

The narratives of new rural residents in the configuration of the peri-urban area: From circumstantial constraints to openness

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Abstract

European peri-urban areas keep growing in terms of land, population and socio-spatial complexity. This article looks at the role of new residents in the ongoing reconfiguration of peri-urban space, by focusing on how their narratives make sense of their residential choices and experiences. The analysis is based on the case of the peri-urban area of Pamplona, an intermediate city in northern Spain surrounded by a peri-urban space characterised by a disperse habitat of single and collective rural-like settlements in a clear process of population growth. The discussion is grounded in a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with key informants and new residents. The results reinforce the relevance of the residential lure of these territories as well as of the housing policies adopted. They also show three key elements to understand better the complexity and internal heterogeneity of this process: the different motivations supporting the residential choice; the links established with the place and its population and the experiences within the territory. Finally, the article concludes by suggesting that the different profiles of the new residents and their different orientations regarding the way of residing and experiencing the residence generate different territorialities through which they form new and coexisting ruralities, as well as a hybrid identity construction with the place.

KEYWORDS

narratives, new rural residents, peri-urban areas

1 | INTRODUCTION: THE 'RURAL GAZE' TO PERI-URBAN AREAS

The aim of this article is to discuss the role that the new rural residents have in the configuration of the peri-urban space in the Pamplona region, in the north of Spain¹. Even though the new rural

residents and pro-rural migration have been thoroughly analyzed in rural studies during the last few decades, this study has traditionally referred in more detail to the protagonists of a counterurbanisation that went beyond the peri-urban areas. There are many reasons for this. On one hand, the first studies about the counterurbanisation conducted in the United States emphasized the more remote rural areas and led the way for further studies. On the other hand, the long-standing prorural culture and the pressure to maintain an

¹The empirical work on which this article is based on belongs to a wider research focused on the study of the impact that new rural residents have on the destination localities of different rural areas of Spain (CSO2011-27981). The case introduced in this article

corresponds to a rural area whose development takes place due to its proximity and close relationship with the capital city of the region.

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urban–rural distinction in the United Kingdom contributed to the consolidation of the image of the ‘authentic rurality’ as the ‘remote rurality’. Finally, but no less important, the proximity of the city and the daily mobility of the residents in the peri-urban areas have facilitated these hybrid spaces, in which the rural and the urban elements merge, have been to a larger extent considered an urban space and have consequently received less attention from the rural point of view. Consequently, the investigations of the peri-urban areas have been done mainly from the point of view of the city and the urbanity, as urbanism and regional planning considered them a functional annex of the city.

In Spain, the counterurbanising processes begin to appear in the second half of the 1980s (Camarero, 1993), but the actual process of population polarisation experienced in the country has contributed to neglecting the rural study of peri-urban areas. In fact, currently, the settling patterns draw a dual rural space: in contrast to the population loss in the inland, the growth and the densification of the periphery and the peri-urban areas are consolidated (Molinero, 2019). In this context, the serious depopulation in large areas of the country has attracted great attention from scholars. Even though the investigation of the peri-urban areas has increased, it is still not sufficient. The population growth, social heterogeneity, complexity and variability make it necessary to continue the investigation of its specific character. This article intends to move away from that vision of peri-urban areas as a mainly urban space to search for elements that can be shared with ‘more rural’ areas. For that purpose, we focus on the new residents of this space. We highlight the relevance of new residents’ discourses about their reasons for moving to a peri-urban area and their experience in that territory. To do that, we look at the case of new residents in the peri-urban area of Pamplona, in the north of Spain.

The structure of the article is the following: First, a short introduction of the peri-urban areas as areas for a ‘more rural’ analysis is provided by looking at elements of pro-rural migration. Second, the context of the configuration of the peri-urban area analyzed is enunciated. Subsequently, the methodology adopted for obtaining the data is explained. Fourth, the analysis of the data is presented by focusing on three elements: the narratives of the peri-urban socio-spatial construction, the narratives of the economic, social and political relationship with the territory and the experience with the city. Lastly, the conclusions are expounded to stress how different experiences and drivers may lead to the coexistence of different ruralities in the same peri-urban space.

2 | THE PERI-URBAN AREAS AS A SPACE FOR THE ‘RURAL ANALYSIS’: IS THERE ANY ROOM FOR PRO-RURAL MIGRATION?

The process of increasing dispersion of the cities and the creation of more and more extensive peri-urban areas have contributed to the academic interest in the configuration of this type of space. They are considered areas where a continuous process of urban sprawling was

unfolding in the most peripheral areas of the city (Caruso, 2001; Entrena, 2005). This process of urban sprawl is often related to the proliferation of second residences and to residential migration processes from the city (Gómez Contreras, 2010). Unlike what happens in the other ruralities of a more remote character, these areas are very dynamic precisely thanks to their connection with the city and the everyday mobility that is established between both spaces for various reasons: work, free time and study, among others.

However, the increasing expansion of the peri-urban areas does not lie exclusively in their connection with the city. Their success as a place of residence lies partly in a symbolic dimension of the rurality that connects it with the sense of belonging to a community, the tranquillity, the life in connection with nature and so on. This is the question in which the study of the peri-urban areas can benefit from the contributions carried out from ‘a more rural point of view’. Specifically, the analyses of the pro-rural migration contribute to the investigation of the peri-urban areas among others based on the four principal and interrelated ways and their derivatives: the “counterurbanisation story” (Champion, 1998); amenity migration (Gosnell & Abrams, 2011); lifestyle migration (Benson & O’Reilly, 2009) and the more-than-representational lens (Halfacree & Rivera, 2012).

First, in the decade of the 1970s, the first counterurbanisation studies (Beale, 1975; Berry, 1976) drew attention to a clear change in the population trend in favour of a population decrease in certain rural areas. Based on the progressive accumulation of the counterurbanisation studies there have been new conceptualizations, which also throw light on the configuration of these areas. Among others are the expression of a wish to reside in an environment that is far from the major cities, and the importance of the representations of rurality as one of the elements that explain this population tendency. Such factors are nature, beauty, community space, parenting, tranquillity and vital regeneration (e.g., Halfacree, 1997); the relevance of the middle classes as a major actor in the story and, closely related, a new process of rural gentrification (Phillips, 1993, 2010), and the complex coexistence of a diversity of drivers and profiles of new residents (Rivera, 2004, 2007a). Ultimately, the story of counterurbanisation has also provided us with its crisis-related processes, in which the difficulties of surviving the economic crisis in the city have motivated some people to move to rural areas (e.g., Ebbreo, 2019; Figueiredo et al., 2019; Gkartzios, 2013; Oliva & Rivera, 2019).

Additionally, another concept that helps to understand the configuration of these areas is the ‘amenity migration’. In this case, just like it was highlighted in many counterurbanisation and rural gentrification studies, the importance acquired by certain environmental services is highlighted to comprehend the lure of the country in recent decades, for example, the beauty of the landscape, the authenticity, the tranquillity along with possible cultural reasons as driving forces of the migrations towards rural areas. That is, ‘the movement of people based on the draw of natural/or cultural amenities’ (Gosnell & Abrams, 2011, cited in Barcus & Halfacree, 2018, p. 213).

Third, a related concept that contributes to the understanding of the peri-urban areas would be that of a ‘lifestyle migration’ according to which the migrations, in our case towards the peri-rural areas,

would correspond to the search for a more fulfilling lifestyle, a place where one can set in motion the project of the self (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009, 2016). This way, the lifestyle migration relates the residential migration with the wish and the aspirations of living a better life with the consumption of lifestyles that are reached after the migration. For our proposal, it is important to highlight how this idea of lifestyle migration draws our attention not only to the reasons that set it in motion but also to how it develops afterward to permit or not, as the case may be, the achievement of the project of the self. Regarding lifestyle migration, recent studies claim emotional reflexivity as one of its components to analyze this type of migration (Osbaldiston, 2020), as well as the study of the well-being and the attachment to a place as elements to understanding the post-migration experience (Berg, 2020).

Finally, when examining the concept of migration not as a practice that is exhausted through relocalization, the more-than-representational approach (Halfacree & Rivera, 2012) draws attention to the postmigration processes that are set in motion once the relocalization has occurred. This bypasses the imbalance produced between the expectations and the representations of the rurality, which is what directed the residential migration, and the experience of everyday life in the destination locality. If this imbalance does not lead to the departure from the locality, the migrants can deploy different ways to make sense of their permanence in the place. This way, migration is conceived as a process that continues after the relocalization; it must be determined not only according to the motives that caused the migration but also to the subsequent evolution and the way of experiencing the place.

All these contributions help us to understand some of the underlying elements of the lure of the countryside that have contributed to the increase of the migrations of the urban-rural type in the context of the Global North, and that are related to the representations of the rurality linked with the rural idyll; for example, a new revaluation of the rurality and the nature as something positive; an environmental awareness, a search for the tranquillity and simple and harmonious life; a wish to escape from the city and so on. However, beyond the symbolic aspects related to the new residential bet, this residential trend is also outlined by more material and personal aspects that are related to the economic limitations, the need for space, the land prices, the cost of living, the need of proximity to work in the city and the services and so on (Rivera, 2007a).

However, it has been observed that on occasions, the 'true' rurality can turn out to be 'too' rural for certain residents, and what was desirable on a representational level can also turn into a deterrent. This way, the distance from the city can turn into isolation, the mutual trust into social control and the tranquillity into boredom. In this context, the peri-urban areas can become appealing for those who, even though they want to move away from the city, do not want a daily experience that is 'too rural'. This way, the peri-urban areas can represent an alternative to the urban-rural disjunction for many people. This gives 'the peri-urbanity' enough entity to be studied, not as a space that depends on or underlies the city, but as a space in its own right.

3 | THE CONTEXT OF THE PERI-URBAN CONFIGURATION AROUND PAMPLONA

In our area of study, housing construction has been continuous in recent years, even though its typology has varied. First, the urban growth in the suburbs of the urban belt and the enclaves of the peri-urban area was characterized by high-rise buildings and high-density housing. Even though this model has not disappeared, it has lost its importance to lower buildings and to the boom of single-family houses (semi-detached as well as free-standing). The single-family houses acquired great symbolic importance as a space of the family and of social distinction. The combination of the housing policies regarding the promotion of private or social housing and the increasing diversity of the typologies have enabled a process of heterogeneous and especially fractured urban dispersion. On one hand, certain localities have turned into residential destinations for a middle-class population, where free-standing single-family housing acquires great importance. Also, exclusive residential complexes and closed communities are created. On the other hand, there are enclaves in which the high-rise building of subsidized housing and housing at a formally valued price have been promoted. This facilitates the arrival of a younger population with fewer economic resources. The result will be a peri-urban area that internally presents a diversity of socio-spatial processes, and has areas with clear socio-spatial segregation and differentiation. Even still, sometimes these areas share close spaces: certain localities attract a population searching for more economic housing and that commutes to the city for work, but also middle classes looking for a greater quality of life and nature and so on (Sanz Tolosana & Rivera, 2019).

This urban expansion has come together with significant population growth. This area has an extension of 353.9 km² which represents 3.41% of the territory of Navarre and makes up the metropolitan area of Navarre's capital, Pamplona (Rivera, 2004). While during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s the population growth was concentrated in the city and its urban belt, at the beginning of the current century the tendency has been reversed. The population growth in the city and its adjacent municipalities with a prominently working-class character has been slowing down and even shrinking, while the peri-urban area has started to expand (Figure 1). In 2019, there was a total of 87,481 inhabitants in this area which represented 13.37% of the population of Navarre.

In fact, the metropolitan area is the area of Navarre that has recorded the biggest growth in percentage (Table 1). According to the National Statistics Institute (INE), in the period 2001-2011, the population in this area has doubled, shifting from 36,898 to 75,667 inhabitants. This setting in Navarre is coming into existence as an area of increasing importance in relation to population distribution. The relative population growth that experiences this setting in the previously mentioned years implies 105.1%², against 15.2% of Navarre (Censuses 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011 and the municipal register 2019).

Hence, the data signals that this area is expanding. However, the area of study does not represent a homogeneous territory but one with a dispersed habitat in which there is a great variety of territories

²However, this growth has differed remarkably in the different municipalities of the area. Relative population growth varies from 21.2% to 415%.

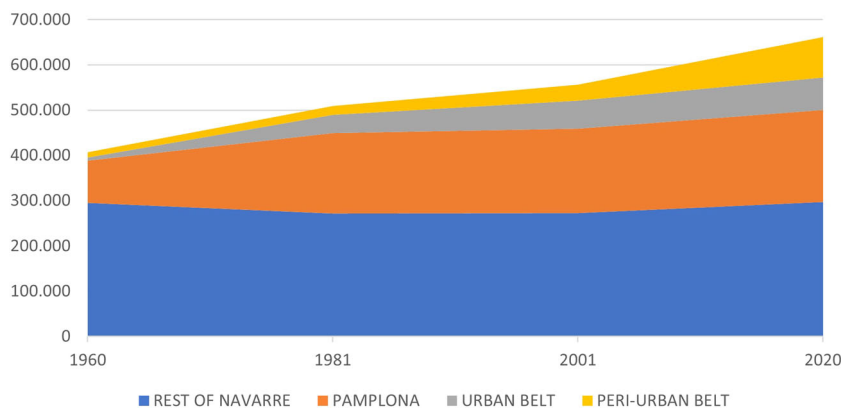


FIGURE 1 Evolution of the population in Navarre

TABLE 1 Relative importance of the areas in Navarre as a whole (%)

	1981	1991	2001	2011	2019
Pamplona	35.99	36.82	33.74	31.07	30.82
Urban belt	7.95	9.64	11.22	10.98	10.82
Peri-urban area	3.74	4.49	6.46	11.43	13.37
The rest of navarre	52.32	49.05	48.58	46.52	44.99

Source: elaboration of the authors, based on the censuses (1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011) and the municipal register (2019).

and populations. This area consists of 12 municipalities³ that in turn integrate a total of 104 population settlements. Logically, the population is distributed unevenly between the different municipalities and entities that compose the area. The variability of the population size is coupled with the coexistence of different socio-demographic structures that outline different dynamics of development in the territory; that is, incorporation of the young generations, people born abroad and the arrival of new residents.

For all that, the processes that converge and configure the diversity of the territory (urbanistic, population-related, economic, etc.) place it as an excellent example for an analysis of the hybrid and diversified spaces of the interstitial rurality.

4 | METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

To reach the previously mentioned objectives, a mixed method of data collection was chosen. On one hand, the datum of the population and housing censuses for the years 2001 and 2011 has been compared, analyzing the municipal registers (from 1981 to 2019) for the purpose of examining the sociodemographic changes that have taken place in the zone of study. On the other hand, the qualitative methodology was chosen, because it was considered the most optimal to determine the impact of the new residents in the aforementioned territory. The technique of in-depth interview was used. It allowed the analysis of the

discourses and accounts of the new residents about their residential experience. The fieldwork had two phases. In the first, six in-depth interviews with key informants—former new residents and inhabitants having held municipal posts—were carried out to obtain a general vision of how the arrival of new residents was developing. In the second phase, 17 interviews were carried out with new residents (Table 2), according to their years of residence in the locality (with a maximum of 9 years residing in the locality), gender, age (between 25 and 55 years), main economic activity and the locality of residence (the locality has not been included in the table to guarantee the anonymity).

The snowball method was used as the procedure of localizing and selecting the individuals, starting from personal contacts as well as contacting the municipalities, associations and so on. The interviews included key issues for a better understanding of the biographies, motives, expectations, adaptation processes of the migration, the economic and social contribution to the local area and the experience in the daily life of new residents.

5 | THE NARRATIVES OF THE PERI-URBAN SOCIO-SPATIAL CONSTRUCTION

The analyzed narratives permit us to distinguish a first dividing line between the individuals that found themselves forced by external circumstances to move from the city to a rural municipality in the metropolitan area, and those individuals whose residential change is more related to their own wish to reside in a rural environment. In the first of the cases, as one of the interviewees says:

Well, it really was not a choice. I signed up for the waiting list for the social housing⁴, then, in the year that... in the

⁴To have access to social housing, it is necessary to be registered in a census of requestors of social housing, for which there is a series of prerequisites regarding candidates' economy, the municipal register and so on. For many years, the list of registered petitioners was far superior to the offer, and for some time, the resignation of a granted home implied having to register again as an applicant, which meant losing the waiting time of the request and being in the last positions of the list. For this reason, in many cases, the applicants were about to buy a home that was not what they desired in terms of the localization or number of rooms, without the possibility of moving to a new house again in the short or medium term.

³Aranguren, Beriain, Berrioplano, Cizur, Egués, Esteribar, Ezkabarte, Galar, Iza, Noain, Olza and Orkoien

TABLE 2 Profiles of the conducted interviews

Interviews	Gender	Partner-children	Age	Years of residence in the locality	Occupation	Education	Profiles
E1	Male	Yes 1 child	47	6	Teacher	Higher education	Experiential Orientation of opening
E2	Male	Yes	36	8	Transport employee	Vocational training	Experiential Orientation of opening
E3 ^a	Female	Yes 3	47	7	Administrative officer	Higher education	Experiential Orientation of withdrawal
E4	Partner	Yes	Male 37 Female 35	8	Female: bank employee male: sales agent	Higher education Vocational training	Experiential Orientation of withdrawal
E5 ^a	Male	No	35	2 (+7 possession of flat)	Building engineer	Higher education	Circumstantial
E6 ^a	Male	Yes 2	38	4	Factory worker	Vocational training	Experiential Orientation of withdrawal
E7	Male	No	45	9	Unemployed	Studying for a bachelor's degree	Experiential Orientation of withdrawal
E8	Male	Yes 2	43	+3 construction	Factory worker	Vocational training	Experiential Orientation of opening
E9	Female	Yes No	33	3	Graphic designer	Vocational training	Experiential Orientation of opening
E10	Female	Yes 2	48	2	Cultural and artistic activities	Vocational training	Experiential Orientation of opening
E11	Female	Yes	55	6-7	Owner, retail trade	Vocational training	Experiential Orientation of opening
E12 ^a	Male	No	38	2-3	Janitor	Higher education	Circumstantial
E13 ^a	Female	Yes 2 children	43	3	Unemployed	Higher education	Experiential Orientation of withdrawal
E14 ^a	Female	Yes	41	3	Administrative officer	Higher education	Circumstantial
E15 ^a	Partner	2	Male: 40 Female: 38	4	Teachers	Higher education	Experiential Orientation of withdrawal
E16 ^a	Female	Yes 3 children	39	5	Unemployed	Higher education	Circumstantial
E17 ^a	Female	No	40	3	Lawyer	Higher education	Circumstantial

^aLocality with less than 500 inhabitants.

first year that I could sign up due to the income statements; it was the year that the housing came out, and well, most of the homes, well that's it, in the villages of the region (E17)

Thus, there would be the first profile of *circumstantial residents* defined according to the circumstances of the moment that obliged them to accept the residential change. Their personal, work-related, economic and other circumstances pushed them to abandon the city and establish their residence in the peri-urban area. The necessity of a more economical home, cheaper land prices, a lower cost of living and so on often turned into the motives that underlay this residential strategy. It is a prominently pragmatic look of the residential change as an optimal solution rather than a problem or necessity, and so the home and the location are not an outcome of an elaborated or sought-after decision.

The profile of these new residents coincides in many cases with young couples at the beginning of their family cycle, in many cases with economic limitations, scarce accumulated capital and who access the residential property through the social housing market. In this case, there is a population that works in the city, maintains a relational space there, and perceives the choice as a forced one, while not giving up the idea of returning to the city in the future.

Well... a money issue. I was granted a social housing home in this village (...). I got a house and so I left. That is the motive. (...) I registered for all the housing promotions in Pamplona [the city] and finally got a home here. There is no strong preference. (...) I wanted to live in Pamplona. Well, in fact, I want to live in Pamplona. I am from Pamplona and I like it a lot. But well, in the end, you live where you can live. I will return to Pamplona (E12)

This circumstantial narrative contrasts with the narrative of the new residents that see the rural peri-urban spaces as a freely chosen space, a result of an intended strategy and an achievement of an aspiration or desire. In some cases, the change of residence happens as a natural development after a process of a decision being elaborated over time. In other cases, as seen in other studies, the mentioned change happens by taking advantage of a concrete circumstance to initiate the achievement of a long-standing wish. As one of the interviewees exemplified:

Well, coming to this village was the fulfillment of a dream (...) and well, the truth is that I wanted to leave the urban environment that did not contribute anything to me (E1)

This profile is called *experiential residents* because the actors want to live the experience of a new residential destination. It represents a more heterogeneous group than the previous one, because the own wish to settle down in a place can respond to the search for different elements. In fact, even though the underlying motivation of this profile is the particular desire to reside outside of the city, this typology of

new residents does not renounce the city for the work nor for the daily activities related to the services, free time, or the family meetings. These new residents do not wish to live far from the city nor radically remotely from the urban lifestyle, but they will try to combine both spaces and obtain benefits from both. Based on this motivation, the narrative expressed in the interviews allows for the observation of two different orientations. On one hand, the first orientation of withdrawal, in which the new residents evaluate their residential strategy according to the quality of family life that allows them to enjoy the new place. This strategy tries to recreate a more adequate space for the family, concentrating on the aspects that are more related to the house and its possibilities. In this case, against the characteristic flat in the city and of the social housing, there is a typology of housing in which the single-family house acquires greater importance. The next case exemplifies all these aspects:

(...), our idea is not to be dedicated to the rural life, right? But, to have, in some way, a space of relief. This... luckily, Pamplona is a small city and, furthermore, you have a house that is in the periphery that allows you the spaciousness that the houses of the periphery have. In this case, it is a semi-detached house, not a real village house, but has that environment, with parks for hiking and such and in addition, it only takes ten minutes to get to the metropolitan area. (...) We are city dwellers, we like the city, but when you have children, that relief gives quality of life (E6)

On the other hand, unlike this orientation of withdrawal regarding the own family, there is also an orientation of opening in which the new residents evaluate the aspects that are more related to the community and the possibilities that it offers to lead a life that is more related to the nature and the community spirit. From this orientation, they seek to live the experience of a 'rural lifestyle' (tranquillity, views, nature), of the characteristic interpersonal relationships of a small community (mutual knowledge and confidence, security, neighbourly help...). In this second case, the original motivation transcends the family unit to embrace the community as well. It would not only be a shelter for the intimate and peaceful family life but also an opening towards communality. The profile of new residents related to this orientation reminds us that the proposals of rupture with the city are more assimilable in remote rural areas and ecological villages, even though they neither search for a change of global life nor are they guided by a utopia of settling down; this is inasmuch as the proposal of disconnection of the city and vital change is more restricted (Rivera, 2007a). So, this orientation shares elements of the rural idyll such as the symbolic values related to nature, the rural world, the small community, the tradition, the identity and so on.

I wanted a house that was in a village, a real village, in which people had been living, something that is hardly left anymore, but that people from the village had been

*living in it, a family, that they would know each other.
That way of... village relationship (E11)*

As happens in this kind of migration, parenting also turns into a core idea that helps to structure the narrative of the residential strategy. This parenting is conceived as healthier, more secure, more enriching, and more tribal.

Here, I think that it is a kind of family in quotation marks and at any given time your grandad is my grandad, and your mother gives me an afternoon snack the same way as the one next door gives her the snack (E3)

6 | THE NARRATIVES OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE TERRITORY

When it comes to understanding the role that new residents play in the construction of the new peri-urban space, it is necessary to observe, how these people are interweaving their daily life with the place to create new territories. The expressed narrative in the interviews reflects that the residential change is not followed by an economic linkage with the locality. In fact, all the interviewees still work in the city, commute daily and none of them mention the possibility or the intention of working in the locality in a near future, as happened in the case of new rural residents in other areas of the region that were looking for a global change of life (Rivera, 2007a, 2007b). In the case analyzed, the economic references are limited to the support (real or hypothetical) of the local commerce through consumption, since these practices are considered 'creating a community'.

The motivations mentioned in the previous paragraph take shape in the practices deployed in the territory. The experiential profile with an opening orientation shows an explicit intention of social integration, 'rekindling the village' and taking care of the environment.

Then for me the village is like a community, but expanded: instead of upwards, it is extended, but it is like a community, then you need to take care of the environment a little (E11)

If they [need something related to my profession], surely, they will ask me, and I will make them (E9)

Participation in local life is generalized and acquires different forms and levels. The institutional participation is the scarcest, as it is reduced to the occasional attendance in the assemblies to be informed and to demand or canalize through the local institutions' certain demands for the basic services (installation of streetlights, rubbish containers, etc.). Only one interviewee anticipates their

candidacy for the local council in the coming months. The informal participation is the most extensive and diverse, from the collaboration in the organization of festivals or courses to memberships in the local societies.

On the other hand, the profile of the orientation of withdrawal does not present a clear orientation toward the new locality. The relationship between the territory and the neighbourhood is mainly occasional. They justify the situation by their own lack of interest in developing new relationships and not by other obstacles or external factors.

In the narratives, having children is the main facilitator and motivator for social integration. The scarce social interaction of the profile oriented to withdrawal is limited to the socialization of the children, such as meeting points in the park with other families, organization of activities for children (e.g., the Christmas cavalcade of the Three Wise Kings, etc.). In the same way, in the circumstantial profile, having children or not is the key variable to explaining the relationship with the territory. The individuals who have no children relate their lack of participation in the local life socially, politically and economically. Their orientation is totally external.

I want to say, because it is what I see, the people that don't... well, we that don't have a dog or children, we don't socialise that much, either you don't meet others or you don't interact (E14)

Another element that was identified as a facilitator is the previous relationship with the place or having lived in the locality previously, to 'be from the village'. This identification is fundamentally realized by the circumstantial profile. The housing politics of the social housing have included as a criterion to be evaluated positively having been previously registered in the locality in the face of facilitate the settlement of the young people from the place. In the discourses, there is a clear differentiation between the 'ones that are from the village' and the ones that are not. On the other hand, the profile of opening orientation stresses the importance of knowing the local idiosyncrasy and then deploying strategies of adaptation and negotiation for the integration and avoidance of conflicts.

7 | EXPERIENCE IN THE LOCALITY

The residential change towards the peri-urban rurality does not have to be a definitive move nor be understood as a static decision. Along with understanding the motivations and the practices deployed by the new residents, knowing how they evaluate their experience in the locality is essential to observe, whether the strategies are medium-term or long-term.

New residents consider mostly that their expectations are satisfied. For those whose strategy is essentially withdrawal oriented, the fulfillment or not of the expectations is concentrated on the capacity of leading the desired lifestyle: enjoying the garden with the family, having more space, a more natural environment, outdoor

activities, and easy access to the city. Leaving aside the development of the family project, the previous expectations, and the specific experience of the place of residence coincide in large part. They tell that if there have been unexpected elements, these have been mainly positive and related to the possibilities that the new place offers while the city life does not: discovering nature, tranquillity and so on. The negative ones are orientated towards elements of the house (maintenance work of the house, heating costs), constant displacements, and new family necessities that can arise in the future, fundamentally in relation to the children. Despite defining the experience as successful, the possible return to the city or a change of residence is mainly an open option due to diverse circumstances: new necessities for the children when growing up, future mobility issues and so on.

In the medium term, yes, without any [problem, I will live here]... and in long term, if I can have the independence to enjoy the two environments, also. If I see that I need to fall back to, well, my children or a taxi service or the staircases become, well, eternal to me, I will have to return (E3)

Those whose strategy seeks a major social relationship with the locality, also consider their expectations to be satisfied, because they live in a house that is integrated into a natural and social environment and with easy access to the city. The lack of basic services and the necessity of daily displacements are expected aspects and consequently, they are not considered to negatively affect the initial expectations. Curiously, many of the unexpected elements are related to the natural environment: the cold, the wind, seasonal changes, silence and so on. Several interviewees talk about how this environment has modified their lives: more quality of life, more time at home, security and so on.

It is a different way to understand the time, no? To understand it through the seasons rather than through the rhythms of the city (...). You are in a friendly environment which is yours, and also protected, the sensation of protection, that whatever happens you know that everyone will know it, will control it [and will help you]... (E10)

Everything, everything has changed, I don't know, my time, my priorities, I think that everything has changed. I don't know if it has been before or after, but my way of life is completely different (E9)

The best intentions toward the relationship with the local population, even when positive in the beginning, can prove to be counterproductive or lead to a frustrating experience if the initial expectations are too high or idealized. There are cases in which the high expectations regarding the local population and the community life do not correspond to the real experience of residence and in

consequence, the result is a high degree of dissatisfaction. Unlike the ones that present an outstandingly familiar withdrawal orientation, the lack of a sense of community generates a certain frustration in two interviewees. Both have previously had the aforementioned experience and perceive it as a significant loss.

We live in a rural environment, in a village, but our way of life is practically that of a rural suburb, you know. That is the idea, let's not have illusions, right? (...) because we lead a suburban life. It is practically... We only eat and sleep. We don't work in the village or for the people of the village. We work in the city for the people of the city, and we go to the village to sleep or to eat and to stay there the whole afternoon or whatever (E1)

The idealization of the community cracks partly after the experience in the locality, not only because of questioning the own lifestyle but also because of the emergent otherness. The others are clearly identified: the ones that live in detached houses or single-family houses. The otherness is constructed principally because of the lack of involvement in the local life and 'not having village life'. In this criticism, there is an underlying incomprehension towards the attitude of the neighbours that neither share spaces nor time. The criticism is exemplified in the absence of greetings in the casual meetings in the street, which is frowned upon in the local culture.

Going up and down, their cars, they put a plot, so you don't see anything. Everything is closed with meshes or fences or whatever, and there you are. The festival comes, they don't even come around or anything (...) They go up and down, many don't even say "bye" or "hello", it is different (E2)

This kind of questioned residence follows to some extent a model of a *colony*, in which the space is used, but there is hardly any relationship with the community. Besides, the location is often established in relatively isolated or separated residential environments of the villages (new developments, etc.). To this physical separation is added the social distance. *You see them with cars that... such bloody things, I don't know, they are wealthier, I perceive them as totally different, no doubt (E2)*. These narratives and practices connect with what Savage (2010) called *elective belonging*. This is a residential strategy in which the social class of the neighbourhood gains a key role in the choice of belonging to certain locations. These are choices that strengthen the sorting population (Bailey, 2012) in the localities. Despite this criticism, the discourses do not mention any evident conflict but express a good coexistence with neighbours. In any case, this profile is forward-looking, permanent, and related to the quality of life.

On the other hand, even in the case of the circumstantial profile of the house as well as the locality of destination were up to a certain point a conditioned decision, once there and over time, some of these new residents may acquire a connotation of a more experiential character. It is the individual experience in the locality that facilitates

the discovery of aspects that are previously not valued. This leads to 'refocussing the life' and searching for a permanent entrenchment in the locality (Halfacree & Rivera, 2012): the discovery of tranquillity and nature through practices such as hiking the local paths, as well as a growing relationship with the place and its people can imply important elements in the process:

Going out and doing a walk along the river and... I don't know, I like that... tranquillity, that a city normally doesn't have. (...) As you create contacts and relationships here, the idea also changes, and I say this even though I don't feel like the most integrated person, nor do I have the most relationship. (...) As of today, it would not be easy for me to go to Pamplona to live there (E14)

To return to Pamplona? No, because now already... I'm already content here, or well, this is already my home, so no... I don't know, in principle, I don't consider it (E17)

Nevertheless, the experience of living in a place, even when the adaptation to the new residential destination has been carried out, does not always imply that the new resident of a circumstantial character starts feeling identified with the place and refocussing their life. On the contrary, some new residents still consider the city to be the ideal place of residence. In these cases, not returning to the city corresponds to economic issues, especially to the housing prices in the city or the impossibility to sell the current residence to cope with the purchase of the new urban residence. This is even more complicated in the case of those who accessed the market of social housing as there are several specific restrictions regulated by law about its sale as well as its rental. Therefore, this profile of new residents turns into a captive population in the peri-urban area. As one interviewee summarises, 'Well, if I could, I would always return to Pamplona' (E5).

8 | CONCLUSION

It has been projected that in Europe, the peri-urban areas will double their size in the next 30–50 years (Piorr et al., 2011). This situation has generated a growing interest not only in the proliferation but also in the complexity and multitude of processes (mixture of land use, fragmented governance, urban dispersion, etc.) that result in different territorial configurations (Shaw et al., 2020). In this sense, this article constitutes a reflection about the space-society connection based on the premise that for this, the knowledge of the experience of the people with the space is necessary. According to Harvey (2018, p. 29), 'only on the basis of the social analysis it is possible to detect the discontinuities and the social differentiation'. The case analyzed in this article sets an example of a peri-urban growth process around medium-sized regional capitals, new territories that will be configured through processes related to the urban overflow, but also to the elements of the rurality with a different vision of the nature and its place in our lives. In this way, these areas represent territories, where the urban and housing policies, and the economic and

social differentiation intermingle and create economically, socially, and symbolically differentiated spaces. The traditionally rural character of these areas is progressively breaking among other factors due to the mixed uses and activities that are being installed in the territory because of its proximity and good connections with the city. The growing appeal that these territories have for the residential use of the people arriving from the city is especially relevant. At the same time, these new residents of exurban character do not represent a homogeneous group neither with regard to the socioeconomic conditions nor the lifestyles or expectations, which contributes to generating a major diversity and social complexity in the peri-urban territory. The result is a heterogeneous and hybrid territory, in which rural and urban elements are integrated in a differentiated manner into the perceptions, family strategies and vital projects of the new residents. We understand that this does not blur the peri-urban territory nor turn it into a mere residential extension of the city but provides it with an idiosyncrasy that allows us to observe the development of different processes.

Even though the first approach to the narrative of new residents shows the first differentiation between those that went to these hybrid territories motivated by an explicit wish and those that did it in a less voluntary manner, it is not always clear at the first sight that there is a dividing line. In certain cases, the wishes and the needs are intermingled with the limitations, possibilities, expectations and so on. However, the dividing line is not always clear at the first sight because in certain cases, the wishes and the necessities are mixed with the limitations and the possibilities, the expectations and so on. Indeed, as the analysis shows, the initial dividing line has a series of nuances that draw differences in meaning, different settings and different ways to reside and experience the residence. Therefore, inside this peri-urban area distinct territories, territorialities, relations and experiences are generated. Consequently, it can be expected that these distinct territorialities will in turn form distinct ruralities, not only short-term but also medium and long-term.

This way, it has been possible to observe three profiles that characterize three different ways of pro-rural migration. Firstly, there is the profile that we have called *circumstantial migration* that features the new residents whose residential strategy is fundamentally conditioned by economic factors and the housing policy implemented at the municipal and regional levels. These are typically young couples with less economic resources and at the beginning of their family cycle. Second, the study identifies a profile that we have described as *experiential withdrawal migration*. In this case, the residential strategy responds to the explicit wish related to the representational aspects of the rurality and to a family orientation, so that the experience that is constructed is mainly orientated towards family life, the recreation of a suitable environment for family reproduction and the upbringing of children. At the representational level, this strategy is very close to the utopia of the refuge identified in previous studies (Rivera, 2007b), whose protagonists have a higher purchasing level than in the previous case and resemble a larger extent professional or more affluent middle classes that look for a more experiential experience of the territory. Third, there is an *experiential opening migration*. Just like the previous profile, it is an

expression of an explicit wish based on the representational dimension of the rurality. However, unlike in the previous case, the family orientation is blurred in favour of a new community orientation, an explicit wish to connect with the community, participate in the life of the locality and to contribute to its development. The protagonists of the third category also have a higher economic level than the circumstantial migration and have fewer limitations when settling down in the territory.

Accordingly, in the peri-urban area of our study, these different profiles of new residents generate different connections with the place, different experiences of the rurality, and definitely, different ways of relating to the territory. Due to this, there is a configuration of different ruralities short, medium, and long term. Nevertheless, the distribution of the different types of new residents does not respond to arbitrary or landscape-related reasons. It is closely related to the housing policy executed by the regional and municipal governments in pursuit of economic resources and the attraction of a determined type of population.

In relation to the uses of space and the conformation of new territories, the analysis reflects how the city remains the main reference for the labour market, shopping or education of the new residents, while the free time and the social and family relationships merge both spaces, even though on the basis of the experience they are modified. The adaptation of the territories to new residents happens through experiential modification. This way, the residents contribute to creating socially differentiated spaces. However, the adaptation process is mutual, and the study also allows us to see how new residents experience a process of adaptation to the place that can lead to a change in expectations.

The residential configuration implies the erosion of the contacts between unequal groups. This is a consequence that generates differentiated feelings of identity, which at their highest extent cause certain discomfort in determined localities. The local idiosyncrasy and the symbolic configuration of the rural identity are sustained by the importance of the community and the social relationships with the neighbourhood. This way, there is confusion before the lack of interest in sociability in the village. These aspects show a hybrid identity construction with the place.

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