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Luís Silva · Elisabete Figueiredo *Editors*

## Shaping Rural Areas in Europe

Perceptions and Outcomes on the Present and the Future

*Shaping Rural Areas in Europe – Perceptions and Outcomes on the Present and the Future* sets out to investigate the effect of urban perceptions about the rural and consequent demands on rurality on the present and future configurations of rural territories in Europe in the early twenty-first century. This volume presents and discusses a broad range of case studies and theoretical and methodological approaches from different academic fields, mainly Anthropology, Sociology and Geography.

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 Springer



## Chapter 15

# Cross-Cultural Perceptions and Discourses Between Rural and Urban in Galicia

Xerardo Pereiro and Santiago Prado

### 15.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the relationships between rural and urban imaginaries in Galicia. We also discuss the role of the Galician nationalist movement and other ideologies on new rural identifications. In the 1950s, some 11 million people lived in towns of less than 2,000 inhabitants in Spain; today, there are less than seven million (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2011). Currently, in spite of peri-urbanisation and 'rurbanisation' processes, only 24 % of the Spanish population (45,989,016 inhabitants) lives in localities considered 'rural', which from an administrative and technical point of view are those with less than 10,000 inhabitants. In Galicia (an autonomous political territory located in the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula), more than 70 % of the population lives in localities considered 'urban' from the administrative point of view.

The so-called traditionally rural spaces are being redefined globally and in particular on the Iberian Peninsula (Roseman 2008; Silva 2009). People now labelled neo-rural and 'rurban' have assumed a leading role in the reconstruction, appearance and meaning of the 'old' rural and have entered a process of dialogue with other actors and institutions. The truth is that we are witnessing a series of social, economic, political and cultural transformations of what 'rural' means, making it necessary to rethink the theoretical and methodological framework.

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The hegemony of urban over rural, which was generated by capitalism in order to seize its natural resources, is a historical process that led to changes in the way we look at relationships between these two spaces. The changes, adaptations and transformations of this new relationship between the rural and the urban must be contextualised both in time and in space, because there are differences among the social, political and economic contexts of the rural and urban historically and still today. Far from being two separate unconnected worlds, the rural and the urban are part of the same multicultural, multilingual, multiracial, multimedia and, maybe, even multipurpose society. The rural and the urban are not absolute categories, but relative categories that frequently interpenetrate, although this may contradict the objectivised and quantitative thinking that seeks to divide and delimit everything into tight categories.

Different models for, and ways of thinking about, the relationship between these two spaces have now converged into an approach that ceases to use twentieth-century assumptions when conceiving of the rural, that is, in reference to dichotomous models employing the idea of a continuum or the modernisation of the rural. The multiple influences – social, political and economic – in the global world where we live also generate transformations that are not only experienced by rural areas but also by the entire global society (Comas d'Argemir and Contreras 1990). Referring, nowadays, to the rural and the urban means taking into account how historical configurations were constructed and how they are mediated at present.

In this chapter, the analytical focus will be on rural-urban perceptions in Galicia (Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula) and how they have been constructed historically within Galician nationalist ideologies.<sup>1</sup> We will also pay attention to the influences of these perceptions on the development of rural areas. The main aims of this chapter are: (a) to present the main theoretical social sciences' perspectives on rural-urban perceptions; (b) to discuss the distinct application of these theories in diverse cultural contexts, taking Galicia as a good example; (c) to make the claim that political ideologies have created a rural-urban imaginary; and (d) to interpret the daily life of Galicia's rural inhabitants as an appropriation of the 'rurbanisation' process.

Our contribution is grounded in our own fieldwork in rural Galicia undertaken since 1993. Xerardo Pereiro (2005) has researched the urbanisation of rural spaces and the role of the Galician small towns, called *vilas*, in the changes of meanings and functions of space, time and cultural heritage. Santiago Prado (2007) has researched the causes of low school performance among rural young people and the impact of the Galician small town in the construction of rurban identities in Central Galicia. Both of us have conducted multilevel ethnographic studies and collected data for this chapter, using comparative perspectives and other qualitative methodologies, such as interviews and the analysis of documents.

<sup>1</sup>In the case of Xerardo Pereiro, this work is the result of a Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology sabbatical grant (SFRH/BSAB/1186/2011) developed at the University of Santiago de Compostela's Department of Philosophy and Social Anthropology from January to July 2012. In the case of Santiago Prado, this work is part of his research for CETRAD, a research centre funded by the Portuguese Government through the FCT, within the framework of the Pest-OE/SADG/UI4011/2011 project.

In the first part of this chapter, we will give a brief presentation of social scientific approaches to the rural-urban relationship: the rural-urban polarising dichotomy of Tönnies (1979 [1887]), the different types of rural-urban continuum introduced by Sorokin and Zimmerman (1929) and Redfield (1947), as well as the theories of modernisation that Comas d'Argemir and Contreras (1990) analysed, showing how they were also imbued with the idea of a continuum. As explained by Pereiro (2005, 2013), from the 1970s onwards, other considerations came into play, such as the models of depopulation-population-repopulation and counter-urbanisation, the revitalisation and renaissance of the rural, the post-rural, the neo-rural and the rural-urban.

These more recent models are not exclusive but are instead bringing in new perspectives to understand these relationships as complementary in nature. The starting point is that everything is interconnected on a global scale and, so, attention must be also paid to the flows and connections between different spaces, times and structures (social, political and economic, among others) present both in the local context and at a global level (Hannerz 1989; Appadurai 2004 [1996]; Tsing 2005). Our attention should, therefore, focus on the processes, both on those already presented and on those that revolve around mobility, hybridity, translocality and globalisation.

In the second part of our chapter, we shall discuss a new approach to the role of Galician nationalist ideologies, which are constructing new ruralities and rurban identities. And in the third part we shall present the role of the Galician small towns (*vilas*) in the crossing of rural-urban imaginaries. We are, therefore, going to analyse the maintenance of the rural-urban dichotomy from the 'emic' point of view of Galician people. These processes and mechanisms produce new senses and meanings of the so-called rural places from an urban point of view that transformed them in spaces of cultural and natural heritage, second homes, renaturalisation, tourism and gastronomic experiences and new agriculture and neo-rural repopulation.

## 15.2 Understanding the Relationship Between the Rural and Urban

### 15.2.1 *The Dichotomous Polarisation Between the Rural and Urban*

In the past, analyses of the rural and the urban were about the opposition between the rural and the urban as two different worlds socially and spatially (e.g. Maciver 1917; Maciver and Page 1949; Tönnies 1987 [1931]; Durkheim 1977 [1893]; Marx and Engels 1970 [1846]; Wirth 1979 [1938]), and the domination of the urban over the passive rural. In this model, the prototypical social relationships of the rural were face-to-face, and kinship, neighbourhood, friendship and place were the important social forces in semi-isolated small rural communities. The social relations in urban areas were thought as secondary, ideological and more open than rural areas. Individualism, secularisation and heterogeneity were the processes associated with

this urban model. The rural was represented as an anti-urban model and claimed as negative, as not urban. Arts, cinema and fiction literature contributed to the reproduction of this model of interpretation and of the less favoured rural stereotypes, such as the character of the Spanish *paleta* (hick), who represented the underdevelopment of the rural, the disorientation in the cities and the subordination to the bourgeois and urban culture.

### 15.2.2 *The Urban-Rural Continuum*

As an intellectual answer to the rural-urban opposition, some authors produced a different model to interpret this relationship – that is, the urban-rural continuum (Williams 1973; Newby 1983). Urbanism as a way of life has been associated with the transition from rural to urban. In this model, urbanism means disorganisation, secularisation and individualism. The rural world does not have the capacity to change without the urban in this model, and then the rural is a simple recipient of external influences. The transformations of the rural are referred to as acculturation, modernisation and social change, but they do not leave aside another dichotomy: tradition/modernity (Comas d'Argemir and Contreras 1990).

In anthropology, this model was created by Robert Redfield, supported by his fieldwork in Latin America, but it has been spread in the past to Europe by the anthropologists who have studied the Mediterranean area and other authors (Frankenberg 1966; Lefebvre 1975; Pahl 1966; Lewis 1953; Newby 1980). In Europe, some of the social agents of this continuum were the part-time peasants and commuters between villages and cities. This continuum has meant the social-cultural urbanisation of the country, new ideas and values about the rural and the differentiation between the rural and agricultural production.

This thesis has been criticised by several authors (Gans 1962; Lewis 1953; Mitchell 1990 [1966]; Whyte 1955 [1943]; Vidich and Bensman 1958) that have questioned the idea of the passivity of rural inhabitants in processes of social change. They have questioned the myth of the small community as a representation of an isolated and functionalist social space without the influence of social forces such as the State and its power mechanisms (Lewis 1953, 1960). The ruralisation of cities and the active participation of peasants in social change (Lewis 1985 [1959]) was another critical perspective of this dichotomous model.

### 15.2.3 *Theories of Rural Modernisation*

Since the mid-1950s, the rural-urban dichotomy was assumed and a group of theories called 'theories of modernisation' was formulated. From the point of view of this theoretical perspective, the rural represents a level of social and economic underdevelopment and needs to experience modernisation in imitation of urban

patterns (Rogers and Svenning 1973). Modernisation is conceived as a positive process linked to technological advances and economic development (Comas d'Argemir and Contreras 1990: 7).

Some examples of the application of these theories are the analyses proposed by William Douglass and Josep Aceves (1978 [1970]) for the Spanish case. Their interpretation of the rural in that work was that rural communities were closed, isolated, autonomous, conservative, subsistence producing and traditional groups. These ethnocentric theories have been criticised by several authors, but they can be summarised as theories that do not pay attention to the historical contexts of change, and that are very linear; that do not include analyses of power relationships and conflicts; that promote essentialist and idealistic views of the rural and the urban as homogeneous entities throughout the world; that define the rural and the urban as absolute categories and not as relative and dynamic social-cultural positions; that do not take into consideration the influences of capitalism in rural areas and even less the local-global links (Comas d'Argemir and Contreras 1990: 22).

### 15.2.4 *The Depopulation-Population-Repopulation and Counter-Urbanisation Models*

Since the 1970s, the relationship between the rural and the urban has been described from the perspective of the depopulation-population-repopulation model (Lewis and Maund 1976; Wilson 1942). The urbanisation of rural spaces is said to be due to the promotion of prevailing urban values, changes in rural values and new social and political structures installed in rural spaces. These processes are not homogeneous in every rural area and have three stages:

1. Depopulation of rural areas and out-migration to more industrialised urban areas.
2. Population of rural areas after the industrialisation period. It begins with a part-time return to the rural at weekends and holidays, new residences, new styles of urban middle-class life, second houses and commuting.
3. Repopulation, when all the family returns, including elderly people and new rural people to work in the third sector or in ecological agriculture, for example.

Another theoretical perspective associated with the previous linear model is counter-urbanisation, a theory that explains decentralised urbanism. Some authors such as Berry (1976) and Champion (1989) claim that the social and environmental problems considered as urban (i.e. pollution and stress) are a reason for people to go out to rural areas, which are thought of as calm and quiet, closer to nature and rich in human relations (i.e. community and neighbourhood relations). Another element that explains counter-urbanisation is the creation of infrastructure (roads, trains, and so on) and the existence of new (communication and information) technologies that allow people to work in these rural areas while being connected with others parts of the world.

Other authors such as Harvey (1992 [1973]), Lefebvre (1975) and Gottdiener (1988) said that this decentralisation is produced in a context of capitalist development by crises of capitalism, but not by improvements in transportation. The crisis of capital accumulation influenced the expansion of capital into rural areas to continue the accumulation.

And from a rural perspective of some authors (e.g. Cloke 1985), the counter-urbanisation process means that the people come back or go to rural areas due to infrastructural factors (roads, accessibility, services, etc.) and superstructural factors called rural attraction (prices, community life, quality of life, landscapes, nature, housing, cultural heritage). This interpretation underlines the positive and active participation of rural territories in their conversion to attractive areas for a good standard of living.

### 15.2.5 *The Revitalisation and Renaissance of the Rural*

A group of perspectives tried to analyse the Western revitalisation of rural areas (Kayser 1990; Camarero Rioja 1991; van der Ploeg 2010). The rural spaces have become an alternative model of life (Entrena Durán 1998: 149) in association with the ideologies of sustainability, naturalist society and pastoralist ideology (Carson 1962; Marx 1964; Seymour 2006; Halfacree 2007). This is an answer to the urban economic and values crises, which questioned development and modernisation. The rural has become a fad, a resource for development and a prestigious and symbolic status. Here we can integrate the post-rural model (Ferrão 2000; García Sanz 1996), the neo-rural model<sup>2</sup> (Kayser 1990; Moya 1991; Rodríguez and Trabada 1991; Del Barrio 1999; Bryden 2000) and the rurban<sup>3</sup> model (Dodson 1939; Arensberg and Kimball 1965; Bauer and Roux 1976; Baigorri 1995; Berger et al. 1980; García de León 1996; Miquel 2000; Pereiro 2005; Voyé and Rémy 1994 [1992]) as proposals for the interpretation of the rural areas' new meanings and uses.

Rather than being the simple opposite to the 'urban', the 'rural' must be thought as part of larger territories that are globalised and urbanised and as part of a historical process that has led to urban domination. Indeed, the idea of rurality is a metaphor and an emblem for many local, regional and national identifications. This leads us to engage in a more in-depth research on the meanings associated with rurality and related social-cultural changes. Rural areas are known to be redefined within a global context (Cloke et al. 2006; van der Ploeg 2010) and particularly so in the Iberian Peninsula (García Sanz 1996; Portela and Caldas 2003; Pereiro 2005; Roseman 2008; Silva 2009; Figueiredo et al. 2011).

<sup>2</sup>See <http://www.neorural.com/> ; [www.cdr Campos.es/plataforma\\_rural/](http://www.cdr Campos.es/plataforma_rural/) and [www.abrazalatierra.com](http://www.abrazalatierra.com)

<sup>3</sup>See Professor Dr. José Graziano da Silva's 'rurbano' project (Instituto de Economia – UNICAMP): [www.eco.unicamp.br/projectos/rurban21.htm](http://www.eco.unicamp.br/projectos/rurban21.htm)

The so-called new farmers, newcomers to rural areas or rurban inhabitants have had a major influence on redefining and revitalising long-standing rural areas. From this perspective, we may regard the concept of new ruralities (Rodríguez and Trabada 1991; Covas 2008; Roseman 2008; Rivera 2009; Oliva 2010; Pereiro 2013) as a useful analytical tool for understanding contemporary rural change. It is what Jesús Oliva (2010) called the 'new rural melting pots', which contribute decisively to the rural tourism associated with the ideologies promoting a 'return to nature', a focus on cultural heritage, the symbolic re-signification of food products and the multifunctionality of rural landscapes.

These new meanings are found in discourses on rural development in Europe and have now led to a recreated rural which is thought of as holding the core of traditions lost through modernisation. The countryside is no longer solely an area for agricultural production; it has become a space of consumerism and leisure. We could say that rural spaces have begun to develop new products (landscape, rurality, tranquillity, roots, identifications, new sociability, cultural and natural heritage) with an urban orientation. The concepts of agricultural and agribusiness have come to be signified with 'rural' and 'field', representing a manifestation of the change from agrarian and industrial societies to postindustrial societies.

### 15.2.6 *The Rural and the Urban in Galician Nationalist Thinking*

Galicia is one of the 17 autonomous regional governments that were created in Spain in the 1980s. In the Spanish Constitution, Galicia is framed as one of the 'historic nationalities' of Spain, along with Catalonia and the Basque Country. It has nearly three million inhabitants living in four provinces: A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense and Pontevedra. Galicia is world renowned because of pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela, the regional capital. Although Galicia was historically dominated by a rural economy (e.g. in 1950, 80 % of the population lived and worked in rural areas), in the last five decades, it has experienced a slow but very strong process of urbanisation, in social, cultural, political and economic terms (Lois 2004; Pereiro 2005). In the 2006 census, 68 % of Galician people were registered as living in urban settlements of over 10,000 inhabitants (Instituto Galego de Estatística 2007). In Galicia, the urbanisation process has been very intensive since the 1960s, and the long-standing rural areas are today part of urban society. But the truth is that the people, the laws and the politics maintain the rural-urban dichotomy as a principle of social life. This 'emic' perspective is confronted with a more dominant and complex urban reality with most of the territory organised in towns, small towns and villages.

Nevertheless, the identification of Galicia with the rural was very important as a repository for Galician national identity and for the external image of Galicia. The idealised Galician peasant became the representation of the Galician people, but the urban has never been less important in the discussions about Galician identity.

From the point of view of several authors (Cores Trasmonte 1973; Castela 1986 [1944]; Pereiro 2005), the Galician rural-urban differentiation was more important than class differentiation in the classification of social identities. Today, these differences are more blurred and complex but persist in the imaginaries of Galician people and in areas such as legislation and politics.

In the contemporary history of Galicia, there is a long-standing and enduring debate about if Galicia needs a big city or several small cities and towns with a network of villages, and also whether Galician culture is more urban or rural. In this chapter, we are going, first, to analyse the ruralist perspectives which defend a rural identification and later the urban and rural models of development and cultural identification for the Galician case.

Benito Vicetto (1983 [1865]) was a nationalist intellectual and historian who defined a dichotomy between rural Galicia and *civil* Galicia (urban), two Galicias. From his point of view, rural Galicia was characterised by social and physical isolation, inaccessibility, human groups with no intellectual or societal relations, a quiet and simple life, children of nature, with love for the work, family and God and also by being of less value and subordinated to urban Galicia, but not less important in terms of a Catholic model for the reproduction of Galicia.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, a Galician rural social movement, *agrarismo* (agrarianism), defended the role of the rural and agriculture in Galicia. *Agrarismo* is a:

Complex movement that attempts to mobilize a social group, such as the peasantry, who until then had not even found an expression of their own interests in order to achieve a broad range of goals that can mostly be summed up in two aspirations: obtaining the conditions that make feasible the survival of the small family farm in the framework of a capitalist economy that is increasingly invasive, and articulating the political interests for the consolidation of land for Galician peasants, so that they match the status of other agricultural cases existing in Spain and of other social groups (Cabo Villaverde 1998: 11, our translation).

Another ruralist vision of rural Galicia as a cultural model for the development of Galicia was introduced by the ethnographers Florentino López Cuevillas and Xaquín Lorenzo Fernández in the first decades of the twentieth century. One good example of their thinking is their defence of rural architecture in the *vila* of Calvos de Randín, next to the Portuguese border:

Calvos's peasant houses are neither polluted by Americanism nor by the influence of city buildings, two diseases that are slowly killing our traditional rural architecture. There is still no heinous urban-looking building next to the brand new road, nor Swiss cottages with pointed roofs, nor overseas-style terraces or banisters; not even concrete balconies (López Cuevillas and Lourenzo Fernández 1930: 31, our translation).

In their book *Parroquia de Velle* (written in 1936 and reissued in 2005), Florentino López Cuevillas, Vicente Fernández Hermida and Xaquín Lorenzo Fernández noted how the process of urbanisation transformed the peripheral rural areas around the town of Ourense. They constructed a portrait of the tension that existed between the rural and the urban in Galicia before the Spanish Civil War. Peasants became part-time industrial and handicraft workers in this town, but, as part of multi-occupationality, they maintained their residence and their agrarian work at the

village of Velle, very close to Ourense. This commuter way of life in the early 1930s in Galicia contributed to the introduction of left-wing ideologies and the Spanish language in rural spaces, an attraction to urban entertainment, and the assimilation of new ideas about change. But this urbanisation process was questioned by the authors as being very critical and negative (2005 [1936]: 170) because, from their point of view, it transformed the agrarian, Catholic, community-based and rural Galician culture.

On the other side, other nationalist intellectuals from the early twentieth century such as Antolín Faraldo, Valle-Inclán, Antón Villar Ponte, Alfonso Daniel Castela and Ramón Otero Pedrayo preferred a big city and urban model, Barcelona being an example to mimic in Atlantic Galicia. Otero Pedrayo stated his preference for the big city in Galicia as a model of development, but 'We cannot lose sight of the eternal peasant background from which Galician towns come, with their culture more or less suited to the modern pace' (Otero Pedrayo 1973: 79, our translation).

In his central work *Sempre en Galiza* (Always in Galicia), written in 1944, Castela promoted the adaptation of the Anglo-Saxon and Catalan models of the garden city to Galicia, paying attention to an harmonious relationship between the urban and the rural: 'I see a rich land, where everybody works and lives in peace, I see my land as one city, the most beautiful garden-city in the world, the ideal city for people who wish to live near nature' (Castela 1986: 122, our translation).

Nevertheless, other nationalist intellectuals such as Xoán Xesús González said that the Galician way of life was the small-town life, and that he preferred a rural model (González 1925) in which the bourgeois were the protagonists of development. Along the same lines, Ramón Otero Pedrayo's literary work *Os Camiños da Vida* (1928) shows us examples of the dialectical discussions among the small Galician aristocrats, who declined in the nineteenth century, and the rise of small-town bourgeois as social leaders and as protagonists of the urbanisation of rural Galicia. Another important author of this period, Vicente Risco (1990), provided a broad overview of how the urban crushed the rural in a conflict won by the urban.

But with the arrival of the 1960s, the architect Andrés Fernández-Albalat (1968) created the idea of 'City of the Rías', inspired by the Dutch Randstand's idea of an urban region. Therefore, if the domination of the urban over the rural was a reality in the historical evolution of Galicia since this period, a great part of the Galician nationalist movement continued to identify Galician national identity with the rural cultural universe. Other master symbols such as the town of Santiago de Compostela or the Way of Santiago are articulated with rural identifications and their objectification in museums, rural tourism, cultural heritage, tourist images and other cultural expressions (Pereiro and Vilar 2008). Behind this thinking we can see a pastoralist (Marx 1964), naturalist and ruralist ideology (Seymour 2006) that was created and reproduced from the nineteenth century on by the Galician nationalist movement.

This process of signification has turned the rural into an emblematic symbol for Galician identification both inside and outside of Galicia. Today, Galicia is an urban territory, but the rural image represents and objectivises a version of Galicia's national identity just has occurred in other locations such as Portugal (e.g. Lela 2000; Silva 2009) and the United Kingdom (e.g. Lowenthal 1996).

### 15.2.7 *Cross of Imagery and Discourses Between the Rural and the Urban in Galicia*

Based on the outcomes of our own primary research (Pereiro 2005; Prado 2007), the Galician small town helps to overcome the traditional dichotomy (Leeds 1975; Cohen 1985; Goetze 1994) of rural-urban in Galicia (Lorenzo 1982). The polarity of these two worlds is diluted in the small town, which instead of being fragmented and divided is part of both of them in its heterogeneous nature, being partly rural and partly urban. In this sense, it is a hybrid reality, a rural-urban space, a subculture and a chronotope in which creolisation is expressed between centres and peripheries. In the small town, the rural world and the urban world are simultaneous and coexist in space and time; the urban is relocated from the locus city and the rural is no longer confused with agriculture. This does not mean that urbanity and rurality are part of the same moral universe. Understood from this perspective, the majority of people in small towns are currently engaged in professing a faith in urbanism, through recognising that urban values prevail and are being implemented in the consciousness of the inhabitants of towns as well as cities. In this sense we can understand the small town as a process, a setting that is undergoing social and cultural construction.

In Galicia, the small towns assume the role of being hinges between the rural and the urban worlds, generally as the seats of rural areas with dispersed populations (usually as the capitals of the municipalities) (Fernández de Rota 1989). Their populations vary from 1000 to 15,000 inhabitants, but their area of influence can affect from 5000 to 30,000 inhabitants. Their role as intermediaries between these two worlds gives them a very intense commercial and administrative life. The small town is a specific cultural form, urban-looking but at the same time having rural and urban characteristics. Its own specificity distinguishes it from both the village and the city, and so it will be defined from within and from outside, in reference to a series of boundaries that reinforce its specificity. In many cases, these limits are not free of permeable barriers and apparently anomalous ambiguities. Moreover, we have to take into account that, within a shared cultural logic and a system of ordered relationships, they are linked with the other two areas under consideration: the village and the city.

Depending on the social sphere in which we place ourselves, the small town will be defined from one or another perspective, and its limits are not the same for all of those who interact with it, from the villagers themselves to young people who visit it during weekends. At an 'emic' level, city and countryside, the urban and the rural and tradition and modernity are going to look at each other, to conceptualise and judge each other as opposites sometimes, as part of flows some other times, and even the town will be shown as a hybrid form that draws on certain elements of the rural to construct its identity as distinct from the city or on other more urban elements to distinguish itself from the rural.

The rural and the urban, far from being two separate unconnected worlds, are part of the same multicultural, multilingual, multimedia and maybe even multipurpose society. The rural and the urban are not absolute categories, but relative categories

that interpenetrate, although this may contradict the objectivised and quantitative thinking that tries to divide and delimit everything into watertight categories. In this sense, rurbanism refers to the urban penetration into the rural, as the trigger of the globalised world we live in, or, in other words, the process of urbanising rural areas. But rurbanism also stresses the urban articulation with the rural, which is not a unidirectional process anymore, but has turned into modes through which rural society is being specialised, where limits, heterogeneities and discontinuities are established.

Urban spaces are one predominant location where one finds that the reinvention, reconstruction and recontextualisation of certain aspects of tradition take place, while other disappears. Rural worlds and the world of small towns are also transformed through new identities and new sociocultural processes. In the case of small towns, this process goes beyond a rural-urban polarisation and becomes much clearer when looking at which leisure spaces are developed in a town and what their effects are on different individuals depending on rural-urban precedence, social class, language, gender, age, etc. In other words, the small town, as a space tending towards urban patterns, plays a predominant role in all social groups accessing its spaces, also allowing the development of differentiated patterns according to various participating social groups.

### 15.2.8 *The Discourse of Small Towns: Between the Town, the Village and the City*

Although the spatial limits of small towns seem to be very clear for people, they are too often questioned because urban-looking areas coexist with other areas devoted to agricultural activities. This situation keeps small towns from being completely urban, and certain social actors' discourses highlight such. The lack of many of the cities' leisure services makes small towns closer to big villages than to the small cities many inhabitants would like them to be. Equal, better or different from cities, small towns are interpreted by their inhabitants as a specific spatial and cultural field, but their ideal and aspiration is to be urban and to have the prestige that goes with an urban way of life (consumerism, work, social relations, leisure, vacations, public services, etc.).

The inhabitants of Galician small towns define their communities in symbolic terms as being different from villages due to their role as centres for commercial and public services: 'more commodification' and 'a space more advanced than rural areas', 'more people to talk to', 'a better social atmosphere for leisure', 'more amusements (fairs, festivals, etc.)' and 'the small-town inhabitants dress in a more charming and modern way' (repetitive discourses during our fieldwork). Very often this prestige contributes to young people being attracted to towns and cities, who are able to leave their home areas in search of new ways of life and new job opportunities.

If small-town inhabitants live in situation of experiencing tension between the rural and urban worlds, the aspiration to be urban must be seen as often emerging

from an 'emic' perspective as opposed to simply rural experience. However, this is not always the case, because the inhabitants of small towns also choose elements with a rural origin to redefine their identity, and this is why this space is defined as rural, having characteristics of two worlds: the urban and the rural worlds. The dialectical relationship between these two symbolic universes, with asymmetry in favour of the urban universe, is what is changing rural value systems and redefining the rural world as a social, cultural, geographic and economic universe.

Every identification is constructed in relation to other identifications (Barth 1969; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; Hannerz 1998). Opposition, conflict, tension, negotiation and consensus are processes through which identity is constructed. In this sense, 'town' and 'village' are two intertwined categories in the small towns, which get mixed together and yet, sometimes, are applied to individuals who may despise each other for being the 'other'. They are two hierarchically related and asymmetrical distinctions, wherein the former is pre-eminent. There is an asymmetrical discontinuity in recognising the other, a conception of the rural as subaltern, and of villagers as an anti-value. But the values of town inhabitants are better reflected in the image of villagers that they constructed than in the values of villagers. This image is the result of exaggerating the differences and suppressing the similarities between towns and villages, wherein the latter is imagined pejoratively and is considered to be a boundary area where people live in some kind of different time, in part belonging to the past. From a dichotomous and evolutionist point of view, villagers are, for certain small-town sectors, their 'primitives'. Sometimes the debt owed to the village is acknowledged by the small town, since villagers consume in the small town, which maintains it economically.

However, not every inhabitant of rural areas falls under the same category, since those who settled there as their residence or who live there but work in towns, especially those practising prestigious professions (e.g. medical, lawyers) or are commuters. They are not part of the characterisation and opposition that has to be portrayed in order to establish the distinction. The inhabitant of rural areas is not considered to be urban, but a villager in sociocultural and symbolic terms. It is the inhabitant whose activity is agriculture or cattle farming for whom no kind of change is recognised to have taken place in rural areas. For instance, this is the case of the *nouveaux riches* that are always concerned to conceal their origins and are uncritical advocates of the town against a rural past that deserves to be forgotten due to its negative associations.

Here are some ethnographic examples of discourses collected through our fieldwork research (using the methods of participant observation and interviews) that underscore negative visions of rural Galicia elaborated by the inhabitants of small town: 'Those living in the village are retarded and slaves'; 'Ignorants!'; 'Farmers have the best life, while they go to bed the hens lay eggs, the cow's milk and they even throw back to earth the rest of the crop'; 'There are poor people who will never get rich because they don't want to, as they are stupid because they will not be'; 'In the village you face many difficulties. My brother stayed at home and he is getting along, he has a car, and he has to work hard in order to earn for his children. He refused to come with me to Bilbao, and now he does not have a day off or

vacation. He earns little and has to work hard'; 'Here there are still rich people. Those who used to be the richest in the village are still the richest and my parents still owe them because one day they helped with the farm'; 'There is a lot of deception and you're always wedged in [by others]. On an individual level, rural people might have more vocabulary, but they might also have more deficiencies, as poorer experiences, such as having less of a relationship with their parents, and fewer resources, might lead to narrower attitudes within the family. Also, I don't know, there is an understatement about their lives, that they do not pay attention to the welfare of their children'.

### 15.2.9 Village Discourses

Just like the discourses evoked from those living in small towns, a set of justifications are created by villagers, which are also related to social status. Despite divergences, it can be said that, generally, the small town is described by the villagers as a place full of opportunities, providing access to modernity, leisure and sociability, as well as a prestigious place and a stairway to a higher social status, which means that there are expectations that a certain degree social mobility would attend living in a town.

We now present some ethnographic examples of discourses collected in our fieldwork (including participant observation and interviews) that were stated by village inhabitants: 'Women do not want to work in agriculture, despite having good returns... People run away from the village, they just want to walk over there... You must care for and pamper the countryside'; 'Melide has grown a lot. Although it is not a city, you find there what the city lacks: security'; 'Currently, you have it all in Melide. It is not like when I went to A Coruña, when there was not even a supermarket'.

Therefore, living in rural areas does not involve taking part in the relationships and ways of life of one's rural neighbours, since middle-class rural inhabitants focus on making sure that their children connect with urban people of small towns, to have the same education as the inhabitants of small towns, the same car and the same access to leisure spaces and activities and to speak Spanish and not Galician, or, in other words, to share the same social practices as those living in towns, through which they are distanced from rural lifestyles, regarded as being of the peasantry, in order to avoid stereotypes, mockery and the minoritisation of their ancestry (Prado 2007).

Attending formal educational institutions and obtaining the corresponding academic qualifications is a requirement of the middle-class inhabitants of Galician small towns, who invest in their children over the long term so that they can place themselves in more prestigious positions and, through them, start to move up in the social structure. Ethnographic examples of that goal are: 'Manolo studies hard, he is always studying. He wants to become somebody in life'; 'If you study hard you might get a good job, with your month off'; 'Look, the girl does study, and she studies hard, she is always studying and that's what she must do. I do not want



her to be distracted by anything'; 'If you don't study you cannot want the same job than someone who has a career. While I study there are many kids who are having fun instead'.

This is how stereotypes regarding the rural are created, as well as distinct attitudes towards a specific way of living and acting, by using the word *bruto* (uncouth, ignorant) to refer to the fact that some did not acquire the only behaviours and manners considered valid by others. That is to say that they do not share the same cultural capital. Despite comparisons and negative images, the small town as a place for socialising is also giving rise to villagers and the working classes of towns creating their own spaces. Just like the town's middle classes, in their spaces, these social groups develop a whole private symbolic system of relations and leisure that is not easy to observe.

For villagers, the small town is a space where they can get everything that is out of reach for them in villages. The small town means a place where they can have a salaried job, as well as contact with other diverse people, and where they can spend their leisure time. Here again are some repetitive discourses from our fieldwork data: 'In Melide people are more refined because they have more free time. I do not mean that I don't find the village people are not refined, because we are as much refined or even more'; 'Apparently in Melide there are more opportunities to have fun'.

This place, the small town, is represented by the consumer spaces villagers come in contact with, mainly bars and cafés, and by the culture of consumption and salaried employment which are approach to the urban world. This is how new spaces are created, together with new relationships that are no longer antagonistic but involve close relationships. On the one hand, this is because villagers with salaried positions get together with people who have a salaried job just like them and, on the other hand, because they find, create and recreate a space where social distinction practices are not explicit or are different from those in other spaces of the town.

While small towns are immersed in an undervaluation of the rural world, some villagers are critical of small towns, presenting alternatives and future aspirations entailing a reflection upon tradition and revitalising those aspects of tradition that are considered to be more positive if creatively combined with modernity. It is difficult to hide what links villages and towns at a stroke. Sometimes, prototypical rural elements, such as certain farming products (sausages, vegetables, fruits, cheese, eggs) or stone architecture (agrotourism guest houses), are presented with a neo-rural discourse for urban consumers, based on 'patrimonial' quality, presentation and labelling. This is a way of resolving the prototypical rural-urban tension, incorporating rural elements to construct a new rural identity.

### 15.3 Conclusions

An approach to the main models for thinking about rural-urban relationships was the starting point of our text. These models served us as a contextualisation in order to show on the one hand, how nationalist ideologies in Galicia linked identity to the

agricultural rural universe, even when Galicia began an intense urbanisation from the 1960s onwards. On the other hand, we presented the role played by the small town in the imaginary of the rural and urban and in the crossed discourses between the rural and the urban in Galicia. This role has to be understood in terms of the various mechanisms, processes, actors and stakeholders involved in the formation of new Galician ruralities and cultural landscapes.

We have referred to 'small town' and 'village' as two moral categories that are expressed through social images and discourses. These images define social spaces that are formed by historically conditioned relationships. These perceptions and representations do not only belong to a mental world; instead, they are also portrayed in cultural behaviours and in everyday social interactions which, although not subject to analysis here, are extremely interesting when coming to understand how mental images influence their participants' social action.

Therefore, the main conclusions of this chapter are that there are many rural spaces in the world and many different relationships exist between these spaces and urban milieu, as the Galician case demonstrates. The chapter emphasises the cultural diversity that exists in terms of understandings of urban-rural relationships and the transformations of rural areas (new ruralities or post-ruralities). In their diversity, rural spaces have become a model for an alternative lifestyle (Entrena Durán 1998: 149) in association with the ideologies of sustainability, naturalist society and pastoralist ideology (Carson 1962; Halfacree 2007). This is a cultural response to the urban economic recession and to the crisis in values, which question development and modernisation. The rural has become a fashion, a resource for development, a prestigious status symbol and a way of adapting to the new global conditions.

The impact of this social trend is the symbolic change in the meaning of rural areas in Galicia, from a view tied to ideas about underdevelopment to idealised cultural landscapes. In this way, the abandonment, ageing and depopulation of Galician rural areas is being articulated with contra-urban, rural, post-rural and neo-rural models of life that transform rural areas into parts of urban regions. Other effects are the increase of production in industrial agriculture and ecological agriculture, new forms of mobility between rural and urban areas, increase offerings in rural tourism, the repopulation of the rural areas closer to Galician towns, the reinvention of new models of rural sociability such as festivals and traditions and the new value for local food products.

The ideas of rural and urban are not absolute and precise concepts; they are metaphors with discursive imaginaries and ideological categories and are diverse in specific sociocultural contexts. Historically, in Galicia, the nationalist movement has identified rural traditions and spaces as a master symbol of Galician identity. In the past, this political choice has left aside the urban, but today it is integrating the urban in a rural identification. But what should be seen as cross-cultural perceptions between the urban and the rural in Galicia are still a little negative with respect to the urban view of rural areas. This may be due to the revitalisation of the rural in Galicia being a very slow process that also began later than in other parts of Europe, such as France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

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