

THE MIGRATION OF FOREIGN WOMEN TO RURAL CATALONIA (SPAIN) IN THE CONTEXT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES¹

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the impact of the arrival of immigrants to Catalan rural areas from a gender perspective. We specifically observed the female migration routes to municipalities experiencing problems in ensuring the reproduction of their communities (depopulation, masculinization, aging, singleness, economic marginality), and suggest that these women make a remarkable contribution to their development and the revival of some of the human capital and labor lost in the process of decline that has characterized rural areas throughout the twentieth century. We noted the demographic trends and characteristics of immigration to rural areas, together with their migratory routes, expectations and the distinguishing factors of their incorporation into such a specific social, economic and cultural environment. Unlike male immigrants to these areas, who are usually employed in the primary sector, women work mainly in the service sector (hotels and tourism), in the agro-processing industry and above all, in work related to the reproductive sphere: care and attention of the aging population who because of the rural exodus, frequently lack either the family or institutional context to meet their care needs. We understand that the foreign women help to re-feminize these communities and become essential economic and social agents.

Keywords: international migration, female migration, new rurality, attention and care, Catalonia (Spain)

1. Introduction¹

This article reviews the impact of international immigration to rural Catalonia, with a particular focus on women's immigration, taking into account the changes that have had both positive and negative impacts on the conditions for social reproduction in its towns and villages. Our analysis is contextualized within the changes in the economic base of rural areas, namely, deagrarianization and lack of opportunities, but also the development of a service sector linked to rural tourism, economic diversification and the emergence of agro-transformation projects that revitalize declining agricultural sectors. We take into account the negative impact on towns and villages of the long-standing demographic dynamics of depopulation, including masculinization, aging or singleness, which threaten the capacity of rural communities to face the future; but we also explore the demographic changes that have had a positive effect on rural areas, and which have also attracted some of the million immigrants who have arrived in Catalonia in the last two decades.²

The objectives of our research include the characterization of the foreign population arriving in the small municipalities, their migration routes, their expectations and, in particular, the distinctive features of the process of incorporation into an environment with very different social, economic and cultural aspects from those in the urban environments that, as the main destinations for immigrant populations, have been studied much more widely. In analyzing the processes of incorporation into town and village communities, we questioned the widely held presumption that becoming part of a small community is easier and more advantageous for the immigrant population than in a large city. This question is addressed in the present paper.

2. Methodological notes

To meet our research objectives, we conducted a demographic analysis of the rural population of Catalonia

in rural towns and villages, and represented 10.7% of the rural population (in the rest of Catalonia the foreign population accounted for 19.8% of the total). In 2000 the population over the age of 65 represented 24% of the rural population, while those below the age of 20 accounted for only 16.8%, resulting in an aging index of 157 (much higher than the figure of 88.2 for the rest of Catalonia). By 2010 the aging index figure had fallen back to 118. The same cannot be said for the male-female ratio, which stood at 95.6 women to every 100 men in 2000 (when the average across Catalonia was 101.3), and had fallen to 92.4 women to every 100 men by 2010, essentially because foreign immigration into rural areas was predominantly male.

¹ This paper presents some of the results of a study that ended in 2011, *The migration of foreign women to rural Catalonia in the context of economic and social transformation in local communities* (ARAF1 00047), led by Montserrat Soronellas with the participation of the following researchers: Yolanda Bodoque, Gemma Casal and Ramona Torrens, from the Department of Anthropology, Philosophy and Social Work at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili; and Jordi Blay and Santiago Roquer, from the Department of Geography of the same university.

² Between 2000 and 2010 the population in Catalonia grew by 1,250,382 inhabitants, of whom 38,884 were foreigners living

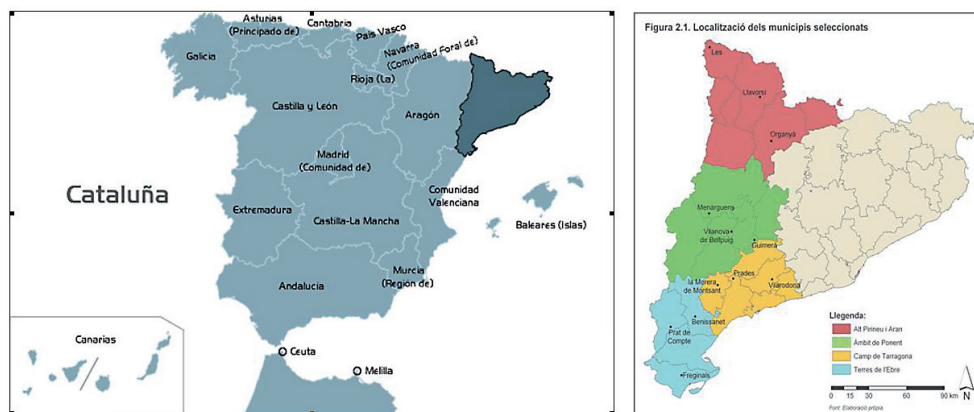


Fig. 1 Location of Catalonia in Spain (left). Location of the selected municipalities in Catalonia (right)

(with data from the local census corresponding to January 1, 2010) and devised a type of Catalan rural municipalities with fewer than two thousand inhabitants.³ This enabled us to define the characteristics for selecting the twelve villages in which to conduct the fieldwork and collect data⁴ using techniques such as participant observation and interviews with immigrant women, employers and local agents. The type of rural areas was based on the characteristics of the local economic structure, from which we obtained seven categories of municipalities: three with a significant agricultural sector, and four with less agricultural activity (tourist-service municipalities, industrial municipalities, peri-urban dormitory municipalities and those with a diverse range of economic activities). We then selected twelve towns or villages (see Figure 1), with significant, although not representative, realities reflecting the diversity that can be found in rural Catalonia today. They all had an immigrant population of over 10% with a significant female presence; this population came from a diverse range of countries; the municipalities were of different sizes (between one hundred and two thousand inhabitants), and finally, they were located in diverse geographical areas: mountainous and low-land environments, proximity to the main town in the districts or large cities, border towns, etc. (see Table 1).

In-depth guided or semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three types of informants, namely, foreign women, employers and local agents (immigration specialists, mayors, local councilors, school teachers and other people with whom we had informal conversations and who proved to be good informants). A total of 78 interviews were conducted⁵ in which we attempted to cover all possible situations and profiles until we had all the information we required on the research objectives.

³ We follow the distinction normally used in demographic sources: rural municipalities (fewer than 2,000 inhabitants), urban municipalities (above 10,000) and intermediate municipalities (between 2,000 and 10,000); we focus principally on the first of these categories, namely, rural municipalities with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants (Roquer and Blay 2008).

⁴ Data were collected from July 2010 to February 2011.

⁵ In section 3.3 we provide a characterization of the women interviewed.

Participant observation was carried out in both public (streets, squares, bars, shops, etc.) and private spaces (private homes, council offices, etc.) and data were collected through kinship charts, and diagrams and sketches of the women's scenarios, migration routes and so forth.

3. Female migration and new ruralities

The foreign migrant population coming to rural areas in recent decades has entailed a social, economic and demographic turning point for communities that for many years had been immersed in a continuous process of population loss, economic decline and impoverishment of the social fabric and dynamics (García Sanz 2006). The crisis situation in rural areas is explained by the loss of economic competitiveness of agricultural incomes; the discrediting of the culture and rural and agricultural ways of life as compared to urban models; the isolation of some rural areas; the limitations of the labor market and the lack of opportunities, among other factors (Etxezarreta and Viladomiu 1997; Soronellas 2006 and 2012). However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the rural population is stabilizing, and in some areas, showing incipient signs of recovery due to a combination of factors that encourage populations to settle in rural areas.⁶ These factors include European support for agricultural production; the opening up of lines of local economic development that offer new opportunities to the rural population (tourism, agri-food and craft industries), improved communications and conditions of access to basic services for rural populations; and also the crisis of the Fordist model of labor relations and of the precariousness and computerization of work (Camarero, Sampedro and Oliva 2012). The arrival of the foreign immigrant population, attracted by the demand for labor in the agricultural sector and new jobs in the rural service sector, has also contributed to positive demographic statistics in small municipalities, more accustomed to losing inhabitants than to receiving new neighbors (Oliva 2010).

⁶ The 600 Catalan municipalities with less than 2000 inhabitants in 2010, staying a total of 362,761 residents, an increase nearly 60,000 people in 10 years: a constant annual growth rate of 1.77%.

Tab. 1 List and characteristics of the selected towns and villages.

Town	Total population	% immigration and main countries of origin	Foreign women over the age of 15	Economic structure	Geographical location
Prades	655	13% (Romania, Colombia, Argentina)	29	Rural tourism	Mountain
Vila-rodona	1,298	20.10% (Morocco, Portugal, Peru)	75	Intensive agriculture and industry	Lowlands. Close to main town in the district
La Morera de Montsant	159	18.24% (Bulgaria, Morocco, Czech Republic)	12	Agricultural innovation. Wine tourism	Mountain
Benissanet	1,263	24.31% (Morocco, Senegal, Romania)	101	Intensive agriculture	Lowlands. Close to main town in the district
Freginals	410	19% (Ukraine, Romania, United Kingdom)	25	Low-yield agriculture	Lowlands
Prat de Comte	201	12.9% (El Salvador, United Kingdom, Pakistan)	9	Low-yield agriculture	Lowlands
Les	1,011	27.24% (Bolivia, Romania, Algeria)	129	Shops and businesses Hotel and catering	Border Mountain
Llavorsí	390	13.88% (Brazil, Portugal, Chile)	25	Rural tourism and mountain activities	Mountain
Organyà	946	11.95% (Brazil, Portugal, Bulgaria)	48	Shops and businesses Hotel and catering	Mountain
Guimerà	332	11.45% (Romania, Morocco, Nicaragua)	13	Low-yield agriculture.	Lowlands
Vilanova de Bellpuig	1,197	10.44% (Poland, Romania, Ukraine)	30	Agricultural innovation Organic agriculture	Lowlands
Menàrguens	858	13.60% (Romania, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau)	28	Intensive agriculture	Lowlands

Source: the authors

We are therefore witnessing a process of repopulation in some rural areas that began in the last decade of the twentieth century (García Pascual and Larrull 1998; Esparcia 2002; García Coll and Sánchez 2005) and has continued in recent years (Roquer and Blay 2008 and 2012; Camarero et al. 2009; Bayona and Gil 2010).

With this *repopulation* has also come a certain process of new feminization in some rural areas that since the 1950s had seen many of their women leaving the countryside in search of economic resources and also seeking a new social role that would give them more space for participation and decision. The current arrival of immigrant women to rural areas offsets the endemic masculinization of many small municipalities, not only because their presence leads to a more balanced population, but also because they increase single men's chances of marriage, thereby favoring social reproduction in communities (Bodoque 2009).

Domestic rural-urban migration has also changed the demographics of non-urban municipalities and of the development of industrial capitalism itself. In the so-called 'urban exodus', populations have moved out of the cities to towns and villages in the surrounding areas (Morén-Alegret and Solana 2006). However, the urban-rural relationship is not limited to internal migration and the existence of a floating population; rather the development of industrial and capitalist society has

created new consumer needs grounded in leisure and tourism. This economic diversification driven by rural development projects funded by programs such as Leader and Proder, has created the ideal economic environment for local populations to remain in the villages, but also to act as magnets for incomers: the foreign immigrant population, men and women who find life and job opportunities in the rural context. However, the jobs available to them are precarious, poorly paid, and unattractive to the local population: primarily male employment in farming or agribusinesses (Pedreño and Riquelme 2007; Reigada 2007; Gualda and Ruiz 2004; Arellano 2006) and hospitality or care sectors that have a significant demand for female labor. To these precarious working conditions must be added the difficulty of living and working in remote and often poorly connected areas. Despite these difficulties, they come to rural areas and remain there. What ruralities do they find on arrival? What are the towns like where they make their new lives?

Our findings show that the number and characteristics of immigrants arriving in a rural area are affected by its diversity. The recent growth of rural areas has depended particularly on the size of the municipality, its location and its economic structure (Solana 2008), all of which have conditioned a larger or smaller presence of different immigrant groups and their characteristics. For example, the geographical distribution by nationality

of origin encourages areas of concentration within each country (Pajares 2008; Fonseca 2008; Kasimis 2008) or regions within the country (Esparcia 2002). In the Catalan case, as well as a more or less well distributed presence of Eastern Europeans (mainly Romanians and Bulgarians) across the region, there is a clear concentration of EU immigrants on the coast, of Moroccans in the inland regions, Latin Americans in the Pyrenees, and Africans in the most agricultural inland areas (Bayona and Gil 2010; Solana 2005; Solé, Guirado and Solana 2012). This territorial distribution is conditioned by certain immigrant groups' specialization in particular tasks and by the way they behave in relation to work and residence. Green et al. (2009) note the differences between the types of immigrants in English rural areas according to seasonality of labor, higher or lower demand and the ability to cover the jobs in each case. Kasimis (2008) finds differences between typologies of immigrants and their relation to various economic activities in three different types of regions of Greece. From this literature we conclude that a classification of rural areas is needed *a priori* to guide the study of immigration within them.

3.1 The contexts of immigrant women's arrival

As we mentioned above, the new rural society can no longer be defined solely, and sometimes not even primarily, on the criterion that it has some agricultural activity. Today, many areas whose environment and population centers would clearly lead us to define them as rural are inhabited by people who have no connection with any type of agricultural activity. These include, for instance, mountain areas (in our case, the Pyrenean area) where the population has diversified its income options and where most people provide services to visitors and tourists (rural accommodation, sports activities, etc.); however there are also areas where the small remaining population is too old for active agricultural work. These are communities and areas that have specialized in the tertiary sector, that no longer have any agricultural activity but, paradoxically, take economic advantage of a rurality which, in order to appeal to visitors, must maintain an attractive agricultural image. We therefore find the curious circumstance of villages with no farmers, and where the local authorities must take on some agricultural work, such as maintaining pastures near the town or village, to maintain a fictional agricultural landscape that visitors find attractive. The fact is that the process of rural deagrarianization is indisputable, as is the expansion of the service economy in the social and economic activities of rural communities (Bonnamour 2001; Gómez 2001; Barrachina et al. 2009). Areas whose economies are now based on industrial production, with heavily built up industrial estates in the vicinity of their towns, have grown in the wake of industrial activity and urban-rural residential mobility – known as peri-urbanization or counter-urbanization

(Ferrás 2007; Paniagua 2002). Paradoxically, these areas have intense or intensified agricultural activity, sustained on a part-time basis by workers from the industry or service sector, who retain ownership of the land inherited from their parents, the last generation of local farmers.

The new rurality has more to do with services and industry than with agriculture and raising livestock, although these primary activities continue to form part of the realities of the towns and villages. Our fieldwork shows that agricultural activities tend to be regarded as linked to the production of services more than to food production. The European discourse on the farmer as the most important asset in territorial management has caught on among sector professionals, local government and trade union representatives. In our interviews we found traces of this discourse, that of the farmer who produces a service for the community, who manages extensive agricultural lands, who constructs the beauty of the landscapes and who adds quality to the environment. Rural development promoted by governments in the last decade, funded by the CAP, has used this appreciation of the work done by those who stayed in rural areas and strived to convert and develop these services as a factor to attract visitors from urban and rural areas and create a service sector to drive local development (Alario 2001; García Sanz 2003; Foro IESA 2009).

However, it would be a mistake to think that this rural development model has transformed most local realities, for this is not the case. Population reproduction continues to be a significant problem in rural villages. Discovering the reasons for this situation is complex, but it is clear that not all villages have been able or willing to redirect their traditional agricultural economies towards the service sector or by adding quality to their agricultural production. Depopulation and the resulting lack of human capital in a position to set up new businesses (agricultural, industrial and service sector) is one of the biggest difficulties facing these communities. Villages and small towns need projects to halt the advance of depopulation and they need young women and men to create and take these projects forward; the arrival of an immigrant population is, therefore, the prerequisite for economic revitalization in rural areas (Stockdale 2006). Demographic data reflect this repopulation of rural areas (García Coll and Sánchez 2005; Morén-Alegret and Solana 2006; Roquer and Blay 2008; Bayona and Gil 2010), as we have found in our research.

In the areas we covered in the study, we observed different situations according to the relationship between the local development model (which depends on diverse factors ranging from the municipality's location in the territory, to whether or not it has strong public or private sector leaders) and the presence of an immigrant population, especially women. Local processes are highly complex but we identified four broad local development trends (or types of rurality), linked to the economic

activity in the town or village, with particular attention to sectors that generate employment.

The first group includes municipalities whose main economic activity is in the primary sector, and that have led some kind of transformation of traditional farming, allowing farms to continue and avoid the structural crisis in the sector. Within this type, we identified two different trends: specialization in intensive farming techniques, and development of new agricultural projects to differentiate agricultural production and achieve levels of quality (gastronomic, environmental or health) with which to increase the market value of the food they produce. The town of Benissanet illustrates this type; by focusing its agricultural activity on intensive fruit production it has managed to overcome the problem of depopulation and attract immigrant incomers. Women from Slovakia and Lithuania are hired in their own countries to work temporarily in the local cooperative warehouses preparing and packing fruit; Romanian women have also arrived on their own initiative, working in the hospitality sector, domestic service and care of the elderly, as have the Moroccans who find work picking fruit.

A second type of rurality is that of towns and villages where agricultural activity continues, supported by an industrial sector that contributes to the diversification and sustainability of the local economy, and that have good transport connections with urban and industrial areas. In the last decade of the twentieth century, Moroccan men came to work as agricultural laborers (vines and some fruit) in Vila-rodonà, and over the years their families have joined them and settled in the village (161 Moroccan residents). The vast majority of Moroccan women are not incorporated in the labor market; only a few occasionally do seasonal fruit-picking work. The growth of the industrial zone has provided employment for the local population, while the foreign population continues to work in agriculture. Since 2005, Romanian and Latin American women have found work in the hospitality sector and domestic service.

The third rural type we examined is one in which the primary sector has virtually disappeared and that has developed a services sector, essentially for tourism. Municipalities with these characteristics are further away from urban areas in regions with a greater appeal to tourists, in the form of landscape, climate and cultural heritage, such as the villages of Les or Prades. Both these villages exemplify local economies based on the service sector that have attracted more female immigrants. Prades has interesting scenic and heritage sites that have given it a reputation as a center for leisure and relaxation; in the last 30 years the village has grown due to the construction of second homes, which has spawned businesses to meet the service needs of visitors, tourists and temporary residents. The business owners are local, but the employees working in them come from thirteen different countries. Finally, the fourth type corresponds to the rural model typical of the last quarter of the twentieth

century: depopulated and with aging communities, where some traditional and marginalized farming persists but with no alternative rural development plan capable of halting the process. Neither the local administration nor the social and business community has pioneered new projects. Three of the municipalities analyzed fall within this type.⁷ One example is Prat de Comte, where the main economic activity is still rain-fed agriculture; it has an ageing population and no public or private initiatives have been taken that would have allowed it to develop some tertiary or artisan-industrial activity. However, immigrants have also arrived to the town in recent years; the men are employed in agriculture (mostly Pakistanis and Moroccans) and the women find work caring for the elderly, one of the main employment options for foreign women in towns such as this. Accustomed to a declining population since the beginning of the twentieth century, the number of residents in Prat de Comte has grown in the last ten years due to the arrival of 24 foreigners who have settled there, although these new incorporations do not solve the long-term problem of reproduction of the community.

In summary, we have seen how agriculture calls for mainly male labor, but the tertiary processes of rural economies, mainly related to tourism, have favored the arrival in the villages of women working for local businesses and in hospitality. Moreover, in all types of rurality, we found foreign women employed in domestic and personal services, especially in caring for the aging population. Because of the transversal nature of this employment option, primarily female and widespread in rural areas, we explore it in greater detail in the next section.

3.2 The ageing population and care of dependents

The new rurality is adopting strategies for the care of older adults as a result of the 'care crisis' that is impacting at a global level and in response to social and demographic changes characteristic of small towns and villages: the aging population, the difficult access to specialized care, and the absence of a 'support generation' (people with the appropriate age and level of autonomy to attend to situations of dependency). Inadequate deployment of social services in rural areas reinforced the 'family-centered' Mediterranean tradition, in which provision and management of care falls to the family. Today, the presence of immigrant women has allowed the informal system of care for older people to expand and become widespread, replacing the care provision previously undertaken by the women of the family and the village, so that although care is taken out of the family-domestic context, the traditional principle of 'growing old at home' continues. The family is obliged to contract out the care of its older members, but it does so within the domestic space by hiring

⁷ Freginals, Prat de Comte and Guimerà.

immigrant women. Below we outline the characteristic aspects of this activity in rural areas.

Families demand an affective rather than a professional relationship; they value the creation of an emotionally supportive environment, although in the context of a business relationship. They do not need a professional caregiver with specific training, but someone to take the place of the primary caregiver and who can take on the role of 'daughter' or 'wife'. Foreign women are required to carry out a task that supposedly requires no more than the life experience and ability to perform a role that they have presumably learned 'naturally' in their own country.

This model of care is based on hiring cheap, flexible labor and developing an employment relationship that is typically informal, arbitrary, asymmetrical and precarious (Castelló 2009). However, the everyday and employment realities of the foreign women who care for dependents are difficult and complex: they are unfamiliar with the context, the cultural, health and nutrition habits and the health care and social services systems. They do not always have the capacity to react in emergencies and they bear an intensely emotional responsibility that goes unrecognized by their employers. These working conditions place some women in a vulnerable position; however, these jobs and the invisibility of the rural environment give them a dual context of opportunity to begin their lives in a new country: first it allows them to live illegally while they obtain their residence and work permits; and second, despite being an uncertain occupation (the duration of the employment relationship depends to a large extent on the lifetime of the person being cared for), it is highly valued because it provides a fixed, stable income, unlike other temporary or irregular jobs. Their vulnerability and their need to work guarantee stability for the family that employs them.

In the next section we analyze the profile of women who have migrated to the rural areas of Catalonia and study the distinctive features of their incorporation process.

3.3 Who are the women that come to the towns and villages?

We begin by outlining the personal, family and migration profiles of the women who migrate to the towns and villages. We use their country of origin as a variable to classify this description, grouping the women into three areas of origin; this undoubtedly oversimplifies the analysis, but it does reveal certain patterns in the migration routes that we examined. Almost half (18) of the 38 women interviewed were from Eastern European countries. Romanian women were working in every employment sector, but particularly in the field of hospitality and retail services, in all twelve of the villages we studied. Most of them came from rural areas, agricultural-based economies and farming families. The women from the other Eastern European countries – Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine – had similar profiles, primary or secondary

education (although two women from Moldova and Ukraine had a university education). The migration of these women is family based, they often arrived with their husbands; in some cases they came shortly after the migration of their spouse and less often, they migrated alone (organized in their home country), followed by other family members.

Latin American women make up the second largest group. We identified 11 women from 10 different countries,⁸ a dispersion that shows how migration to Spain has offered a resource for people from Central and South American countries to improve their socio-economic position. Despite the diversity of background stories hidden behind so many different and distant areas of origin, of the eleven women, four were working in care of the elderly (living in the person's home) and two others had worked in the same sector, although they were unemployed at the time of interview. The data tentatively show that Latin American women have the least diverse job profiles and are the group with the largest proportion working in the personal services sector, one of the most precarious sectors. We found exceptions of women working in the services sector (cleaning tourist apartments, hospitality, and shops and businesses) and one local council family worker. Nine of these women had migrated alone, initiating their own migration plans (the others migrated with their families). In some cases, they led family migration chains consisting of groups of almost 100 people. Some of them had left their husbands and children behind, others were separated and the younger ones arrived, and remain, as single women. In general, women who head single-parent families, and therefore have little family support, take longer to bring their children to join them. Most of them come from urban or metropolitan areas, and some of those with levels of higher education talked of the shock entailed by life in the villages, especially the lack of amenities (shops and entertainment facilities) and limited means of transport.

We also interviewed seven North African women, six from Morocco and one from Algeria. In contrast to the stereotypical image of the immigrant woman, four of these women had arrived on their own, usually in the footsteps of their brothers who had previously migrated to the villages; one of the women had brought her husband and son to join her a few years after her migration. The other two women had come to join their husbands. At the time of the interviews, two were not working, two worked in domestic service paid by the hour, and the other three were working as a live-in carer, in hospitality and in fruit picking. Three came from urban areas, namely Nador, Casablanca and Tangier. Among the Moroccan women, especially those who were married and with children, we observed an explicit desire to move from the villages to the cities or towns where most members of

⁸ Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Colombia, Argentina, Brazil and Peru.

their social of family networks lived, driven by the wish to leave behind the pressure of the stigma they felt in the local social environment (Aguilar 2013). In almost all the municipalities in the study, except in the Pyrenees where immigration from Morocco has not been very significant, we noted that Moroccan immigrants were the first to reach the rural areas of Catalonia (in the 90s); they were generally men employed in the agricultural sector who brought their families to join them a few years later. In the last ten years, with the arrival of other migrant groups to rural areas (Romanians, Latin Americans and sub-Saharan Africans, in that order) they have tended to leave the rural areas as they were displaced by the newcomers to the agricultural labor market.⁹

3.4 Distinguishing aspects of female migration to rural areas

The villages and the rurality shape an environment into which the women arrive that distinguishes their migration routes and, in particular, the ways they are incorporated into the local communities. These specific features include increased visibility of migration chains; movement around the areas near the local community and where labor markets are found; ease of access to information networks and resources; the possibility of being known and of becoming familiar with the environment and local networks; and finally, achieving what we call 'fragmented incorporations,' characterized by the hurdles to incorporation in the local community. Below, we examine each one of these features.

First, we note the presence of small, very different nationality groups in localities relatively close to one another,¹⁰ which although not numerically significant are sufficiently large to be noticeable in the population as a whole; this factor leads us to suggest that it is the size of municipalities that makes migration chains visible. These chains take many different forms: they are long, extremely complex and usually family-based since they are made up of various households in the same locality. We also found networks made up of several unrelated nuclear families from different areas of the same country of origin; these networks emerge to support their members during the time they take to settle more or less per-

⁹ Most of the employers interviewed, and some of the local agents, described the aforementioned migratory sequence (Moroccan, Romanian, Latin American and sub-Saharan African immigration). To explain this ethnic-labor substitution process, they used stereotypes referring to the employment qualities of each group and, in general, the Moroccan workers were the most poorly valued. In only one of the villages did we observe the continual residence of Moroccan families who had arrived in the 90s, where local agricultural employers had won the loyalty of these workers.

¹⁰ Some of these national groups, moreover, are not particularly representative of the wider Spanish immigration picture. The main countries of origin of the foreign population resident in Catalonia, according to National Statistics Office (INE) data for 2010, are Morocco, Romania, Ecuador, Colombia, United Kingdom, China, Italy, Peru, Bulgaria and Portugal.

manently, after which the chain loses its initial meaning. Except for specific cases, the women from Latin American countries form part of short individualized chains. They work in sectors related to the care of dependents, they come alone, with a small support network at the destination (those who started the chain) and sometimes they leave their children behind with relatives because of the time restraints of the type of work they do. These are the chains with the largest female presence.

I worked in the supermarket and when my husband arrived, he didn't work in the supermarket but in another business my boss had and he's still there now. Then my brothers-in-law started to come and they began working in the restaurant because they said they were looking for people and there weren't many foreigners and there they told you if they could come... then one of my cousins came, then another cousin with her husband, then my sister with her husband (...) they asked me for advice and I helped them as much as I could, with the papers, I told them what steps they had to take, and they would phone me. (Bolivian woman - Les)

The women expressed a certain feeling of loyalty to the villages and areas where they live, arguing that in general the town or village met their personal and employment expectations from the first moment, since it is the place where they live with their family following reunification and/or where they work. They often live in a different town or village from the one in which they work, especially in the most mountainous areas with poor communications and closely linked to seasonal activities. In these cases the women travel as best they can from one place to another, depending on job opportunities and, in general, without moving out of the municipality. When the location does not meet their consumption needs, they spend their available free time traveling to shopping centers where they can browse a wider and cheaper range of products.

My sister-in-law was here with us, my husband's sister. We got a call (in 2008) to come and work in the fields, here in Benissanet, the two of us. He stayed on working in the fields until last year and I've found a few houses where I go and clean. We're happy here and we're not thinking of moving away because we're building the house in Romania. With the money we earn here we're building the house and we'll see, for the moment we haven't decided to go. We've both got permanent jobs, we're not thinking of going at the moment. (Romanian woman - Benissanet)

A third distinguishing factor concerns the advantages of living in a small town that the women reported, specifically, the ease with which they can build the social capital that allows them to work. Despite the initial misgivings they aroused in the destination, they were able to establish good relationships with their employers and neighbors, and they became known for the results of their

work, the trust they generate and their complete availability for work. This is because the most widely available jobs in rural areas are done in harsh conditions for low wages, often without contracts, involving long, unsocial hours and instability. The immigrant population will take these jobs, which the local population is unwilling to do. Even foreign women who have attained some job security and quality of life continue to show their availability to the local population.

As well as the restaurant, I clean in seven or eight houses. Not all the houses are regular. I have four I do every week for people from the town and the others are for people who come at the weekends or maybe once a month. I also do cleaning for the council (...) My husband works in the Scala Dei wine cellars. The first two years he worked in Passanant, then in Poboleda in the vineyards, and after that in Cornudella and la Morera, then he was unemployed for a year and the town council took him on, and then he started again in Scala Dei where he's now got a permanent job. He's never been short of work because when he has time he helps out in the vineyards. They come to the house looking for him. (Bulgarian woman – La Morera de Montsant)

Finally we observed that despite the immigrant women's availability, the trust placed in them, and their good labor relations, they and their families (when they had them) did not find incorporation into the local community any easier. Although the idea is prevalent that social integration of a foreign population is much easier and faster in villages than in cities, during the fieldwork we observed a significant division between the local and foreign populations. The immigrant women considered living in a small town to be positive because of the environment, quality of life, opportunities to work and accrue financial resources in general, and finally, because of the people. But they predominantly emphasized the opportunities the town offered to work and live in conditions that allow them to save money and follow through their migration plans. Their status as foreigners and as immigrants (having their family with them, or maintaining the family in their country of origin and sending their savings) condition their incorporation into the community. However, even when the migratory paths are regarded as irreversible (those affecting large family chains), there is no guarantee of incorporation into the local society because, among other reasons, they do not have the opportunity to cultivate social relationships beyond strictly labor relationships.

I always say hello. If they answer, fine, and if they don't sometimes I feel sad when they look at me like that. A lot of them don't reply and they give you a look (...) but there are some good people too and they ask you what you do, where you live, if you like being here (...) That's normal. If I'm in my village in my country, when a lot of people come from abroad I'd also think, what's going on? They're going to take

everything, we'll be left with nothing. Like here. (Moroccan woman – Vila-rodona)

In some cases, they have tentatively begun to participate (in associations, local events, etc.), but they find it difficult because their place in the labor market and their prestige as workers do not go hand in hand with their incorporation into the social fabric of the town. In the public sphere we observed the segmentation of the local society and the obstacles to incorporating new neighbors who, despite providing a solution to some of the difficulties these communities face, continue to be perceived as outsiders who are too different, and to a large degree, unrelated to the local community.

4. Some conclusions

Rural municipalities in Catalonia are witnessing a process of repopulation brought about by the arrival of immigrant populations from a wide range of countries who are contributing to develop and sustain new forms of rurality resulting from the process of deagrarianization. Rural development measures, promoted by the public administration systems, have turned municipalities into providers of services linked to tourism and the exploitation of natural and cultural heritage that attract men and especially women from abroad, and whose work is essential for the reproduction of communities. These women tend to be employed in the processing sector of agricultural production, but we found larger numbers working in tourism-related services (businesses, tourism, hotel and catering) and especially in care services for people. The aging of the population in small towns has created an employment sector specialized in the care and attention of the elderly in which foreign women find work. Specializing in the care of elderly people is common to all municipalities, regardless of their particular economic structure. The jobs available in rural areas are often more precarious (no contract, seasonal, etc.), especially those in the poorest rural areas, but also in the services sector. Therefore, the foreign population is forced to be highly mobile to take advantage of the employment opportunities in the regional labor market.

Immigrant women's incorporation in rural areas has some distinctive characteristics. First, in recounting their arrival in the towns and villages, the women's reconstruction of their migration chain evidences family reunification strategies that bring members of their extended families into the localities. It was relatively easy to identify the women who headed the migration process and reconstruct the workings of the chain. Second, these paths lead to a municipality that they do not always consider as their permanent settlement, nor necessarily live in, but is regarded as a hub from where they move to work, bounded by the geographical area, generally the municipal district. We found small residential displacements

between neighboring municipalities, and on few occasions the initial point of residence was abandoned. Third, the women exploited their social capital by establishing closer relationships with the local population and by cultivating relationships within the immediate area to maintain connections with the region and its resources. Working in the service sector (especially domestic service and care of dependents) allows them to accumulate some social capital in the community when contracting families are satisfied with their work. Finally, despite being known and being familiar with the social environment in the towns and villages, they find assimilation difficult in a local community that, while valuing their work, does not necessarily encourage their active participation in other aspects of community life.

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