COUNTERING DEPOPULATION IN RURAL SPAIN: THE CASE OF PAÍS ROMÁNICO

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ABSTRACT

Among other factors, industrialisation has been considered the main cause of extensive rural exodus in the European Union towards urban areas. Gradually the process of urbanisation is substituted by movement to rural and periurban areas, also termed as "counterurbanisation". Migration towards rural areas and small villages far from cities appears as a new dynamic in population settlement.

Depopulation appears as a crucial concept in research agendas; the contents of policy agenda concerning rural areas are mainly focused on stopping this phenomenon. On the contrary, the importance of repopulation processes has not been yet sufficiently highlighted from both academia and public administration.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the influence of networking in reverting depopulation in rural areas. For this purpose we designed a theoretical framework based on three concepts: depopulation, counterurbanisation and the key theoretical contributions from social capital. In addition to this, three main actors have been identified: autochthonous people, newcomers and technical assistant of a local action group. From the analysis of their personal experience and the linkage with the theoretical framework, we verify that networking has a positive effect when attracting new population to rural areas.
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INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

During the 60s changes originated in the agrarian sector, had a strong impact on rural areas. These changes caused unemployment and, at the same time, a decrease in rents. In the age of desagrarisation, the agricultural output declined to less than 25% of the total Spanish economy. In 1975 the agricultural production accounted for only 10% of the GNP. This situation along with the dispersed settlements fanning out across Castilla y Leon and Cantabria, gave a rise to a rural exodus as people searched for new opportunities (RICO GONZALEZ & GOMEZ GARCIA, 2003).

As a result of decreasing birth rates, out migration in rural areas and the ageing population, there is a high risk of demographic desertification.

Since the second half of 20th century rural areas have high out-migration rates, leaving a rural population panorama made up of a high percentage of elder people and a high proportion of males. Why do people leave?

In this sense the relation urban-rural is crucial. We are assuming a difference between urban-rural areas that could push/pull people to move. A better understanding of this relationship is the first step to understand why people have been leaving rural areas. However, there are some areas where this tendency has reversed recently. In the light of this movement some initiatives have been undertaken, promoting the arrival of people and recognising the importance of attracting and retaining new population. This is the case of “Abraza la Tierra”. This program started running in 2004 and since then, it has been playing a mediating role in rural areas by preparing the arrival of new settlers and entrepreneurs, establishing networks of shelter offices which could help to conjugate the need of this new settlers with rural resources.

Particularly this thesis aims to understand the relationship between a territorial partnership and the project “Abraza la Tierra”. We seek to understand how this relationship helps to establish new comers in rural areas. Secondly, we aim to comprehend the personal motivation for each of these new comers when deciding to live there.

This would imply a higher political weight for rural areas which could be favoured higher investments and better services for the population, providing the dynamism of the territory with new entrepreneurial activities (RICO GONZALEZ & GOMEZ GARCIA, 2003).

1.2 Outline of the report

This report consists on four chapters. The first one explains how the study is developed: the objectives, research questions and the methodology of the research are formulated. In the second chapter we have elaborated the theoretical framework in order to have theories where support our findings during the fieldwork. The third chapter includes the history and objectives of our case study “Abraza la Tierra” and particularly the labour of
“País Románico”. In addition to this we also include the findings of our field work. The last chapter presents the main conclusions of the research; a special linkage between the results of the empirical research and the theories used in our theoretical framework are made.
2. Research settings

2.1 Background and motivations for the report

My interest on population, demography and particularly on rural issues started during my last year of my degree on Sociology. After one year of courses in the IMRD, I have acquired different skills and abilities to concerning rural development: how to promote local resources, how to enhance participation, among others. However, I have been wondering for some time how it is possible to carry out these initiatives and projects if people still leave rural areas.

The importance of repopulation should be highlighted and should be a priority in any issue concerning rural development. These pages are just an attempt to show the importance of having people in rural areas, and the positive effect that an initiative like the one analysed in the report could have in rural areas.

The area for the research was not chosen randomly. The knowledge in Sociology was acquired at the University of Salamanca in the region of Castilla y Leon where the field work is carried out. Fortunately, we counted with the support of “País Románico” that did not hesitate on helping me and being part of my research.

2.2 Objectives

The general purpose of this thesis is to analyse the issue of repopulation and to draw attention to the problem that many European countries have regarding depopulated rural areas. Particularly we seek to describe the influence that networking has on attracting new population to rural areas. Also we aim to describe the value of the LAG, newcomers and autochthonous people specifically. We understand these actors are crucial in tackling the issue of repopulation.

2.2.1 Research questions

Given the above mentioned problem statement and research objectives we are now able to define an appropriate research question. We focus on one specific question, from which some sub-question will derive.

What is the influence of networking for achieving the repopulation of rural areas?

In the light of this research question some specific questions arise:

1. How do the different actors involved (LAG, newcomers and autochthonous people) perceived the question of depopulation?
2. How do they perceive the role of local public administration in these processes of depopulation/re-populating?
3. What is the relationship between the Local Action Group, the newcomers and the autochthonous people?
4. What kind of social capital is created in the light of these re-populating processes: inclusive or exclusive?
3. Methodology

3.1 Approach

Due to the characteristic of this thesis, we consider the use of a qualitative methodology most appropriate.

For an explorative study such as this, we could say that a more “sensitive” approach is needed for collecting the data, entailing openness to the unknown and unpredictable. So, during the interviews we are also looking for new issues that could complete the topic of our thesis.

In comparison with large scale survey and questionnaires, qualitative methods appear to provide in-depth information regarding motivations and personal experiences. Qualitative methodology in social research gives a chance to obtain descriptive data directly from the people, both in spoken or written way. “As in a survey research where the questions presented to the respondent are often uncritically conceived of a stimuli which elicit the respondent’s answer(...) the majority of data collection situations are socially and psychologically much more complex” (BRENNER, 1981). Here we want to lay on motivations, hopes and fears of moving to rural areas, and this is all about meanings; meanings given to actions and for which there is no a priori fixed format. Hence, subjectivity is present in the whole development of the thesis.

This means that social and psychological aspects are also taking into account when doing the research; therefore the importance of subjectivity is obvious during the whole interviewing process.

“(…) Doing qualitative analysis is difficult. The techniques serve as crutches, but one still has to find one’s own way”. (HAMMERSLEY, 1981).

In qualitative research is characterised by interaction between conceptual and empirical world. (BYRMAN & BURGUESS, 1994). There is a high risk in imagining that interaction per se is an automatic guarantee of the analytic status of the data that emerged during the interviews (SEALE, 1998).

In the topic on our thesis of the production of meanings become a real meaningfully point. The analysis of language and words is crucial. For our interview analysis we have opted for the discourse analysis. In this case language will be understood as a tool to explain and comprehend the meanings of motivations, and reasons when moving to rural areas.

Who decides what is true or not? This decision will depend, in cases, on the theory we will adopt during the whole process. When speaking about meanings, perceptions and individual context should not be taken for granted. In this respect two concepts should be highlighted: reliability and validity.

The method itself does not guarantee reliability, (SEALE, 1998) so the research should have some “ways” when presenting the results. In this sense we deal with two hindrances. Firstly, the information obtained will depend mostly in the attitude of the interviewer. Secondly, we are working with a small sample that could entail some
coincidental findings. Since the question requires intensive research method a large scale survey and sample would be impossible.

Regarding validity, we identify three different levels that could assure us a valid research (KVALE, 1996).

The first step is to create a strong theoretical framework on which relays our finding: the theories should support our research question as well as the specifics. The second level makes reference to interviewing. In this step validity is dependent on the interviewer’s ability to produce a good interview. The question and the topic list should be connected to the research question and also to the theoretical framework.

The last step we consider is referred to the analysis of our field work. When analysing we need an intense review and reflection of the question we want to study. In addition to this, an incorrect translation into writing could compromise the validity of our research. For this reason we decided to complete our quotations with the exact original version in Spanish. Adequacy of transcription is even more important than the information collected. In our case we deal with an appropriate translation Spanish-English of the quotations, we should take into account the informal vocabulary used by the interviewees. Details of intonation or prosody are crucial, as well as the vocal expression and silence that the interviewee makes.

The selection of what is recorded should be in relation with the research question, which also means a great capacity to refuse all the “extra” details that are out of the purpose of the research.

3.2 Literature Research

The empirical research is based on literature research and a second stage of interviews and meetings (being part of the field work).

The literature analysis covered scientific articles and books as well as some extra information provided by the LAG that is part of our field work. In addition to this we used some statistical information available in the Spanish National Institute of Statistics.

In a first step, we started reviewing scientific literature specialised in rural matters. We focused on different research areas such as sociology, demography and anthropology. Articles were obtained from two main sources, the library of Wageningen University and online journals specialised in rural issues. This was also broadened with books and articles and in a later stage completed with non-scientific documents provided by the organisation part of our field work. More detailed information is given in the last part of our thesis.

Our first step was starting a literature review about our topic. First of all we considered necessary to include a special section regarding depopulation in rural areas, as a first step to understand urban-rural migration.

Secondly, we focused on the issue urban-rural migration in Europe, to understand how the pattern has been developed in the last decades. After this, we tried to reduce our searching and enclosed it in the Spanish context.
After reviewing we realised the small line separating urban-rural migration and counterurbanisation; we considered necessary to make a special section in our theoretical framework as key factor to precise this type of migration. At this point we started wondering which the causes of this migration are, and to get in deep in the profile of those who have starring role.

We analysed the concept of social capital as we want to understand the influence of social capital to revert depopulation, and to favour urban-rural migration.

Regarding population figures and demographic data we used the information available from the National Institute of Statistics (Instituto Nacional de Estadística)\(^1\). In order to create tables and graphics, we used information directly from reports as well as unprocessed data.

In the section focused on the case study, we used information provided by the LAG and published online and in paper. The statistical data were obtained again from the INE and also directly from the reports edited by the organisation.

### 3.3 Empirical research

Our empirical research has been carried out with the help of the Spanish Local Action group “País Románico”. The first stage consisted on finding information on the project “Abraza la Tierra” based on the website of the project\(^2\) and the LAG\(^3\). The main purpose of this preliminary seek was to have a general idea of the basis of the project, the origins, partnerships, etc. Later the information collected was useful for elaborating our topic list for the interviews. This point leads us to the next part of our empirical work: the field work.

The field work took place during April 2008, in the area of País Románico in the province of Palencia and the region of Cantabria.

We divided the field work in three different sets of interviewees according to the social actors important for our topic\(^4\). Firstly we interviewed the staff of the LAG in charge of the project “Abraza la Tierra”. Thanks to the contacts they provided us we were able to carry out the second set of interviewees: the new comers. In our first thesis schedule, we planned to do a focus group within newcomers. However, due to their tight agendas, and under warning of the LAG, we were not able to do it.

In addition to this, we completed our field work with a third series of interviews consisting in meetings with autochthonous people from the area. This part of the field work was mainly localised in the village of Cervera de Pisuerga, in the province of Palencia. In this group we included different categories: newcomers, people that came back after a period out of the village and people that were born and worked in the area. Although it was not previously arranged, we were able to make a focus group with them.

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1. Hereafter INE
2. www.abrazalatierra.com
3. www.paisromanico.com
4. For further information regarding the interviews see Appendix I (p.63).
3.3.1 Qualitative interviews

As an emergence process in rural development, we opted for a tool that reinforces the exploratory character.

A qualitative interview offers opportunity to explain questions and to go into more detail concerning specific issues such as “in depth”, “unstructured” of “life history” (SEALE, 1998). One kind of interview has been carried out during the research: informal-semistructured. We opted for this because the flexibility that both, the respondent and the researching gain when interviewing. In qualitative research, and more precisely in this thesis, we look for presenting additional questions and data (motivations, fears, etc), based on the information of the respondent; and this normally cannot be achieved under a fixed format. Since we do not have an exact theory concerning the subject of our thesis, this kind of interviews allows us to explore new points of view that we had not anticipated.

In the research we have identified three different social groups. Since we consider they give us different points of views of our topic, we have made three different topic lists for each of them. For further information see Appendix II (p.64)

What to take into account when interviewing?

As with many of the research methods, interviews present both negative and positive features. As mentioned above, qualitative methods, and precisely open interviews, give the possibility of interaction between actors involved in the process. On the other hand, a lack of trust between them could represent a barrier difficult to overcome. Information can be obtained under a situation of trust; however, lack of trust in open interviews could hinder from obtaining the required information. This is in connection with hierarchical relation between actors: interviewers and interviewees must be at the same level.

Fortunately during the meetings and interviews, it was possible to achieve an equal situation between interviewers and interviewees.

We should also take into account the need to “negotiate”. We did not deal neither with confidentiality nor security; on the contrary we tackle problems regarding newcomer’s accessibility. Due to the agendas of newcomers, the LAG already warned us about the impossibility of making focus group; in addition they warned us about a general displeased attitude newcomers have regarding interviews and media.

3.3.2 Analysing interview data

Our data collected was analysed as follow.

We transcribed the data recording during our field work: this includes the interviews and the focus group. The interviews lasts on average 1hour 30minutes, with the exception of focus group that took around 2 hours.

Firstly we made our analysis based on the three set of interviews and focus group. Secondly, we identified the most relevant conversations that included at least some
“brushstrokes” of our research question. In this point we opted for the technique of discourse analysis. For this purpose we have consider the ideas exposed by Tonkins (1998). For Tonkins, there are two key words in the discourse analysis: interpretative context and rhetorical organization. The former one implies power relations that occur where the discourse is set by different speaking positions. People modified their discourse to suit the context where it takes place, and this should also take into account when doing the interviews and when analysing them.

Of course, meanings can be contestable and texts are always open to alternatives reading or interpretations. Internal coherence in this kind of analysis is sometimes more important than having a generalizable research. Discourse analysis implies which is not a reflecting reality, so that the ability to understand is crucial.

Finally we made the linkage between the theoretical framework and the interviews. This entailed an in detail review of the conversations and the main points of our theories.

3.4 Limitations of the research

Below some shortcomings concerning this study are mentioned.

At the theoretical level and more specifically concerning the literature on counterurbanisation, we made use of research done in northern Europe. As this phenomenon emerged only recently in Spain, the literature available is scarce. Moreover, distance was another problem, as we were not able to have access non-digital publications and reports in Spanish libraries.

We are aware that migration processes are a complex phenomenon. Nowadays, Spanish rural areas have increased its population due to migrants coming from Latin America, Sub-Saharan countries and Eastern Europe countries that mainly work in agriculture. For the purpose of this thesis, we will not consider this out-migration.

In the light of the results, it should have been appropriate to include specific section focused on the role of public administration in the issue of depopulation/repopulation.

As regards the field work this study suffers shortcomings in some aspects. We found a limiting factor in the lack of time and a restricted budget. Firstly, there are not contrast group to see whether the findings are specific for the case of País Románico for another group. In addition to this, our initial idea of working mainly with focus group was not possible, because of the “tight agenda” of the interviewees. Furthermore, it could have also been interesting to include the official version of the public administration. The Lack of time was once again our major hindrance.

In spite of this, the results presented meet the “basic” methodological requirement of social research; as we will explain below.
4. Theoretical framework

This section explores the main concepts that the theoretical corpus of the thesis. The first point to be treated will be depopulation including ageing and depopulation in the case of Spain and with special references to Castilla y Leon. Secondly and following up on the topic of population and its distribution, it is necessary to mention the trend of counterurbanisation that has influenced the industrialized countries during the last decades, as a consequence of a collapse in the urban systems and the effect of this trend in Spain. As known, this tendency is affecting rural areas as it is producing a process of deconcentration in urban areas (in)directly affects to rural areas. This entails the emergence of new categories in population, among others Neorrurales. These groups as well as the new people arriving in rural areas and the support they have, the value of networks in society and rural society in particular will be the last point we will analyse.

4.1 Decrease of population in rural areas: ageing and depopulation

Rural migration to researching started with the idea that it was a phenomenon mostly composed by groups’ age. Later, it turned out that the phenomenon shows a greater complexity not only that restricted to the elder people who migrated.

One of the issues is whether or not migration means revitalization and the creation of a new economic dynamism in rural areas. On the contrary, the positive impact on the labour market is scarce, focused on very concrete activities and the rural space is formed exclusively as a residential space of consumption instead of production. (SOLANA, 2005)

4.1.1 Ageing of population

Current societies have experienced a double process of ageing being on the one hand, the decrease in birth rate; on the other hand, an increase in life expectancy. According to the INE, in 2005 life expectancy at birth for Spanish women was 83.9 years, the longest-lived in Europe, whereas for men it was 77.4 years occupying the fourth place in the EU.

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5 The first contact I have with this term came out from Spanish research. For this reason, we consider enriching to keep the Spanish spelling.
6 INE, Spain in figures 2005 (INE, España en cifras, 2005)
In recent decades the number of elderly people within the Spanish Autonomous Communities (hereafter AACC) has increased in a substantial way; while the “replacement group” between 15 and 30 years has diminished. According to “Spain in figures 2007” (España en cifras 2007) 14.3% was under 15 years old in the year 2006. The 65 and older component represented 16.7% of the total population, representing the highest percentage (22%) in the AACC of Castilla y León (INE, 2007).

Regarding natural growth, the case of Castilla y León is the most noteworthy as it has a negative natural growth; while Andalucía and Madrid are having a positive data. In general it is possible to say that Spain is a really aged country in comparison with most European countries.

This ageing has generated various challenges at economic, social, political and sanitary level (OLMO GASCÓN & COBOS ARTEAGA, 2000). Very often these issues (in rural areas) have been a priority for public institution and political parties, but at the end there have been no tangible results.

Nowadays optimism in the demographic recovery is manifest because the most numerous cohorts are located between 1965 and 1976. Consequently, the net births supposedly should increase. As we can also see in Figure 2 foreign population is also increasing and they are contributing to recover the birth rates at national level.
4.1.2 Depopulation in rural “territory”

The study of (de)population in industrialized countries has been related to the use of natural resources, waste production and sustainability, both socially and environmentally, of economic growth. If we also add to this assumption the spatial feature and we “descend” in the administrative scale (from national to local level), it could be easily recognised that the most peripheral areas will be depopulated within a short period of time.

First of all, depopulation is not a recent phenomenon in many Spanish rural areas. However, the fact that society has become aware of the importance of this phenomenon is rather recent. Along the XIX and XX century out-migration was the result of an unbalanced, polarized and cumulate growth.

Nowadays, rural depopulation is seen as a serious problem for many regional governments, as it impedes economic development and the territorial cohesion.

In case of emigrating people that emigrates is working population; rural areas are left without forces to dynamize those territories economically and socially. From this point of view, policies of rural development are justified, since they are based on fixing population and creating jobs by using the endogenous resources in rural spaces (RICO GÓMEZ & GÓMEZ GARCÍA, 2003).

Despite this fact, some rural areas are able to receive a great number of people that are now moving from urban to rural or periurban areas recently. What are the characteristics of this process? Is it really a process? How is possible to define it and what is the effect in rural areas?
4.2 Counterurbanisation

Many western countries during the 60s experienced what it is called a switch in general patterns of population distribution. This change is what many authors have called “counterurbanisation”. The stabilisation of the population or even deconcentration trend in urban areas is evident in the capitalist world; this “turnaround” is implied in the notion of counterurbanisation. (VARTIAINEN, 1989) Generally this term has been used to describe the redistribution of population away from major cities and metropolitan areas towards more rural areas (HALLIDAY & COOMBES, 1995). So we are taking for granted the distinction urban vs rural, assuming a big difference in geographical, social and economical terms for both areas. This distinction has been discussed by many authors. However, we will not take it up again in this theoretical framework. As many authors mention a particular and a clear definition of urban and rural areas is lacking and so the debate remains ambiguous.

The above definition of counterurbanisation is just one of the several definitions that is easy to find in literature. In the case of Europe one of the most relevant studies in this topic have been developed by Fielding or Champion in the case of United Kingdom or Vartiainen in the case of Finland. Generally migration has been a key feature in counterurbanisation (MITCHELL, 2004). This new pattern of migration represents a break with respect to past migration trends, where centralization gives way to decentralization.

As Fielding mentions, counterurbanisation refers to a process of spatial deglomeration of the population, an inverse relationship between the population size of an area and its rate of growth. (SPENCER, 1995).

However, it is not really useful to speak about a major turnaround; nowadays urban areas are still attracting population and are growing rapidly. Nevertheless, there is a tendency by which rural areas are absorbing population, that cannot be explain just in geographical terms alone, but also under a socio-cultural perspective. The urban migration could be not so much explained by the decreasing of out-migration than to long distance “urban to rural movement”. Vartiainen (1989) identifies two senses in which counterurbanisation operates: on the one hand, movement from central areas to hinterland sites (located in urban areas); on the other hand movement from larger centers to smaller ones.
Figure 3 “Conceptualization of the process of population distribution”

Source: Mitchell, 2004

Taking into account the difficulties entailed in the concept of counterurbanisation, and the great amount of literature generated as a result of this “chaos”, it could be a good idea to illustrate how the settlement systems and migration shape counterurbanisation idea. Figure 3 is taken from Mitchell (2004) and makes a connection between the factors that generate counterurbanisation. According to the author, there are three concepts corresponding to each aspect of population redistribution.

We analyse the figure form the micro level to the macro level. To start with, the author makes a distinction in the way counterurbanisation is constructed, being a movement, a process or a pattern. From the bottom of the figure it is possible to identify what kind of urbanisation process exists, when assuming that counterurbanisation is a downward migration movement, and in consequence heterogeneous. This first level identifies counterurbanisation from a micro level, emphasising the characteristics of the actors involved. The term *ex-urbanization* makes reference to the ties that still retain people in
urban areas, in case of commuters. In contrast, *displaced-urbanization* implies a movement to wherever needs of people are satisfied, no matter the location. Finally the *anti-urbanization* type, whose occurrence is found in settlement systems with people who aspire to live in small places. It is important to mention that this distinction is based on motivations, and that the spatial criteria are not related with them.

Counterurbanisation not only entails a redistribution of the population but also characteristics ascribed to the people who move. This social aspect is key for understanding what is behind the motivations for those who move, and potential solutions for depopulation.

Moving one step further three new concepts appear for completing the idea of *counterurban* settlement pattern. Urbanization movement is a movement up in the settlement system. On the contrary lateral migration implies a movement between similar sized classed settlements, and its importance is not really remarkable. The crucial and the dominant one in here would be *counterurbanisation*, understood as a deconcentration and a process movement of downward migration. These three migration movements contribute within the settlement systems.

The second aspect in the population distribution is occurring during the process itself. This term describes a process in which a settlement system is transformed from a concentrated in a deconcentrated state. According to Mitchell, there are two variables that influence *counterurbanizing*: at this level *net migration* and *net natural increase* of population. Concerning both variables, *in* and *out migration* plays a crucial role. High rates of in-migration are a source that could mask counterurbanisation tendencies, and in the same way reduced rates of out-migration, contribute also to the population settlement system. For the latter case, net natural increase, historically explains discrepancies between urban-rural settlements. However, many authors as Fielding, point out that the growth or decline in people living in an area is above all due to variations in net migration. Hence changing level in both variables may cause a transformation from *urbanizing* to *counterurbanazing*.

Last but not least, and the macro level leads us to the pattern that establishes a new relationship between the growth and the settlement size. *Counterurban*, as described here, represents a pattern in population distribution that is already deconcentrated.

In the table below the main concepts are connected trying to summarize the above explanation.

### 4.2.1 Rural Spain

Spain is a predominantly rural territory. This statement could be surprising but Spain is characterized by on the one hand territorial dispersion and on the other hand by a concentration at population level.

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7 In here a sociological dimension is added, this idyll vision of countryside and a rejection of urban lifestyle. This is called the “rural Idyll” and is a basic cause when motivating people to move to rural areas, really in connection with the topic of this thesis.
As can be seen in the above tables, Spain has a total of 8606 municipalities (according to INE, 2007) from which more than half are considered rural. It is important to say that INE considers Rural areas those with less than 2,000 inhabitants, intermediate areas those between 2,001 and 10,000 inhabitants, and Urban areas those with more than 10,001 inhabitants. The tables above show that most of the population in Spain is concentrated in urban areas, whereas rural areas just comprised 6.3% of the total Spanish population.

But what is the reason why the population tends to gather in urban areas? According to Hierro Franco (2005) it is due to a high mobility that normally tends to incline to provincial areas are moreover to perirurban areas. As the author mentions, migration now does not follow the traditional patterns, which means to move to most industrialized areas of Spain (as happened in the 60s and 70s) but to more dispersed
areas. Urban areas in Spain are suffering stagnation, the growing process now is moving to nearer areas instead of the urban capitals of province which, thanks to the highways are well connected. These movements are also stimulated by a new residential framework whose “spinal column” is sustainability and quality of life, normally achieve in rural areas. Nevertheless, this fact does not mean that rural exodus is over. On the contrary, still has occurs in many areas. (GÓMEZ GARCÍA & RICO, 2005)

Despite this, the ability to attract new population is considerably less in the capitals of provinces than in the rest of municipalities, even less than in rural areas; urban centers no longer have the capacity to monopolize the attraction of population.

4.3 New population established in rural areas

We should no only look at the numbers of people who migrate, but also the types of people. The emigrants are after young skilled people who are not able to find a job that fits their education in the small nucleon from which they come, a labour continuity with their formation.

As a consequence the migratory balance between the city and the rural world is not so intense since it still remains in the polarization and asymmetry of the potential development strategies of each area. The most weakly populated rural areas share a minor furnishing of public services based on the notions of Welfare State (LOPEZ CASANOVAS & MOSTERÍN, 2007). Most of the social infrastructures, that cannot be provided in reduced units and imply very high fixed costs, make even harder the decisions of public management to intervene (since there is an scarce numbers of inhabitants in the area).

In general we can say that migration towards the small rural areas usually is composed to a great extent of elder people that return to their place of origin after retiring. They generate rent flows quite stable and originate a series of new economical activities. Even though the returnees are beneficial in an economic, social and cultural way, this return is not as beneficial as it could be if these returnees were skilled young people.

From the “public sphere”, the delays in formulating a territorial policy tending to compensate the imbalances in social infrastructures of networks have contributed to diminish that quality of life in rural areas (SAÉZ et al. 2004).

In addition to this key group in the rural areas, the inclusion of new inhabitants, of working population, who contribute to initiatives and value the rural areas positively, is one of the actions necessary to develop these areas. From these assumptions, different public interventions arise to attract new settlers to rural areas, like those focusing on attracting immigrants to some localities (IBARGÜEN RIPOLLÉS et al. 2004).

Nevertheless, there is a migratory movement from urban to rural areas that have passed unnoticed when searching solutions to the depopulation. Approximately twenty-five years ago, in the opposite direction to the principal migratory rural-urban movement, new settlers have been coming to the rural areas with some special characteristics. The term that is used to name this group is Neorrurales.
4.3.1 Neorrurales

It is convenient to make a few remarks of historical and ideological nature. Generally speaking three fundamental influences can be distinguished. In this case we will use a study by Ibargüen Ripollés (et al. 2004), which analysed the experiences of these people when settle in rural areas.

a) The tradition of utopian thoughts

Even while depopulation that rural areas dominated half a century had always been a migratory flow from the city to non metropolitan areas already stand out of the crown. These utopian thoughts introduce the idea of “living together”. It is possible to find historical precedents in the anarchistic thought of the 19th century and in some experiences of “collectivist Utopian communities”. Nevertheless, the most direct and recent form of “neorrural”, connects the movement with the community/commune approaches and pacifists inheritors of this alternative stream in Europe and North America during the sixties.

b) The romanticism

Secondly, there are aspects of the neorrural tendency of more ancient roots spread in European countries, such as United Kingdom or France. With the arrival of modernity, and especially with the industrialization, the urbanite/urban dweller theme emerged arises taken out from nature to which he/she had been till then. In romanticism, men are aware of the nature and the landscape as a beautiful and bucolic feature, and turns into a devotee of this wild nature not only to get material profit from it.

c) The ecologism

The search of a balance between the basic needs of the society and the conservation of nature is the main inspiration for this group of people. The concern about the environment is present in the ideology of the Neorrurales, often in combination with social and political demands, but also evident in daily life.

The decision to live in rural areas is motivated, but by a search for a different way of life. This decision is, therefore, a challenge to carry out a good part of their life expectations.

All changes and experiences that they face in the adjustment to a different environment suppose an important personal challenge. The neorrurales are conscious of this process and that is why they value to learn from mistakes and to overcome the difficulties.

Since the moment neorrurales feel the impulse of leaving the urban life to settle down in the rural areas until the final adaptation to this way of living it is a long process full of satisfactions, but also not free from difficulties. The decision of the neorrural to establish in a “rustic” environment responds neither to material interests nor to professional motives, but to the search of a major genuineness in their lives, to the search of coherence in their values and the way of living. In addition to the fears that this decision entails, one of the main problems that they face in this phase is the lack of professional skills suitable for the jobs available in the area.

Nevertheless, a great part of their labour strategies demonstrates their enterprising character.
Most of the time they are self-employees and they are really innovative when running the business. This entrepreneurial character is also revised by others authors like Paniagua and Hoggart (SOTCKDALE, 2006) when stating that many of the projects they start running are traditional business rather than innovative ones, that new migrants are not innovative per se. Of course, this could also be refuting when considering that running traditional business (coming back to the origin) in rural areas is also an innovative idea.

Step by step, the neorrurales are getting more in contact with persons who already live in the rural areas, calibrating the labour possibilities, studying the investment in housing in different localities, etc.

On the one hand, the environment and the desire of major contact with the nature drive them to prefer the environments of high natural richness. On the other hand, the presence of acquaintances: the previous relation with other persons who already took the step of moving, is one of the most influential factors when deciding where to settle (IBARGÜEN RIPOLLÉS, et al. 2004). Hence, it is possible to speak about a pull effect. The combination of these two points drives to the fact by which a few zones of the territory turn out to be less attractive than others. This supposes a difficulty for the settlement in not well-known or environmental degraded areas. Not all rural areas meet the expectations of the neorrurales: they are less eager to settle in environmentally degraded areas.

4.4 Social Capital

The main idea of social capital is that networks have a value; networks are a valuable asset. In general terms, since classic sociology some authors started to emphasize the importance of networks and norms. This is the case of Durkheim or Tönnies, with the concept of “mechanical and organic solidarity” or the importance of association in Tönnies when distinguishing between community and society.

To start with, networks have been identified as the main axis in the creation of social capital within a society. Most of the definitions revolve around three elements: social networks, norms of reciprocity and trust. (FERLANDER, 2007).

More recently, during the 80s, the concept of social capital generated a debate between several sociologists. As Field mentions, linking ties enable people to access resources and information outside their own social networks (FIELD, 2003). Many social scientists during the last few decades have been developing this idea trying to identify which concepts could be the most representative for this. Despite the differences Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam consider that social capital consists of personal interactions with shared sets of values.

Summing up, Bourdieu (1986) emphasized the importance of symbols handled by groups within social structure. In his words social capital is a sum of resources, within a network of mutual acquaintance and recognition-he did not mention specifically the word trust.

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8 Bourdieu use in this case the concept of “cultural capital”
In subsequent works, the author mentions that solidarity within groups is just possible because profit is part of networks, and like for other capitals, social capital needs time to be accumulated. For Bourdieu this means that economic capital is in the root of all other types of capital, even though he considers that not all the forms of capital can be reduced to economic capital.

Whereas Bourdieu could fit the notion of social capital into a wider picture of actors concerned to reproduce social and economic inequality, he was writing on the importance of trust in economic life. Coleman had difficulty in refining his definition to fit with rational theory.

For Coleman (1988), some types of social structures are more likely to facilitate individual’s choice actions than others. Social capital is a variety of entities that all together facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure. But this notion of individuals acting rationally, this rational calculation collides over the basic idea of social capital: trust. Coleman assumed a highly individualistic model of human behaviour. In social capital individuals are always expecting reciprocity beyond a certain degree of trust and shared values, as Bourdieu considers. One of the most important contributions of Coleman was to recognize social capital as an asset for social groups being in disadvantage and the influence of social networks.

The third author whose social capital theory will be used in the thesis is Putnam. Figure 7 illustrates his theory.

**Figure 6 “Putnam: Social Capital”**

![Diagram of social capital]

Source: own elaboration

Finally, it is important to mention that Putnam has a more political background than in the former authors. However, his vision is more “broader approach” than the sociological of Bourdieu and Coleman His research has been sometimes focusing on the role of civic engagement when generating political stability and economic prosperity.

According to Putnam (1993), social capital is the combination of networks, norms and social trust, in order to facilitate co-ordination and co-operation in mutual benefit. These are features that can improve and facilitate coordinated actions. Social capital can
foster reciprocity, facilitate flows of information. Although Putnam alludes to the formal character of networks, recent studies have demonstrated that informal networks, even though they do not build civil skills or formal support, provide sources for emotional support and a base for social networks.

Social integration in associations and civil activities are the counterweight to excessive corporate power and social apathy. This is the case of his research in Italy in which he connects the social capital with the above mentioned civic engagement in regional governments in Northern and Southern Italy. Apart from the results, the important point in here is the idea of social capital that he suggests. In the course of time, Putnam changed this notion, giving less importance to the concept of society but emphasising the “participants” when trust –and consequently reciprocity- are also important. The vision of Putnam has been critised for ignoring that networks can also foster distrust. It was Putnam who made the distinction between two basic forms of social capital: bridging and bonding social capital, which will be developed further on.

In spite of this, “social capital is a relatively young concept, and much more needs to be known about the variety of ways in which social ties work to engender such significant effects” (FIELD, 2003).

4.4.1 Shaping the concept

But how it is possible to identify whether social capital is individual and the collective presence in networks? Many scholars identify two different levels. On the one side, the individual corresponds to social connections within people and the support given by them, and on the other side, collective level is generalized in social trust, social cohesion, communitarian etc. However, this approach has been strongly criticized since the above mentioned aspects only make reference to the effects, whereas social capital should be defined by its sources.

So, the key factor in social capital falls in the strengthening of networks. Bonding and bridging social are the two distinction made by Putnam in order to identify which are the linkages within capital. Because social capital can be remarked within homogenous group and heterogeneous groups, the above mentioned concepts can also be applied in different cases. Bridging is inclusive, bonding is exclusive. While both, bonding and bridging social capital are working for strengthen horizontal ties (intimate ties, family and close friends), there is a significant difference in the kind of actors involved in these forms of networks ties. In other words bonding social capital cements only homogenous group (certain demographic factors), maintains group loyalty and reinforces specific identities. Bridging social capital makes connections across actors from different social groups, links external assets and information diffusion generates broader identities and reciprocity.

4.5 Linking the concepts

After explicating what the theoretical points are, it is necessary now to make a connection between the three concepts and to establish as their relations of the framework of the thesis.
To start with: counterurbanisation. As previously mentioned it can be understood to as a movement of deconcentration originated by changes in the dynamics of population: migration and birth/deaths. Regarding the latter one in the recent years, Spain is suffering a great marked problem of depopulation; low birth rates and elder population has created a distressing panorama. Spain now has to tackle this question in order to ensure the working of welfare state.

Considering migration as a redistribution of population in the settlement system (urban to rural areas), this notion allows us to see it as a possibility for both, rural and urban areas. Generally, counterurbanisation us a downward migration movement occurs towards periurban areas or rural areas. Many of the problems caused by the above mentioned question could be solved, and in fact are being solved, with migration. Migrants are increasing the birth rate. As Spanish women are abandoning the idea of having babies or prolonging the age of having them, out-migrants either come with the families or have babies when they settle in Spain.

Under a broader perspective rural areas are seen now as providers of leisure, also job and quality of life. This together with expensive life in urban areas, pollution, unemployment, etc, have created a situation of deconcentration of population in urban areas which closely related to the above mentioned counterurbanisation movement. This migration movement carries out redistribution in the population settlement system. According to Champion (1992) these “counterurbanites” assume a lifestyle when they move. The process of counterurbanisation entails more than a change of residence to “remote” rural areas. This “nuance” introduced by Champion makes counterurbanisation more interesting, since we assume that beyond this migration movement there are social and cultural patterns.

Concerning rural areas, migrants are also the main cause of increasing population in rural areas. On the one hand, migrants or returnees who come back when retiring. This group of people does not provide direct economic labour force, but they invest in new
houses and services in the areas, hence there are additional economic consequences. On the other hand, new migrants, young skilled people from urban areas that has a different idea about what rural areas are and its function in the society. Which is the motivation for them to move?

This new community requires special attention in the sense that they create a special vinculum with the territory and the people living there. The existence of a rural development group in the area is the most tangible sign of social capital; this network attracts new people and also makes the process of settlement easier. At the same time, social capital is increasing when these newcomers arrive, as they become part of the network and establish ties with the people in the territory.

This point leads us to the research questions we set out in the previous chapter. What is the influence of the LAG for attracting newcomers? Is the social capital generated by the LAG, newcomers and autochthonous people at the same level? It is necessary to corroborate whether this social capital generated is “useful” or “useless” for the territory. Is this social capital reinforcing the identities of newcomers and autochthonous people separately or on the contrary is creating ties that unify them?

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9 In scientific research the difficulty of measuring social capital is well known. However it will be considered here that social capital is increasing when the number of participants are also higher, and also we will take for granted that when arriving they are linked to the activities of the net.
5. The case study

5.1 Abraza la tierra: the project.

The actual project of “Abraza la Tierra” has been the result of several meetings and seminars starting in February 2000 were called “Retos de la integración de pobladores en el medio rural”\textsuperscript{10}. This meeting was held in Aragon and meant a break trough in the way the stakeholders, public administration and LAG used to tackle the problem of depopulation. In 2001 one year later, with the creation of the “Asociacion de municipios para la despoblacion” started the project of transnational cooperation ANER.

Two years passed until some LAGs of Castilla y Leon and some other regions agreed on building a network for receiving new comers in rural areas. After several meetings in different places of Spain, 15 groups from Castilla y Leon, Aragón, Madrid and Cantabria decided to work together in the Interterritorial cooperation project called “Abraza la Tierra”.

The figure below shows the regions involved in “Abraza la Tierra”. In green is identified País Románico, the LAG part of our field work. In Appendix III (p.65) more information regarding the LAGs involved in “Abraza la Tierra”.

\textbf{Figure 8 “Regions and LAGs participating in “Abraza la Tierra”}


\textsuperscript{10} “Challenges in the integration of new comers”
5.1.1 **Target groups, objectives and actions.**

The beneficiaries and target groups of the project give space to a wide range of population.

On the one hand, according to the guidelines of the project, local population should be the most favoured. The arrival of new inhabitants implies a gradual increase of the population that indirectly contributes to the quality of life in the different villages. It is also positive for them the fact that they are able to make joint activities together with these new comers. On the other hand the “new entrepreneurial newcomers”\(^{11}\). They are able to be wage-earner or entrepreneurs as the LAG provides new job offers and dwelling that were not offered or promoted until the date.

Another collective favoured by the project are young people, women and immigrants insofar as the project try to make them aware of the problem of depopulation and the possibilities of each village to retain them. The welcome offices give advice to women in order to balance personal life with working life. In addition to this, the project fits both individuals and families.

Among the rural population, the project has also discovered the importance of children at school age. The programme “Abraza tu pueblo” is the educational project by which they look for enhancing, fostering and creating a positive feeling towards “the rural and the local”.

This curricular is created in order to promote a positive attitude to the surroundings and to enhance a sense of belonging among primary students. In the long term speaking, this action aims to promote of rural territory as a provider of resources able to guarantee an optimum quality of life.

The curricula is based on 29 worksheets, grouped by different categories: first stage of raising awareness, second stage of acknowledging and researching, third stage of criticizing and reflecting on, and fourth stage of acting-communicating.

In addition to these groups above mentioned, “Abraza la Tierra” recognise the returnees as a possible target group, those who left the villages in one moment and they are willing to come back again.

In order to enhance mutual communication and collaboration, these groups worked with different kinds of professionals on the margin of the association. From field work and direct contact with villages and local population, they identified, analysed and proposed a solution adapted to each of the territories for preparing the “Oficina de acogida de Nuevos pobladores”\(^{12}\).

They developed a list of objectives as follow:

- Promote the transfer of good working practice by the “Observatorio sobre los procesos de asentamiento de poblacion en zonas rurales”\(^{13}\)

\(^{11}\) Literally the way they call the new comers.
\(^{12}\) “Welcome office for newcomers”
\(^{13}\) “Observatory of settlement process of new population in rural areas”
• Establish networks of offices for the welcome of new population. These offices have the purpose of providing information, advice and support to the new comers. It is to say giving information and support in order to develop a project for living for those who want to live in rural areas.
• Mediation between local population and new comers as well as the public administration.
• Elaborate a welcome plan adapted to each of the new comers.

Apart form these three mains objectives they also worked in some particular areas such as facilitating job opportunity to the new comers or help them with developing a project in the area. They also facilitate the way to find dwelling and to guarantee the stay of the new comers.

These objectives had their appearance in some actions taken by all the groups. Furthermore they started the following activities.
• Surveys of the resources in the territory such as a data base with information regarding: dwelling for renting and selling, business premises, infrastructures and communications, non forma social networks, job offers(real and potentials)
• Prepared the welcome of new settlers by introducing them to local people and people interested in working with the newcomers.
• Awareness campaign about the project in order to involve local population in receiving new inhabitants.
• Actions for spreading the goals of the project. Organisation of different forums involving stakeholders and institutions. This also includes the relationship with media, internet, and a traveling exhibition concerning the project “Abraza la Tierra” and the problems of depopulation.

5.1.2 Results

“Abraza la Tierra” published an evaluation of the programme with some results in December 2007. It emerged that 188 families had settled which means an increase of more than 10% of population in villages where “Abraza la Tierra” works. More than 100 families are in process of settlement and since they started the project, 2817 families have contact them and 635 have visited the different territories. For more specific data related to the results in Appendix IV (p. 66)

Generally, newcomers arrive from big cities or urban areas, like Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, etc. The project has not only influenced the demographic composition of the village point of view. It also contributed to reopening of basic services closed due to the rural exodus, such as bars, grocery stores, bakeries and pharmacies. In spite of these positive results we need to verify if repopulation is mainly caused by this project rather than another factors.
5.2 Abraza la Tierra: País Románico

After the analysis of the whole set of LAGs participating in the project, we will focus more specifically on the case of País Románico.

The LAG País Románico was created as a tool for carrying out the different projects to be developed by the programme LEADER + and later the project “Abraza la Tierra”. This LAG is running in the “Cordillera Cantábrica”\(^{14}\), in the north of Spain. The territory of the País Románico includes two different regions: Cantabria and Castilla y Leon, and three different provinces: Cantabria, Palencia and Burgos. For a more precise location we include the below figure with the LAG in the context of Spain.

**Figure 9 “Spain and País Románico”**

Source: own elaboration

The inter-territorial character of the programme stems from a historic reasons. This territory used to be the Merindad de Campoo, which brought together three counties: Comarca de Campoo los Valles, Montaña Palentina and Odra-Rudrón (as seen in figure 10). The main service centres in the territory are Reinosa and Aguilar de Campoo for each one of the above mentioned regions. For both Aguilar de Campoo y Reinosa the rate of population growth is still increasing at the expense of the small villages in the surroundings.

País Románico comprises a total area of 1132.8 KM\(^2\), where nowadays are living 25.594 inhabitants spread over 173 municipalities. Of this 173 municipalities 22 villages have more than 50 inhabitants, 79 villages have a population between 10 or 50 inhabitants, whereas 72 villages have less than 10 inhabitants. This data implies a population density\(^{15}\) of 22.6 inhabitants per KM\(^2\).

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\(^{14}\) Cantabrian Mountain range

\(^{15}\) We have included some maps with the population density in the areas of País Románico, see Appendix V (p.67)
In the period 1979-2000 the total rural population decreased with 6.2 % (data only available from 1979). The Cantabrian mountain areas used to be the most populated; however with the industrialisation a process of ageing and depopulation as well as a process of urban concentration started. In general terms, population in Cantabria has increased in the last century with almost 300,000 inhabitants. However, there are still some villages that are losing population. Villages in the area of País Románico, belonging to Valdeprado del Río, Valderredible and Valdeolea being the population growth rate of -5 for Valdeolea or even -20.64 in the case for Valdeprado.

The situation of depopulation that this area has been experiencing was the main cause for people to participate in different forums and seminars in order to find an appropriate solution. In 2005 they decided to join the project of “Abraza la Tierra”.

According to the “Ministerio de medio ambiente, medio rural y marino” 16 the region of Castilla y Leon was part of those regions in Objective 1 whereas Cantabria was in transition between Areas Objective 1 and those out of these areas. This has an important repercussion since the Areas Objective 1 are financed by the EAGGF17, ERDF18 and ESF19, and for the period 2007-2013 also EAFRD20.

Following we include some specific data regarding depopulation and the areas most depopulated in the provinces analysed21.

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17 European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund.  
18 European Regional Development Fund  
19 European Social Fund  
20 Support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development  
21 More detailed information in appendix. Data disaggregated by counties
• **Cantabria:**

Figure 11 “Population Density of Cantabria 2005 (Inh/Km2)”

As seen in the map, the highest level of depopulation in Cantabria corresponds to the southern area and the southwest part of the region matching with the action area of País Románico. At 1st January 2007 the total population of Cantabria, was 572,824 inhabitants. It is necessary to point out that in contrast to Castilla y Leon, Cantabria is just one province instead of eight. The density of population depends on the proximity to the sea, in Santander and surroundings live 50% of the total population. The spatial distribution is unbalanced due to the fact that approximately 70% of the population is concentrated in 10% of the space.

• **Castilla y León:**

• **Palencia:**

The situation of Palencia is rather different from the former one. The rate of depopulation is high; the trend is migration to urban areas. At 1st January 2007 the total population of Castilla y Leon -8 provinces- amounts 2,528,417 inhabitants of which province of Palencia has 174,281 inhabitants. According to data from “Abraza la Tierra” the population loss in Palencia is 1.99 inhabitants per day during 2005. As seen in the map the densest area are the surroundings of the capital Palencia. On the contrary, the north of the province is suffering high rates of depopulation and low levels of population density.
• **Burgos:**

As for the other provinces, Burgos gathers the population in the centre of the provinces that is the capital. The area most depopulated (north-west of the province) is that participating in the LAG. Data obtained from INE in 2005, pointed out that the daily loss of population in Burgos amounts almost to 2 people.

**Figure 12 “Population Density of Palencia 2005 (Inh/Km2)”**

**Figure 13 “Population Density of Burgos 2005 (Inh/Km2)”**

5.2.1 Objectives and Actions.
The LAG País Románico shares the main objectives of the project, but they also engaged in some specific activities. The group has its own database of municipal housing, premises, and land for selling and renting. The updated information is permanent and is available once people are interested in the territory.

They also work to advertise for offerings and the project, mainly in the media and internet. The LAG also monitors different meetings and takes the initiative in different meetings with councils from the area and also with people with the same interests and other newcomers.

Until April 2008, the group has processed 497 applications (which include information about the territory), did around 79 interviews, organised visits to the territory and meetings with councils and other neighbours. The number of total families settled in the territory amounts to 21 (63 people). For more information regarding the results of “País Románico” see Appendix VI (p.69). They also have a wide range of projects presented within these 497 applications, among others: craftworks, educational-farms, tapestry museum-studio, ostrich farms, shops, camping, horse breeding, etc. For detailed information see appendix where are resumed the results of the group along these two years of operation.

One of the most important activities has been the restoration of a house in Sobrepeña 22. There is a scarce house renting offer in the south of Cantabria; however some opportunities could arise when the potential lessor knows the lessee.

The group recognised the need of temporal (for people that are interested in living in the area) housing where to stay during their visit of the territory. This house means a chance to know and be known by the people in the territory, and get in contact with the area. After signing the agreement with the “Consejería de Medio Ambiente” of Cantabria, the group also signed an agreement with the Neighbour board of Sobrepeña in which they agreed on leasing the former “Casa del Maestro” 23 to the group for a period of five years. The government of Cantabria undertook the project with an amount of 50.500€.

5.2.2 What about the future?
The LAG proposed to continue the project with the collaboration of the “Consejería de Medio Ambiente” of Cantabria. The first agreement was signed for the year 2007, and subsequently in 2008.

As seen in the agreement they are in accordance with the benefits that the “Oficina de acogida de nuevos vecinos del sur de Cantabria” 24 has had in the territory. They recognised the need to continue fighting against depopulation. Both parties agree to

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22 Pictures available in Appendix IX (p.72)
23 House of the teacher
24 “Welcome office for new neighbours from the south of Cantabria”
collaborate in order to consolidate the actions undertaken by the “Oficina de acogida de nuevos vecinos”.

On the one hand, the Consejeria contributes with 120,000€\textsuperscript{25} to finance the activities proposed by the group and also appointed two members as part of the General Committee. On the other hand, the LAG agrees on contributing with trained staff for the project, knowledge transfers to other territories and counties. Both the government and the LAG have created a monitoring commission with two delegates each of them.

After having passed the different stages of “Abraza la Tierra”, the group wants to continue with “Quedate a vivir”\textsuperscript{26}. The working guidelines will be similar to the one used in “Abraza la Tierra”: contacts with councils, visits to the territory, data base of dwelling for renting and selling, awareness campaign for local population, etc.

The foreseeable results affect both local population and new comers. Indirectly, the arrival of new population could represent an increase in the quality of life and a promotion of the area and valorize the rural life style. Especially the new comers will have access to job opportunities and dwellings not available until the date and not enough promoted, they will also have access to activities with the people in the area in order to facilitate their integration in the territory.

6. Field work analysis

The following analysis is focused on the social aspects of depopulation and repopulation. We are mainly interested in discovering which are the demands for each group interviewed, personal opinions about depopulation and challenges for the future in rural areas. In addition we would like to discover which social ties are enabling the repopulation of rural areas. We seek to understand which role is played by each of the social actors interviewed.

Our starting point stems from the following scene:

Figure 14 “Countering depopulation through social ties: basic actors involved”

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node (rep) at (0,0) {Repopulation};
\node (lag) at (2,2) {LAG};
\node (ac) at (0,3) {Autochthonous people};
\node (nc) at (-2,3) {Newcomers};
\draw[->] (rep) -- (lag);
\draw[->] (rep) -- (ac);
\draw[->] (rep) -- (nc);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

Source: own elaboration

\textsuperscript{25} The LAG also enjoys the same amount valid until December 2008

\textsuperscript{26} “Stay for living/Stay to live”
Accordingly, we consider for this research that the basic actors involved would be newcomers, LAG and autochthonous people. In this case there is communication and interaction among them; repopulation is build as a key factor and central in their relationship. Is this relationship equal? Are these actors in mutual communication: are trust and reciprocity present? The results will be developed in our final chapter.

This chapter presents the information obtained from our empirical research. It will be divided in three different sections corresponding to the set of interviews carried out. Firstly we will analyse the results of the interviews to local people, following the main aspects in the different meetings with the personnel of the LAG. Finally we will end up this chapter with the interviews of the newcomers.

The descriptive data will be exemplified by using quotations gathered during the research stage. We will adopt the abbreviation “FC” for the quotations referring to the focus group, while “P” refers to the personal interviews. Each set of interviews starts a new numbering for the interviewees. We have translated the quotations from Spanish to English; in order to have more accurate information we decided to place the original sentence as a footnote. More information regarding interviewees in Appendix I (p.60)

6.1 Meeting autochthonous people

The first part of our analysis is based on a set of interviews with local autochthonous people. In contrast to the following two sections, this set of interviews was held in the village of Cervera de Pisuerga, in the county of Aguilar de Campoo. We did six interviews and additionally a focus group. The results of both methods will be analysed in the same section.

We will start this section by making a description of the relationship of two social processes: “depopulation” and “daily life in the village”. In this sense we will describe the opportunities that, according to the interviewees, the village has and which might susceptible to change. Finally, we will make special reference to the attitude towards new people moving to the area.

a) Depopulation

At first sight, the concept of depopulation does not fit in the vocabulary of villagers. However, our interviewees were really concerned about the consequences of depopulation and what it entails in their daily life.

How it is possible that people are leaving the area? There is a common belief among the interviewees that life in the village is much better than the city. When asking about advantages or disadvantages of living in a village, the arguments for the former case are stronger than for the latter one.

They are all pleased and satisfied with living in the village. The landscape, the people, and the tranquility, in one word: the village is synonym to quality of life. The idyllic and

\footnote{For further information regarding demographic data look Appendix VII (p.67)}
bucolic features of the countryside are what give value to the village and so to the villagers.

FC 2 “For us this is quality of life. The traffic jams, noises...this is nothing for us”28

During the last decades the village is getting empty. Since the closure of the mines in the area as well as the gradual process of abandonment of agriculture and cattle farming during the 60s meant the point of inflection, since the village gradually has been losing population.

In spite of the arguments we gave a priori, and although it could seem paradoxical, depopulation is assumed as logical. According to the interviewees the area has lack of infrastructures, scarce job opportunities, suffers from a deficit of communications networks in the area that make the village isolated from the main urban centres.

Children, young people and elderly people find a reason to move from the area or at least to do most of the activities out of the village. Many families bring the kids to school in Aguilar de Campoo, the nearest village and bigger in population and economic terms. This has entailed the closure of many courses in the school at the village. The same goes for the high school.

In order to attend the demand in the recent years a medical centre was opened in the village in Cervera and adjacent villages. Still this is not enough and elder people are moving to urban areas because of the scarce resources in the villages.

P6 “people in Cervera take the kids to school in Aguilar instead of here. We are shooting ourselves in the foot”29

Is this situation reversible? The answer does not show consensus. It turned out that the opinion of elder people differed from younger generations. This statement is observed in both the personal interviews and the focus group.

On the one hand, younger generations are able to appreciate the opportunity that rural areas have: new business and the possibility of running projects which are not necessarily connected to agriculture.

On the other hand, the first ones still have in mind the idea of the rural as backward, connected to agriculture or cattle farming. The city means the opportunity and the chance to earn money and prosper. There is a predisposition in young people to study out of the village and the province, and to reduce the contact with the villages to short periods.

How do they see the future?

The difference between young and middle-aged people comes up when the interviewees talk about the future of the village. Elder people recognised that the situation is irreversible. When talking about a higher need of involvement in the village in order to avoid people leaving the area, the response is generally pessimistic.

28 “Para nosotros esto es calidad de vida...El trafico, el ruido...eso no es para nosotros”

29 “La gente lleva a los niños al colegio de Aguilar, en lugar de dejarlos aquí. Estamos tirando piedras sobre nuestro propio tejado”
On the contrary, young people look the future with more hopefulness.

We observed a form of self critique about the attitude towards the problem and the situation lived in the village. There is a certain apathetic attitude between the villagers. At this point we should think if this is only responsibility of the public administration. The values and education that children receive are more focused on city and urban lifestyle. A great part of the interviewees recognised that life in the village is not comfortable; it is not “enough” for their children. The inhabitants perceive the condition of the village as the sole responsibility of the local public administration.

“my son is studying psychology, if he told me I want to come to the Ruesga and work with a flock of sheep…I would tell him, do not even think about this, are you crazy? I would never let him do it”

FC3 “we need to think...what can we generate? It is important to instill the value of being farmer, or carpenter...we need this people not only in the area but in the whole society”

At this point younger people differ. There should be a change in the way rural is seen, and particularly in rural areas. The root of is there; in the way rural is perceived.

b) “A state without the means of some change, is without the mean of its conservation”

The interviewees agree that a change is needed in education and values. It is necessary to instill into younger generations the love towards the rural; teach them how to valorise the rural as possibility and positive. Although this is a common thought, again the adults recognised that life in the village is hard and it is not an appropriate life for new generations.

So the attitude people have regarding the problems of the village and the opportunities it can give should change. Who should make this effort? But who should promote this change?

The role of the public administration was highlighted during the interviews. In some way the interviewees believe the public administration is responsible as the government possess resources and money.

Although they recognised the limitations of the council, insofar as the town councillors partly work for the village and they have another employment, the interviewees think that local public administration is not really involved in enhancing the potential opportunities of the rural.

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30 “No podemos para esto. El pueblo ya esta vacío”
31 “intentamos buscar soluciones. No hacer leña del árbol caído”
32 “Mi hijo estudia Psicología. Si él me dijera que quiere venir a Ruesga y montar un rebaño de ovejas...Le diría: Ni se te ocurra pensar en eso, ¿estás loco? Nunca le dejaría hacerlo”
33 “Debemos pensar... ¿qué podemos generar? Es importante inculcar el valor de ser granjero o carpintero...pero no solo aquí, sino en toda la sociedad”
34 (Edmund Burke, “Reflection on the revolution of France”)
Some of the interviewees believe that the public administration should be more involved in the issue of repopulation, not only to attract new population in the area but also to retain it. The solutions are those that just come from the council and the government.

Again a divergence emerged between the elder people and young interviewees. The latter ones recognised that apathetic attitude has been in the village for a long time and the responsibility should lie on the side of citizens. They are aware of the weakness of the public administration and the councils, so they argue for a higher involvement of the population.

The council has limited competences and is not able to reach all the areas. In a sense they complain about all the studies, research projects that the council or regional government has done without tangible results.

P2 “we complain, and complain...But then there is no joining together for being a pain in the neck...If nobody gives us what we need, we just leave it” 35

Many of the interviewees were part of the commissions created in order to carry out the Agenda 21 36. There were plenty of people involved, but unfortunately many of the councils participating left the work done far behind.

FC3 “the point is not what we have. But what we want to create” 37

However, they still feel change is possible. The general impression is that organizations and associations are positive for the village. The chances to have a positive response to their demands are higher the villagers would act like one.

c) What is new? People arriving!

Despite the tendency of moving from Cervera during the last years, the village has also been receiving people from both urban and rural areas. Most of the people were unaware of the existence of any project related to tackle depopulation. However, they are or have been in contact with people that come from urban areas and they are happy with the idea of new people coming to the area.

In addition to this, there are people that want to remain in the village, but they do not have the resources to stay there.

P2 “he stayed here because he had the possibility to, because catering trade is useful in the area” 38

The job issue is considered as the first handicap for coming to rural areas. In many cases the jobs offered in the village are not well enough remunerated for the training or skills

35 “Nos quejamos y nos quejamos. Pero no hay una unión para dar guerra, si nadie nos lo da lo dejamos”
36 Agenda 21 is a programme run by the United Nations (UN) related to sustainable development. It is a comprehensive blueprint of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organizations of the UN, governments, and major groups in every area. The full text was revealed at the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro on 1992. The implementation of Agenda 21 was intended to involve action at international, national, regional and local levels.
37 “La cuestión no es lo que hay, sino lo que queremos formar”
38 “Se quedó porque tuvo la posibilidad. Porque la hostelería es útil aquí”
acquired, thus the best option is to leave to the city. In other cases, vested business represents a barrier for those who want to start something new in the area.

The interviewees see themselves as friendly people and always ready to welcome newcomers in the area. When asking them about the kind of relationship they have with the newcomers they do not hesitate in saying nobody has had a problem when trying to be part of the “local community”. They do not see them as potential competitors or menace to their business.

FC3 “there could be some people that might feel assaulted... it is a question of survival. But this is only specifics cases” 39

But how do newcomers themselves experienced this? Following the personal experience of a newcomer interviewed. This interviewee arrived around 20 years ago to the area without any group or programme on which relays on.

P5 “We had to wait until we felt this was our home. People are nice here, but there is always a kind of reticence with those who come...They are not able to understand why they come here” 40

We were able to interview people that came into the area decades ago and also more recently. Summarising we could differentiate in two different categories: those who come for job purpose (generally assigned by the public administration) and those who come motu proprio. For the second group of people, normally from urban areas, the main reason is to abandon the life style they have been living since the date.

This group has been identified with a special character and sensibility to live in rural areas. After being in the village for a long period, they are able to say they feel comfortable. However, all of them recognised that integration is rather difficult. They are seen as “those from outside”, and it was very difficult for them to be part of the village

\textit{d) Summary}

During this first part of our analysis, we have analysed the personal perceptions regarding the problem of depopulation in the village. We have seen that depopulation affects daily life and is regarded as a “reasonable” consequence of living conditions in rural areas. In addition to this we have exposed the reasons why-according to the interviewees- people nowadays leave rural areas and in a brushstroke we presented the general attitude towards newcomers. In this sense we dare to say that change is the concept that would compile our ideas. A change should arise from the side of public administration and also local people. This idea will be widened in the conclusion section.

In addition to this we have identified a substantial divergence within the responses of the interviewees according to their age. Generally young people moved from the village

39 “Podría haber gente que se sintiera agredida... es cuestión de supervivencia. Pero solo son casos puntuales”

40 “Tuvimos que esperar hasta que sentimos que este era nuestro hogar. La gente es amable aquí, pero siempre existe cierta reticencia con esos que vienen... No pueden entender por qué eligen venir al pueblo”
to study or work and after a period came back. Middle-aged people interviewed have developed their life in rural areas, having a limited knowledge about daily life in urban areas. Might this difference emerge form the fact of having lived in cities?

This question will be retaken in our conclusion section as part of our debate.

6.2 Interviewing “País Románico”

In the following pages we will present the set of interviews carried out to the members of the LAG “País Románico”. We had a total of four meetings with the different people in charge of the managing of the programme. In addition to this we had the opportunity to meet the former person managing the contacts when the project starts.

This section is divided in three parts. Firstly we will analyse how the personnel of the LAG view the project “Abraza la Tierra”. Secondly and according to interviewees, we will discuss to the aim of the project and the relationship established by the newcomers and the autochthonous people. Finally, we have considered necessary to add an extra point, where to including information regarding the role played by the public administration and some other relevant points raised during the interviews.

a) “Abraza la Tierra“: Why?

The first idea of running this project comes from the need and the perception of depopulation as a curse for rural development for many of the territories in central and north Spain.

Cooperation was the key word for tackling the problem; a problem that “has gone unnoticed” by the public sphere. The LAGs participating in “Abraza la Tierra” observed a slight tendency of people from urban areas to move to rural areas. In the case of País Románico many of the assistants were also “urban migrants”, so they were aware of the need of any kind of project based on accompanying, informing and supporting people that wanted to move to rural areas.

The project is carried out thanks to the LAGs created in the framework of Rural Development policy and LEADER initiative. The acknowledgement of the problems and shortages in the area made these groups involved in depopulation and repopulation activities.

Along these years the total number of groups has increased; nowadays there are 18 LAGs participating in the activities, share experiences with other villages and groups.

The programme “Abraza la Tierra” is not officially established in the political agenda. In fact, it is an initiative raised from the local action groups. The involvement of the public public administration is noticeable when it comes to financing on approving the projects. For instance in the case of País Románico the “Consejeria de medio ambiente of Cantabria” has signed the expenditure of the house in Sobrpeña, but it is only an economic agreement. Yet today the project has a “pilot” character, a provisional or experimental character:

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41 Environmental Regional Council
42 Pictures available at Appendix IX (p.69)
P2 “either they —public administration—solve the problem of tackling a political initiative in favour of repopulation or this will be working ad hoc”\(^{43}\).

b) Newcomers and the project: how?

Usually internet is the first step taken by those who want to get in contact with the programme. The LAG asks for some general details (numbers of members coming, age, and intentions, etc) or in some cases people submit a proposal for the project or work they would like to start\(^{44}\).

They do not look to any specific profile of people in the territory; normally the people that are coming have a specific idea of what they want. They start a closer contact with those interested in coming, and as a second step they initiate a more personal relation with more details of the projects.

P1 “There is a great proportion of people who say this is nothing to do with me. There is nothing for free”\(^{45}\).

However, the people that come have a very particular idea. They already know what they want and they realise the importance of their decision. These projects, and these people, play their role in this point. As a project they are not working with the idea of giving funds, which means that the valuable material turns out to be information and support.

P3 “the project is about giving information and support. But “Abraza la tierra is a project in the field of performance of a LAG, (…) but until now we are managing the European funds for rural development” \(^{46}\)

The project \textit{per se} does not give any funds directly but they help to deal with bureaucratic requirements\(^{47}\). Therefore urban migrants likely to have economic support are those who start a project and fulfill the characteristics required by the EU, national or regional government.

c) Newcomers: dynamising the territory

Since the beginnings of the project the main idea was to promote the establishment of new population as well as fostering the economic activity in the area. The entrepreneurial character of the project has been always a point of discussion. As it is happening in many territories, the area is suffering an economic decline; in addition to this, in this area agriculture does not provide new opportunities. They do not have the possibilities to offer jobs directly.

\(^{43}\)“O se resuelve el problema de que se aborde una iniciativa política a favor de la repoblación o esto seguirá funcionando a impulsos”

\(^{44}\)Application form of the project in Appendix VIII (p.71)

\(^{45}\)Hay una gran proporción de gente que dice esto no va conmigo aquí no regalan nada”

\(^{46}\)“El proyecto es información y apoyo. Pero Abraza la Tierra esta enmarcado como proyecto de actuación dentro de un GAL(…) Hasta la fecha esta gestionando los Fondos europeos para el desarrollo rural”

\(^{47}\)Up to now País Románico is in charge of the distribution of the European funds, but yet this assignment was a matter pending.
The requirement of demanding a job project to the new comers was, indeed, a way to facilitate their settlement. However, the LAG realised this requisite could also present a barrier. In itself it is difficult to attract new population, therefore how could they dare to demand also a specific project that might be advantageous for the territory?

P2 “It is something very difficult. People that come and also come for invest. You do not give them anything; they are the ones who give us the human capital”

In this sense, they decided to widen the concept of “entrepreneurial”. The concept would include not only those who come to the territory to invest, but also those who are able to “dynamize socially” the territory.

d) About integration

How is it possible to achieve this goal? Local integration between local people and new comers is a key factor.

Therefore, they introduced for enhancing and reinforcing integration between local and newcomers, like “Nos encontramos” in the south of Cantabria. The group assumes a mediator role. However, there is a moment where the involvement of the group disappears from daily routine. Besides, there are newcomers that do not want to have anything to do with the programme and stand out of the crowd. They are not interested in sharing experiences or have any future obligation concerning the programme; however, this is the minority.

In urban areas or wider context, the limits in society are bigger and the relationships face to face are not that intense. However, in rural context the situation is different. Is this integration possible and is it indeed what is happening? They still considerer a big gap between urban and rural, and some differences that make the integration rather difficult.

P1 “People in rural areas have deeply rooted local customs”.

Furthermore there is an imaginary barrier that separates the autochthonous people from the newcomers. One of the interviewees explained this situation. In one recent meeting a woman told P2 that some neighbours were quite disappointed; they did not know some of the personnel in charge of the project they were trying to set up. One of the neighbours claimed most of them were not from the area. They were only living there since 15 years ago, but still “they were not from the area”.

According to the interviewees local people see new comers and the activities they undertake with certain skepticism. In many cases depopulation has had a “positive” effect on some local people (as they will obtain own benefit). They have turned from public spaces into their own private resource; hence new people in the territory could represent a potential menace to them. For instance stockbreeding and the land that used to be for cattle farming became “now no-man’s land” due to depopulation and the lack of farmers. As a result a scarce amount of farmers in the area have made from the

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48 “Es una cosa muy difícil. Gente que venga y que además venga a invertir, no les das prácticamente nada, ellos son los que vienen a darnos”.

49 “We meet”
land “a private issue”, hindering the new settlers from easy start of the business and even from social integration.

This simple anecdote shows the reality to which new comers have to face when they decide to go to rural areas. With no more data available it would be a mistake to generalise this kind of attitude and also to consider that all local people have a negative attitude per se. But generally they mentioned that there is a big difference culturally and socially between locals and “those from outside”. It is necessary to point out that some members of the LAG are also newcomers (they arrived years ago: until when we should consider them newcomers?). Apart from having a well knowledge about the problems or difficulties that newcomers could have, the LAG perception regarding the integration and adaptation could be also conditioned by having been newcomer once.

This difference makes the integration more troublesome. The formal network established by the programme goes beyond its own limits. The personnel interviewed do not hesitate in saying that the relationship established is more than professional: trust among people from the project and new settlers build bridges to other activities. In here the group is just a point of reference, introducing people and new settlers is the first step for establishing informal networks.

**e) The public administration**

It is also necessary to make a brief reference on how the different political layers understand the problem of depopulation, and how the relationship project-public administration could be improved. País Románico collected information of people that would like to go to rural areas and provide also information that is not available in governing bodies.

The role of the public administration was cited during the different meetings. They emphasised the importance of a higher involvement by the “official” side. They felt orphan insofar as many of the activities and projects have been undertaken without any official support (apart from the economic one).

When revising the main points of the European Rural Development policy for 2007/2013 the role of human capital became more important. In the 1st axe the measures refer to setting up of young farmers of improve human potential, and also for targeting the sustainable use of agriculture land. Following in the 2nd axe and in the 3rd axe respectively the measures refer to diversifying the rural economy, improving the quality of life or regarding training or capacity building.

However, in the “Plan estrategico nacional de desarrollo rural” of the Spanish national government no references are made to depopulation, it simply cites the question of elder population when referring to the “economic activities” and the lack of human capital in rural areas.

Descending one step at a regional level, Castilla y Leon, the question of depopulation and loss of population is mentioned in the development of the 3rd thematic axe in its

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50 “Strategic Nacional Plan for rural development 2007-2013”
The regional government recognised that the loss of population affects 79% of the municipalities during 1978-2002. So they proposed an enhancement in the basic services as well as an increase in investment in order to avoid this phenomenon.

In addition to this, they have some funds that affect this kind of projects, for instance: for the settlement of new agricultures in rural areas, a fund to compensate farmers in mountainous areas, a fund for basic services for rural population, transnational and interregional cooperation, etc. In the case of Cantabria, depopulation comes up again in the 3rd axe and it is analysed as a shortcoming for the territory. As in Castilla y Leon, they also provide some actions for activating and diversifying the economy in rural areas. As it also happens in Cantabria there is no specific policy in the programme in order to alleviate depopulation.

In spite of these measures, there is no specific attention to de-population or any other measure regarding repopulation. How is it possible to achieve this goal without formally recognising the importance of having people in rural areas?

There is dissociation between the activities of the project and the local and public administration. The public administration is an important issue in here. Due to the fact that they are established in two different regions, the procedures for settling on a place or another are different. When asking them how they were dealing with this question, P2 mentioned that they are still trying to figure out how to see the positive side of this.

P3 “We are green on that”52

In most cases this represents a problem, for instance, depending on the region the financement of project will be different.53 The fact of depending on two different regions could also be an advantage when dealing with ministries at national level.

There is a great need of including depopulation/repopulation in the public policy agenda setting, hence policy formulation should include measurements that could tackle the problem from its different dimension: economic and social. After all, these groups are working as tools for tackling a question that should be recognised by governments.

What they have claimed is the need for depopulation to be officially recognised as an important part of the political agenda “local and national government should assume depopulation as a problem and they should work with active policies”54 said P3.

f) Summarising...

In the last pages we have shed light to the importance of a LAG in the issue of repopulation. This importance is highlighted not only in administrative way, (by making easier the bureaucratic procedures when moving to rural areas) but also in the role of mediation between newcomers and the public administration and cooperation between social actors involved.

51 In the European Rural Development Policy (2007/2013) this third axe makes reference to “Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy”.
52 “Somos novatos en ese campo todavía”
53 As it was mentioned in the previous section
54 “Los gobiernos locales y nacionales deben entender la despoblación como un problema y hacer políticas activas”
Moreover, the interviewees has pointed out that it is necessary to modify the perception that the public administration have regarding depopulation and its consequences to rural areas.

Additionally, we paid special attention to the responsibility that the public administration should take and the need of a firm commitment. This compromise could be seen in special fiscal system for avoiding depopulation, rewarding this people for living in disfavoured area.

The same as with the question and reflections made during our analysis, further details about the implication of the public administration will be presented in the conclusions section.

### 6.3 The “Neorrurales”

In the last part of our empirical analysis we will present the interviews with newcomers. The total of interviews amounts to six. Although the interviewees lived in small villages in the area, the interviews were held in the Aguilar de Campoo and Mataporquera, where the Lag offices are located. These newcomers arrived in the area via project “Abraza la Tierra”. We will analyse their motivations and try to find what their characteristics are. Additionally, we will analyse their relationship with the project and some new features that came up during the interviews.

**a) Why moving?**

What is the previous life story for the new comers before arriving to rural areas? The interviewees come from urban areas, in most of the cases from big capitals. On this occasion we did not meet any new comer that came from any minor population centre in rural areas. Generally they are men and women from urban areas in their thirties that decided to stop their routine and start a new project in rural areas, normally depopulated areas.

They recognised themselves as urbanites, having developed their life in urban spaces. However, they have had contact with rural life, either for working reasons or family tradition. Hence, we could not say that they were completely unaware of the reality of rural life.

Before settling in the territory they all had well paid job, as well as a high education training, they are for instance technicians, teachers, chefs, agronomists, etc. However, we are not in a position to infer from this statement that it is applicable to all cases. As mentioned in the interviews with the LAG there is a wide range of people applying for information; skills and background are not restrictions for the LAG/project.

Directly or indirectly the interviewees had relation with the handicraft world, such as tapestry, or leather works. Nowadays, most of them are self-employed and their work has no relation with their previous jobs: farmers, assistants in a youth hostel, and teachers among others. Except for one case, the decision to come is not in connection with work; only in the case of a shepherd who choose this territory due to its specifics characteristics.
For all of them, the decision of moving from urban to rural was previously pondered. The step to move was not by chance; on the contrary they had the need to make a radical change in their lives. Usually they contact the organisation in a short period after they decide to come; once and they are sure about moving, the LAG works efficiently. The problems start when they tried to find housing as the house offers for rental is scarce and buying a house is not in their mind. This decision entails a change for them, not only in the material side but also in the affective level. They all feel a certain fear or apprehension to what is new and how the future would be. In some of the interviewees they felt they have to deal with a decline in status; moving backwards in what they achieved in life, regarding professional sphere.

P1 “Emotionally, it brings a high degree of involvement. I do not know what will happen with my partner, but at the end we will take our own road”

P6 “In my life I did achieve certain stability, and here the change has been sharp!...I am 39 years old...and I wonder...will I have time to start all over again here without feeling myself vulnerable?”

In many occasions during the interviews, the city was mentioned as the cause of many of the problem of the society. The idea of consumption is negatively perceived and so the opportunities that a city can offer nowadays; all of them emphasised that rural areas are a way to escape from anxiety in urban centres.

They feel city life is based on economic and consumption values and they want to start a project “economic consumption system” put aside.

P4 “I was tired of the routine, city is a predator and is devouring all in its surroundings”

Does it mean that they have the idea of rural idyll in their minds? They do not see themselves as too ecologic people, or alternatives, but in search for a different kind of life beyond the consumption life style.

Although they were aware of the problem of depopulation in central Spain, none of them recognised that fact as a motive to make them move to rural areas.

Although they appreciate the tranquility of rural life, they also have in mind the difficulties of living in such a territory, in terms of infrastructure, the weather and also in social terms. This is contradictory insofar as rural autochthonous people admired this life in urban areas, whereas new settlers tried to avoid staying in urban areas, in an environment they considered degraded.

b) Adaptation and integration

The facts of being in this kind of territory made them to adopt certain patterns of behaviour that, in the former situation, was unthinkable. For them life in rural areas is seen from an urban mentality, P2 “coming here we have entered in the XXI century”.

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55 “Emocionalmente requiere mucha implicación. No se que pasará con mi pareja, pero al final cada uno tomará su propio camino”
56 “Estaba cansado de la rutina de la ciudad. La ciudad es un depredador que devora con fiera todo lo que tiene a su alrededor”
57 “Viniendo aquí hemos entrado en el siglo XXI”
In this territory technology is also necessary even more than in urban areas. For two of the interviewees the use of mobile phones and even cars started when they came; for reaching a more quiet life, they have to accept technology, which, in fact, sounds quite ironic.

The idea of moving requires a high level of conviction as well as a sensibility regarding rural world, its shortages.

P7 “although we have different occupation, farmers, rural tourism we all agree on something...the special sensibility and perception towards the rural, the countryside”  

These new comers are really prepared for what they are going to face, they have seen both sides the positive and the negative, and they explore the territory before making the decision.

P1 “(...) Because this is not idyll or easy, people see this and think...oh, sheeps! But then the story changes a lot...it is necessary that people know the reality before coming”  

They pointed out the need of having a good knowledge of the territory, the possibilities you will have or not; here the role of the organisation is essential. They are all determined to accept certain difficulties or disadvantages. Although there are some areas with problems of communication, geographically speaking, they do not see the areas as isolated. Therefore, these difficulties are not linked with isolation, as P6 said “you are in a depopulated area, but you cannot say that is isolated”.

They recognise the importance of having highways, having the sea at 50 minutes, Madrid just in two hours.

Many of them wanted to embark on new business, but they did not have to face problems with communications. Besides this point, they do recognise a certain lack of opportunities in terms of leisure and social life. In addition to this the services provided in urban areas are still far from those available in the territory, for instance internet.

In this case, they have to pay “double” for having half the service. They had to surpass some barriers that should not be from their competences, dealing with companies for the service, a lot of bureaucratic hindrances that make more complicated their adaptation.

At this point we could think that the involvement of government should not only come from the investment they make, but also from the obligation to “impose” a compromise on private companies in order to act efficiently in rural areas.

Insofar as this is not happening, newcomers feel they are fighting alone; they feel the degree of involvement of local population is almost imperceptible. They recognise two different societies within the territory: the new comers and that from autochthonous

58 “Aunque cada uno tenga ocupaciones diferentes, agricultura, o casa rural o no se...coincidimos en algo y es la percepción a lo rural, al campo”  
59 “(...) Porque la gente ve esto como algo idílico, dicen ¡oh, ovejas! Pero después al historia cambia mucho...es necesario que la gente conozca la realidad antes de venir”  
60 “Estas en una zona despoblada, pero no puedes decir que está aislada”
people. It could seem that local people prefer to keep things the way they are, no changes, living with minimums, why asking for more?

P6 “there are people, and villages…but, I have the feeling that they do not mind if this one day become a ghost town”\(^{61}\).

This passive attitude is also perceived when talking about integration and adaptation in the villages. Regarding adaptation there is the distinction between those who are autochthonous and those who come from outside the village.

The interviewed newcomers think of adaptation as a more personal issue depending mostly on individuals \textit{per se}. Having all the information available, once they are familiar with the territory and they are really convinced of their decision, they will be able to adapt themselves to the environment. However, integration is another topic since in this process there are local people involved and social life is restricted to the same people.

The general opinion about local people is positive; none of them has had a problem of integration in the villages. However, local people feel certain mistrust of everything that means change, new activities and new people. They identify a high level of difficulty when trying to interact with local people, integration in the different layers of rural society is rather complicated for them. All in all, this corresponds to Halfacree’s idea of insecurity and discrimination when living radical rural lives (HALFACREE, 2007). These areas have been suffering depopulation for a long time; rural society has made them used to this situation.

Generally integration occurs within newcomers, they share the same fears, and hopes for the territory, they come from urban areas and in many cases their motives to move are the same. This brings up the point of social capital that will be developed later on. However, what kind of social capital are they creating? Is the project achieving the goal of interaction between local and newcomers? Is this their goal?

\textit{c) “Neorrurales” meeting “Abraza la Tierra”}

The first contact with the group happened just once they pondered about the possibility of moving to rural areas. First they have in mind the idea and the will to move to rural areas and to start a new project of life, and then they look for a group or initiative that may help them to settle somewhere.

The connection between the LAG is permanent and the information provided is always according to their needs. In one case, P4 told that first they got in contact with the project in another territory, but they did not offer what they were looking for in that moment. This other LAG put them in contact with País Románico whose territory was suitable.

The work of the LAG is defined as a bridge for those who have no relationship or root in rural areas, as they show newcomers the weaknesses and strengths of the territory. In a territory with these characteristics, with small villages separated by long distances, the work of the group is capital.

\(^{61}\) “Hay personas, hay pueblos...pero tengo la impresión de que a ellos no les importa si esto alguna vez se convierte en un pueblo fantasma”
P3 “you are the one responsible of making the decision, however they help when you do not have time to travel throughout Spain to find a place”

The limits of the group go beyond the professional boundaries; the group is really involved in the personal cases. This fact could have “influenced” when taking the final decision;

But is this influence strong enough to determine their decision? In all the cases the decision of moving was already taken; they provide contacts, people in the same working field, information, etc,

P5 “if people do not have things clear in mind, they do not stop their lives”

They could have settled anyway, the interviewees pointed out, but these people of País Románico opened a door for them, and made the process shorter and easier.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the organisation asks for a project for those who want to move to rural areas. None of the interviewees recognised the obligation of presenting the entrepreneurial project. Nevertheless, they recognise that moving to rural areas empty-handed is risky. All the interviewees except one, first decided to which territory they wanted to move and then start a project or a small business; just one selected the territory because it was suitable for the business he wanted to run.

They all knew in advance that the project “Abraza la Tierra” does not offer economic help directly, but acts just as a manager of the European Funds. Therefore, they know that moving to rural areas is rather complicated if you come without capital or ideas.

Even if you have your own project it is rather risky to wait for the LAG to give you money,

P1 “They work with LEADER programme and then they subside project. When you start you cannot set up a project depending on these subsides, you cannot count on this since, you do not know if you will have it”

What is next after installing? We should point out here that the group is managing, up to now, the funds of the European Union. Most of them are aware of this. For this reason, the relationship newcomer-LAG can be prolonged. However, what is the situation for those who did not applied for any kind of fund?

Officially, they do not have any monitoring programme. The work of the LAG finishes once the newcomers are installed. However, for all the interviewees the relationship with the group continued after they had settled. The “informal” side is relevant here.

P2 “we were passing through a difficult period (…) after the fourth day my wife was here, she (the manager) came with another member of the group. They want to know if we are ok, if we feel at ease; if not they would try to do their best”.

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62 “Tu eres el responsable último de la decisión, sin embargo ellos ayudan en el caso de no tener movilidad disponible para recorrer España en busca de un lugar”

63 “Si la gente no tiene las cosas claras, ellos no paran sus vidas”

64 “Ellos trabajan con el programa LEADER y te subvencionan proyectos. Desde el principio no puedes empezar un negocio dependiendo en los subsidios, no cuenten con ellos, no sabes si los tendrás o no”
Although it is not in the formal philosophy of the programme, some newcomers have obtained help for finding a job even once they arrived.

P4 “she-the manager- came to see our house, and introduced me to a man that was searching for a shepherd. After speaking to him I was really interested in his project”.

P5 “she also put me in contact with a girl who works with leather; probably we will work together in the area of Cantabria”.

This quotation serves us as a linkage to the next point. How is the relationship established by the newcomers? As mentioned above the integration within the category newcomers is easier than the integration with local population. In addition to this, the contacts provided, are generally within newcomers, and the opportunities arisen also come from them.

As P5 pointed out, the first step is to have contact with somebody that works in the same field as they do; the interviewees rarely mentioned any contact out of the “newcomer’s world”. The process of deciding, moving and adaptation to the area is slow even for those who are in the area for more than a year that is the case of P2 and P3 “the local people I know are one-off. They are people that came to the area 10 or 15 years ago...but still people from outside”.

Does it mean that the organisation should be involved also in approaching local to newcomers and vice versa? How to draw a limit in the duties of the project, the professional and the personal?

d) What is new? Recognising the value of the rural

Most of the interviewees made a division between the rural and the urban. Although they brought up the idea of the globalised world, consumption patterns and cultural homogenisation, in daily life they still could notice a great gap between both worlds; this discernment made them move to rural areas.

This awareness is in connection with the quality of life that they had in urban areas; in spite of the lack of amenities, rural areas give them the tranquility and some other opportunities not available in urban centres. They appreciate there the relationships face to face with people or closer contact with nature among others.

This appreciation goes beyond the simply cultural division. This division also entails for them a negative perception that comes from the local side. According to the new comers interviewees there is a problem of “communication” and “socialization”.

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65 “Pasábamos por una situación difícil (...) tras el cuarto día de que mi mujer estuviera aquí ella vino con otro miembro del grupo. Quieren saber si estas bien, si te sientes a gusto; si no ellos intentan hacer lo posible”

66 “Ella vino a ver la casa y después me presentó a un hombre que buscaba un pastor. Tras hablar un poco, estoy realmente interesado en su proyecto”

67 “Me puso en contacto con una chica que también trabaja el cuero. Seguramente trabajaremos juntas en el área de Cantabria”

68 “La gente local que conozco es puntual. Son personas que vinieron aquí hace 10 ó 15 años...pero igual, es gente de fuera”
The image that is projected regarding urban and rural is not the proper one. In socializing and education we perceived “the urban” as opportunity and the rural as disadvantage. This conception, culturally spread, makes the cases of these new comers as anecdote. Moving to rural areas seems to move towards isolated places, with no communication or infrastructures, back to the agriculture, etc. This feeling of isolation “should” change.

This “rarity” should be reverted in the sense of promoting mobility or changing educational values regarding the rural and the urban. The role of the public administration again comes up in this point.

The public administration should be involved in changing this negative perception of the rural as synonym of isolation and disadvantage. It is by making available the same amenities that urban citizens have. Hence, the problem of depopulation would not be problem in so far as mobility could be appreciated as a normal issue.

Another question arose during the interviews is the problem of the dwelling. As seen in the profiles and in the interviews, the majority comes without aspirations of buying a house, yet the rental offers is reduced. This is not due to a quantitative problem, but to a certain fear of the local population, and of course the implication of public administration is not as it should be.

There are a great number of houses in the territory that are neglected, but the procedures to rent it or sell it are time-consuming and tiresome. On the other hand, there are also houses that are inhabited by people that still make their lives in urban areas, and they use it for short periods of time. Is it a way to repopulate?. What is the effect in local economy?

P5 “People come, buy their house but they live in Valladolid...they come here just when they have people to locate in their house…”

In many cases, these houses are holiday’s places, or they are promoted for activities such as rural tourism, and which is enhanced by the public administration. Nonetheless, this is not an activity that fosters people to settle in the territory, dynamise social or culturally the territory.

P4 “Tourism generates unstable, insecure jobs...Precarious jobs. Am I going to move to earn a misery?”

This last statement leads us to the idea if really these new comers can be call “Neorrurales”? Do they have the same pretensions?

So far we took for granted that the term Neorrurales could be used indiscriminately. We assumed the characteristics of this new kind of migrants would be the same as Neorrurales have. However, the notion of Neorrurales does not neatly fit to the

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69 “La gente viene, compra su casa pero vive en Valladolid...viene aquí cuando tiene a gente que meter en su casa”

70 “El turismo genera trabajos inestables, inseguros...trabajos precarios. Voy a moverme para ganar una miseria?”
characteristics of the interviewees. This point will be discussed in detail in the conclusion section.

e) **Compiling ideas**

In the third part of our field work we have presented the motivations for newcomers when deciding to move to rural areas. We have made an effort to clarify which obstacles and fears they have to face when taking this decision; in this sense the social aspects have been emphasised. In addition to this, we presented the relationship established with the LAG and the project “Abraza la Tierra”, inquiring into the way this programme is, or not, useful for them.

Finally, we made special reference to the perceived value of the rural and the rural lifestyle. This issue was not part of our topic list, but as we were willing to include issues relevant for our interviewees, we consider it noteworthy. As for the previous cases, we will leave the open questions and remarks for the conclusion section.
CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL COMMENTS

7. Conclusions

7.1 Linking the concepts with field work

In the following pages we will try to summarize our research and position the findings in a theoretical context. We will follow the scheme of our theoretical framework in order to link it with the results of our empirical research.

7.1.1 The issue of depopulation

As shown in the previous pages, the interviewees perceived depopulation from two different perspectives.

On the one hand, autochthonous people focused on retaining population in rural areas. They have mainly referred to the question of depopulation as keeping people in the area. They wondered why they left and which measures could be carried out in order to prevent them from leaving. On the other hand, newcomers were more oriented to repopulating rural areas, trying to attract entrepreneurial ‘neorrurales’. So, there is a divergence in the way they have tackled the question and the solution they provide.

We also have been able to identify issues of ageing in policies dealing with depopulation. This is particularly the case with regard to cattle farming and agriculture issues. Traditionally, farmers have been a key factor in maintaining the population in rural areas. Therefore, an early retirement of the former ones with no generational shift assured, could represent a risk for rural areas. The involvement of local public administration and government is crucial here. Since recent measures, e.g. CAP, encourages early retirement, the point here is how to attract and promote younger farmers to rural areas.

Nowadays, shepherds are “on the verge of extinction”. The number of shepherds is decreasing and younger generations opt for jobs far from agriculture and cattle farming. In order to tackle this situation, one of the measures that could be undertaken concerns the professionalisation of shepherding. This could be achieving by creating shepherds schools or by working on measures for promoting local or regional shepherd associations in the sector.

Another important question is that depopulation has left rural areas without any opportunity to dynamise the territory. In this sense the LAG seeks to address the social aspect of depopulation, widening the concept of entrepreneurial. Since its beginnings the concept was understood mainly from an economic perspective. At the time, creativeness and own initiative were fundamental when moving as it was thought that the project which newcomers would be undertaking in the area should at least guarantee self-employment and be of long-term duration.

However, gradually the LAG broadened the idea and the concept of entrepreneurial. The LAG emphasised the importance for newcomers of living their daily live in the village and participate from its traditions and its relationship. The LAG understands that maintaining the village is not only about repopulating but also about creating opportunities for
people to stay in the area. The social aspect is highlighted, for instance, preserving traditions and widening relationships between newcomers and autochthonous people, enhancing collaboration between them.

7.1.2 Counterurbanisation

We need to point out that the phenomenon of counterurbanisation is rather recent, at least in Spain. For this reason, we focused our theoretical framework on studies from Northern Europe. At first sight a simple replacement from these cases could be not advisable (since there are differences between Spanish and Northern Europe rural areas), we consider that the literature contribute and generate interesting topics for discussion.

The term counterurbanisation implies “redistribution in the population settlement”, which takes for granted a distinct difference between the urban and the rural. One of the current debates in rural sociology is how big the differences between the urban and the rural actually are. In this sense some pointed that a drastically difference between the urban and rural is nonsense (BAIGORRI, 1995).

After presenting the results of our field work analysis, we observed that this gap entails different aspects (social, cultural, economical) that indeed make migration possible and viable. Interviewees admit indirectly that there is a difference between both urban and rural. These differences are connected with the shortcomings that both newcomers and autochthonous people observed in rural and urban areas.

Autochthonous people

For autochthonous people interviewed, the urban and the cities represent the opportunity to improve their life style and their spending power. Indeed, there is still a tendency that people leave the villages in the area analysed. This depopulation is influenced by causes beyond the control of migrants: labour market, infrastructures, etc. However, it seems there is also a predisposition among young people to leave the area. Staying is seen as wasting your future and is also encouraged by elder generation that still perceives the rural as backwards. This tendency has been demonstrated in recent researches. For example, Navarro Yáñez’s survey (1999) shows that, when mothers from rural areas were asked about the future of their children, the majority agrees on preferring non-agricultural work. In addition to this, another survey from Camarero (1993) shows that the parents interviewed mostly preferred to their children to go somewhere else where life is better than in the village.

So, there is a need of changing the attitude and vision concerning rural areas and the education that rural children are receiving. The understanding of why people are coming to rural areas while others are leaving is crucial. From the moment we will be able to comprehend these reasons, it will be easier to transmit a more positive valorisation of the rural to autochthonous people.

Newcomers

Newcomers perceived that rural areas and the tranquility there, represents an improvement in their life style. While, autochthonous people believed that regarding
infrastructures and communication the area is disadvantaged, the newcomers interviewed found that the area is not isolated that much.

How do newcomers experience the moving? We regard counterurbanisation as a movement (a process or pattern) from larger centres to smaller ones (see figure 3, p. 13) However, the newcomers who experienced this counterurban movement do not regard this as just a ‘process’, rather they view their migration as fuelled by an anti-urban ideology. They perceive life in cities as full of anxiety and collapse. The lesser their current ties with urban settlements are, the stronger their anti-urbanism. Nevertheless, and despite their anti-urbanism, the newcomers experienced and had to cope with a radical and drastic change in their lives when moving.

This leads to the next point: who are these people coming to rural areas? Grosso modo these migrants are young skilled people, middle aged, from capitals of provinces and well positioned in the labour world. They all shared a firm wish to be established in rural areas,–apparently- without any material reasons.

In our theoretical framework we introduced some characteristics of these newcomers, assuming that they might share the features of what is called neorrurales.

As well as neorrurales, these newcomers established contacts with people who already lived in the area. However, these connections do not have a pull effect; the decision to move to the area is already taken and it is not determined by these contacts (including the liaison with the LAG). Moreover, the newcomers interviewed first establish a plan to settle in the area and prepare their settlement well, while neorrurales are profiled as people who willing to take a risk.

The newcomers interviewed share with the neorrurales that they have a liking for handicraft and the artisan’s world and that they are self employed. On the other hand however, for these newcomers, technology becomes part of their lives since they moved. So, the break with urban lifestyle is not as evident as for the neorrurales, at least with respect with the use of modern technology.

We dare to state that there is no predominant ideological stream among the newcomers interviewed; they did not show any preferences in political leanings or at least we were not able to perceive anyone specifically. However, as neorrurales we do perceive certain claims against the attitude of the local public administration.

Since we do not have a wide sample, it could be tricky to extrapolate the neorrurales characteristics to the majority of newcomers. However, we are in the position to say that the term of newcomer is more appropriate when naming those who come to rural areas, since neorrurales entails social characteristic not suitable for every migrant that moves to rural areas.

7.1.3 Social capital

It emerged from the field work analysis that the creation of social capital was an important issue. The existence of a network in the territory influences the choice for settlement in this rural area.
But the creation of social capital is not only reduced to the LAG. We have identified that newcomers shared a set of values and motivations when deciding to move to rural areas, which forms a basis for the creation of social capital. So, how do our ideas exposed in the theoretical framework regarding social capital relate to the empirical findings?

Considering Bourdieu’s ideas first. For Bourdieu (1986) social capital is mainly composed of two features: group memberships and social networks and mutual recognition among the members of the network. In our opinion Bourdieu emphasises the opportunities and advantages that each individual member of a network has. For Bourdieu the significance of the members pass the importance of the networks per se; what counts in here is the potentialities exploited by the each individual. He argues that this solidarity among groups is possible only when there are opportunities for achieving a profit. However, we found that in both relationships - within newcomers and between newcomers-LAG- the exchanges are generated spontaneously and are not directly focused on receiving rewards.

Coleman distinguishes three main ways of how social capital is created. First, it emerges when two actors experience an obligation to give and, in return, expectation to receive. During the interviews we did not recognise any signal by which the LAG were giving information and contacts and were waiting for compensation. Secondly Coleman introduces the value of information as an advantage for the actors involved. In this sense, the value of information turns out to be crucial in the relationship LAG-newcomers. Third Coleman brings in the idea of norms and sanctions that inhibit some actions but foster others. Coleman mentions as for the other capitals, social relationships lapse if they are not maintained; expectations and obligations are wilted if there is no communication among actors. Here the importance given by the LAG when saying that there should be a direct contact and continuous communication between autochthonous and newcomers.

We consider relevant and more appropriate the vision Putnam has regarding social capital as he pays more attention to civic associations and horizontal relationships, more in relation with our research. We should point out that a small amount of newcomers do not want to have any relation with the programme and the other newcomers (although this is not the common trend). These few newcomers are not becoming part of the informal networks (contacts and associations e.g.) generated from “Abraza la Tierra”. As well as newcomers, the LAG established trust as the basis for their actions. This trust has made possible the achievement of their objectives, to develop their aims and extend the limits of the project to another LAGs interested in working to revert depopulation. Hence we take form Putnam the value bestows to trust when creating and enhancing informal networks and voluntary association.

Figure 15 exemplifies the relationship between trust and reciprocity for Putnam in the context of our field work.
We identify trust among newcomers and LAG as the key factor for settling in rural areas. Newcomers interviewed recognised that the support given by the LAG and the fact of having somebody who “relays on” was crucial in all the stages of settling: when deciding, when moving and once they were settled. This trust has created reciprocity and has favoured the creation of associations and ties among newcomers. This is seen in the common project that newcomers interviewed will start. This reciprocity at the same time reinforces the level of cooperation and trust. However, we should also take into account the above mentioned idea of Putnam regarding the importance of “taking care” of this social relationship established in order to enhance the creation and accumulation of social capital.

### 7.2 Final comments

In this final section we will compile the main conclusions and reflections obtaining from the whole research. For this purpose we will take up again the research question and the specific derived from it.

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<th>What is the influence of networking for achieving the repopulation of rural areas?</th>
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<td>1. How do the different actors involved (LAG, newcomers and autochthonous people) perceived the question of depopulation?</td>
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Depopulation is observed from different perspectives. As we have shown, autochthonous people see depopulation as a logical consequence of the current system of life. The lack of infrastructures, bad communications, lack of job opportunities are the main cause for people to leave the area. For them, therefore, the solution is to retain the population, that is, to keep people in the territory.
The vision of the LAG is conditioned by the fact that they are “newcomers” themselves (or they were years ago). As part of the project “Abraza la Tierra” the group mainly works in re-populating rural areas, not so much in activities to retain population. They do not have a fixed idea about depopulation. Furthermore, the LAG believes that it is necessary that the public administration starts to play a major role. For instance, at legislation level, it would be good to revise the state subsided housing system to the reality of rural areas (by building houses with space for storage, by restoring houses and farms. In addition to this, the LAG pays specific attention to a major involvement in agriculture and cattle farming issues. They demand facilities in installing the electrical grid in new houses, an improvement in the conduction of water supply to farms and ranching fence among others.

Finally, newcomers also think a higher degree of commitment from the side of public administration is required. This involvement would go from the infrastructure side to the education features (regarding the importance of transmitting the value of the rural and their villages to school children). The newcomers had difficulty in understanding why people leave rural areas, as they themselves wish to leave the city. They considered as well, that the “rural” is not appreciated enough and that the public administration should intervene in this issue.

We have identified that informal networks are important when new people want to settle in the territory, even more than the formal ones generated from the LAG. The close ties between newcomers and between LAG/newcomers imply a high degree of emotional support and have generated several networks and opportunities for the newcomers. This is experienced by all the newcomers interviewed.

These ties reinforce the rural identity of the newcomers; the sense of belonging (that is represented, for instance, when referring to each other as “newcomer”) cements and strengthens their identity. The characteristics of autochthonous people are also reinforced by the same mechanism. Which kind of social capital are they working with or are they creating?

This situation is generating bonding social capital, insofar as newcomers create a strong group loyalty. Should the LAG not try to generate a broader identity, by playing a role in widening rural interactions between newcomer and autochthonous people?

The ideal situation, borrowing from the ideas of Woolcock, (2000) would be to work under a system of multiple networking, combining bridging and bonding social capital. In this sense, the gap between different social sectors needs to be bridged. The actors involved would include newcomers and local autochthonous, information mediators (LAG) and private sector. It will be also necessary to include an institutional vision entailing more participation from the public administration. This last point has been claimed from all the interviewees: LAG, newcomers and autochthonous people.
As seen in Fig 16, the actual state presents the two different situations the villages are experiencing at the moment. Figure 16a represents a situation where the relationship LAG newcomers are permeable and susceptible to receive influences by external actors (e.g. public administration). The LAG is the tool that communicates public administration-newcomers.

We have seen that the communication between autochthonous people and the public administration has been distorted in recent years.
Another point to take into account is the ties between newcomers and autochthonous connection. Daily contact with the autochthonous people is separated by an “imaginary barrier” which impedes relationships and integration among both groups.

Figure 16b illustrates the LAG assuming a mediating role. This situation would be advantageous for both groups: as it would enhance communication and collaboration among them. On the one hand permeable relationships with autochthonous people would facilitate the process of settlement to newcomers. In this sense, it would be easier to undertake a new business since newcomers will be working with people from the area (autochthonous people) that already are aware of the advantages and disadvantages in the territory. On the other hand, autochthonous people would be able to receive and work under different approaches, being inspired by the ideas from people from urban areas. In addition to this, autochthonous people would also have the opportunity to embark on new projects and be opened up to innovative ideas.

In order to achieve this “goal”, permanent communication should be present. We have already demonstrated that both groups, newcomers and autochthonous people, agree on the lack of infrastructures and deficits in the territory. Moreover, both of them recognised the need of having a more involved public administration and the importance of acting together.

What could be the desirable circumstances? Figure 16c shows us how these two different groups might become one entity: rural society. In this scenario, the newcomers will progressively become part of what we have called “rural society” The role of the LAG would remain in the background and would be temporal. They would work in the earlier stages of newcomers’ integration, helping when bringing new ideas and urban influences that could affect positively in the area.

### 7.2.1 Countering depopulation

Depopulation is affecting Spanish rural areas since decades. The importance of this phenomenon has been highlighted by different organisations and programmes. Depopulation is not only a problem that affects rural areas environmentally, socially and economically. Depopulation poses a threat in many aspects and it has created disparities between areas. The maintenance of welfare services in depopulated area is a particularly urgent issue. But depopulation also leads to the closure and concentration of private services normally in the major villages.

The case of “Abraza la Tierra” is one example of how this question should be tackle immediately. We recognised the importance of having a higher commitment from the side of the public administration. However, the main aim of this research was to study the influence of networking while fighting depopulation.

In light of the results we are in the position of stating that the influence of having a LAG in depopulated rural area is positive. This influence starts when newcomers are about to make their decision. Although the LAG has no pro-active role in attracting population to rural areas, the LAG helps them to settle down. The information and the contact given by the LAG is a valuable asset for newcomers. Moreover, we have observed that the relationship established between LAG-newcomers goes beyond the professional
boundaries generating a favourable context for newcomers and facilitating their adaptation process.

To answer our research question (what is the influence of networking for achieving the repopulation of rural areas?), we could state that the field work analysis shows that this support tip the balance in favour of moving to one particular rural area rather than another.

7.3 Recommendations for Research Agenda

After finishing the research analysis some others questions and point of discussion arisen.

- The urban rural issue. The existence of the urban rural fringe has been a matter of discussion for many authors such as Baigorri (1995) or Pahl (1966); generating controversy on the matter. During this research we have seen that this “gap” is still in the mind of villagers and “urban citizens”; the difference is perceived by both. An in-depth research regarding this topic and how overcome this barrier would be appropriate to understand why there is still a migration movement in both directions: urban to rural and viceversa.

- Migration is understood as a complex phenomenon. As mentioned, we did not take into account the migratory movement coming from other countries to Spanish rural areas. We consider interesting to research the effect that networking could have not only in Spanish newcomers, but also in attracting non-Spanish migrants.

- From the study emerges the need of including the issue of re-population in policy agenda. A better understanding of the characteristic of newcomers is convenient to achieve an appropriate policy that assures the settlement of newcomers.

- The importance of having a more involved public administration regarding repopulation process has been stressed during the research from all the interviewees. We consider that future studies should be included the voice of the public administration. In this sense it would interesting for the public administration how to make their communities and territories more attractive for young people in order for them not to leave. In this sense how could be the role of the public administration for involving young people in the future of their villages?

- The importance of networking in rural development has been highlighted by many authors like Murdoch (2000). Networking has been identified in this research like a tool to revert depopulation. An interesting point of discussion would be how informal networks arisen from the emergence of formal networks are able to reinforce identities and particularly “rural identity”. This leads us to another question: could we speak in terms of rural identity of rural life style?


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WEBSITES/REGULATIONS/INFORMATION FROM LAG

*Websites*

• Website from the programme Abraza la Tierra [www.abrazalatierra.com](http://www.abrazalatierra.com) Retrieved June 2008
• Website from the LAG País Románico [www.paisromanico.com](http://www.paisromanico.com) Retrieved June 2008
• Website from Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) [www.ine.es](http://www.ine.es) Retrieved March 2008

*Regulations*

• Convenio de colaboración de la Consejería de Medio Ambiente de Cantabria y País Románico. Abril 2006
• Convenio de colaboración de la Consejería de Medio Ambiente de Cantabria y País Románico. Enero 2008

*Information provided by the LAG*

• Memoria de Actividades y proyecto de continuidad de País Románico/Abraza la Tierra.
• Datos demográficos de municipios País Románico
APPENDIX I “Categorising the interviewees”.

Personal Interviews

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>From 25 to 45 years</td>
<td>LAG worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>More than 45 years</td>
<td>LAG worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>From 25 to 45 years</td>
<td>LAG worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>More than 45 years</td>
<td>Autochthonous people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>From 25 to 35 years</td>
<td>Autochthonous people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>From 25 to 35 years</td>
<td>Autochthonous people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>From 35 to 45 years</td>
<td>Autochthonous people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>More than 45 years</td>
<td>Autochthonous people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>From 25 to 35 years</td>
<td>Autochthonous people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>From 25 to 35 years</td>
<td>Newcomers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>From 35 to 45 years</td>
<td>Newcomers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>From 35 to 45 years</td>
<td>Newcomers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>From 25 to 35 years</td>
<td>Newcomers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>From 25 to 35 years</td>
<td>Newcomers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>From 35 to 45 years</td>
<td>Newcomers</td>
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Focus group

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>From 25 to 35 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>From 35 to 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>From 25 to 35 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>More than 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>More than 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>More than 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>More than 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>From 25 to 35 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>More than 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>More than 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>From 35 to 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>From 35 to 45 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX II “Topic list for interviews and focus group”

Autochthonous people
- **Depopulation in rural areas**
  - Attractiveness of the area
  - Rural exodus ➔ Why?
    ➔ Who is responsible?
- Importance of local association when stopping depopulation

**Repopulating rural areas**
- Urban exodus ➔ Why?
- The future ➔ Newcomers

**The territory**
- Isolated or depopulated?
- Quality of life

Newcomers
- **Depopulation in rural areas**
  - Attractiveness of the area
  - Rural exodus ➔ Why?
    ➔ Who is responsible?
- Importance of local association when stopping depopulation

**Repopulating rural areas**
- Urban exodus ➔ Why?
- Potential of the rural ➔ Back to the origins (rural idyll)

**The territory**
- Isolated or depopulated?
- Quality of life

**The programme**
- Awareness of the programme

**The moving**
- When/why?
- Previous contacts with the rural
- Settling ➔ Difficulties
  ➔ Facilitating ➔ the LAG
  ➔ Linkages with local people

**LAG**

**The programme**
- History
- Achievements/challenges
- Profiles of applicants

**Depopulation in rural areas**
- Attractiveness of the area
- Rural exodus ➔ Why?
  ➔ Who is responsible?
- Importance of local association when stopping depopulation

**Repopulating rural areas**
- Urban exodus ➔ Why?

**The territory**
- Isolated or depopulated?
- Quality of life
# APPENDIX III “LAGs involved in Abraza la Tierra”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>LAG</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aragón</strong></td>
<td>Huesca:</td>
<td>CEDER SOMONTANO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teruel:</td>
<td>ADIBAMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AGUJAMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ASIADER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OMEZYMÁ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zaragoza:</td>
<td>ADEFO CINCO VILLAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Castilla- La Mancha</strong></td>
<td>Guadalajara:</td>
<td>MOLINA DE ARAGÓN- ALTO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TAJO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comunidad de Madrid</strong></td>
<td>Madrid</td>
<td>GALSINMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Castilla y León.</strong></td>
<td>Salamanca</td>
<td>ADECCOCIR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ASAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Segovia:</td>
<td>CODINSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soria:</td>
<td>ADEMA, ASOPIVA PROYERSO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TIERRAS DEL CID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valladolid</td>
<td>TIERRA DE CAMPOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zamora</td>
<td>ADISAC LA VOZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cantabria (y Castilla y León)</strong></td>
<td>Cantabria, Palencia y Burgos:</td>
<td>PAÍS ROMÁNICO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Part of the Project since 2007)*
## APPENDIX IV “Abraza la Tierra since 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welcome Offices</th>
<th>Contact Established</th>
<th>Visit to territories</th>
<th>Settled Families[^1]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADECOIR</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7 (20 people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADEFO CINCO VILLAS</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADEMA</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADIBAMA</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8 (28 people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADISAC LA VOZ</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11 (34 people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGUJAMA</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASAM</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>21 (60 people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASIADER</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5 (15 people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASOPIVA</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CODINSE</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30 (52 people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALSINMA</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOLINA DE ARAGÓN-ALTO TAJO</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMEZYMMA</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26 (66 people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAÍS ROMÁNICO</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>21 (63 people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROYERSO</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMONTANO</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIERRA DE CAMPOS</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6 (10 people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIERRAS SORIANAS DEL CID</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^1]: In some cases the data available was split by people.

Source: Adapted from “Resultados de Abraza la tierra” (December 2007)
APPENDIX V “Population Density: area of País Románico”

“Population Density País Románico. Inhab/km²”

Source: own elaboration, data from “País Románico”

“Population density: Montaña Palentina. Inhab/km²”

Source: own elaboration, data from “País Románico”
“Population density: Campoo-Los Valles. Inhab/km²”

Source: own elaboration, data from “País Románico”

“Population density: Sedano-Las Loras. Inhab/km²”

Source: own elaboration, data from “País Románico”
## APPENDIX VI “País Románico since 2005”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of members of the family</th>
<th>Settled in…</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Province of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Celada Marlantes (Campoo de en Medio)</td>
<td>Campoo los Valles</td>
<td>Cantabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Entrambasaguas (Campoo de Suso)</td>
<td>Campoo los Valles</td>
<td>Cantabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Espinosa (Valderredible)</td>
<td>Campoo los Valles</td>
<td>Cantabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mata de Hoz (Valdeolea)</td>
<td>Campoo los Valles</td>
<td>Cantabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(two families)</td>
<td>Mataporquera (Valdeolea)</td>
<td>Campoo los Valles</td>
<td>Cantabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reinosa (Reinososa)</td>
<td>Campoo los Valles</td>
<td>Cantabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reinosilla (Valdeolea)</td>
<td>Campoo los Valles</td>
<td>Cantabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>San Andrés de los Carabeos (Valdeprado del Río)</td>
<td>Campoo los Valles</td>
<td>Cantabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Santa María de Hito (Valderredible)</td>
<td>Campoo los Valles</td>
<td>Cantabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>San Martin de Valdelomar (Valderredible)</td>
<td>Campoo los Valles</td>
<td>Cantabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sobrepeña (Valderredible)</td>
<td>Campoo los Valles</td>
<td>Cantabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Villota de Elines (Valderredible)</td>
<td>Campoo los Valles</td>
<td>Cantabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alar del rey (Alar del Rey)</td>
<td>Montaña Palentina</td>
<td>Palencia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cezura (Pomar de Valdivia)</td>
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<td>Palencia</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Matamorosca (Aguilar de Campoo)</td>
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<td>Palencia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (two families)</td>
<td>Puentetoma (Aguilar de Campoo)</td>
<td>Montaña Palentina</td>
<td>Palencia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rueda de Pisuerga (Cervera de Pisuerga)</td>
<td>Montaña Palentina</td>
<td>Palencia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>San Mamés de Zalima (Salinas de Pisuerga)</td>
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<td>Palencia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vallejo de Orbó (Brañosera)</td>
<td>Montaña Palentina</td>
<td>Palencia</td>
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</table>

Source: Adapted from “Resultados de Abraza la tierra” (December 2007)
### APPENDIX VII “País Románico: demographic data”

<table>
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<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Inhabitants</th>
<th>Population Density Inh/KM²</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campoo-Los Valles (11 municipalities)</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Campoo de En medio</td>
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<td>Santiurde de Reinosa</td>
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<td>Pesquera</td>
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<td>San Miguel de Aguayo</td>
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<td>Campoo de Yuso</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Rozas de Valdearroyo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valderredible</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valdeprado del Río</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sedano-Las Loras (9 municipalities)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Rebolledo de la Torre</td>
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<td>362</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Basconcillos del Tozo</td>
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### ÁREA DE INTERÉS Y CONSULTA

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APPENDIX IX “Field work in pictures”

“Logo Abraza la tierra”

“Logo País Románico”

“País Románico in Mataporquera: main entrance”
“País Románico en Mataporquera: office”

“País Románico and Landscape: Montaña Palentina”

“Romanesque church: San Salvador de Cantamuda, Palencia”
“Reservoir in Aguilar de Campo”

“Farming tools: Rueda de Pisuerga”

“Typical Houses: Rueda de Pisuerga”
“Wellcoming newcomers: the house in Sobrepeña”