryingly even on occasions attitudes that all but correspond to xenophobia.

There must be few houses for rent. There must be few because a lot of people come here and ask 'Do you know if there are houses for rent? [...] And well, the housing rental market is scarce. It's not easy, it's not easy. (Mayor 5)

I don't know if they put tents or mattresses or how they sleep. I don't want to know anything about that, as long as they don't annoy the neighbours. (Mayor 6)

The immigrant workers are absent from the collective imaginary of rural development. Although they are vital for the local agro-food industry, their status as cheap and very temporary labourers is emphasised. In this sense that can even be considered as an obstacle to economic development.

They are people, labourers that do a very necessary job for this area, for this company at a given moment in time. And then they go. This money won't stay here. These people don't establish themselves in our area. Eh? (Local Development Manager 2)

The business owners have turned to immigrants, haven't they? [...] right now there is a lot of unemployment and there has been this recession, well this has finally knocked down the wages in the job market. (Local Development Manager 2)

The majority of the perceptions that the interviewees present in relation to the immigrants are negative, and when they are positive sometimes they are negatively nuanced. For example, as we can see in the following declaration, the immigrant children help fill the rural schools but hold back the learning of the other pupils.

There are many foreigners and many foreign children too. The foreigners are saving the schools and the nurseries because we have very few local children. [...] they hold you back a lot, of course. A child of ten or twelve years old arrives and does not know Spanish, of course that he holds you back a lot. (Mayor 6)

Despite the existence of two different visions with regard to the immigrant population, we must highlight that in both situations the acceptance of the immigrants is full of ambiguity. The acceptance of immigrants as new neighbours coexists with the idea that they are only the least worst option instead of depopulation. Although not explicitly expressed, the declarations of those interviewed make you realise that the ideal new residents would be young, entrepreneurial, qualified and Spanish. The hierarchy established among the different groups of immigrants also reflect this ideal. The examples of integrated immigrants usually refer those who are qualified, entrepreneurs and economically successful.

Who will arrive to the villages? Well, I am not looking down on anyone but they should come people like those young people in the LC (referring to a rural hotel run by young Spanish new residents) it has been the envy of all the villages. (Mayor 1)

And then we have those that have really stayed. Here the head of nursing at the residential home in this village who is in charge of forty women is Romanian. Well she has specialised, I think she did nursing. (Mayor 3)

On occasions the interviewees show little sympathy for the economic, personal and employment circumstances of the immigrants. They frequently complain about the excessive mobility or the refusal to become self-employed. Even in the most depopulated areas, where you can hear a more empathic attitude towards immigrants, you can hear negative stereotypes. These are above all to do with the idea of abusing social benefits. Another frequent prejudice relates to the perceived uncivil behaviour of the immigrants.

They received 400 euros minimum. And more if they have children, a wife and have whatever. They are getting a thousand euros without working, well great. Then they go to Morocco for two months holidays and sometimes they lose benefits because they don't come to sign on time. And that's how we carry on. (Mayor 1)

There are people who are more complicated. More complicated. Well I don't know, they have a way of life [...]. Noise, ways of celebrating whatever. They don't take things into account like us, do they? (Mayor 5)

2.4.2 The Precariousness of the Immigrant Condition: Work, Housing and Language

One of the sources of precariousness with rural cosmopolitanism is the very precarity suffered by immigrants, which is above all residential and work related. The work of immigrants develops in ethnic employment niches, jobs that the Spanish can't do or don't want for their harshness, their low salaries, their temporary nature or because they are carried out without any contract.

...It is certain that many are working in agriculture and livestock in dreadful conditions [...] They work every day of the week, more than eight hours in a normal working day, for an income that maybe is less than 200 euros. [...] many of them are not registered with the social security... (Local Development Manager 1)

He returned to his country and said: 'Look, I am over fifty and have spent fifteen years here and have not been contributing the social security and I am going back to my country'. (Mayor 3)

Job insecurity drives immigrants to frequently move, motivated by the constant search for better working conditions. It is also necessary to occasionally or regularly turn to benefits in order to survive. Both the mobility and the use of benefits are issues that bring about a significant feeling of rejection from the local community.

Because you pay him 1000 euros and tomorrow he is offered 1100 euros and goes. He doesn't say: 'I'm staying here because I am happy here', does he? No, he packs and goes. (Mayor 6)

Cattle farmers complain a great deal because they say that they spend a lot of time teaching them. 'And when they have been taught, they leave'. (Community Educator 1)

Sometimes it's 750–800 euros for a family of five. And it is for feeding five people for a month [...] that at the end is sufficient, but when books, clothes and so on have to be paid for, they do not come ends meet. (Social Worker 2)

People in the village always say 'let's see how long they stay', 'in the house they live in and in the work they have,' 'let's see how long they stay' Well I've heard it many times. Then I don't know, I believe that if they really had dignified conditions they would stay. (Community Educator 1)

The lack of housing for rental for immigrants, and the precarious conditions of those within their grasp are recurrent themes in the declarations of those interviewed. For those working in agriculture, accommodation is usually provided by the employers.

The houses were damp, without heating and in dreadful conditions. After working so many hours a day, you get to such a dreadful house. Well, the families in this village left there as soon as they could. (Local Development Manager 1)

Those renting are indigenous people. But they are houses that aren't fit for another purpose. They won't serve for anything else, if these people don't use them. (Mayor 6)

A lack of knowledge of Spanish is also one element that puts immigrants in a very vulnerable situation. For women, who are primarily employed in the services sector, speaking Spanish is a condition for accessing employment.

The number of men learning to read Spanish is increasing, in order to get a driving licence [...]. With women three areas as sewing, cooking and learning Spanish are worked on. [...] I can't give the women work until they can speak Spanish. (Social Worker 2)

As you may gather from the previous declaration, knowing the language is necessary for obtaining the driving licence and logically for having automobility, which is something essential in the rural environment. Not being able to speak Spanish is also a significant obstacle in relating to the local population. In this sense, mastery of the language is a prerequisite for intercultural coexistence.

She can't even say 'well this child is beautiful,' or things like that. There are others that speak better and that make attempts to mix with local mothers but she is very limited in her communication. (Community Educator 1)

The opportunities to learn the language are not really great; moreover, they are dictated by the long and irregular working days and the limited time available.

The statements from those interviewed concur in identifying the scarce resources available to local councils and other local agencies for the development of initiatives aimed at improving living conditions of immigrants. Logically, this complaint is more emphatic in those rural areas most interested in settling the immigrant population. The lack of resources has been aggravated by the cuts in social expenditure that happened after the 2008 recession, and has reinforced the role of civic non-profit organizations and charities in the social welfare of immigrants.

2.4.3 *The Effects of the Recession*

During the fieldwork we have observed that the recession has brought about the departure of a significant number of immigrants, who return to their countries of origin or move to new destinations; this is also shown in the statistical analysis carried out so far (Sampedro and Camarero 2016). The cause is the reduction in the job opportunities in two primary employment niches, construction and family agriculture. The worsening of working conditions also influences the decision to leave.

Many have left, because of course with the recession in the construction industry the owners of these businesses went bankrupt so the employees had to go. But there are still rather a lot of immigrants. (High School Teacher 1)

Yes, there was depopulation. Those who sought work elsewhere left. Bulgarians left, many to their country of origin [...] What I mean is that in Bulgaria they have a house, and here they were paying a rent that they couldn't afford and in the end Bulgaria is where they all have houses paid for. (Social Worker 2)

Those that have stayed after the most difficult years of the recession are perceived as being stable and as such near to the status of "resident". In this context the coexistence with the local population is viewed as being reasonably good.

And for that I believe that many have left, except those that are already here which is a significant population and that don't foresee leaving and are already settled here and are going to stay and be here. They feel completely local. (Mayor 3)

Unlike what we may think rather often, there doesn't appear to be competition for jobs. This is because the immigrants continue working in occupational niches for which there aren't enough local workers, or in jobs that are openly rejected by the indigenous community.

There are no confrontations, there are no problems, there is no conflict ... [...] Yes, why? Because they then work together in [the local company factory], they work together, they are neighbours... (Social Worker 1)

The immigrants do jobs that the locals don't want. Who now wants to work with livestock? (Mayor 4)

'They are going to take away my job.' Then they realised that it's the other way round, that immigrants have many times been necessary as the country needs jobs. Because the population is ageing and the work is frequently physical and it needs young people to do it. (Mayor 3)

However the recession seems to have led to growing competition for benefits, among those being the jobs provided by the councils. This competition for benefits was fed by the increase of social needs but also by the existing negative stereotypes about the misuse that immigrants make of social aid.

[...] Because it's not something as important as a conflict, but yes, it exists. It exists for example with grants, with benefits... with the benefits, with the housing.... With the benefits... uffff. For example... with the subject of food banks, no? Well, 'why are they given

help when they aren't going to work?' Well then, sometimes, we have to explain a bit. (Social Worker 1)

2.4.4 *Intercultural Coexistence: A Pending Subject*

One element that may facilitate the flourishing of cosmopolitanism and intercultural coexistence in the rural environment is the greater facility to perceive the immigrants as individuals, rather than members of a given ethnic group. In small villages, in which the groups of immigrants are also small, it is easier to avoid the formation of ghettos whereby groups of immigrants become closed in. In this sense the statements of those interviewed confirm the greater opening towards people in small villages. There, the establishing of personal links between immigrants and the locals only face the specific difficulties of incorporating new members into the established community, and the difficulties seem to resolve themselves relatively easily.

Thus my experience is that in a small village the person is more important than the group, isn't it? (Social Worker 1)

Then also in the small villages where there is a Muslim population you are surprised by how well they get on, and that local women and Muslim women laugh together, they tell jokes and funny stories, and sometimes look after each other's children. (NGO Staff Member 1)

On the other hand, in contexts where there are bigger groups of immigrants, the tendency for the groups to close is greater, as it is to classify people according to their ethnic affiliation and to form ghettos.

We have had a problem, well not a problem, for them it was an advantage. It's that there are a lot. For many of them it's not necessary to learn Spanish because they can chat with their fellows. (Mayor 4)

The statements of some interviewees suggest that pacific or even cordial coexistence does not always involve a true intercultural harmony. Intercultural coexistence is a goal rather than a reality.

Not having the perfect integration, they make their lives normal. But there is not a mix of Spaniards with the immigrants, a mix in participation in the activities of the village. But afterwards the coexistence isn't bad. (Mayor 4)

Moroccan mothers and Spanish mothers come and they treat each other with politeness and respect but they don't mix. One lot put themselves on one side and the others on the other side. And they don't mix at all. (Community Educator 1)

The idea of integration appears to be repeatedly identified with cultural assimilation. The satisfaction that is produced by seeing how the immigrants incorporate themselves into the local customs does not produce a corresponding attitude of incorporation of their customs or cultural characteristics.

Well then, this year a sixteen year old girl whose mother is Nicaraguan and whose father is from here was the *Móndida* (a character in the local festival) [...] Last year it was two

Bulgarian sisters, two girls from here of Bulgarian origin [...] and this is what the people from here live saying 'well you're with us'. (Social Worker 1)

.. And they are already adapting to our customs. The girls, they want to completely imitate what they see here, they want integrate themselves. For me, that is wonderful. In this sense there are no barriers, are there? (Mayor 3)

He's of Moroccan origin. [...] He has always worked here, and he is absolutely and totally integrated. He has a Spanish name or has Hispanicised his name, and he is the area's champion guiñote player (local card game). I would like to say that, for example, at burials he goes to the funeral mass. [...] And among his group of friends there are no Moroccans. (Social Worker 1)

In this way the understanding of the customs of the immigrants is achieved voluntarily and spontaneously, without there being specific programmes aimed at promoting interculturality; many times this is due to the lack of resources available to the local administrators.

... and we saw that the Muslim workers looked at the sun and knelt down to pray. Of course, the first times we were saying 'What do they do, God almighty! What fanaticism,' and then you understand it isn't fanaticism that it is something they are born with and do quite naturally. (High School Teacher 1)

I think there are stereotypes. With the Latin Americans the language barrier does not exist. Then the relationship is easier. But then the stereotype is that they waste a lot, isn't it? That they have an extravagant standard of living. Do they have? Well I don't know, probably they do, but probably it's that we're more austere; therefore we have to criticise ourselves a bit, don't we? (Social Worker 1)

By having the means we could do much more ... (what is done now is) treat them like just another citizen. Specific things are that sometimes we try to produce the edicts in two languages. From some rural development association we help them in learning Spanish. In the school, they get special attention from an educational point of view. What more can we do in a small village? We don't have specialists. (Mayor 4)

The lack of awareness about the importance of interculturality can mean a problem for the cultural identities of the second generations; this has been indicated by studies carried out in other contexts (de Lima 2011). They straddle two cultures that run in parallel without mixing. Curiously, those interviewed focus the answer to all the problems of integration on the second generations. According to this vision, it is the second generations that, having acquired the Spanish culture, will dissipate the problem of intercultural coexistence.

We are coexisting well. But everyone is in their own world. But this is disappearing. This happens among the older ones. The young ones are fully integrated. (Mayor 4)

Their children are already from here. A lot of them say it to me: 'I am from this village, I am from Valladolid, I am from Castile and León and I am Spanish'. And I think that is very important. (Mayor 4)

There are some immigrants who only relate with those from their own country and not with many of them either. They don't have much of a social life. This happens with parents, the

children are one of us. And you know by the surnames they aren't Spanish or because they have a name which is not common here, they even Hispanicise them, that is very curious, they try to change the letters so that their names appear to be more Spanish. (High School Teacher 1)

2.5 Conclusion

Despite the rural depopulation experienced in the region we have studied, the potential of the immigrant population still has not been realised. In general, the case study confirms the tendencies observed in the majority of the studies carried out at European level. The perception of immigrants is dominated by utilitarianism, their cultural contribution is still absent from the collective imaginary of the key players in the local sphere and social integration tends to be identified with cultural assimilation.

The statements from mayors, social workers, members of non-governmental organisations, and other key participants suggest that the perception of immigrants varies substantially; it depends on the degree to which depopulation appears as a real and tangible threat in rural communities. In short, we might say that the threat of depopulation is related to the idea that the immigrants are fundamentally residents, with a sentiment of empathy and with a proactive attitude in their being attracted, welcomed and defended, against the possible distrust of the local population. On the other hand, in situations where depopulation doesn't seem to be a problem, immigrants are basically perceived as workers that come and go; they are viewed with indifference or suspicion, and even before their arrival a passive attitude of mere spectators is adopted.

Even in those places where the vital demographic contribution of the foreign immigrants is recognised, they are implicitly compared to the ideal potential settler who would be young, qualified, entrepreneurial, and Spanish. With respect to this ideal, hierarchies of desirability are established for different national groups of immigrants. The statements of those interviewed often reflect the difficulty they have in understanding the precarious economic and employment situation of the immigrants and above all some of its consequences; for example, their intense mobility to seek better employment conditions, locations with better services or better proximity to coethnic support networks and their occasional or recurrent need for social benefits in order to survive. The stereotypes and prejudices regarding the immigrant population abound in the statements of those interviewed, and in some cases attitudes approaching xenophobia have been perceived. Thus, the research confirms that one source of precariousness of rural cosmopolitanism is the very precarity of living conditions of immigrant population.

With regard to the precarity suffered by immigrants, the results of our research reflect the harsh working conditions, the difficulties to access decent housing and the frequent irregularities with the development of work. The recession seems not to have caused any competition for jobs, since the immigrants continue working in

ethnic occupational niches, rather there is a reduction in or a worsening of the job opportunities and a greater dependence on benefits. So, the recession has meant an important obstacle to the flourishing of rural cosmopolitanism, especially by the increase of reluctant attitudes from the local population with regard to the alleged abuse of social benefits by immigrants. The recession has also brought significant cuts in the resources available to social policies.

The institutional intervention with regard to the welcoming of the immigrant population varies between voluntarism in the most depopulated rural areas and passivity whereby the immigrants are basically viewed as workers. The lack of resources and planned intervention by the local agencies means that the civic organisations play an important role in attending the immigrant population, although this assistance is focused on the resolution of difficult social situations on the individual and family scale. We might say that following the proposal by Søholt et al. (2018) the lack of a welcoming policy at a local level predominates retentive practices. In rural areas with high depopulation there is a situation of conditional reception on the inclusion-exclusion axis, by means of the pressure of cultural assimilation. In the case of the environments where immigration is more closely linked to intensive agriculture, there is exclusion related to a lack of empathy, the absence of immigrant population in the collective imaginary of rural development and a proliferation of stereotypes and negative prejudices.

One of the main obstacles for constructing the cosmopolitan and welcoming communities is the lack of intercultural comprehension. The culture of the immigrants is simply tolerated without any real intercultural coexistence of the immigrant and local population. In the mind-sets of the key participants integration is automatically produced by the assimilation of the second generations. This lack of recognition of the others' culture may inflame feelings of being uprooted, both in these second generations and in the parents who wish to keep their culture alive. If we take into account the importance of emotional aspects in the decision of immigrants to settle mid and long term, the absence of an actual intercultural coexistence may feed rural depopulation.

The lack of social practices and institutional mechanisms capable of promoting interculturality unite with the difficulty of recognising the immigrants as entrepreneurs or consumers. This frustrates the economic and cultural potential and the capacity of innovation that surrounds this new social diversity. Immigration is not only able to reduce depopulation in rural areas, but it can also reactivate the connection of the rural areas with the globalised world. Nevertheless, to do so it is vital to design and enact welcoming policies by means of cooperation among local, regional and national authorities, and between public and private actors. This is the way to support actively the frail rural cosmopolitanism.

Acknowledgements This study forms part of the Project “Recession and immigration in the rural environment of Castile and León” (CSO2015-67525-R, MINECO/FEDER). This is a research project financed for the period 2015–2018 in the State RDI Programme orientated at the Challenges of Society. The project is incorporated into the IsoRural Network of Excellence (CSO2016-61728-REDT).

References

- Aure M, Førde A, Magnussen T (2018) Will migrant workers rescue rural regions? Challenges of creating stability through mobility. *J Rural Stud* 60:52–59
- Balibar E (1991) Racism and crisis. In: Balibar E, Wallerstein I (eds) *Race, nation, class. Ambiguous identities*. Verso, London, pp 217–227
- Bayona J, Gil F (2013) Is foreign immigration the solution to rural depopulation? *Sociol Rural* 53(1):26–51
- Berg-Nordlie M (2018) New in town. Small-town media discourses on immigrants and immigration. *J Rural Stud* 64:210–219
- Camarero L, Oliva J (2016) Understanding rural change: Mobilities, diversities and hybridizations. *Sociální studia/Social Studies* 13(2):93–112
- Camarero L, Sampedro R, Oliva J (2011) Foreigners, neighbours, immigrants: translocal mobilities in rural areas in Spain. In: Hedberg C, do Carmo R (eds) *Translocal ruralism: mobility and connectivity in European rural spaces*. Springer, New York, pp 143–162
- Cid-Aguayo B (2008) Global villages and rural cosmopolitanism: exploring global ruralities. *Globalizations* 5(4):541–554
- Corrado A, de Castro C, Perrotta D (2017) *Migration and agriculture. Mobility and change in the Mediterranean area*. Routledge, London
- de Lima P (2011) Boundary crossing: migration, belonging/‘un-belonging’ in rural Scotland. In: Hedberg C, do Carmo R (eds) *Translocal ruralism: mobility and connectivity in European rural spaces*. Springer, London, pp 203–217
- de Lima P, Wright S (2009) Welcoming migrants: migrant labour in rural Scotland. *Soc Policy Soc* 8(3):391–404
- Depner W, Teixeira C (2012) Welcoming communities? An assessment of community services in attracting and retaining immigrants in the South Okanagan Valley (British Columbia, Canada), with policy recommendations. *J Rural Commun Dev* 7(2):72–97
- Eimermann M, Kordel S (2018) International lifestyle migrant entrepreneurs in two new immigration destinations: understanding their evolving mix of embeddedness. *J Rural Stud* 64:241–252
- ESPON (2017) *Shrinking rural regions in Europe towards smart and innovative approaches to regional development challenges in depopulating rural regions*. ESPON EGCT, Luxembourg
- Flynn M, Kay R (2017) Migrants’ experiences of material and emotional security in rural Scotland: implications for longer-term settlement. *J Rural Stud* 52:56–65
- Fonseca M (2008) New waves of immigration to small towns and rural areas in Portugal. *Popul Space Place* 14:525–535
- Gadea E, Pedreño A, de Castro C (2017) Producing and mobilizing vulnerable workers. The agribusiness of the region of Murcia, Spain. In: Corrado A, de Castro C, Perrotta D (eds) *Migration and agriculture: mobility and change in the Mediterranean area*. Routledge, London, pp 79–94
- Gertel J, Sippel S (2014) *Seasonal workers in Mediterranean agriculture. The social costs of eating fresh*. Routledge, London
- Górny A, Kaczmarczyk P (2018) A known but uncertain path: the role of foreign labour in Polish agriculture. *J Rural Stud* 64:177–188
- Halfacree K (2012) Heterolocal identities? Counter-urbanisation, second homes, and rural consumption in the era of mobilities. *Popul Space Place* 18:209–224
- Hedberg C, Carmo R (2011) ‘Translocal Ruralism’: mobility and connectivity in European rural space. Springer, Dordrecht
- Hedberg C, Haandrikman K (2014) Repopulation of the Swedish countryside: globalisation by international migration. *J Rural Stud* 34:128–138
- Hoggart K, Mendoza C (1999) African immigrant workers in Spanish agriculture. *Sociol Rural* 39(4):538–562
- Jentsch B, de Lima P, MacDonald B (2007) Migrant workers in rural Scotland: going to the middle of nowhere. *Int J Multicult Soc* 9(1):35–53

- Kasimis C (2008) Survival and expansion. Migrants in Greek rural regions. *Popul Space Place* 14:511–524
- Kasimis C, Papadoulos A, Pappas C (2010) Gaining from rural migrants: migrant employment strategies and socioeconomic implications for rural labour markets. *Sociol Rural* 50(3):258–276
- Krivokapic-Skoko B, Reid C, Collins J (2018) Rural cosmopolitanism in Australia. *J Rural Stud* 64:153–163
- McAreevey R (2012) Resistance or resilience? Tracking the pathway of recent arrivals to a ‘new’ rural destination. *Sociol Rural* 52(4):488–507
- McAreevey R, Argent N (2018a) Migrant integration in rural new immigration destinations: an institutional and triangular perspective. *J Rural Stud* 64:267–275
- McAreevey R, Argent N (2018b) New immigration destinations (NID) unravelling the challenges and opportunities for migrants and for host communities. *J Rural Stud* 64:148–152
- Moren-Alegret R (2008) Ruralphilia and urbophobia versus urbophilia and ruralphobia? Lessons from immigrant integration processes in small towns and rural areas in Spain. *Popul Space Place* 14:537–552
- Oliva J (2010) Rural melting-pots, mobilities and fragilities: reflections on the Spanish case. *Sociol Rural* 50(3):277–295
- Pedreño A, Riquelme P (2006) La condición inmigrante de los trabajadores rurales. *Revista Española de Estudios Agrosociales y Pesqueros* 211:189–238
- Pinilla V, Ayuda M, Sáez L (2008) Rural depopulation and the migration turnaround in Mediterranean Western Europe: a case study in Aragon. *J Rural Commun Dev* 3:1–22
- Popke J (2011) Latino migration and neoliberalism in the U.S. South: notes toward a rural cosmopolitanism. *Southeast Geogr* 51:242–259
- Pugh R (2003) Considering the countryside: is there a case for rural social work? *Br J Soc Work* 33:67–85
- Rye J (2014) The Western European countryside from an Eastern European perspective: case of migrant workers in Norwegian agriculture. *Eur Countryside* 6(4):327–346
- Rye J (2018) Labour migrants and rural change: the “mobility transformation” of Hitra/Frøya, Norway, 2005–2015. *J Rural Stud* 64:189–199
- Sampedro R, Camarero L (2016) Inmigrantes, estrategias familiares y arraigo: las lecciones de la crisis en las áreas rurales. *Migraciones* 40:3–31
- Sampedro R, Camarero L (2018) Foreign immigrants in depopulated rural areas: local social services and the construction of welcoming communities. *Soc Incl* 6(3):337–346
- Sethi B (2013) Newcomer resettlement in a globalized world: the role of social workers in building inclusive societies. *Crit Soc Work* 14(1):81–100
- Søholt S, Stenbacka S, Nørgaard H (2018) Conditioned receptiveness: nordic rural elite perceptions of immigrant contributions to local resilience. *J Rural Stud* 64:220–229
- Trevena P, McGhee D, Heath S (2013) Location, location? A critical examination of patterns and determinants of internal mobility amongst post-accession polish migrants in the UK. *Popul Space Place* 19(6):671–687
- Weist K, Leibert T (2013) Selective migration and unbalanced sex ratio in rural regions. SEMIGRA. ESPON & Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Leibniz
- Woods M (2018) Precarious rural cosmopolitanism: negotiating globalization, migration and diversity in Irish small towns. *J Rural Stud* 64:164–176

Rosario Sampedro is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Valladolid (Spain). Her research is primarily on rural sociology and gender issues, with a focus on the different dimensions of mobility as a key factor of current rural societies. At present she is involved in research projects focusing on the settlement of foreign immigrants in rural areas in Spain as a way to better understand the underlying conditions for social sustainability and the economic development of rural communities.

Luis Camarero is a Sociologist and Professor at the Theory, Methodology and Social Change Department, National University of Distance Education (Madrid). He has conducted several research projects on the demographic and socioeconomic transformations of southern European rural areas. He is author of several books and articles focusing on social sustainability in rural areas and on the new social inequalities related both to gender issues and mobility.