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Suburbanisation tendencies within the context of the new rural society. The case of the Galician countryside, 1970-1991

Introduction

The peripheral regions of Atlantic Europe -among them Galicia, Ireland or Brittany- have been either individually or altogether historically characterised as rural regions¹, where the dispersed environment, the humidity of their oceanic climates, the predominance of a farming and cattle raising economy, the "bocage" landscape of fenced fields and greens most of the year, the demographic pressure on the land, the geographic isolation, the subsistence or mixed farming together with their scarce urban-industrial development, shaped the image which those regions projected abroad. The periphery of Western Europe was a land of alienation, poverty and emigration. The Irish and the Scottish embarked on the diaspora towards Anglo-Saxon cultural realms, whereas the Galicians, Asturians, Portuguese and even Basques headed towards the Iberian cultural realms.

During the last four decades, the communities and rural areas within the European peripheral regions underwent remarkable social, economic and cultural changes. Presently, those changes are still happening, to a great extent due to urbanisation and industrial development in the classical sense of the paradigm of rural exodus, to the development of intensive agricultural systems and to the Green Revolution; but also, since 1970, due to the emergence within the European Union of new forms of urbanisation and new rural-regional development policies, that is to say: new tendencies towards de-concentration have appeared in contrast to the concentration of population and resources in the largest and most developed European regions.

Despite this image, from 1970 to 1990 the Galician society - like other societies also

located in the periphery of Atlantic Europe, such as Ireland, Scotland or Cornwall² - did not stand still and have changed substantially. Return migration movements were noticed in many coastal and inland towns³, the increased use of technology in farming became widespread⁴, the traditional industrial development model - polarised and dependent on public capital - gave way to another model with a more endogenous and decentralised approach⁵, dispersed urbanisation replaced concentrated urbanisation⁶. All this took place within a more favourable political climate, with a higher proportion of self-government for Galicians after the passing of the Statute of Autonomy and the full integration of Spain into the European Union, which, on one hand led to a high investment on infrastructure and human capital training, and on the other to the setting of limits on what should be a reasonable expansion of productive capacity.

Since the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century, there has been a considerable de-population of rural areas. Technology was brought into the countryside, generating a labour surplus which was then used in city industries. Soon, an industrial, capitalist mentality spread to the countryside and farmers became agrarian entrepreneurs who sought maximum profits through improved production. Currently, agriculture production in Europe is greater than required and an excessive amount of funds are used to support rural areas and stop prices from falling due to a market supply surplus. At the same time, intensive capitalist agriculture has become a serious threat to the environment caused by the massive use of chemicals such as fertilisers and pesticides, and because of the increased extension of arable land. In these circumstances, the alterations of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union, which started in 1985, attempt to limit agricultural production as well as to promote an integral and self-sustained rural development. The new CAP also supports social and economic diversification, especially changes in activities that are environmentally sensitive.

New agrarian policies for economic development come in a context in which urban-rural relationships are changing. Suburbanisation appears as a process that favours rural and regional development. The relationships between suburbanisation and rural development are discussed in this paper. The presence of suburbanisation is verified in the settlement and hinterland systems in Galicia's cities from 1970 to 1991

1 Ramón Otero Pedrayo, *Guía de Galicia. Geografía, historia, vida económica, literatura y arte*, Madrid 1926, pp. 6-70; Pierre Flatres, *Géographie rurale de quatre contrées celtique: Irlande, Galles, Cornwall et Man*, Rennes 1957, pp. 22-80; Emyr Estyn Evans, *The Atlantic Ends of Europe*, Londres 1958, pp. 9-20; José Manuel Beiras, *Estructura y problemas de la población gallega*, A Coruña 1970, pp. 10-25, 375-386; Jaques Verrière, *La Population de l'Ireland*, La Hagne 1979, pp. 9-110; Jesús García Fernández, *Organización del espacio y economía rural en la España Atlántica*, Madrid 1975, pp. 9-45, 290-332; Ramón Villares, *Edad contemporánea*, in: José Carlos Bermejo et al., *Historia de Galicia*, Madrid 1982, pp. 225-299; Ronald W. Perry et al., *Counterurbanisation. Case studies of urban to rural movement*, Glasgow 1986, pp. 10-60; Patrick O'Flanagan, *La Europa Atlántica: pasado y presente. Una revisión del concepto y de la realidad*, in: *Actas Congreso Internacional A Periferia Atlántica de Europa: o desenvolvemento e os problemas socioculturais*, Santiago de Compostela 1992, pp. 15-60; María Pilar Torres Luna, *La agricultura gallega, una visión geográfica*, in: *Actas Primeiro Congreso Internacional da Cultura Galega*, Xunta de Galicia, Santiago de Compostela 1992, pp. 221-233

2 Carlos Ferrás, *Contraurbanización. Suburbanización y Cambio Rural en la Europa Atlántica: estudio comparado de Irlanda y Galicia, c. 1970-1990*, Tesis Doctoral, Universidad de Santiago 1994, pp. 10-25, 610-650; Huw Jones, *Peripheral counterurbanization: findings from an integration of census and survey data in Northern Scotland*, in: *Regional Studies*, Vol. 20, no. 1, 1986, pp. 15-26.

3 Jean-René Bertrand, *A poboación de Galicia. Estudos xeográficos*, Servicio de Publicacións e Intercambio Científico da Universidade de Santiago, Santiago de Compostela 1992, pp. 70-120.

4 Francisco Sineiro García, *Los cambios operados en la agricultura y actividades forestales en el periodo 1960-1988*, in: Fernando González Laxe, *Estructura económica de Galicia*, Madrid, 1992, pp. 57-125; Lourenzo Fernández Prieto, *A caracterización da agricultura galega contemporánea: entre o atraso e a adaptación ó capitalismo*, in: *Trabe de Ouro*, Vol. 2, no. 10, 1992, pp. 207-218.

5 Pedro Armas, *Desarrollo y dependencia en la industrialización de la Galicia rural*, in: Grupo de Geografía Industrial, *Actas da II Reunión de Xeografía Industrial*, Santiago de Compostela 1984, pp. 24-43; Juan José Ares, *La base industrial y sus especializaciones. Análisis de la diversificación y la localización*, in: Fernando González Laxe, *Estructura*, pp. 223-251.

6 Rubén Camilo Lois, *As transformacións socioeconómicas e espaciais recentes nas antigas comunidades campesiñas*, in: *Humanitas. Estudos en Homenaxe ó Prof. Dr. Carlos Alonso del Real*, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, Servicio de Publicacións e Intercambio Científico 1996, pp. 763-789.

(Table 1); the demographic and socio-economic changes induced by suburbanisation in two rural boroughs are described, and the possible effects that suburbanisation and new agrarian policies may have on the Galician countryside are considered.

Suburbanisation and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Suburbanisation is generally defined as the redistribution of population and economic activities in rural areas adjacent to cities. More specifically, suburbanisation is defined as a process of deconcentration of population away from large urban settlements and city centres. It is usually associated with change in the traditional direction of the rural areas-to-city migration into the opposite – city-to-rural areas migration. It is linked to the phenomenon known as urban de-concentration and rural renaissance that occurred in several western countries during the 1970s; in the United States⁷, in Europe⁸ and, during the 1990s, in Mexico⁹ Suburbanisation involves rural change by promoting the social and economical diversification of rural communities.

Suburbanisation and urban de-concentration are also linked to the new type of society labelled post-industrial and to the third technological revolution. At the beginning of the 1970s, the concept of "Post-Industrial Society" was introduced¹⁰, representing the replacement of the "Industrial Society", and it was marked by the widespread acceptance and adoption of telecommunications, computers, and other advanced technologies. The post-industrial society brings relevant changes in settlement models: conglomerate economies lose vitality in the light of technological advances that bring about reductions in transportation costs, improvements in communication networks, more widespread use of cars, etc., and companies and populations located in rural areas derive important advantages over the increasingly more dangerous and polluted large cities¹¹. In the late 18th century, the Industrial Revolution initiated the process of

population concentration and urbanisation and, according to post-industrial theoreticians, ongoing technological innovations and the decline of traditional industries have combined to bring about the opposite de-concentration process, though there is no agreement about how this happened. Post-industrial urbanisation is more and more relevant in western societies. The rural exodus to cities has become another symbol of the past and the number of families and individuals that leave the city to settle in traditional rural areas is increasing. Many are attracted by a bucolic image of the countryside, fleeing from perceived urban dangers and vices.¹² Arguably, there may be many different motives which make up the elements associated with suburbanisation and de-concentration processes: scenery, way-of-life, retirement, proximity to family, the cost of housing, retirement and health.¹³ Inhabitants of rural regions are no longer forced to abandon their homes to find employment in services or industry when they now have the possibility of travelling back and forth quickly and safely.¹⁴ De-concentration of urban centres involves their de-population in favour of rural re-population, in accordance with the change in direction from the traditional rural areas-to-cities migration, which has now become a city-to-rural areas migration.

Migration from an urban nucleus involves a new concept of the city and territorial planning. Demographic and economic concentration tendencies are being reversed and may lead to the dispersion of hitherto urban characteristics to the countryside and, therefore, to the replacement of the traditional social and spatial dichotomy which separated urban from rural concepts.¹⁵ City dispersion is the main feature which defines the new urbanisation currently evident in western societies.¹⁶ Suburbanisation contributes to urban de-concentration in favour of a renaissance of some remote areas and areas adjacent to cities.¹⁷ This process is closely related to the new forms of dispersed urbanisation, since urban families who abandon the city to set up home in the countryside, contribute to the spread of city culture to rural environments and to the diversification of the social and professional composition there. The increases in the number of single-family houses in ribbon development following rural roads, or the proliferation of isolated housing are palpable indications of dispersed urbanisation. Specific relationships between suburbanisation, new forms of dispersed urbanisation and countryside urbanisation can be noticed, which should be investigated in detail.

Since the 1950s the so-called "Green Revolution" encouraged agricultural production in Europe and later the CAP protected European agricultural products from those of outside countries. The use of chemicals in agriculture was intensified in order to

7 Brian J. Berry, *Urbanisation and Suburbanisation*, New York 1976, pp. 15-35; William H. Friendland, *The end of rural society and the future of rural society*, in: *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 47, 1982, pp. 589-608; Harley E. Johansen/ Glenn Victor Furguitt, *The changing rural village in America Demographic and economic trends since 1950*, Cambridge 1984, pp. 7-19; Calvin L. Beale, *The Changing Nature of Rural Employment*, in: David L. Brown/John M. Wardwell, ed., *New Directions in Urban and Rural Migrations: the Population Turnaround in Rural America*, New York 1984, pp. 37-49.

8 Anthony Fielding, *Suburbanization in Western Europe*, in: *Progress in Planning*, Vol. 17, 1982, pp. 1-52; Paul Cloke, *Suburbanisation: a Rural Perspective*, in: *Geography*, Vol. 70, 1985, pp. 13-29; Anthony Champion, *Suburbanisation: the conceptual and methodological challenge*, in: Anthony Champion, ed., *Suburbanization: the Changing Place and Nature of Population De-concentration*, London 1989, pp. 19-33.

9 Carlos Ferrás, *La contraurbanización. Fundamentos teóricos y estudio de casos en Irlanda, España y México*, México 1998, pp. 69-106.

10 Daniel Bell, *The coming of Post-Industrial Society*, London 1974, pp. 450-507.

11 Burns argues that technological changes can promote the correction of territorial imbalances and allow socio-economic development in poor and underdeveloped areas. s Leland S. Burns, *Urban Growth and Decline as a force in regional development: issues and research agenda*, in: Leo van den Berg et al., eds., *Spatial Cycles*, Aldershot 1987, pp. 253-266; Pierre Barrère, *Urbanización del campo en los países industrializados*, in: Pierre Barrère, ed., *Espacios rurales y urbanos en áreas industrializadas*, Barcelona 1988, pp. 59-78.

12 David T. Herbert, *The residential mobility process: some empirical observations*, in: *Area*, Vol. 5, 1973, pp. 44-48.

13 Joyce Halliday/Mike Coombes, *In Search of Suburbanisation: Some Evidence from Devon on the Relationship between Patterns of Migration and Motivation*, in: *Journal of Rural Studies*, Vol. 11, 1995, pp. 433-446.

14 Bernard Kayser, *Le Renaissance Rurale. Sociologie des campagnes de monde occidental*, Paris 1996, pp. 763-789.

15 Hugh D. Clout, *Geografía Rural*, Barcelona 1976, pp. 25-45.

16 Christopher R. Bryant/Lorne H. Russwurm/Alexander G. McLellan, *The City's Countryside. Land and management in the rural-urban fringe*, New York 1982, pp. 40-53.

17 Keith H. Halfacree, *The importance of "the rural" in the constitution of suburbanisation: Evidence from England in the 1980s*, in: *Sociologia Ruralis*, Vol. 34, 1994, pp. 164-189.

raise productivity.¹⁸ Since 1985, when the CAP started to be re-formulated, the countryside has been considered as a place more suitable for living than for producing.¹⁹ This new concept of rural policy encompasses several dimensions that even transcend the rural world, as it affects European society as a whole, and determines traditional urban-rural relationships. The latest CAP changes in 1992 put a limit on production and try to protect the environment by promoting sensitive farming systems, plans to develop forestry, early retirement for farmers and economic diversification programmes for rural areas. They are intended to encourage a modern extensive agriculture which does not harm the environment, as opposed to some modern agricultural practices. These innovations are established as an answer to the European agricultural surplus production problems and the spatial disequilibrium which has emerged from the implementation of the CAP. The European Union allocates more than half of its annual global budget to subsidise rural areas and protect farmers. For these reasons, the following goals are proposed:

1. To re-establish the production-demand equilibrium.
2. To obtain an economic diversification for rural society which allows farmers access to alternative jobs.
3. To contribute, in economic terms, to narrowing the differences between European regions.

The relationship between suburbanisation and rural development policies is direct. It means countryside urbanisation and new forms of settlement de-concentration. Urban families who abandon the city and set up home in rural areas act as diffusers. The new European rural policies promote rural development, in contrast to the sectoral agricultural programmes of the past. They are designed to stop surplus production and negative environmental impacts that high-tech agriculture generate, by facilitating new activities in the rural world, such as tourism, crafts and the production of high quality traditional cuisine. Suburbanisation and new rural development are creating a new relationship between the countryside and the city. The development of the new city-countryside relationship is closely related to the urban de-concentration of compact industrial cities. The process of industrial re-structuring of metropolitan Spanish areas means a move outwards by the population and economic activities towards the urban periphery and medium-sized cities. Development points from the centre out towards the periphery and substitution processes have become established.²⁰ At the same time, rural development and the European Common Agricultural Policy offer very important options²¹ contributing to the industrialisation of the countryside, to the diversification of production areas and to the conversion of the countryside into a place to live and not just for production. All this is noticeable in the Spanish rural environment. The post-productive rural world, in an agricultural and industrial

sense, is assuming urban characteristics in its economic functions and in the lifestyle of its communities.²² A new rural world and a new type of closely related city have begun to be defined territorially. In my opinion, we are helping, to a certain degree, in the propagation of processes announced by Howard in his proposal of garden cities 100 years ago, a model of open and decentralised cities in the countryside and a proliferation of economic, social and cultural values and characteristics which derive from the urban.

There are two positions regarding the future of rural communities. The optimists believe that in sustainable rural development, policies are a solution to the difficulties of the countryside.²³ The pessimists' view considers that rural living and working conditions will deteriorate further.²⁴ Even rural tourism needs substantial investments which may never yield profits because they will require qualified and trained personnel and many of these people may leave for better paid jobs in the city. Nevertheless, at the expense of the optimistic viewpoints, it is a fact that the European classical agricultural practices designed for production maximisation are ecologically and economically untenable. The future of rural communities is best linked to a model of sustainable growth, which promotes diversification of activities and incomes with respect to the environment. New European rural policies and suburbanisation directly impact on the re-definition of a new rural society. This paper focuses on analysing the discussion of the potentials and implications of these new all-inclusive urbanisation processes and policies for rural Galicia.

Urbanisation and suburbanisation in Galicia

During the last forty years, Galician society has experienced a profound transformation. In 1962, 63 per cent of the population was employed in the primary sector and by 1991 it had decreased to 24 per cent of the total working population.²⁵ Traditionally, Galicia has been perceived as a rural and underdeveloped society due to its excessive dependence on agricultural activities in a highly dispersed habitat. Galicia is a special case in Spain, in that its settlement system is different. Galicia has 30,000 settlements, which is more than 50 per cent of all those in Spain, yet it only makes up six per cent of Spain in terms of land. The largest cities are A Coruña and Vigo, which both have populations of about 300,000 people.

Rural development in Galicia has led to an improvement in the traditional rural systems that used to be practised in small, multi-crop farms oriented to subsistence agriculture and using primary technology. Since the 1960s, some aspects of underdevelopment in the Galician countryside have begun to disappear. The so-called Green

18 Clive Potter, La reforma medioambiental de la P.P.A.C.: análisis y crítica del paquete MacSharry, in: *Agricultura y Sociedad*, Vol. 71, 1994, pp. 51-72; Lourdes Viladomiu Canela, Diez años de reforma de la política agraria comunitaria, in: *Agricultura y Sociedad*, Vol. 70, 1994, pp. 9-31.

19 Marc Mormont, La agricultura en el espacio rural europeo, in: *Agricultura y Sociedad*, Vol. 71, 1994, pp. 17-49.

20 Ricardo Méndez/Inmaculada Caravaca, Procesos de reestructuración industrial en las aglomeraciones metropolitanas españolas, Madrid 1993.

21 Eugenio Baraja/Fernando Molinero, Tradición y cambio en la actividad agraria de Castilla y León, in: *Semata*, Vol. 9, 1998, pp. 37-54.

22 Pascual Rubio Terrado, El postproductivismo en los espacios rurales. IX Coloquio de Geografía Rural: Perspectivas geográficas sobre el espacio rural, Vitoria 1999, pp. 19-77.

23 Andrés Precedo Ledo/Antonio Vázquez Barquero, Desarrollo local y comarcalización, Santiago de Compostela 1993, pp. 7-80.

24 Miren Etxezarreta, Trabajo y agricultura: los cambios del sistema de trabajo en una agricultura en transformación, in: *Agricultura y Sociedad*, Vol. 72, 1994, pp. 121-166.

25 In 1962, in Galicia, the population working in industry and construction was 17 per cent; in services these were 31 per cent; in 1991 it changed to 31 per cent and 45 per cent respectively. Information extracted from the Population Censuses for 1991 and "Consejo Económico y Social de Galicia". See Carlos Ferrás, Cambio Rural en la Europa Atlántica, Santiago de Compostela 1994, pp. 10-25, 610-650.

Revolution experienced earlier by French, German or English farmers and later promoted by the European Union, also became a reality in Galicia, where production orientation turned towards the market, with greater specialisation in milk production, the creation of intensive agro-industrial holdings, farm concentration and the modernising of technology leading to production growth with fewer workers.²⁶

Galician rural transformation coincided with high rates of rural depopulation and a major exodus towards the cities. Vigo, A Coruña and Ferrol experienced industrial growth which generated country-to-city migratory movements. The 1960s saw even more sustained migration to cities in France and Germany. These developments in the countryside were accompanied by industrial growth in some of Galicia's cities and rural de-population changed to urban deconcentration, which has helped to sustain a turnaround of population in many rural areas. Rural depopulation has been constant in Galicia throughout its contemporary history²⁷, with rural populations emigrating to urban areas looking for better living conditions, as happened elsewhere in Europe. The Galician rural exodus acquired unusual dimensions, and emigration to Europe and South America must be added to the countryside-city movements.

Nevertheless, Galician society shares a common feature: the rural population is larger than the urban, and this is also evident in its wide dispersion. Galicia in 1991 still retained 53 per cent of its population living in settlements with less than 1,000 inhabitants (see Table 1). The population of Galicia in the 1960s resided predominantly in settlements of less than 1,000 inhabitants (77 per cent). As many researchers have concluded, it was a deeply rural society. The demographic concentration processes associated with the main Galician cities was studied by, among others, Martínez and Gómez²⁸ or Villarino, Fernández and Martínez-Conde.²⁹ They concurred that the most intense demographic concentration was evident in the cities of the coastal districts and in some other inland centres. Industrial development was important during the 1960s in the western coastal districts of Rías Baixas and the Artabro Gulf.³⁰ Moreover, "economic development" policies favoured the concentration of economic activities and population in certain urban areas.³¹

Martínez and Gómez (1975) showed that the demographic evolution of Galicia during the 1960s emphasised the demographic imbalances between cities and rural areas, which were the main consequence of the urban concentration process. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, strong demographic dynamism of settlements with less than 1,000 inhabitants, and, above all, the big urban conglomerates, confirm that the group of settlements with more than 20,000 inhabitants predominated over the countryside-city migratory movements. The general tendency was for higher demographic growth in the larger-sized settlements (see Table 2).

This general tendency is also evident in terms of the incidence and directions of most migratory movements and was a constant during the 20th century, as Sánchez³⁰ showed. This author, working at a municipal scale, analysed the distribution of migratory movements and showed that in Galicia, between 1900 and 1963, municipal trends in population loss from emigration paralleled those of other rural areas in Spain, where the result was a general reduction in total population.

During the 1970s and 1980s there was a substantial change in the urban and regional development of Galicia. Rural settlements with less than 1,000 inhabitants continued losing population - minus seven per cent on average in the 1970s. A new trend is evident in the population growth in the intermediate settlements of between 5,000 and 20,000, which were able to multiply their population threefold, from 56,300 inhabitants in 1970 to 143,000 in 1981, and they were growing at a higher rate than the larger urban centres (see Table 2). This trend is confirmed by the intense growth of intermediate settlements located in the periphery of the main cities, especially around Vigo, where industrial growth had a strong suburban component³⁰. The trend was also evident, on the other hand, in localised settlements far from the big cities, such as the chief towns of extensive rural districts, as in the case of Melide, Arzúa, Ortigueira or Santa Comba in the province of A Coruña (Table 4). In the 1980s, the highest demographic growth is not experienced in the bigger settlements, as had happened in the past when the urbanisation-concentration processes predominated. Suburbanisation and the associated proliferation of new rural housing and other forms of dispersed settlements, such as isolated residences in lines along the roads, private housing developments or the growth of small towns and villages are the new forms of de-concentrated urbanisation.

But in the case of Galicia, in contrast to other regions of Atlantic Europe, urban and territorial management policies have not played a determining role in settlement re-distribution tendencies. In Galicia, during the 1970s and 1980s, drastic regional development policies that favoured demographic de-concentration were not implemented. Municipal level planning is the ideal approach, but it does not exert control upon population movements, housing and settlements, since the 315 Galician municipalities are not obliged to coordinate their urban and economic plans or objectives. The results of this almost total lack of control mean that diverse outcomes occur. Cases of absolute negligence exist, especially in rural municipalities with scarce populations or weak economic resources, where no controls on construction are exerted. Territorial structures which facilitate sensitive development do not officially exist in Galicia. In spite of the lack of foresight regarding the control of de-concentration movements, its physical presence is visible in parts in the evolution of the settlement system and in the hinterlands of the large Galician cities.

The policy of controlled land use determines the development of suburbanisation. Urban pressure on the countryside means that land enters speculative markets and the

26 José Colino Suárez, *La integración de la agricultura gallega en el capitalismo*. El horizonte de la C. E. E., Instituto de Estudios Agrarios. Madrid 1984. pp. 390-438.

27 José Manuel Beiras, *El problema del desarrollo de la Galicia Rural*. Vigo 1967. pp. 12-25. 223-226.

28 José Martínez Sarandeses/Josefina Gómez Mendoza, *El proceso de concentración urbana en Galicia (1960-1970)*. in: *Ciudad y Territorio*. Vol. 1/2, 1975. pp. 15-26.

29 Montserrat Villarino/Miguel Fernández/Ricardo Martínez-Conde, *O proceso de concentración da poboación de Galicia. Contribución a súa análise espacial*. in: *Revista Galega de Estudos Agrarios*. Vol. 9, 1983. pp. 109-133.

30 Francisco Sánchez López, *Movimientos migratorios en Galicia*, Santiago de Compostela 1967, pp. 10-55; Jean-René Bertrand, *Evolución reciente de la población de Galicia*, in: *Estudios Geográficos*. Vol. 178, 1985. pp. 178f. 159-176; X. M. Souto González, *Vigo, cien años de historia urbana (1880-1980)*. Vigo 1990.

31 In 1964, economic global programming began in Spain with the First Development Plan, and the Development Poles of A Coruña and Vigo were created; and in the Second Plan, Vilagarcía was added. In the Third Plan, the Development Poles were turned into the so-called "Great Areas of Industrial Expansion" which covered six areas, four of which adjoined areas of cities on the Atlantic coast: Ferrol, A Coruña, Vilagarcía up to Santiago de Compostela and Vigo; the remaining two correspond with the two inland provincial capitals, namely, Lugo and Ourense. See Carlos Otero Díaz, *Estudios de economía gallega. Servicio de Publicacións e Intercambio Científico*. Santiago de Compostela 1984, pp. 25-60. 150-200 and Patrick O'Flanagan, *Agrarian structures in North Western Iberia. Responses and their implications for development*. in: *Geoforum*, Vol. 11, 1980. pp. 157-169.

lack of control in rural Galician towns generates very serious environmental problems. The number of houses in the countryside is growing in unlikely places with especially attractive landscape, without providing for the needs of basic services such as water, electricity, waste treatment, rubbish, etc. Rural development policies have promoted functional and social diversification in the Galician countryside without evaluating the impacts on the social and local environments.

Table 1: Galicia's population distribution by settlement size (1950, 1970, 1991)

| | 1950 | | 1970 | | 1991 | |
|--------------|------------|---------|------------|---------|------------|---------|
| | Population | Percent | Population | Percent | Population | Percent |
| > 20,000 | 361,571 | 13.9 | 570,146 | 22.1 | 845,017 | 31.0 |
| 20,000-5,000 | 43,407 | 1.7 | 56,298 | 2.2 | 178,945 | 6.6 |
| 5,000-1,000 | 189,248 | 7.7 | 230,900 | 9.5 | 265,057 | 9.7 |
| < 1,000 | 2,009,974 | 77.2 | 1,726,330 | 66.2 | 1,431,426 | 52.6 |

Sources: Nomenclators of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (I.N.E.).

Table 2: Galicia's population distribution by settlement size. Inter-census variation ratio (1950-60, 1960-70, 1970-81, 1981-91)

| Size | Inter-census Variation Ratio (percent) | | | |
|--------------|--|---------|---------|---------|
| | 1950-60 | 1960-70 | 1970-81 | 1981-91 |
| > 20,000 | 21.2 | 30.1 | 29.6 | 14.3 |
| 20,000-5,000 | 15.0 | 12.8 | 153.8 | 25.2 |
| 5,000-1,000 | 2.0 | 19.6 | 13.2 | 0.8 |
| < 1,000 | -4.4 | -10.2 | -6.7 | -11.0 |

Sources: Nomenclators of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (I.N.E.).

Table 3: Demographic evolution of Galician municipalities according to the number of residents (1960-1991)

| Size | 1960-70 | | 1970-81 | | 1981-86 | | 1986-91 | |
|------------------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| | Municipality | (*) | Municipality | (*) | Municipality | (*) | Municipality | (*) |
| No. of Residents | No. | Index | No. | Index | No. | Index | No. | Index |
| > 20,000 | 10 | 10.8 | 12 | 16.2 | 13 | 9.7 | 9 | 10.8 |
| 20,000/10,000 | 14 | 9.4 | 20 | 14.1 | 38 | 10.2 | 16 | 13.4 |
| 10,000/4,000 | 48 | 8.0 | 57 | 8.7 | 40 | 9.1 | 14 | 9.4 |
| 4,000 /2,000 | 9 | 6.0 | 21 | 7.0 | 30 | 8.2 | 4 | 9.6 |
| < 2,000 | 4 | 5.2 | 6 | 7.4 | 13 | 11.6 | 4 | 15.9 |
| Total | 85 | 7.9 | 116 | 10.7 | 134 | 9.8 | 47 | 11.8 |

Sources: Population Censuses for 1960, 1970, 1981, 1991, and the Municipal Register for 1986.

(*) Index = New inhabitants annual average increase per thousand.

Municipality No. = Municipalities which have experienced a population increase.

Table 4: Demographic change in the hinterlands of the main Galician cities (1960-70, 1970-81, 1981-91)

| | Annual average change per 1,000 inhabitants | | |
|-----------------------|---|---------|---------|
| | 1960-70 | 1970-81 | 1981-91 |
| A Coruña hinterland | 5.3 | 18.2 | 9.0 |
| A Coruña city | 12.5 | 16.7 | 7.0 |
| Rest of hinterland | -15.1 | 22.0 | 14 |
| Ferrol hinterland | 9.7 | 5.4 | -4.5 |
| Ferrol city | 14.7 | 4.3 | -5.6 |
| Rest of hinterland | 4.3 | 6.6 | -3.6 |
| Santiago hinterland | 3.7 | 10.9 | 4.1 |
| Santiago city | 26.5 | 28.8 | 19.7 |
| Rest of hinterland | -7.7 | -1.9 | -11.6 |
| Pontevedra hinterland | 3.9 | 11.4 | 4.7 |
| Pontevedra city | 27.2 | 29.4 | 24.6 |
| Rest of hinterland | -0.8 | 6.5 | -2.7 |
| Vigo hinterland | 22.0 | 21.3 | 6.3 |
| Vigo city | 39.4 | 32.6 | 18.6 |
| Rest of hinterland | 9.9 | 11.0 | -9.2 |
| Lugo hinterland | -4.9 | 4.7 | 7.1 |
| Lugo city | 15.0 | 16.8 | 17.5 |
| Rest of hinterland | -24.3 | -11.0 | -11.1 |
| Ourense hinterland | -2.5 | 8.8 | 2.4 |
| Ourense city | 33.3 | 28.2 | 9.3 |
| Rest of hinterland | -32.1 | -17.4 | -9.0 |

Sources: Population Censuses for 1960, 1970 and 1991, and Precedo (1987).

Suburbanisation and the settlements system

Suburbanisation in Galicia is not as visible as in other parts of Europe. However, sub-urbanising tendencies began to be evident in Galicia in the 1970s, when smaller urban entities grew at a faster rate than larger ones. Nevertheless, it is necessary to mention the co-existence of two contemporary processes; one of rural de-population and the other of re-population, the latter being related to suburbanisation. To verify the presence of suburbanisation processes it was necessary to turn to a simple but practical method. Starting with an analysis of the demographic evolution of the Galician municipalities according to their population size, the ones that showed decreasing tendencies were isolated, in such a way that, by analysing the evolution of the municipalities with positive growth within the different inter-census periods from 1960 to 1991, it was possible to recognise an important qualitative change.

During the 1960s the highest growth was registered in the larger municipalities (see Table 3). The greatest vitality was associated with the big cities and this was related to the urbanising process. The trend towards suburbanisation is statistically

revealed throughout the 1980s, when municipalities with less than 2,000 inhabitants recorded a higher growth rate than the larger ones. The annual averages were 11.6 per 1,000 inhabitants in 1981-86 and 15.9 in 1986-91. This departure broke the supremacy exerted by the larger urban centres. Most of the municipalities with less than 2,000 inhabitants increased their population during the first half of the 1980s, while during the 1970s most of them were in decline. In the 1970s, 6 registered a demographic growth and this number increased to 13 through 1981-1986. The demographic recovery of certain rural areas does not fit in with the explicative paradigm of urban concentration; it relates to the disappearance of rural de-population being replaced by re-population. These fundamental changes demonstrate the existence of suburbanisation processes in Galicia.

Suburbanisation in city hinterlands

At the same time, the new demographic set of location preferences is clearly evident when the population stops concentrating exclusively in big urban centres, as shown when city hinterlands grow demographically at a higher rate than the cities. To verify the de-concentration demographic movements from the larger Galician cities from the 1960s to the 1980s, I examined the surrounding districts of the main Galician cities. An annual demographic exchange index was calculated for every 1,000 inhabitants, for the cities and other surrounding areas which comprise their hinterlands.

The results of the analysis on a regional level show the exclusive predominance of urbanisation-concentration during the 1960s. In the seven hinterlands of Galicia's main cities, demographic growth was evident only in the cities, with the exceptions of Ferrol and Vigo. Adjacent rural areas notched up decreases of population (see Table 4). The change towards de-concentration appears during the 1970s and 1980s, when the hinterlands of A Coruña and Ferrol gained population at a higher annual rate per 1,000 inhabitants than their respective urban areas. In the case of A Coruña, this departure acquires more relevance, since the demographic expansion in its hinterlands is preceded by a recession period during the 1960s. It is also relevant to mention that in the period from 1881 to 1991, Ferrol lost population at a higher rate than its hinterland, which emphasises the fact that the industrial crisis from its naval shipbuilding had more impact on the city than on its rural hinterland. In the other cities (Vigo, Santiago, Pontevedra, Ourense and Lugo) over the same period, the concentration process continued.³²

32 However, the chief cities have not remained in the first rank of demographic de-concentration, since municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants and settlements with less than 2,000 inhabitants record higher demographic inter-census growth rates than the regional capitals. See Carlos Ferrás. *Contraurbanización. Suburbanización y Cambio Rural en la Europa Atlántica: estudio comparado de Irlanda y Galicia. c 1970-1990*. Tesis Doctoral Universidad de Santiago 1994. pp. 12-35.

Suburbanisation and local development: specific cases

Up to the 1980s, certain Galician rural communities were characterised by a traditional economic structure and a dispersed habitat, from which, for years, their residents were forced to emigrate. After 1980, many municipalities experienced a new and exceptional period of re-population, as well as social transformation. The rural areas which experienced this kind of recovery are geographically located near the leading urban centres, although some are in isolated marginal rural areas. The most important factors that have favoured the demographic and socio-economic recovery of these areas are the following:

1. Demographic deconcentration is related to a changing perception of the countryside as a good place to live.
2. Population mobility: the universality of the car and improved communications allow the separation of residence from the working place.
3. Rural industrialisation: diversifies local economies and offers new living possibilities for people formerly destined to emigrate.
4. Stopping of the traditional exodus: cities no longer offer new employment possibilities for lifestyle improvement as in the past.
5. Return emigration: allows a new integration of individuals and families in the rural milieu after living part of their lives in industrial cities.

In the rural parts of the Galician province of A Coruña, rural change related to the suburbanisation is perceptible in many municipalities with a strong agricultural tradition. These transformations are evident in demographic, social, economic structures and new forms of settlement, as in the municipalities of Tordoia, Melide, Santa Comba and Ortigueira, which all experienced in-migratory flow throughout the 1980s (see Fig. 1). The municipalities of Tordoia and Melide, with populations of 5,300 and 8,200 inhabitants respectively, were the ones with the highest immigration rates³³ Located 45-55 kilometres away from the nearest city, Santiago de Compostela, they are characterised by a low population density and small dispersed settlements that rarely surpass 100 inhabitants. Tordoia does not even have an expanded nucleus that can be considered urban, and Melide has a village with about 4,000 inhabitants, which traditionally served as a service centre for a wide rural hinterland. They have an Atlantic "bocage" landscape, with extensive pastures used to feed cattle and woods used to supply raw material for the timber industry. Traditionally, most employment was in agriculture. Links at Tordoia and Melide with the outside world are via secondary roads and at Tordoia by means of a railway link with the cities of A Coruña and Santiago de Compostela.

In these rural municipalities de-population has turned into re-population. In the 1960s, Tordoia lost seven per cent and Melide 13 per cent of their inhabitants, and during the 1980s they grew by two per cent and five per cent respectively, despite the

33 Extract from the conclusions of Carlos Ferrás. *Cambio Rural na Europa Atlántica. Os casos de Galicia e Irlanda 1970-1990*. in: *Estudios Migratorios*, Vol. 2, 1996, pp. 85-121; result of a comparative monographic study made by the author as part of his doctoral thesis

fact that their populations were getting older as a result of sustained emigration. Immigration has been able to compensate for these losses. In recent years, many of their rural parishes, often with less than 500 inhabitants, experienced demographic growth. Melide's main settlement itself also tallied a robust increase; its population returned an eight per cent growth from 1960 to 1970 and converted this to a growth of 36 per cent between 1981 and 1991.

Incomers to these rural municipalities are mainly emigrants returning from abroad, especially from Switzerland, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Argentina or Venezuela, or from Spanish industrial cities such as Madrid, Barcelona and Bilbao. The returned emigrants outnumber those who continue emigrating. The latter are, in the main, young, literate and semi-skilled people who migrate internally within Galicia, moving predominantly to cities. These new trends contrast with the mainly external movements of the past. In general, today's migrants are younger than immigrants, they are better qualified and usually single; the new incoming residents are invariably accompanied by their families. The average migrant is 28 years old and the returning immigrant is 34.

The immigration of young people to these municipalities helps to fashion socio-cultural transformation. These people have little difficulty integrating into traditional rural communities, even though they have lived for years in urban industrial areas. Frequently, the family heads are native inhabitants of the parish, while the children encounter an entirely new world. They bring with them new tastes, customs and values, which often clash with tradition, but they also contribute to the modernisation of the community. Return migration has promoted activities not linked with farm work; it has encouraged growth in industry, building and services. At Tordoia and Melide new initiatives have emerged, especially in commercial and tourist-related activities; new bars, restaurants and pub-discos, as well as three small textile factories have appeared. At Melide, an industrial park was built in the 1990s close to the village through the initiative of the township and local entrepreneurs. Sites and basic infrastructure are offered to prospective investors. Frequently, returned migrants have to continue farming activities, substituting for retired direct relatives who no longer wish to farm. Now, formerly exclusive farm-family economies are turning into mixed economies, combining the incomes from pensions or subsidies with those from construction, industry or services, with benefits still accruing from the land. The so-called worker-farmer is becoming quite common in rural Galicia.

For many, the development of rural tourism may now be an alternative or complementary source of income. At Melide, there are plans to exploit part of the old pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela which crosses the municipality as a tourist resource. Those families which participate in this activity may obtain public monies to refurbish their homes. Accommodation demand, however, remains highly seasonal and many of those involved have indicated that they do not earn enough to be able to repay their loans. In spite of this problem, local families see this as a positive activity. Other auxiliary activities are being encouraged by townships and then implemented by local heads of households, such as home production of traditional regional items like cheese or honey, with quality control assured by an official council.

Also of special significance is the greater mobility now available to rural families. The large majority of residents own at least one vehicle which allows more frequent movement and more choice than that offered by a poor rural public transport

system. Enhanced mobility favours rural communities' socio-economic diversification, enabling people to commute out of the villages to take up salaried positions in industry or services. The number of cars per family in Tordoia and Melide was 0.7 and 0.5 in 1981, but had increased to 1.3 and 1 in 1991, respectively.

The spread of the private car has an added value in rural areas compared to towns. The mobility of people contributes to the social and economic diversification of rural communities by fostering commuting outside small villages to work in industry or services located in the nearest cities and towns. We should bear in mind that the increase in mobility boosts social and economic diversification in rural areas; new dwellers and returned emigrants who took up residence in Tordoia and Melide are able to work in the city and have their home in a small village. This mobility is highly appreciated by young people and local families, who clearly express their will to live in the countryside and to work in the city. It is particularly significant that young people studying at the university and willing to become teachers or civil servants wish to maintain their family home in a small town or village. However, it is especially surprising to see that local young people of working age usually refuse to take charge of the family farm or develop rural activities in the countryside. Thus, while mobility makes it easier to maintain the local population, it also contributes to the gradual disappearance of farming activities.

The analysis made by means of participant observation among families living in Tordoia and Melide shows that presently there is a perception of general well-being associated with the social and economic situation and high geographic mobility of these families. A remarkable fact is the general opinion that rural families are satisfied living in rural areas, they think their economic situation is good and see themselves as part of the middle social level of society. Moreover, local society in general and civil servants agree that the arrival of new families is very positive. In spite of this, there are still problems, which become evident when they stop to think about their future, such as ageing, generational shock, the stagnation of the land market, low qualifications, young people's lack of interest in farming activities or the excessive fragmentation of properties. During the long conversations with local families it was usual to hear statements such as "our grandparents do nothing but work" or "if they stopped working, they would die". We, as outsiders, cannot judge some uses and ideas typical of the rural world. But the coexistence of young, middle-aged and elderly people and of traditional rural families and new suburban dwellers can become negative when there is a clash of differing perceptions and levels of education, which also slows down the spread, development and modernisation of lifestyles. It often happens that grandparents and parents with low qualifications and almost no education take a stance of inherited inertia and invariably object to the innovative projects of their children and younger family members. We often heard statements such as "it is enough for me" or "for the years I have left...", etc. The effect or consequence of these conservative attitudes is to drive out qualified young people to take up employment, mainly in the nearest towns and villages.

Social welfare provision in these municipalities is less comprehensive than in the cities. Many families are not connected to basic services, although substantial improvements have been made relating to housing and public health, for instance the separation of the living quarters from the barns and byres of the holdings. The regional Autonomous Government, the "Xunta de Galicia", is currently implementing pro-

grammes to rehabilitate and improve rural housing up to the level of urban housing conditions.

Demographic and socio-economic changes have influenced settlement location. Traditional rural de-population caused the abandonment of many houses. Suburbanisation has promoted rural house construction. Many of the new residents in the country have refurbished empty houses or rebuilt them from scratch. It is not uncommon to see multi-storey buildings in minor population centres. Numerous unoccupied buildings have been converted into second homes of urban residents. Many such developments in Tordoia and Melide have been accomplished outside the rigours of serious physical planning controls, which has led to the degradation of the local landscape. Dispersed housing located in very isolated areas has now become common. Houses built by returned migrants are imbued morphologically and stylistically with the cultural influences absorbed while residents were abroad. These kinds of houses are evident both in the main urban centres and, dispersed, throughout rural areas.

In short, suburbanisation is clearly associated with change and rural development. The flow of new young residents into rural areas enhances the demographic and socio-economic changes. Returning emigrants, the enhancement of people's spatial mobility, housing and welfare improvements, socio-economic diversification, multi-activities and part-time farming, the proliferation of second homes, rural industrialisation and new rural housing are all indicators of fundamental change in the Galician countryside. Big cities are no longer the exclusive reception centres for the migratory movements, and certain rural areas have emerged as novel living and residential alternatives.

Suburbanisation entails new economic possibilities for existing rural communities, but it also entails environmental, social, economic and cultural impacts which must be anticipated and controlled. Demographic de-concentration brings with it greater pressures on infrastructures, energy availability and waste disposal. Planners must ensure that rural regeneration facilitates new opportunities for new and existing residents alike and that it does not lead to the marginalisation of the weaker elements of the host society.

Conclusions

Suburbanisation could favour the kind of rural development which is being encouraged by the new EU Agricultural Policy. It seeks to halt emigration and promote re-population and socio-economic diversification. The Galician rural population must be adaptive to radical transformation and be prepared to make good use of its own resources. Sustainable rural development policies need to be implemented to foster activities such as crafts, the traditional preparation of quality local foods, sustainable agriculture, forestry and timber products, as well as to respect the environment and return a higher standard of living for the population, thereby underpinning the diversity of their activities. Endogenous rural development must be accomplished by means of policies that favour suburbanisation: conditions in congested larger urban areas should be eased by promoting investment in housing and the transfer of resources to rural areas. Nevertheless, suburbanisation generates demographic pressure on rural

areas and creates social conflicts in local communities. In Galicia, between 1970 and 1991, suburbanisation engendered a transformation of the traditional rural world and a diversification of economic activity and social composition in many small towns and villages whose residents have stopped emigrating.

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