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Rurality and discourse:

From the Spanish case to the Cantabrian case.

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SUMMARY:

The European Union reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 1992, in accordance to what has been called multi-functionality of rural environments, has considered as its most ambitious goals the preservation of the rural landscape and natural environments, as well as the maintenance of the social fabric and the welfare of local populations. As an attribute of the territory, and in harmony with the principle of sustainability, the multi-functionality of rural environments should provide the society with essential public goods. After some time, the rural rhetoric reinforced by the Agenda 2000 and the CAP reforms of 2003 and 2004, has created a growing illusion of an immense rural world that supposedly covers nearly the whole territory of the European Union. Contradictorily, the European Union spreads over one of the most urbanized areas of the world, and its citizens have adopted urban living styles long time ago. This research shows, through the analysis of the Spanish case, the insurmountable difficulties for assuming this dichotomous conception of the territory and, on the other hand, how the multi-functionality of rural spaces hides a great diversity of *social landscapes of the rural*.

KEY WORDS:

Common Agrarian Politics, multi-functionality, new rurality, rural spaces, sustainability, peasantry.

Introduction

The official discourse on rural spaces dispensed by the European Union as of late insists on centering upon the notion of multi-functionality. Both the political and administrative documentation issued by the Commission and the European Parliament refers to this concept when addressing the growing multi-dimensionality that rural spaces have acquired ever since their traditional agrarian conceptualization. Although multi-functionality has been present from the early nineties as a fundamental and crystallized concept, employed both as the administrative language of the social sciences as well as by the European Union and its member States, it is also true that other analogous concepts were being used prior to the fact, as central themes ranging from agrarian politics to scientific analyses. Surely then, one cannot claim that the discovery of multiple uses for rural spaces was a sudden occurrence, especially if one takes into account the fact that the concept harkens back to the European Common Agrarian Policy of 1962, within the auspices of the 1957 Treaty of Rome that founds the European Community, predecessor to the European Union, although not conceptually similar until the 80s.

Indeed, the notion of rural space as it resonates with the philosophy of pure productivism is also found in the Latin American context, where comparable traits to multi-functionality are evident and the expression of a *new rurality* or *new ruralities*¹ (Giarracca, 2001; and Giarracca and Levy, 2004) has been rooted since the mid-nineties. In the European Union as well as Latin America, the rural sphere, in greater or lesser degrees, has acquired uses that it did not previously possess and which have set it apart from a mere compartmentalized conceptualization as S. Gómez (2003), L. Llambi and E. Pérez Correa (2007) and others have argued. In effect, these new Latin American ruralities refer to urban surroundings, and more specifically, to those areas bordering large cities. Consequently, they do not represent a general phenomenon, as with the European Union, but rather a matter that in Latin America is limited to concrete places and spaces (Grammont, 2004). In general, rather than answer to an *ad hoc* political and administrative philosophy, they instead respond to the more or less spontaneous constrictions of

1. In the “Introduction” to N. Giarracca and B. Levy’s book (2004), Norma Giarracca herself comments: “the transformations in the social world of the fields, as well as changes on the level of agrarian production, influenced by powerful economic actors, result in numerous configurations which we Latin American sociologists conceptualize as a “new rurality” (N. Giarracca and B. Levy, 2004: 22), referring to N. Giarracca (2001). The author began to employ this expression halfway through the last decade of the twentieth century.

urban life and, if merited, the interaction between the rural and the urban. Consequently, the phenomenon of these *new ruralities* that depicts Latin American countries does not correlate, *stricto sensu*, with the same causes of European multi-functionality, although they do, on occasion, share comparable effects.

Indeed, we could add that, in one case or another, we are dealing with realities that result from the many changes that are being introduced into contemporary life by the advances of the so called global system (Roseman, Prado and Pereiro, 2011). It would be prudent to explain that in Latin America there are obstacles that oppose any great similarity between the European and Latin American fields. An interesting work by J. Segrelles (2007) analyzes the existing differences between European and Latin American rural spaces in order to demonstrate that the consolidation of land by a few, the poverty of the small agriculturalist, the power of agro-industry, the vibrant agro-export models, the predominantly non-food cultivation of land and the lack of a common agrarian policy, amongst other things, very clearly sets apart the Latin American field from the European.

Without losing sight of the similarities between these two phenomena, this article will focus primarily on the multi-functionality of the rural European space, while referencing the case of Cantabria, a northern region in Spain. The Spanish rural zone has increasingly abated in its productivist endeavors and although not completely dispensing with it, has endowed itself with a territorial significance it did not previously possess as authors such as J.A. Segrelles (2002 and 2007), E. Moyano Estrada (2008), L. Camarero (1993), L. Camarero et al. (2009) and others have gone on to explain. As is well known, the importance of the Single European Act (SEA), which earnestly took off in 1987, the year following the admission of Spain into the European Community, resides in transcending the general market to reach the internal market. This came at a time when economic and social cohesion was prioritized as a real goal of regional convergence, thus imparting reforms on the foundations of solidarity, that from 1988 were deemed to be structural. It is in this manner that Spain begins a period of intense agrarian transformations, stimulated by the movement of resources from the most prosperous states. The changes proposed by the Commission in 1998, at the very top of the 2000 Agenda, and the important reform introduced by the ministers of Agriculture of the European Union in 2003 created a Communal Agrarian Policy (CAP) dedicated to three fundamental principles: a unified market (free circulation of products within the territory of member states), communitarian preference (prioritizing the products

of the European Union over imports), and financial solidarity.

In the following sections I intend to demonstrate, first, that the European Union has adopted an image imprinted with a very different kind of rurality from that of the past. Agricultural values (nutritional provisioning and security) now share their primacy with those of the territory (natural and cultural patrimony), to bring to life rural spaces that, in terms of communitarian rhetoric, “occupy 90% of the territory of the European Union”. Then I will demonstrate that this elaborately detailed discourse rests atop a dichotomy, created from the rigid and merely quantitative differentiation between rural and urban, that has long been contested by the social sciences, and finally I will examine the case of a northern region of Spain where there exists a series of “rural social landscapes” that unequivocally show on the one hand, a *continuum* between the rural and urban, and on the other hand, the true impossibility of conflating the multiple faces of rurality into one single conceptual category.

We conclude with the working hypothesis that rural spaces are heterogeneous given historical constants and the incidence of numerous variables. We also start from a theoretical framework where the rural and urban do not constitute a clear distinction as the administrative perspective would have us believe. The fact that the complications associated with a rural conceptualization are reflected throughout this article does not impede the permanent departure from the previous system of analysis. Thus the empirical research is carried out in a northern region of Spain, Cantabria, although keeping in mind previous years of research in adjoining regions such as Asturias, and of course maintaining the greater framework of Spain in consideration. The quantitative aspect of the research, obtained through the exploitation of statistical information, has now been paired with qualitative research. On this last point, the author has utilized a large series of semi-structured interviews, periodically structured, administered to previously selected informants, and carried out between May and October of 2011 in various places of Cantabria. They are hence considered to be empirical aspects of analysis, the legacy of the author’s various field research from preceding years.

1. Of new rural avenues in the European context

Shortly after the publication of Gro Brundtland’s text over sustainability, in the now distant year of 1987, the European Union revealed a transcendental document (COM. 2058/88) that would introduce important nuances to the philosophy of the CAP. The document in question entitled

The Future of the Rural World established a fundamental European rural policy. In essence, what it proposed was a rethinking of agrarian logic for a new vision that, instead of assuming the primacy of agrarian activity, prioritized a spatial or territorial dimension. In line with this doctrine, rural spaces should abide by sustainability requirements, in the sense that authors such as D. Bourg and J.L. Shlegel were calling for (2004).

Let us remember that the politics of the sixties—which generated categorical wealth in the agricultural sector of the European community by taking production to new lengths, while simultaneously making a name for itself internationally with its productivity, protectionism, and ever increasing competitiveness—would, from that point on, generate overproduction. The channeling of said overproduction to foreign soil in the way of below cost exports would inevitably clash with the agrarian politics of the United States, a country who at that point dominated the agro-export arena. The treaties from the *Ronda de Uruguay* (1986-1994), at a time when formation of the World Commerce Organization (WCO) was slowly coming along, favored the implementation of an Agrarian Agreement by wealthy countries which would set the stage for the liberalization of agrarian commerce, likewise proving most advantageous for the interest of said countries. This was the way in which the excesses of agrarian production would be introduced into the southern countries. A tactic which was heavily subsidized by the European Union and the United States and simultaneously ruined the production of the small farmers of poor countries whom were assaulted by commercial dumping and driven away from an activity they had practiced for generations.

So, in *The Future of the Rural World* (1988) the European Commission, in its dealings with the Consulate and Parliament, pleaded for solutions that, in a short amount of time, would be made known and implemented in international organizations. It was understood that it was essential to propagate an endogenous development, integral and sustainable, instigating the “diversification of rental opportunities”. This involved substituting price policy for direct aid, and simultaneously shifting the focus from agricultural activity to the rural world. With diversification, the aim was to find rental alternatives that avoided abandoning the rural, both for the sake of producers as well as their descendants, in order to create something locally and in any case, sustainable.

The document by the European Commission in 1988 came to represent a change in course that, in principal, attempted to salvage the depopulation of the most unwanted areas. The negative economic result of agrarian exploitation with a surplus production, in addition to the expansive economic cycle, stimulated a new phase of emigration to ci-

ties thus reactivating an exodus that had its origins in the last century. In mountainous areas and other marginal spaces in Western Europe the migration incited a true depletion, in such a way that communitarian policies attempted to rectify the situation, by holding on to demographics in the largest average possible.

Three years later, on March 19, 1991, the *Diario Oficial de las Comunidades* (DOCE) (Official Agenda of the Communities) was published, a text which contained the directives of the Commission regarding the communitarian initiative *Liaisons entre Activités de Développement l'Économie Rural* (91/C73/14), which from then on would be known by the acronym LEADER, and which constituted a first and accurate application of the 1988 document, *The Future of the Rural World*. The initiative contained all the necessary elements to create rural development that accented territorial quality and at the same time boasted an integrative and participatory element. The initiative was meant to procure the development and betterment of those rural areas that were found in *Objective 1*, that is, regions or areas where an average of its inhabitants were below the 75% of the average communitarian. The subsidies that funded the programs would also reach regions that were found in *Objective 5b*, that is, rural areas in which, generally speaking, had little socioeconomic development.

However the territorial development programs spurred on by the initiative LEADER between 1991 and the present day, in four successive phases, do not constitute an adjoining part to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), rather on the contrary, they read as an unavoidable reference to the same. While the *first pillar* of CAP, the so called Guarantee Fund (FEAGA), supports the principle of multi-functionality in the sectorial sphere, or even the productivist strategy, the *second pillar* or FEADER deals with the weight of the LEADER programs that move along multi-functionality in the territorial sphere, betting on a single strategy of partnership agreements woven into endogenous development. Although each policy has its own identity, on occasion there is overlap. This is due to the fact that CAP was born at the time of the European Economic Community, therefore with an increased focus on agricultural activity and the rural world. Both have grown together from the middle of the twentieth century, with a large part of its agenda executed through the PAC. E. Moyano Estrada (2008: 13-15) illustrates the point metaphorically, capitalizing on the one hand, PAC's productivist and liberal soul and on the other, it's rural and corporative soul. While the former speaks to the big producers that have made CAP into a philosophical framework substantiated by maximization and competitiveness, the latter harkens to

the small producers whom in the complementarity of rent and the extraction of territory find their way of life.

Both the official documents as well as the scientific research regarding the European Union find themselves associated with rural multi-functionality ever since 1992. In reality, the concept of multi-functionality becomes, in a way, naturalized in the Cumbre de Río in 1992, although certainly it is the European Union that most emphatically will make use of the concept to define an agrarian model that attributes to the rural world the double function of a space of generating food stuff for the markets and of being the territorial sphere that procures services and public goods that speak to the aspirations of European Union citizens in the framework of all that is environmentally sustainable, social, and cultural. So while programs such as LEADER exclusively focused on rural territory, PAC, without neglecting this same objective and keeping in mind a similar philosophy, also aimed its sights on the European agricultural field, attempting to conserve its excellent role as provider to the communitarian population and, at the same time, world commerce which in the latter did so not by uncompromising protectionism nor by the policy of subsidies which characterized the European CAP before 1992.

2. On the matter of the supposed rural-urban dichotomy

The institutional documents hailing from European organizations in the last few years insist upon a concept that has simultaneously been introduced into social science theory, that is, the multi-functionality of the rural world. Likewise, they highlight novel ways of understanding rurality, indeed providing us with a distinction of the rural and urban. Even though the discussion over the differences between rural and urban have long since been saturated, the debate continues, even today as the intensification in the processes of change make analysis all the more difficult. In effect, the transformation of the rural sphere has been great throughout the last half century in the countries of the world that espouse a Western lifestyle and where the relationship between the rural and urban has been increasingly more dense and complex; more so, in the context that since 1993 we have a designated European Union, and previously a European Community.

Certainly, through a social science perspective the rural world has changed considerably throughout the course of time. In the same way that in the past, social scientists have focused on units of production, on the relationships formed between them and their contributions to a

group identity; in actuality this perspective has reduced its influence before a point of view that attempts to contemplate the whole, socially speaking. In other words, it has moved from a simple vision to another complex one, in which the social, political, economic, and institutional are found. The new vision is compatible with the changes that have been tried on all levels in the so-called world system, which have found a way of conceiving rural spaces.

It is true that since the end of the nineteenth century there have been varied gains in the rural sphere, which, regularly speaking, are products of the times. The classic contributions were offered at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth by F. Tönnies, E. Durkheim, F. Simmel, M. Weber, C. Cooley and others and were of dual symbolism, such that they established a marked border between the urban and the rural. These contributions belonged to those who were intensely living the effects of industrialization, and with that, the birth and development of new urban emporiums (J. Oliva Serrano, 1997: 322-327). Perhaps it was due to this, despite the differences that characterize their fields, that their results were so fundamentally similar. None of the cited authors, including Thomas and Znaniecki in their research of Polish peasant farmers in 1918, could conceive a rural world that was not dominated by agricultural activities, and they all coincided in attributing this rural world the presence of people tied through kinship and community whom together bore the enormous weight of the past and of shared beliefs, jointly and in solidarity reaching decisions, and permanently looking to tradition. That is, resolving their problems in the manner that problems had always been resolved, and very rarely innovating. Realistically, it was the picture that all of the aforementioned authors, without exception, contemplated while they constructed their theoretical contributions.

Each of the aforementioned authors in a different way expresses the proverbial differences between a rural and new urban life which is flourishing under the auspices of industrialization, even at the risk of finding their own perceptions essentially similar to the others. In every case, the static rural sphere is presented in opposition to the dynamic urban world. While F. Tönnies (1887) observes the passage of *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, that is, from the community to organized society, Durkheim (1883) focuses on the division between labor and the change in mechanical and spontaneous solidarity in rural life towards the organic solidarity of the urban. Simmel (1903) theorized the change that the individual experimented with in his migration from a rural life of personal and affective ties to an apathetic urban life characterized with frigid human relationships, interpreting it as a sure response of survival to the excessive stimuli

that an individual faced while in homogenizing contexts. Simultaneously, M. Weber (1921) believed that the urban, although generating personal disenchantment, reigned in the traditional and stimulated the rational, generating an array of ideal types prime for a new bureaucratic society. In conclusion, all of these authors discover a rural world that feeds off the traditional, in opposition to modern urbanity. C. Cooley (1902) based his assertions on his theory of groups in order to explain the differences between rural and urban society; while the primary group prevails in the rural world, that is, a group of persons that live in the heart of a community where there are both intense and constant interactions; the urban space is the backdrop for secondary groups where people are immersed in a progressive process of individualization.

Although the vision of these authors has proven to withstand time, indeed, due to the ingenuity demonstrated in constructing rural and urban images that are diametrically opposed to one another, little by little new perceptions are surfacing that exhibit a relationship between the rural and urban. The rapid urbanization happening in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century demands that the differences and similarities between the rural and the urban increasingly gain importance. The migration to the cities has created fluid urban areas that constitute a nexus with the surrounding fields, in such a way that urban and rural are defined as complementary spheres whose borders are diffuse. As such, in many large European and North American cities it becomes increasing difficult to delineate the urban sphere as more and more families begin to make use of both temporary and permanent living quarters close to cities in which they reside, thus creating a very rich urban environment.

It is thus at the eve of the 1930s that theorists of sociology, such as the well known case of P. Sorokin and C. Zimmerman (1929), move away from the perception of a rigid dichotomy and argue for the idea of a *continuum* between the rural and urban, without speaking of rigid borders. The rural is defined through one basic variable, that of agricultural work, and a series of complementary variables such as the more or less small size of the settlement, low population density, the homogeneity of the rural community, and the lack of social mobility and the like. Indeed, keeping in mind a duality rather than an opposition, rural and urban may constitute very similar spheres, almost indistinguishable, or also very different. The gradation between defining the country and the city, which prohibits the creation of borders, also does not occlude the differences between them, amongst them, the historical. The very concept of indefinability itself could be the reason for the acceptance of the theory over time. Nevertheless, the observations of Sorokin and Zimmerman bring

us closer to present problems found when speaking of *new ruralities*. What this concept brings to the realization of the non-urban contains both theoretical and methodological implications.

The following are some of the claims by known sociologists based on their observations in both European and North American contexts where great processes of change were occurring. It is also worth including the thoughts of some anthropologists, amongst them R. Redfield, that were contemporaries to Sorokin and Zimmerman. When Redfield published his text on Tepoztlán in 1930, he perceived a rural sphere that was almost perfectly outlined, which allowed for his text to be set alongside those whom defended the clear dichotomy between the field and the city. The small settlement that he studied in the Valle de Morelos, in Mexico, was the living example of a rural community, perfectly profiled and antithetical to urban life, at least so it seemed. First, it must be stated that Redfield uses a European bibliography and his texts share a clear kinship with that of Tönnies (1887), Simmel (1903), and others. Redfield studies the life of a rural settlement, and in his analysis the idea is immediately made evident that its residents form a community, a *Gemeinschaft*, created of a kind of natural will and forming a relatively homogenous group, and found in polar opposition to a *Gesellschaft* which is created on behalf of a rational will. The bottom line was that Redfield based his theories on the idea of spontaneous *communitas* when referring to the rural world. At the same time, Redfield wanted to highlight the autonomous ideals of rural society, to the point of isolation, given that in the latter these ideas are what allowed peasant farmer societies to initially be thought of by some anthropologists as a present day formulation of primitive societies, which up to then had been the focus group of anthropologists.

R. Redfield's theories (1930 and 1960) are reminiscent of Durkheim (1883), when he pictures the peasant farming community as a "moral community". Indeed, the work of Redfield has in the same way revealed that its intellectual roots are seeded in Boasian theory. Without a doubt, he is seduced by the same idea that A. Kroeber (1923) had long since voiced and finally published in 1946, that the peasant farming society is "part society, part culture". The heart of Redfield's functionalist theory, dictating an absence of innovation and an ever-present dependency that ranged from the economy to politics, placed rural areas, or, as he terms them, peasant farming societies, on a subordinate plane. Rural society, which boasts a strong cultural identity and which, in his own words, assumes the *small tradition*, cannot avoid being framed in terms of a larger society, the representative of a *great tradition*, with the urban at the forefront. Theoretically, societal *ideal types* are in a permanent

continuity, which at each pole respectively is *folk* society and urban society (Gómez Pellón, 2011: 59-83). Eventually, Redfield would end up accepting a vision that was a modification from what he espoused in Tepoztlán, although still conserving its essence and based on the same settlement, which would later be voiced by Oscar Lewis in the late forties and published by 1951.²

Although J. Steward is very much likened to A. Kroeber and R. Redfield, his ideas can be dissimilar in very substantial aspects in that he draws them from cultural ecology and the strong relationship between the country and the city. Subsequently, we find a new relationship between the country and the city in a well-known student of Steward's, E. Wolf (1966). Once again re-appropriating the idea of community, or rather the little community, drawing from his own observations of places so distant from one another such as the world of Latin America (Mexico and Guatemala) and Asia (Java), he boasts of the existence of not one but many relationships between the rural and urban sphere, depending on the degree of contact between what he calls *peasant communities* and the exterior. E. Wolf (1967: 230-246) claims that while in some cases these communities may be classified as *closed* and *cooperative*, given that the rural and urban are seen as relatively foreign phenomena, in other cases *peasant communities* adopt an *open* morphology, generating a complementary relationship between the rural and urban. As a result, he sets the concepts on a more graduated plane.

A similar and perhaps more detailed assertion is offered by F. Cancian (1991: 177-234) during the sixties, with his *research on communities* in the Maya region which would inevitably be used to establish analogies. His Mexican research site of Zinacantán, in the Altos of Chiapas, is understood by the author to be a *closed and cooperative community*, similar to those described by Wolf. Wolf managed to show that this type of rural community, closed and cooperative, goes hand in hand with colonized areas, external or internal (typical of places where society has generally become polarized), and is an expressed reaction against those

2. The vast research by foreign anthropologists carried out in Spain during the third quarter of the twentieth century, and even later, adopted the theoretical framework of cultural functionality. The majority of which are research on community and very rarely elude historicity, and which leave the issue of conflict alone. In general they are inspired by Redfield's classic text (1930) about Tepoztlán and its focus on the *little community*, with theoretical precursors, especially, in the *gemeinschaft* of Tönnies. The pioneer text of these *community studies* in Spain is that of Pitt-Rivers (1954) about Grazalema, on which many others adopt the same or similar premise. Even still, Lewis' (1951) publication, adapting the Tepoztlán hypothesis, would introduce the reformulation of the hypothesis and new claims, thanks mainly to its polemic with Redfield in terms of the rural-urban *continuum*.

greater societies that seek to enclose it. As F. Cancian will illustrate, *open peasant communities* are quite numerous around the world, even in Latin America, with different degrees of openness managing the fluid relationship between the rural and urban. This is a notion that will alienate even more the proverbial border that supporters of the dichotomous thesis had always defended.

Cancian (1991: 188-190) himself highlights how rural societies are not closed of their own account, but rather as a result of history, an ignored variable that could have been responsible for the drawing of such a rigid dichotomy between the rural and urban, as was often the case in the past. Indeed, as Cancian recounts, the closed cooperative is a preserver of tradition, in such a way that using this variable in a simplistic comparison to the urban world would feed into the notion of dichotomous spheres. In this sense, F. Cancian (1991: 210-214) gives us a contrasting example, that is, of a *typically open community*, the rural community researched by Peggy Barlett in El Paso (Costa Rica). Notwithstanding, the latter coincides with the community Cancian himself researched in Zinacantan where both, far away from supposed homogeneity, were socially heterogenous, and consequently, possessed a markedly permanent level of conflict. Hence Cancian's validation of the types of what he terms *peasant communities* are themselves a negation of the very existence of peasant communities as such.

Alongside these perceptions of the rural and urban, rooted in the analysis of communities and institutionally accepted, there have been others, which have resonated greatly in the social sciences. One such theory is that of G.M. Foster (1967: 300-323) which states theoretically that a community permanently intends to maintain homogeneity and equality amongst its inhabitants given their understanding of the *image of limited goods*: increasing wealth without justification, either by chance or by engagement with the outside, suggests that the benefit of one was at the expense of the rest of the members of the community.

However, there is still another theoretical construction, equally centered on the homogeneity of group members, but based on an economic perspective, that understands the family to be an authentic unit of production and consumption. This theory, elaborated in the twenties by A. Chayanov (1925), has indeed been influential in tracing the differences between the rural and urban, especially since the sixties with the work of Wolf as a pivotal example. Rural society would be characterized as: responsive to a grouping of units or agrarian exploits, relatively autonomous, embedded in the corresponding families, and deeply inter-related with weak connections to the outside. This model, hardly applicable in

the present day, was utilized as a marker in the sixties by some French authors, such as B. Hervieu (1990 and 1993) or H. Mendras (1962), who would find that rural peasant societies were a relatively autonomous entity within a global society (acknowledging Kroeber and Redfield).

3. From the Spanish case to the Cantabrian:

One rurality or many ruralities?

With the passage of time the CAP, without foregoing the sectorial perspective, has opted to confer an added significance to the territorial sphere. The official statement of the European Union categorizes 90% of the total extent of their territories as rural, assigning the rural sphere 40% of Europe's population of the 27. In recent years they have utilized the Eurostat parameters (*Statistical Office of the European Communities*), which allow for the classification of different territorial units, given the degree of urbanization, on a scale from typically rural and less populated zones (with a population size of less than 50,000 residents and a density of lower than 100 inhabitants per square kilometer) to typically urban zones (with at least 50,000 residents and a density of greater than 500 inhabitants per square kilometer), leaving a vast intermediate area³.

The European Commission as well as the administrations of the member States have attempted to delineate rural spaces with respect to the urban sphere, perhaps in an attempt to answer the ecological call that resonates in our time against market threats. In this way we find in official documents, the existence of a rural space constituting a great economic and social fabric that brings together a multitude of activities, including not only agrarian but also industrial, artisanal, service industries, etc. In addition, the rural sphere speaks to natural and cultural landscapes that compensate for the degree of nature that is clearly lacking in the most critical sectors of European societies, and especially in the lives of urban inhabitants.

In general, all countries use complementary methodologies, in the case of Spain it is Ley (*Law*) 45/2007, *Desarrollo Sostenible del Medio Rural (Sustainable Development of the Rural Sphere)*, which defines the rural sphere as a geographic space formulated by the union of municipalities or small local entities with population counts lower than 30,000 of habitants and with a density of less than 100 inhabitants per square kilometer. The final result is that the Spanish rural sphere assumes a popula-

3. The Instituto Nacional de Estadística (*National Statistics Institute*) utilizes in Spain a methodology that considers municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants as rural.

tion that approximates 40% of its total when including pre-urban areas, and rounding down to 20% when excluding them. The prognosticated potential for rural expansion, spreading onto an area consisting of 94% of the territory, in a similar way to its population, approximates the data obtained when the Eurostat methodology is applied.

When we allude to the European Union, we reference a part of the world in which there are two clearly concurrent phenomena. The first is that agricultural activity does not define the rural sphere. Even though marginal spaces exist in which there could be prominent agricultural activity, agricultural work *per se* belongs only to a very small percentage of the population in the greater part of the European Union, especially at the time when Europe was 15. Obviously, the incorporation of new countries enlarged the rural sphere and conferred greater weight to rural European landscapes. Although at times only provisionally. If one considers that in the Europe of 27, where according to the European Commission⁴ the agricultural sector employed 5.7% of the population in 2009, then the fall of agricultural activity constitutes a clear tendency.

Even still, the effects of this multi-functional philosophy of the rural sphere, in general, appear to be arguable. Limiting ourselves to the case of Spain, if we compare the situation in 1999 with what occurred in 2008, referencing the Municipal Padrón of inhabitants, we observe that while in 1999, 19.4% of the rural population lived in the rural sphere (they inhabited municipalities that had a density less than 100 inhabitants per square kilometer), in 2008 the percentage of the population that lived in the rural sphere was 17.7%, meaning that in less than a decade 1.7% was lost to the immense Spanish rural space, which accounts for 85% of the total territory (Vid. Anexo al Real Decreto 752/2010, June 4th, where the first sustainable rural development program was approved for 2010-2014).

It is true that this does not forgo the fact that, at least in administrative terms, statistically speaking, the population of the Spanish rural sphere has increased during this time to approximately half a million inhabitants. However, when one delves deeper into statistical details, one can see how the loss of population in the rural sphere has affected the smallest municipalities in a significant way, specifically those under 2,000 inhabitants who have seen how their population has decreased by thirty percent. One would think that the larger municipalities suffered less, but the reality is that the municipalities with less than 10,000 have seen their population reduced by eighteen percent. Consequently, growth has only

4. http://europa.eu/about-eu/facts-figures/economy/index_es.htm

occurred in the largest rural municipalities, which comparatively, also included a percentage of the population that lived in municipalities with densities classified as urban, given the simplistic statistical designation which allowed for a dual characterization.

The movement of inhabitants from rural to urban areas, generally speaking, has continued in Spain throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. As such, even though 17% of the municipalities are urban, they are host to more than 80% of the population. These urban municipalities are located on the Mediterranean coast, in the grand Spanish cities, and in the most metropolitan areas. In the rest of Spain, the municipalities that are considered rural are indeed very varied, ranging from 5 inhabitants per km² in the small mountainous municipalities located in the northeast peninsula, to 10 inhabitants per km² in Castile and León, Castile-La Mancha and Aragon, to the nearly 70 or more rural municipalities of a larger scope that neighbor important cities, such as the Community of Madrid and Mediterranean Communities. As such, we are dealing with a variety of situations that, introducing diverse variables, give way to very different ways of understanding rurality in Spain.

In truth, according to the Municipal Padrón, in 2008, 17.7% of the Spanish population lived in some kind of municipality that was designated rural, *stricto sensu*, as opposed to the 82.3% that lived in some kind of urban municipality. In 2008, the European Commission published the *Rural Development Report*⁵ based on the data from 2005, which I have aforementioned and illustrates what I have been referring to. The report gives us a revealing, albeit incomplete, image of reality. It does so by classifying regions as *predominantly rural zones*, *intermediate zones*, and *predominately urban zones*. Given these classifications, it is conclusive that in 2008, 7% of the Spanish population lived in predominately rural zones, 45% in intermediate zones, and more than 48% in urban zones. Thus, while in the European Union of 27, 60% of the population resided in non-urban zones, in Spain it was 52% and in the Europe of 15 it was 54%.

Again with regards to Spain, the population density in predominately rural areas is very low, especially in mountainous regions, but it is also low in intermediate areas in terms of both Europe of 15 and Europe of 27. While in Spain, during the latter two, density was 74 inhabitants per km², in the European Union (both of 15 and 27), it was easily 100 inhabitants per km², as claimed by the Unit of Prospectus and Analysis of the Ministry of Environment, and Rural, and Marine Affairs (currently

5. http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/agrista/rurdev2008/index_en.htm

the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Environment)⁶. It is in these intermediate zones where almost half of the Spanish population lives, even if density is greater in urban centers.

In any case, multi-functionality means an alternative to the lack of success of the rural sphere in the European Union, which in the case of Spain, after two decades of the development of CAP and LEADER initiatives, could be summed up in this way: together three-fourths of Spanish rural municipalities have population decreases between 1999 and 2008, while 91% of urban municipalities witness a positive increase in population. These results go beyond the arbitrary distinction between rural and urban. It is clear that they are due in part to the tripartite classification system drawn by the Office of Statistics of the European Union that created an intermediate area (although similar to the rural), which makes it difficult to deny the existence of a kind of rurality that is increasingly heterogeneous and incapable of being reduced to a seldom few categories, and much less to the one label of multi-functionality (agricultural and territorial).

In effect, if we limit ourselves to the case of Spain, and in particular to that of Cantabria, we can easily verify that the rural and urban do not constitute separate spheres, but rather, to the contrary, that a *continuum* exists between them which first and foremost reveals an undeniable complementarity. This fact, however, does not deny the use of such concepts, as theoreticians of continuity have already observed while attending to historical constants and a multitude of variables. Hence, the existence of this reality, composed of both rural and urban terminologies (of diffuse borders) can only lead us to one conclusion which is that there exists a multiple rurality, or rather, the perception of many ruralities.

As such, the work by L. Camamero and his collaborators (2009) illustrates the existence of very diverse ruralities in Spain, and although in the text they appear to conform to a typology comprised of five different types, it is obvious that there could be many more. For now, however, these five types are enough to serve the fundamental purpose of providing distinct “social landscapes of rurality”. Note that this concept of a rural landscape, in terms of a social landscape, complements, albeit in a different way, the concept of the cultural landscape, recently analysed by L. Álvarez Munárriz (2011, 6 (1): 67-76), if given the complete interconnection between society and culture⁷. There is one type of polar

6. http://www.magrama.gob.es/es/ministerio/servicios-generales/servicios-de-informacion-y-participacion/Agrinfo12_tcm7-161562.pdf

7. The *social landscape of rurality*, by L. Camarero and his collaborators (2009:41), constitutes a surreal model that harkens back to a social environment in which its inhabitants

rurality in Spain, which most approximates a traditional rurality, and which L. Camarero and his collaborators (2009: 46) refer to as the rurality of *disconnection* in their epigraph, hence evidencing its marginality. I have repeatedly had the opportunity to research this rurality, on many occasions in the areas of Asturias (Gómez Pellón, 1992 and 1994) and Cantabria (Gómez Pellón, 2002, 2004, and 2008). It deals with disadvantaged areas, plagued by marked depopulation and an astonishing degree of population aging, riddled with neighborhoods that frequently find themselves distanced from the capital of the small municipality. Agricultural life is demanding and a significant amount of those who live in these regions are seniors. In these areas there still may be found domestic groups that theoretically produce only what is necessary to survive, characterizing them more as traditional peasant farming units. And yet, they are not that traditional because a considerable part of their income is drawn from retirement pensions and what comes in as production subsidies. Given all of this, their income, on average, is vastly inferior to that found in urban areas, although their expenses are also much lower by comparison.

This kind of traditional or disconnected rurality is what mostly characterizes the rurality of the past, partly due to the limited conceptualization of rurality. It is the rurality found in the mountainous areas of Galicia, specifically Leon and Zamora, and also of the Cantabrian mountain region. They share traces of a traditional rurality (Guzmán, 1984) because their inhabitants, or at least a large part of them, have as their common denominator an agricultural lifestyle, which compels them to pool their collective interests, sharing in reaping the fields, and regulating mutual aid, which translates into cooperative attitudes, albeit not exempt from conflict. Notwithstanding, when harmony is disrupted, some community individuals turn to arbitration or mediation, which allows for confrontations to be redirected and dealt with out of court. In this sense, the village and the parish continue to constitute an ideal social unit, in the authentic sense of institutional definitions.

However, it would be an overstatement to claim that these “traditional” areas represent a vanishing way of life, on the contrary, the rural spaces have the traditional and the modern permanently intertwined.

themselves develop their everyday routine. The strength of this model is drawn from the fact that it is the expression of a situation that occurs within a determined space. The authors themselves make bibliographic reference to the concept (Oliva and Camarero, 2002). The *cultural landscape* is a conceptual category that according to L. Álvarez Munárriz (2011: 72) references how nature is transformed by man, whom works with it to configure, use, negotiate, and also enjoy it, in terms of the patterns of his own culture.

The kind of decision-making that occurs, more often looking towards the future and less towards the past, as well as the use of modern technology, even if only in the form of small tractors and vehicles, help formulate the image of a progressive modernity. Women have also taken on new roles, including that of title-holder, even if in a small percentage or in complementary fashion. Generally speaking, this happens when the men concern themselves in one way or another with activities outside of agriculture. Similarly, signs of modernity include those individuals who although living in these social landscapes of traditional rurality, earn a living outside of their place of residence, sometimes kilometers away. If these few *commuters* do not contradict the model of traditional life because they are frequently the sons, brothers, partners, etc. of area residents, they do indeed contribute to modernizing the guidelines of socialization and coexistence. On the other hand, these *commuters* frequently multi-task by pairing their agricultural exploits with their other job in the secondary or even tertiary sector, illustrating the goals of articles 32 and 38 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (1957) and article 38 of the Treaty of Lisbon (2007). It is also common for other members of the family to carry out similar roles, even if it is in a stationary way, as they take advantage of the work roles in the tertiary sector of nearby villas.

As such, these rural areas carry the brunt of emigration. While the population exodus towards urban centers ceaselessly continues in the European and Spanish contexts, these marginal areas have witnessed an ever-increasing loss of population, making a significant dent in the already low demographics that are still tied to these landscapes. In the case of the Cantabrian mountains, depopulation is coupled with remarkable population aging. The situation as it stands shows that none of the areas where the LEADER programs were applied has less than 20% of people 65 years of age or older, some municipalities even have over 35%, in over two decades of having applied the program. This is in conjunction with the great disproportion between men and women, where many municipalities exceed 130 men for every 100 women of reproductive age, occasionally reaching even 150 or even 200 men⁸ (Gómez Pellón, 2008).

Under these circumstances, the lack of a baseline social fabric as well

8. In the municipalities where the LEADER (Campo-Los Valles) program was applied, there is an average of 27% of the population that is 65 years or older, some municipalities reaching 40%, as in the case of Valderredible and Valdeprado del Río. In the municipalities of Rionansa, Lamasón, and others in the area where LEADER (Saja-Nansa) was applied, all within the mountainous region of the Cantabrian mountain range, men have outnumbered women of reproductive age by 160 men per 100 women for over a decade. In the case of small municipalities like Polaciones and Lamasón the rate is 200 men per every 100 women.

as the scarcity of conditions to generate alternative ways of life constitute an insurmountable obstacle. Not to mention that the ability to find solutions is compounded by the difficulties faced in the absence of frequently used modern technologies, such as an internet signal, or even just a cell-phone or television signal, amongst other standards of modern society.

As such, the fundamental objective of the LEADER initiative was demographic retention in “backward” areas or areas “in need of motivation” (Objective 1 and 5b in the initial terminology of the European Commission). Well, twenty years later we can state that, in general, it was a failed attempt in the sense that many of the areas that generously benefitted from the application of said programs have continued to lose their population and in some instances to a very intense degree. Despite the abundant investments in infrastructures and the implementation of all kinds of strategies to capitalize on natural and cultural resources, in many traditional, or *disconnected*, areas a lack of demographic retention has failed to impede the incessant bleeding of the troops. As it follows, if we turn to the other aspects of these development programs, where sustainability has been achieved, we find the social objective, which is incidentally the most sought-after and which has defined the pending task. As L. Camarero and his collaborators reveal (following the work of M. Alario and E. Baraja, 2006), the disheartening effects of the LEADER initiative in Castille and Leon, of which we have had the opportunity to carry out similar research in Cantabria (Saja-Nansa and Campoo-Los Valles Programs), verifies that the jobs created have not contributed to stabilizing the population as previously thought. This definitely warns of the doubtful social sustainability of these kinds of rurality, which are often projected over widespread geographic regions, even if we focus on those ruralities closest to urban centers. It is telling that some of the southern regions of Cantabria, subject to the implementation of LEADER programs in its various phases, have in the last two decades lost a significant percentage of their population, to the point that some municipalities have suffered over 25%, hence, evidencing an unstoppable loss of demographic vigor⁹. Half of the implicated municipalities in the LEADER program in the area of Saja-Nansa, totaling twelve, have continued to lose their population at a steady rate, according to the Población

9. There are municipalities, included in the areas where LEADER was implemented, whose cases are especially significant. Valdeolea has gone from 1,626 inhabitants in 1996 to 1,145 in 2011, estimating a loss of around 30% of the population. At this same time, Vega de Liébana went from 1063 to 851, Lamasón from 417 to 310, etc., all examples of the difficulties these programs faced in achieving their foremost objective: the vital retention of demographics.

de Hecho in 1991 and the Municipal Padrón in 2011. Statements collected during fieldwork of the *lugareños*, or locals, expressing that “there are no more youngsters here”, “every day there are more empty houses”, “today people want to live differently” or “we who cannot leave are the ones who have stayed” add to the vivid expression of the very reality of the aforementioned mountain region.

The exception is found in the few municipalities that, over the span of twenty years, have seen a positive return, which although insignificant at times, occurs in the midst of an aging and demographically unbalanced population, which is dramatically different from just two or three decades before. Hence, only three coastal municipalities, independent of those receiving LEADER aid, have evaded this population decline. The municipalities where the Saja-Nansa LEADER program is being applied are of surprising heterogeneity due to various factors which include the mountainous landscape which leads to lack of communication between municipalities. There is also a vast difference between internal settlements and coastal ones, specifically in terms of their respective economic subsectors which free coastal municipalities from the subjectivity of a disconnected rurality and in turn paint internal municipalities in the light of traditional rural landscapes.

In the case of the LEADER program of Campoo-Los Valles, the result, from a demographic perspective, is even more disheartening. Between 1991 and 2011 the municipalities affected by the program saw their inhabitants reduced from 30,227 to 25,110, which translates into the loss of nearly 20% of the population. Both in the case of the Saja-Nansa program as well as with the Campoo-Los Valles, there was substantial economic investment fed into various projects such as the creation of various infrastructures, the increased effort to conserve natural and cultural heritage, the creation of a network of small businesses, the reinvigoration of the tourism industry, the creation of social spaces, the renewal of services that contribute to the betterment of the population, in formation programs and programs that deal with women’s issues. Yet for all this investment, these projects have yielded surprisingly modest results.

One of the peculiarities of the new *social landscapes of rurality* bred by multifunctionality and globalization, is that in relatively small areas there can coexist different ruralities. In the review of the two LEADER programs in Cantabria that we have just discussed, we can see clearly that there were different situations occurring within the small area in which the program was carried out. While some municipalities find themselves in a state of *disconnection*, there are others that are in a mo-

ment of *transition* towards a different kind of rurality, with a clear capacity to find alternatives to de-agriculturalization. Although they still share many of the same problems faced by *disconnected* municipalities which are associated with: aging, masculinity, few commuters, a reduced number of new residents, fragile economic alternatives, and above all, the lack of a relatively vibrant demographic that comes from the kind of strength found in the so-called “support generation” (30-49 years). In L. Camarero et al.’s typology (2009: 46-49) the *transition* model appears to extend across a series of Spanish provinces: part of them Galician, part from Asturia and Cantabria, provinces of northern Castille, Salamanca and the northern parts of Extremadura, part from Aragon, the provinces of the Iberian System and some provinces north of Andalusia. This is due to the fact that the analysis corresponds with provincial units. Even still, when the analysis is carried out locally, taking into account regional or municipal units, we can appreciate the presence of different types on a territorially smaller scale. On the level of small territorial units, it is not rare that the *disconnected* and *transitory* types occupy neighboring areas, after all, they share numerous traits only to be distinguished by those that are the most promising of the *transitive* model: they are grades on the same *continuum*.

Alongside this *transitory* model, we also find another clearly defined model defined as the *local*. It is characterized by having an entrenched generation with the capacity to nourish a local environment. The existence of ever-present economic activity, perhaps modernized, explains how a circumscribed area can afford appreciable demographic strength, thanks to its lack of emigration. The sustainability of economic activity, with the absence of comings and goings or rapid growth, explains how these *local* models possess very low counts of new residents and few commuters, and together with significant economic and social cohesion, they create solid local identities. Some typical examples of this model can be found in the agro-cities of southern Spain and Levante, however they are not absent in any one region of Spain. The inner Cantabrian villas, such as those of La Rioja and Navarra, often are of the *local* variety. The development of services that are produced in these places explain their role as regional heads, and consequently, their identification as local models given their capacity to feed an environment with said characteristics.

Beyond this last kind of intermediate rurality we find another type that is clearly different from the *transitory* types and the polar opposite to the *disconnected* ruralities. We call this the *liquid* model and it includes all of the areas that in numerous subsectors of the economy were quick to find alternatives to the old ruralities. We are dealing here with

one of the kinds of *social landscapes of rurality* that best responds to the demands of what we have designated as the multi-functionality of the rural sphere, in accordance to institutional and administrative documents. In effect, this *liquid* rural landscape was not born as a remnant of CAP, but rather it was CAP that found inspiration in this model of rurality as a way to guarantee stable demographics in rural areas, although there is no doubt that there was notable progress within the framework of the new CAP. In the case of Spain, it corresponds to areas that have suffered discretely the effects of depopulation, given their economic potential. The end result in these areas is an extensive network of settlements that span throughout the territory. Luckily, these settlements in at least some way conserve agrarian productivity while at the same time acquiring diverse businesses and activities, thus nourishing multiple industries and services.

In the north of Spain, Cantabria with its small mountainous municipalities speaks to the *disconnected* type, however, in a large part of the region along central and coastal areas it embraces a *liquid* rurality. Whomever steps foot in the region can confirm that in the lowlands, the population forms a *continuum*, nourishing a landscape of plains and labor lands, but there are also all kinds of businesses, commercial centers, hostels, repair shops, offices, etc. The small number of the population dedicated to agriculture lives alongside salaried workers of all sectors, that converted themselves into *commuters* and go about each day like clockwork traveling the short distance from their home to their business. This is the kind of rurality that is most comparable to *commuting*, which explains how a good portion of salaried workers participate in these kinds of daily back and forth displacements. The economic dynamics that encircle this kind of rurality have resulted in attracting new residents, especially in times of economic growth, although also coinciding with stable periods. This kind of rurality which we are calling *liquid*, is what informants have vividly illustrated with the following phrases: “although we live here, we know no one”, “we leave our house in the morning, not to return until the evening or even at night”, “we are almost all from the outside”, etc. On the contrary, those that belong to families which are from the place, whom are in the minority, insist that “everything has changed so much that there is no one who would recognize it”, “except for a few lifelong families, all the rest are new”, or “we used to know one another”, etc.

In effect, this is the kind of rurality that is mostly found in the north of Spain (Cantabria, Basque Country, Navarra, and La Rioja), part of Aragon, part of the Submeseta Norte, and especially in border provinces with Marid, near the Mediterranean coast (Catalan and part of the

Valencian Community) and other places. The economics of these areas compels the movements of the workers to follow their work, which follows that this kind of lifestyle is not ideal for the maintenance of local activity, which often, if agricultural, is seen to by a mix of agriculturalists. Neither is it compatible with a dependent aging population. In this sense, it is equally important that this *liquid* rurality attract very diverse inhabitants, who have left their families behind, hence increasing their detachment from dependence. On the other hand, there are also a large number of commuters of both genders, similar to what occurs in other social landscapes of rurality and which also clearly coincides with an urban model. Due to their parent's work schedules, children here are left to the care of agencies of socialization for the majority of the day, even before they enter preschool. In these *liquid* areas public transportation similarly aids in maintaining the system in a very effective manner, contrary to what happens in *disconnected* districts, or even those in *transition*.

Due to new residents the *liquid* municipalities of these areas have generally witnessed a clear demographic growth. They are rural municipalities that do not suffer from the general exodus, quite the opposite, they have resulted as being especially suited for receiving immigrants. And yet, one cannot go so far as to say that they are municipalities with balanced demographics, given their modest birth rates, and motivated by the lifestyle of its possible progenitors, there is a notable masculinization of the population. On the other hand, even if we classify these municipalities as players in new ruralities, this is not always the case, due neither to their population density, nor the lifestyle of its residents, in so much as the majority understands that we are facing a diffuse urbanism, where capital cities radiate settlements without any thought to continuity, configuring lifestyles that are closer to the cities than the fields. On the other hand, the lifestyle of residents in these areas does not contribute to the growth of local identities, amongst other reasons for which groups of residents have flexible borders.

In this kind of *liquid* rurality, which has dominated the fundamental agricultural activities that characterized rural affairs since before the last quarter of the twentieth century, and even the transition towards other ways of understanding the rural sphere, they include so many aspects of urban life that it questions whether we are indeed dealing with properly rural places, such as T. Linck (2001: 90-92) illustrates in a very interesting way in the French case and *emerging ruralities*. Many of the new residents in these *liquid* ruralities are young adults that have opted to live outside the city, and benefit from economic or professional reasons, or due to their affinity for nature, etc. The fieldwork carried out by the

author of this text reveals this last reason, that of the thirst for nature, is present in most decisions, although it is not the main reason (main reasons include the low cost of living, services, proximity to the place of work, the comforts of living outside the city, etc.).

The thought-provoking work of H.G. de Grammont (2004) with regards to the new rurality in Latin America makes the point precisely, when he refers to the preference of living in the country, as response to the ideology that: the “rusticity” presupposes a way of seeing and understanding life (Grammont, 2004: 288-289). In a previous work I had the opportunity to express myself in similar terms. Indeed in the *Siglo de las Luces* (Century of Lights) the song of life in the country constituted a romantic and archaic attitude, in response to the urban glorification of the illustrators, where at the turn of the nineteenth century, increasing disorder in the cities fed a multitude of ambient problems. Together with conflicts, social tensions and the violence of urban living a new way of life was crystallized, different from one that motivated many city residents to find themselves anew in the country, although the modern and massive colonization of this last wave has not exactly been fortunate (E. Gómez Pellón, 2004: 301-326).

Embedded in the typology constructed by L. Camarero (2009: 41-49) and his collaborators, the most extreme case of the situation just described is of *dense* rurality, pertaining to metropolitan areas in large cities. In the case of Spain, *dense* rurality is inseparable with the kind of cities like Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Seville, and others. It is a type of rurality characterized as such because the working generation is comprised of young adults and adults, that choose to live in urbanized areas, within large cities. These adult residents of these *social landscapes of rurality* frequently spend the majority of their time at work, hence yielding the most significant characteristic of such a population, that is, that generally their dependents are exclusively their descendants and not their forebears, as is the case in other rural areas. We are dealing then with a kind of rurality that, keeping in mind the high population density that tends to accompany, keeps a closer relationship with urban lifestyles rather than with rural ones, in so much as it deals with a social landscape that is gradual, or in terms of an extreme case, a kind of *liquid* rurality.

Conclusion

In this text we reserved special attention for the image seldom contested in the discourses on multi-functionality constructed by the European

Commission and other institutions of the European Union, such as the Administration of the Member States, which when illustrating rural spaces, make a supposed clear distinction from the urban sphere. Notwithstanding this dichotomous perception, which separates the rural and urban sphere, and which social science theorists expounded in the second half of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, a path to a new vision began to open in the twenties, increasing in strength, and each time negating the opposition between the rural and urban, reducing the problem with the existence of a gradation or *continuum* and affirming the complementarity and interconnectedness of both spaces. Interestingly, the methodology used in our day by the Public Administrations of the states and by international organizations continued to promote a dual vision between the rural and urban, elaborated by mostly quantitative criteria.

The rhetoric on rurality generated by the European Commission constitutes a typical product of the CAP, resulting from the historical evolution of the latter, which, alongside the *first pilar* of the same, supports the sectorial orientation, and contemplates a *second pilar* which is characteristically territorial and constructed by local development values and innovation. In this way the appearance of a rural world has been created, which represents a group of “green” values, highly sought after by modern society, that extends throughout almost the entire territory of its member States. Even still, paradoxically, the European Union territory is one of the most urbanized in the world, and its residents have long ago adopted lifestyles that are genuinely urban. Indeed, the particular ability for rural spaces to change and the heterogeneous effects of the many endogenous development initiatives have revealed situations, sometimes more or less urban, or more or less rural, but always profoundly interconnected and intermingled, and without rigid separations, that are characterized by permanent gradations, with a distinctively continuous character. The frequency with which specific variable sequences are repeated, as in the case of Cantabria, in the northern region of Spain and also not unlike other regions in Spain, allows us to construct typological models that, in agreement with actual research in the social sciences, we define as *social landscapes of rurality*.

The discourse on multi-functionality gives us at least one answer in terms of the reality of the situation: the agriculture of our time continues to constitute a matter of wealth, however, it has lost the strength it once had to hold together an essential social fabric. In these circumstances, we presume that the foremost danger in abandoning the rural sphere depends on how well the theory of agricultural and territorial multi-functionalism

can be put into practice, that is, how new social and cultural landscapes as well as economic and environmental functions may be bestowed upon these rural spaces.

In conclusion, it is certain that the present is a time of utmost complexity for the rural and urban, more so than any other in history given all that we have mentioned up to now, and taking into account that there has always been some degree of overlap between the two. The journey through this theoretical discourse has similarly revealed, that the distinction between rural and urban, always fluid and changing, has always been more of an issue for those contemplating reality rather than those in actual reality, or rather, its appreciation was much more positivist than constructivist.

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