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The Context of Rural–Urban Relationships in Finland, France, Hungary, The Netherlands and Spain

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ABSTRACT *This paper presents a comprehensive view of the empirical research findings concerning rurban relationships in different European countries (Finland, France, Hungary, the Netherlands and Spain), through two types of rurban territories: those that are placed close to (or included in) a metropolitan area and those that are close to (and influenced by) an important tourist area or place. Its main aim is to show the diversity of European experiences with regard to urban pressure in this type of areas, highlighting the socio-economic and institutional contexts in explaining similarities and differences between five countries. The results will review the various meanings of ‘rural’ and ‘rural-ity’ in different European contexts and how the study areas combine the characteristics of a rural and an urban area. Moreover, we will see that urban pressure is not perceived as a negative process by many but, rather, the opposite. Further, the multi-functionality of rural areas has often implied an excessive focus on new external urban demands in detriment of enhancing other traditional functions. Given these situations, institutions do not always provide efficient responses to changing rurban areas.*

KEY WORDS: Urban pressure in rural areas, rural planning and development, rural goods and services, rurban areas in Europe

Introduction

Most development theories and practices have focused on either ‘urban’ or ‘rural’ issues with little consideration of the interrelations between the two (Tacoli, 1998, p. 147). Moreover, the issue of urban pressure on rural areas has been widely studied, but from the urban territories’ point of view (Barrère *et al.*, 1988; Berry, 1976; Lefebvre, 1968; Lehrer, 1994; McKenzie, 1996; Van den Berg & Kaassen, 1987). Regional and economic studies until the 1980s focused on exploring strategies to diminish economic disequilibria between urban and rural areas, of which industrialization and urbanization were key components. Urban–rural

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relations used to be regarded in terms of urban centres' capacities to provide rural areas with urban goods and services; in this context, the main objective perceived by the rural population would be to get access to urban resources and to achieve 'urban' standards. However, since the late 1980s, rural areas have recovered their traditional status as suppliers of rural goods and services (RGS) for urban areas. The main element in this new situation is the fact that rural areas own exclusive resources and (public) goods that cannot be obtained elsewhere and that are in great demand in nearby urban areas. This situation goes some way towards restoring an 'urban' dependence on rural areas which existed prior to the globalization of markets, in which rural areas were the main suppliers of raw material and agricultural products to urban areas.

The rural hinterland of metropolitan or urban areas is not city 'appendages', but it is integral to the development processes of a city region. It means that if development does not happen in the rural area, then the consequences spread out through the whole region (Hoggart, 2005a, 2005b). This observation has been integrated in the principles of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), which also specifies that only a basic balance in rural-urban relationships, regarding the respective development dynamic in both rural and urban areas, gives the key to improve the competitiveness of regions outside the European core (Commission of the European Communities, 1999).

In this paper, we will try to address some questions that explore a more equitable rural-urban relation. How do rural areas react to urban pressure? What dynamics are generated by urban pressure in rural territories? To what extent do rural territories benefit from this rural-urban relationship? We attempt to address these questions by using the empirical results of 10 case studies of rural areas facing urban pressure. The set of case studies covers areas in the Netherlands, Spain, Hungary, Finland and France. In each of these five countries, a rural area under pressure from cities nearby and a rural area under tourist pressure have been studied.

We will focus on areas that still maintain some typically rural characteristics but also present urban characteristics due to the close physical, economic and social interconnections with a major city. This is the case of rural territories that are included in or are near metropolitan and urban areas. Given this particular situation, it would be better to refer to these spaces as rurban spaces, what other authors call 'plannings last frontier' (Gallent *et al.*, 2006a) or 'urban-rural fringe' (Gallent *et al.*, 2006b; McKenzie, 1996) or 'transitional' spaces (Weaver & Lawton, 2001). The type of spaces we will focus on differ from Sieverts's (2002) idea of *Zwischenstadt*, in the sense that he refers to urbanized landscapes or landscaped city, which are spaces neither traditionally urban nor traditionally rural, and often geographically located between the two as well. Rurban spaces are basically defined by their proximity to big cities and by the fact that they are affected by rapid and quite aggressive processes of land occupancy and the substitution of functions; however, they still maintain important rural qualities. Rural areas being under tourist pressure are also highly influenced by 'urban' features because of the effects of urban-type growth (second homes) and because of the presence of (urban) tourists and visitors.

We structure this paper around three main sections. The first one dealing with the dynamics of urban pressure and the features of rurban areas is based on desk-work and interviews done in the 10 study areas (Andersson *et al.*, 2003; Esparcia *et al.*, 2003; Kovách *et al.*, 2003; Mathieu *et al.*, 2003; Overbeek and Vader, 2003). The

desk-work is two-fold: on the one hand, exploring the existing bibliography dealing with the research topic at a European, national and regional perspective; on the other hand, gathering specific data related to the selected study areas. Interviews with key informants in each of the areas (a total of 100 interviews, 10 per area) aimed at obtaining well-founded information on structures and actors, processes and relations, conflicts and opportunities related to land uses and new functions of the rural areas. Informants came from a variety of spheres and areas of knowledge and practice. On the one hand, there were (internal) actors originating from the rural area itself, able to provide a more territory/rural-based perspective; we talked to representatives of local authorities, local entrepreneurs, project managers, and non-profit associations. On the other hand, (external) actors who had some links to the rural areas, able to provide well-founded knowledge and points of view from ‘the urban side’ were interviewed; within this group, we approached academics, technicians working for public administrations, practitioners, non-profit structures and chambers of commerce.

A second section of the paper reflects on the potential of RGS and the formal mechanisms to deal with urban pressure. From bibliography and the information gathered through the interviews, we will consider opportunities and instruments available for rural areas to manage urban pressure and reap increasing benefits from them. In this sense, RGS linked to nature and the landscape can be effective instruments for the promotion of better conditions and new opportunities for this type of territories, and also for the enhancement of public goods in general.

Finally, to complement the second section, we will reflect on the formal mechanisms to deal with urban pressure.

Rurban Areas Today: Urban Pressure and the Implications for the Development of Rural Areas

There is not a common and unique definition of rurality or rural area in Europe (Briquel & Collicard, 2005). In fact, there has never been one, since interpretations have varied considerably over time (Mathieu, 1990, 1998). There are currently different ‘ruralities’ or different ‘rural realities’ in Europe: prosperous rural areas that benefit from a privileged location for attracting external capital, isolated rural areas whose economies are based on the exploitation of natural resources for tourism, rural areas which in spite of different types of actions and grants have not managed to reverse negative demographic and economic trends, etc.

The growing social demand for open spaces as part of the contemporary urban functional space implies that the traditional definition of ‘urban’, based on building space, must be changed. Functional limits for urban territories must consider individual mobility, which means that city boundaries have expanded during the twentieth century and have surpassed the administrative frontiers (Nello & Muñoz, 2005).

The attention to rural and urban relations in literature has been moderate, but it allows us to highlight two main characteristics in the way rural and urban areas are considered. On the one hand, there is a quite generalized acceptance of the rural–urban continuum, where there is an increasing gradation of rural realities in an increasingly urbanized space. On the other hand, cultural and symbolic dimensions of rurality, which have developed within the urban imagery, are added to socio-economic criteria, and they contribute to a better understanding of rural territories, while favouring more accurate approaches and actions in

these areas (Cloke, 1995; Entrena, 1998; Murdoch & Pratt, 1993; Rinaldi, 2004). Despite these general characteristics, one needs to acknowledge that the different historical evolutions in rural areas, the particular influences of peasant and rural studies, and the current socio-economic dynamics in the European regions introduce different appreciations in the way urban pressure and rural–urban relations are understood in the different areas [studied].

At first glance, urban pressure could be regarded as a negative process. In fact, this concept may have an intrinsically negative connotation, especially in some countries or contexts where urbanization and land speculation processes are a hot topic in social and political spheres (Table 1). However, the analysis of different areas in Europe has come to question this departure point, and indeed urban pressure is perceived differently—and not necessarily in negative terms—by diverse actors, especially by ‘rurals’.

In the abundant rural–urban French literature, ‘urban pressure’ has not been a major issue, which this has been more dominated by the dichotomy between those arguing for an irremediable urbanization of the countryside [in the way it was postulated by Lefebvre (1968)], and those emphasizing the diversity of rural spaces. Among the latter, it was possible to identify two theoretical positions. As Mathieu (1990, 1998) puts it, the first position focused on the variation in time and space of the representations of rural and urban space, and of their inter-relationships; these variations depended on the positive or the negative value given to rural and urban attributes and were linked to the idea of crisis. The second position focused on the observation of changes in the composition of local societies and the definition of new ‘social/space’ types (Mathieu *et al.*, 2003). This second discourse includes the analysis of peri-urban rural areas near big towns, which differ from medium-sized and small towns, tourist and protected areas and rural low density areas.

The ‘peri-urban’ concept does not have a universal usage, nor is there exactitude in its meaning (Hoggart, 2005a). Sometimes, it is used as a synonym of ‘rural–urban fringe’, or zones around the edge of built-up urban areas. In the countries we have analysed, there are also some differences in the use of this concept.

The ideological framework that dominated the French rural–urban debate also had a key influence on the Spanish theoreticians of rural and peri-urban areas (Gómez, 1987). However, as in the French case, it seems that urban pressure has not been a central issue in academic, social and political terms until recent times when, promoted by some (urban and rural) interest groups, there

Table 1. Different sources of urban pressure and their impacts

Source	Urban pressure	Effect on
(1) Smaller households, more homes/households, migration due to push cities, migration due to pull rural areas	Direct: more buildings (houses and businesses)	Metropolitan areas: loss of rural landscape, more tax payers. Tourist areas: rural landscape becomes coloured, economic development
(2) Increased mobility	Indirect: more physical infrastructure	Accessibility, fragmenting the green landscape, more noise
(1) + (2)	Result: increase in inhabitants, tourists and day trippers	Supply of services

has been renewed interest in the new processes and relationships introduced by urbanization processes in rural areas, and especially in the relationship with the natural environment. Previously, only some studies raised the issue of the impact of suburbanization processes in the evolution of agricultural land surrounding major cities in Spain during the 1980s (Entrena, 2005; Gómez, 1987; Ugalde, 1985). However, as in the French case, peri-urban areas and processes were never analysed from the perspective of people living in these areas or considering the sustainable development discourse.

In the Netherlands, the situation is somewhat different from what has been described above. In the last half of the twentieth century, representations of the Dutch countryside were not so much connected with rural living, but more with an efficiently organized agricultural sector (De Haan, 2001, cited in Overbeek & Vader, 2003, p. 9). In fact, agriculture is the main land consumer in this country, and for many years, agricultural and urban functions were highlighted. This view seems to be shifting towards a greater emphasis on aesthetic and consumptive values of rural spaces, and this has resulted in a higher public and societal emphasis on the need to enlarge nature and water storage areas while reducing agricultural and urban uses. In conceptual terms, there is an emphasis on the need to explore rural–urban forms of integration and there is an increasing adoption of discourses concerning *networks*, *ecosystems*, *local identity* and *real estate* (Overbeek & Vader, 2003).

With the exception of ‘shore protection’, which is a main issue in the Finnish context, urban pressure has not been a major issue in Finland. In fact, the urban expansion of the only large city in Finland, Helsinki, was not a major issue for discussion. The reason for this can be found in the symbolic separation of two different ‘discursive landscapes’ (Häkli, 1999; Osborne, 2001): one linked to the Finnish-speaking urban residents and the other associated with the Swedish-speaking rural residents (Andersson *et al.*, 2003). Considering this separation, the former have moved the city frontiers into the rural space as if going into virgin land, but in reality they have invaded the discursive universe of the Swedish speakers. This ‘invasion’ was the principal reason for a debate in the Swedish linguistic community but not in the Finnish, and it is only more recently that a more generalized and intensive discussion has taken place in and between the two communities.

The Hungarian situation with regard to the urban pressure issue does not differ much from what has been described above. In Hungary, urban discourses to explain rural processes and rural–urban relations prevail, while rural societies have not been able to develop an effective ideology to counteract urban pressure and these urban-dominant ideologies (Kováč *et al.*, 2003). Regionalization, modernization, suburbanization and ‘Europeanization’ discourses and theories converge in a context where ‘rural’ has a negative connotation, and where, on the one hand, increasing urbanization is justified to achieve development and meet EU standards and, on the other hand, there is a demand (also from the EU) for a greater emphasis on the preservation of natural spaces.

In general terms, and contrary to the views defended by sustainability, eco-feminism (Merchant, 1997) and livelihood discourses (Scoones, 1998), urban sprawl into rural areas is also regarded as a ‘natural’ and even positive process by both urban and rural stakeholders. Cities in metropolitan areas or mass tourism areas have gradually expanded and this has been accepted as a ‘normal’ process, that is, as an evolutionary process where city extension and

urbanization is a natural condition of growth and development. What is more, some actors, in both rural and urban areas, would even defend that 'rural' areas were expecting this new condition in order to improve their development opportunities. However, this urban sprawl hides different household motivations (Mitchel, 2004). It is important to take account of the different motivations that lead actors to move from urban to rural locations in order to obtain a better understanding of the relationships which exist in these spaces, and the potential for more balanced associations between urban and rural interests (Renkow, 2003).

When defining rural areas, symbolic limits have become very important (Hoggart & Buller, 1987). Rural areas are no longer linked solely to farming activities, but to many other functions and symbolic meanings. Rural areas are defined by using different mental constructs that vary from person to person. These constructs are not the same among urban and rural stakeholders: while the former tend to link rural areas to an ideal (peace and quiet, the countryside, nature, authenticity, etc.), the latter link them instead to their own experience in the rural area (means of earning a living such as farming and agriculture, loss of population and services, etc.). The concept of *rurality* is also different among the different areas in Europe and also among the different perspectives, from the quantitative focus to the post-modern emphasis on 'difference' (Hoggart *et al.*, 1995).

The mix of the two types of constructs pointed out before (the ideal and the 'lived') helps to shape rural areas as multi-functional areas where traditional and new functions converge. Rural areas that are close to urban centres are highly multi-functional, not only in terms of developing activities which complement traditional farming, but also in terms of developing completely new functions (Arias, 2003). Examples of activities that have evolved through changes in regard to traditional modes concern organic farming, processing local resources, agri-tourism and the development of new farming techniques and products (e.g. greenhouses, extensive one-crop farming, tree and flower farming, etc.). By taking advantage of existing local resources and the proximity to urban markets, new activities could, however, replace traditional ones and become more profitable for the rural economies in the short term. Such new activities may include the development of residential or industrial areas, recreational areas and services (e.g. golf courses, restaurants) and the promotion of outdoor sports and activities based on the countryside (fishing, canoeing, cycling, walking, fruit picking, etc.) (Butler *et al.*, 1997).

Rurban Study Areas: General Features

Rural areas are increasingly expected to provide new RGS and a variety of landscapes other than the production of food and raw materials for urban areas. In this respect, relationships between rural and urban territories need to be reconsidered, especially the relations concerning the preservation and development of the rural landscape. These issues have been explored through the analysis of 10 selected study areas in the Netherlands, Spain, Hungary, Finland and France. The study areas illustrate the processes, opportunities and threats affecting rural areas as a consequence of increasing and intense relationships with surrounding urban areas and urban demands.

Two case study regions have been chosen in each country: one is a rural area close to a metropolitan area and beyond its influence and the other is an amenity or tourism area placed near a seashore or a lake area with a high intensity of

tourism development. The selected metropolitan areas are those of Helsinki, Paris, Budapest, Amsterdam–Utrecht–The Hague–Rotterdam and Valencia. The tourist study areas are: Åboland, Pays de Caux, Lake Balaton and Valley of Arts, Zeeuwse Eilanden and Marina Alta.

Some statistical indicators of the case study areas show that these are quite diverse in their rural backgrounds and population densities (Table 2). As a consequence, the study could benefit from the opportunity to explore and compare urban pressure on rural areas and rural–urban relationships in different territorial contexts.

All the study areas are experiencing changes to the green landscape caused partly by strong demand for RGS from urban consumers (e.g. land for residential or recreative use), but also partly by other socio-economic, structural or policy factors that may affect the areas. For example, in the Vexin Français and Camp de Túria, the traditional farming landscape has been characterized by a system of smallholdings. In recent years, there has been an evolution towards large, highly mechanized farms, while the number of smallholdings has fallen drastically.

The increase in the number of houses in rural areas owned by urban families willing to live outside the city is transforming the rural landscape in areas close to metropolitan areas, especially if we take into account that: (i) usually, these houses are located in the most attractive and/or the most accessible spots; (ii) very often, the residential function competes with traditional forms of production, such as crop farming, animal farming and forestry, and the higher level of profitability of the former has accelerated a dramatic reduction in other activities; (iii) moreover, competition may also affect the current and potential collective use of areas (e.g. for leisure), which are now in private hands; and (iv) finally, in some

Table 2. Area, population size and population density of the RURBAN case study areas

	Year	Area (km ²)	Population size (*1000)	Population density (population/km ²)
<i>Finland</i>				
Metropolitan area: Helsinki region	2004	2388	240	100
Tourist area: Åboland region	2004	1567	23	14
<i>France</i>				
Metropolitan area: Vexin Français	1999	767	264	343
Tourist area: Pays de Caux	1999	685	117	175
<i>Hungary</i>				
Metropolitan area: Budapest agglomeration	2003	180	120	60/240 ^a
Tourist area: Valleys of Arts	2003	79	85	69
Tourist area: Lake Balaton	2003	56	5	93
<i>The Netherlands</i>				
Metropolitan area: Oost Zuid-Holland	2003	500	323	645
Tourist area: Zeeuwse Eilanden	2003	1072	207	256
<i>Spain</i>				
Metropolitan area: Camp de Túria	2001	815	106	126
Tourist area: Marina Alta	2001	220	19	80

Source: Esparcia and Buciega (2005) and Overbeek and Terluin (2006).

^aFor Pilisvörösvár and Bicske subregions, respectively.

cases (e.g. the study areas of Finland and Spain), the spread of housing is taking place in a rather anarchic (i.e. unplanned) way. Moreover, we must also take into account the fact that residential and industrial development has generally been encouraged by the existence or development of good transport networks, especially roads, and that this has also been one of the main causes of changes in the rural landscape. It appeared that the case study areas did not respond to urban pressure in the same way: they may follow different strategies and patterns.

Pressure on Rural Areas

Rural Areas Under Pressure from Metropolitan Areas

The Dutch metropolitan study area (Oost Zuid-Holland) belongs to the densely populated conurbation of the 'Randstad'. The area presents a typical picture of Dutch man-made landscapes: polders, peat meadows and lakes under sea level. Its plot structure, with long narrow strips of land and ditches, can be said to be unique. Due to its good accessibility (central location), its openness and the rural landscape, the area attracts people and firms from the surrounding cities.

The Spanish metropolitan study area (Camp de Túria) is included in the second ring of the metropolitan area of the city of Valencia. It is located on the coastal plain, within a fertile, irrigated area that has traditionally been a very important production centre for fruit and vegetables in Spain. Part of the area lies inland where other kinds of Mediterranean-type crops (e.g. olive trees, almond trees, vineyards) predominate due to drier conditions. Some of the Camp de Túria municipalities are included in the Sierra Calderona Natural Park catchment area.

In the Hungarian metropolitan study area (Budapest agglomeration), five settlements in two different counties and subregions have been studied. The first county, Pest, surrounds the city of Budapest. In Pest, we examined the Piliscsaba subregion. The other county, Fejér, is slightly further from Budapest and includes the Bicske subregion.

The Finnish metropolitan study area (Helsinki region) is located in Southern Finland, on the coast of the Gulf of Finland. The region is thus connected with the Baltic Sea and through this with the global waterways. The natural and rural landscape in the Helsinki region is characterized by fields, forests, lakes and rocks in the inner and northern parts of the region. The southern areas are endowed with seashore, juts of land and numerous islands.

The French metropolitan study area (Vexin Français) is located north-west of the Ile-de-France region. It is one of the most important farming regions in the Parisian Basin. This area includes the Natural Regional Park of the Vexin Français and the new township syndicate of Cergy-Pontoise.

Over the last 10–20 years, two processes, suburbanization and counter-urbanization, have developed in urban areas in America and Europe (Perry *et al.* 1986). Suburbanization is:

'the creation of residential areas and, to some extent, industry at the edge of the city. The term suburb usually indicates an area of houses set apart, and in open spaces. *Suburbanisation* in Britain began with the development of mass transport systems: railways, trams and trolley buses, motorbuses and then mass car ownership, all of which made possible the separation of work and home. It is aided by decentralising forces within the

city: higher local taxes, pressure on space, natural increase and congestion and pollution, together with relatively cheap land and higher amenity at the edge of the city, decentralisation of industry and the freedom of foot-loose industries from locational constraints.’ (Mayhew, 2004)

On the other hand, *counter-urbanization* is:

‘the movement of population and economic activity away from urban areas. The push factors include: high land values, restricted sites for all types of development, high local taxes, congestion and pollution. The pull factors offered by small towns are just the reverse: cheap, available land, clean, quiet surroundings and high amenity. Improvements in transport and communications have also lessened the attractiveness of urban centres, and commuters are often willing to trade off increased travel times for improved amenity. Furthermore, with the ageing of populations in the West, many no longer need to travel to work.’¹

All areas under study have experienced marked population growth over the last decade (Table 3), caused by large migration flows and an exodus of population from big cities to the surrounding areas (suburbanization and counter-urbanization). These processes had already started in the main metropolitan areas in the late 1970s (e.g. Paris, London, Madrid, Amsterdam, Turin, etc.) and gradually spread to the other main urban areas in the 1990s. In Hungary, during the post-communist period, the double process started later.

A number of different causes lie behind the growth of rural areas surrounding major urban centres. The increase in first homes (and to a lesser extent, second homes) is directly linked to the attractiveness of rural areas in terms of natural and social values, accessibility, services and facilities, to the new conditions linked to the growth of big cities (e.g. insecurity, high prices, a general loss of quality of life) and to the generalization of new quality of life parameters among urban consumers (Table 4). In all the metropolitan areas, there has been significant residential development for many years. However, there have recently been important changes that reflect the process of urban pressure: the number of first homes in non-metropolitan areas is increasing more rapidly than the number of second homes which, in some cases, are substantially diminishing due to their transformation into first homes. Another feature of these out-migration processes is the fact that most movements are to smaller villages, rather than to medium–large towns.

The fragile interdependence that exists between all the different uses that converge in an area is a major issue in all the metropolitan areas, and the balance almost always tips in favour of economic interests to the detriment of

Table 3. Population in the metropolitan case study areas, 1990–2003 (thousands)

	1990	2003	Population index (1990 = 100)
Oost Zuid-Holland	300	323 (2003)	108
Camp de Túria	73	101 (2001)	138
Budapest agglomeration	95	120 (2003)	126
Helsinki Region	202	240 (2004)	119
Vexin Français	237	264 (1999)	111

Source: Overbeek and Terluin (2006).

Table 4. Evolution of first and second homes in the metropolitan case study areas, 1990–2000 (thousands)

	First homes		Second homes	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Oost Zuid-Holland	111	124	0.95	0.96
Camp de Túria	24	35.8	26.1	17.7
Budapest agglomeration	40.3 (1997)	42.2 (2003)	n.a.	n.a.
Helsinki Region	82	103 (2004)	6.5	5.9
Vexin Français	76	90.2 (1999)	4.1	2.6

Source: Overbeek and Terluin (2006).

conservationist principles. Housing and land prices are a very good indicator to illustrate the powerful relationships and dependence that exist among different uses. The price of land for building has generally increased during the last decade in all the study areas. Meanwhile, the price of farming land in rural areas is much lower than the price of building land (housing, industrial and commercial). This has generated high expectations among farmers who want to have their agrarian land re-converted into building land, and hence obtain profits that farming can never provide. As an example, in the Oost Zuid-Holland area, house prices have increased by around 150% in the last 10 years. In the Helsinki region, prices also rose between 52% and 74% between 1997 and 2002, and in Camp de Túria, house prices are now double what they were in 1990.

Rural Areas Under Tourist Pressure

The Dutch rural area under tourist pressure, Zeeuwse Eilanden, belongs to the province of Zeeland, which is located in the south-western part of the Netherlands. The study area is located between the urban networks of the Dutch Randstad, the large cities of the province of Brabant and the Flemish Diamond of Antwerp–Brussels–Ghent–Leuven.

In Spain, the selected study area includes some inland municipalities in the area called Marina Alta, close to the Mediterranean Sea but in a mountainous landscape. It is the north-eastern part of the province of Alicante. The extremely benign climate is probably one of the most outstanding features of the area, together with the physical contrasts that can be found in a small area between an impressive coastline and beaches, which are currently highly built-up, and an inland area shaped by abrupt mountains that make up different valleys with the characteristics of a lagging rural area.

The Lake Balaton study area integrates two subareas, the West Balaton area and the Valley of the Arts. The first one has been a significant tourist area for many years. Its attractive location has encouraged the development of tourism and other related activities around Lake Balaton. The second one is situated about 50 km north of Lake Balaton. The Valley of the Arts is a good example of cultural tourism and of the presence of urban stakeholders in a rural area.

The Åboland region is part of Finland's south-west archipelago and coastal areas. The south-west archipelago forms a junction in the Baltic Basin in which the Gulf of Finland, the Sea of Bothnia, the Sea of Åland and the Baltic Sea meet. As a result of this position as a central crossroads, many parts of the archipelago have traditionally had close connections with the outside world.

Contact with inland areas of Finland has, on the contrary, not been so close. This is partly explained by geography and partly by the fact that the majority of the inhabitants have always been Swedish-speaking.

The French tourist case study area is the coast of Pays de Caux, which is located north of Normandy, ~150 km west of Paris. The study area includes all the coastal cantons between Dieppe and Etretat. The coast consists of a line of chalk cliffs that are only occasionally interrupted by river mouths. The Etretat needle is the symbol of this coast.

With regard to population development in the study areas, the population has increased in Western Balaton (Hungary), the Coast of Pays de Caux (France), the Marina Alta (Spain) and Zeeuwse Eilanden (The Netherlands) (Table 5). In the latter two areas, this growth has been particularly noticeable. However, in the last 10 years, the population has decreased in areas such as the Valley of the Arts (Hungary) and the Åboland region (Finland), and this decline has also affected some small rural municipalities in the Marina Alta area.

The time–distance factor with regard to the main metropolitan areas in the region explains the maintenance of endogenous features in the tourist study areas. Although distance and isolation (when it exists) may constitute barriers to development and growth, they definitely contribute to a better preservation of the rural environment and culture. Over the last 15 years, the trend towards rural depopulation has changed, and some rural areas have started to undergo something of a ‘renaissance’. This is mainly a consequence of the increasing interest of urban consumers in the values of rural areas as a whole (environment, heritage, culture, etc.). As a result, processes of restoring and promoting rural heritage have been initiated in all tourist areas, very often by urban developers, and usually accompanied by tourist infrastructure.

The elderly population is quite high in the study areas. In all of them, the proportion of people over 65 is above the national average, except for the Hungarian areas. The migration of young people to the nearby cities and the arrival of many elderly newcomers who have decided to retire to a nice, quiet place, such as Marina Alta or Pays de Caux, explains the high proportion of elderly people in these areas. The lack of a sufficient supply of services to meet the new needs of the elderly should be taken into account in these areas in the short term.

Tourism in some areas has a long history. However, some areas have developed a model based on second homes (Table 6) and others have developed a tourist infrastructure for visitors and tourists who make use of the existing accommodation while they spend time around the area.

Tourism is very often based on the development of residential estates aimed at external actors who establish their residence in the area during one part of the

Table 5. Population in the tourist case study areas, 1990–2003 (thousands)

	1990	2003	Population index (1990 = 100)
Zeeuwse Eilanden	249	270 (2003)	108
Marina Alta	16	17 (2001)	106
Lake Balaton	86	85 (2003)	99
Åboland Region	24.1	22.8 (2004)	95
Coast of Pays de Caux	117	117 (1999)	100

Source: Overbeek and Terluin (2006).

Table 6. Evolution of first and second homes in the tourist case study areas, 1990–2000 (thousands)

	First homes		Second homes	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Zeeuwse Eilanden	104	113	6.8	9
Marina Alta	6.1	7.2	3.8	2.7
Lake Balaton	35.5 (1997)	36.6 (2003)	n.a.	n.a.
Åboland Region	11.2	11.8	9.4	10.8
Coast of Pays de Caux	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Source: Overbeek and Terluin (2006).

year. Some ‘outsiders’ choose the areas to retire, whereas others use it to develop their professional aspirations which could be connected to new rural tourist activities, and hence become permanent residents. This is the case of the Valley of the Arts, for example, where the organization of cultural events and the arrival of outsiders have breathed new life into the area.

The archipelago of Åboland has been attracting domestic tourists for many years. These tourists, who are mainly from the urban area of Helsinki, see the archipelago as a place to relax and to enjoy outdoor activities, and the number of second homes is gradually increasing. In the Marina Alta area, mass ‘sun & beach’ tourism started to develop along the coast during the 1960s. This was linked to the arrival of northern and central European citizens who were initially looking to buy houses on the coast, but later in the inland municipalities that are still close to the sea. Lake Balaton is also a place where houses are in demand from foreign tourists, mainly from Germany.

On the other hand, we find the cases of Pays de Caux, where picturesque villages on the coast saw the development of popular tourist resorts in the nineteenth century, and Zeeuwse Eilanden, where the proportion of second homes is very low, but where there is a varied infrastructure of traditional tourist accommodation.

RGS May Provide New Chances for Rural Areas

Both types of areas (metropolitan areas and tourist areas) share a common feature: they are endowed with natural, cultural and aesthetic resources that are highly valued by today’s increasingly urban societies. The most commonly demanded rural resources and RGS are: land, leisure linked to the landscape and water, nature, cultural heritage, gastronomy, etc.

Economic motivations moving rural actors to supply land and water resources for urban functions are much more powerful than those moving them to invest in the development of RGS that enhance the green environment and the landscape. The former strategy implies high and rapid economic benefits, whereas the latter involves assuming higher risks and uncertain benefits over a longer time span.

Rurban areas combine both strategies, although rarely in a balanced way. Market failure seems to persist in any decision regarding the *pros* and *cons* of attaching rural resources to other functions, since mechanisms to internalize costs and benefits derived from the persistence or change of rural functions and

land uses are neither developed nor implemented. As Hanley puts it, 'alternative land uses produce a wide range of external benefits and costs, for which private agents are not rewarded/penalised by the market and which affect the supply of rural public goods' (2002, p. 70). Often, the intervention of public and/or voluntary mechanisms is necessary to correct market failures and to reduce negative effects. Indeed, compensation payments have the function of 'paying' rural areas for the provision of public goods that have not been or cannot be given a value in the market, but which clearly have a key social, environmental or cultural function.

It is difficult to determine the amount of 'compensatory' payments linked to the supply of rural public goods. It is often necessary to explore new mechanisms derived from improved rural–urban relations; and also the other way round, that is, to develop RGS that enhance rural resources and promote more balanced rural–urban relations. The former option is a more complex *a priori*, as it implies some levels of territorial solidarity, shared governance and responsibility; the latter is probably the most commonly used option. There are many RGS linked to the environment and the landscape which rural areas can offer; the main issue is to what extent these RGS enhance the environment, the landscape and, in particular, rural livelihoods, or contrarily whether they compromise sustainable rural development. As Bryden (2005) argues, public goods have no value for territorial development unless they are 'used' to produce increased wealth by local enterprises and boost employment, income and quality of life.

Therefore, RGS are those goods and services that contribute to economic development in rural areas while simultaneously enhancing the natural and cultural values of a rural area in a sustainable way. Considering this definition, the importance of RGS and their potential for future economic development linked to nature and landscape is very low in the study areas compared with other types of economic activities. This is because economic interests linked to the demand for land and water resources, used for the promotion of intensive uses (i.e. residential or intensive farming), are so strong that these overrule most chances for sustainable development alternatives. Nevertheless, the supply of RGS and the potential for the promotion of new ones is currently much higher in the areas under tourist pressure than in areas close to or included in metropolitan regions.

Location has traditionally been considered, especially among geographers, as a key to the success of economic activities (Krugman, 1995). The emergence of new opportunities for development in rural areas usually depends on their location, and this is indeed the situation of rural areas that are under the influence and pressure of metropolitan areas. The development of RGS is more difficult in these areas because there is a clear intention to extend urban lifestyles and urban functions in rural areas given the proximity to the city and the higher frequency of fluxes.

In tourist areas, the perceptive frames that operate are different; long or medium distances to big urban centres have helped to preserve and enhance 'rurality'. Moreover, these distances also reduce the potential for new economic dynamics linked to urban expansion. Therefore, there is a more favourable atmosphere towards preserving and enhancing rural features and developing RGS; in fact, very often they constitute the basis of local economies. The location of these rural areas, close to important tourist centres, may also favour the development of these RGS for tourists.

After this reflection, and bearing in mind the different areas we are analysing, the main issue or question that emerges is: to what extent can the development of

RGS, on their own, support rural economies at the same time as they contribute towards preserving the environment and landscape? It seems that unless they become part of a broader territorial strategy that also includes public actions for compensation measures, the development and promotion of RGS has a fairly residual profile and currently only ensures benefits for a reduced number of entrepreneurs and households.

Formal Mechanisms to Deal with Urban Pressure

Within European regions, there is usually a duality between rural territories that are less developed/more vulnerable and more developed/more dominant urban spaces. Moreover, institutions at regional level do not always find the most suitable way to meet the needs of both realities. Some regions have been able to integrate this socio-economic duality better than others, and interesting efforts have gone beyond merely resolving specific problems to exploring new ways of rural–urban integration and the encouragement of synergies.

At the EU level, different policies have affected urban pressure processes in the member states in an indirect but fundamental way. Such policies include, for instance, the environmental policy, the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) and Community Initiatives such as LEADER. For some NGOs, the CAP has squandered the future of some rural areas; for instance, the limited support provided to small farms, which in some areas constitute the main component of traditional rural systems, has increased their vulnerability to urban pressure and has progressively forced them to disappear.² Nevertheless, the environmental orientation of the CAP is going to take on greater importance in the years to come (2007–13). The EU LEADER Initiative has contributed to improving the economic situation of rural areas by encouraging their ability to give value to traditional knowledge and to acquire new knowledge for the promotion of new development opportunities.

The compulsory nature of EU environmental regulations and directives, such as the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora, or Regulation (EC) No 2152/2003 of the European Parliament and the Council concerning the monitoring of forests and environmental interactions in the Community (Forest Focus), does not extend to spatial and land-use planning (European Commission, 2000). The most important document at European level is the ESDP. Even though this is not a compulsory instrument, it has become a valuable reference guide for EU member states, regions and cities in their spatial planning strategies and policies (Healey, 2004). Therefore, even though the main responsibility for land-use planning remains with the member states, it is a fact that during the last decade there has been a move towards the integration of an effective territorial dimension in the European common project (Méndez, 2005). Moreover, although the ESDP does not propose specific instruments, it does emphasize its character as being a referent with regard to the rest of programmes and initiatives financed by the EU (Romero & Farinos, 2004). In the ESDP, the EU called for the promotion of urban–rural cooperation. In March 2000, the Study Programme on European Spatial Planning used some new concepts and indicators to try to make some of the general proposals presented by the ESDP operative; among others, it emphasized the idea of developing a better spatial balance through improved co-operation between the city and its surrounding areas. To obtain this, it is necessary to look more closely at the relationship between urban and rural areas (European Commission, 2000).

Despite some hopeful attempts to adopt more integrative, strategic and territorial approaches to land use management, sectoral planning and spatial zoning tools still predominate (Esparcia & Buciega, 2005). Among the areas analysed, the Dutch and French cases are examples of highly regulated and centralized planning systems, while in Spain, Hungary and even in Finland, tradition in strategic spatial planning is shorter and high regulation is often ameliorated by existing administrative decentralization. Despite the fact that in recent years important changes have taken place at policy level, newly formulated policies and plans—which integrate the sustainable development discourse for land use planning—can have very ambiguous and versatile results, especially when interpreted and applied at the local level. This level is the most susceptible to ‘flexibility’ in the application of land-use regulations, and this is a very relevant issue if we consider the generalized context of gradual administrative decentralization, and the implications this may have in spatial planning and in the inter-relations between rural and urban areas.

The trend towards increasing decentralization, even in countries with traditionally highly centralized systems (e.g. France and Hungary), is a one-way process and this undoubtedly has clear benefits. However, it is also necessary to promote solutions that may prevent the negative effects of this decentralization and foster sustainable development in rural areas. Cooperation between different administrative levels and between municipalities may not only reduce the chances of unilateral decisions having inconvenient consequences, but it may also favour the implementation of processes which lead to more prosperous rural–urban relations (Esparcia & Buciega, 2005). This cooperation is especially necessary in the context of metropolitan spaces, where rural areas are under strong urban pressure and suffer tremendous transformations. It is worth mentioning the examples of cooperation in Hungary and Finland: in the former, decentralization resulted in the emergence of multi-stakeholder regional/rural development networks, which promoted institutionalized cooperation between government, counties, local associations and local governments (Kováč *et al.*, 2003). In Finland, the Helsinki Metropolitan Area Council promotes formal and informal means of cooperation between different municipalities (Andersson *et al.*, 2003)

Horizontal cooperation is also important in this decentralization context, and in relation to land-use changes, we would argue that it is absolutely necessary as a mechanism for public decisions and as an incentive for local governance and democracy. Rural areas that are being ‘absorbed’ by metropolitan regions may have more facilities to promote both forms of cooperation because common administrative and political structures are centralized there and have more human, social and economic capital. Rural tourist areas may rely to a greater extent on the opportunities provided by horizontal cooperation and civil organization. The condition of being ‘economically and socially lagging’, which is linked to some rural areas under tourist pressure (i.e. Marina Alta or Balaton), may imply that, on the one hand, the areas have lower levels of human and social capital than those necessary to prevent undesirable forms of development for sustainability and, on the other hand, in general terms, they receive less political and economic attention than more densely populated areas, i.e. metropolitan areas. This means that it is fundamental that the role of civil structures enables local actors to become involved in the processes that bring about changes in these rural areas and to propose alternative solutions for the improvement of the rural quality of life.

Concluding Remarks

Rural areas have become extremely complex spaces of opposing factors and processes: urbanity and rurality, global and local, endogenous and exogenous, innovation and tradition. This complexity is especially high in areas which, given their proximity to urban centres or the existence of highly valued rural resources (e.g. green areas, landscape, tranquillity), are under pressure to make strategic decisions regarding the management of their resources. In some cases, they adapt traditional land uses and functions to current (urban) demands. However, new processes and conflicts emerge when there is no adaptation but instead substitution, for instance, when agrarian land is substituted by residential use or when there is a conflict between different uses or users. In these cases, important social debates emerge between defenders of an increasing occupancy of rural land by urban uses with the gradual assimilation of urban values and lifestyles, and those defending the conservation of rural practices, values and resources. The 'large and often growing influence of cities on land ownership and use, economic activities and labour markets in the rural areas around them obviously has significant influences on agricultural production and on the livelihoods of those who live in these areas' (Tacoli, 1998, p. 160).

Depending on the dominant views on 'rurality' in the analysed areas, three main trends can be identified.

- (a) In France and the Netherlands, rural areas are highly productive places in terms of agriculture, farming, agri-food industries and services (i.e. tourism and leisure).
- (b) The negative perception of 'rural' linked to long periods of demographic and economic recession is present in Spain and Hungary. In Spain, rural areas suffered severe processes of economic, demographic and services decline from which most have not recovered yet. Therefore, for many years (and still today), rural territories have been linked to lack of opportunities and underdevelopment. In Hungary, prior to EU accession, rural processes were not perceived negatively. In fact, the opposite was quite true: rural areas were considered to be the source of national culture and the country's demographic base (Kováč *et al.*, 2003). It was during the EU accession negotiations that rural areas acquired a negative image and were considered to be underdeveloped and problematic areas with regard to future EU integration. It was also in the context of the EU cohesion policies introduced by the EU that some intellectuals spoke out against the differentiation of rural areas as spaces deserving particular or specific attention.
- (c) Finally, an idealistic and romantic view of rural areas, with the enhancement of the environment and its cohabitation with activities based on natural resources, is present in countries such as Finland. There, links between rural and urban areas have been very strong, and this may be explained by the existence of a deep peasant tradition that has persisted in spite of an increasing urban population and the institutional framework.

Although these three views can be considered to be the mainstream in the national literature, in each country there is evidence of other views in different stakeholders' discourses.

Despite a diversity of situations present in the different European contexts, there is agreement in terms of one fundamental aspect: in general terms, urban pressure on rural areas is not considered to be a negative process; moreover,

very often it is regarded as a natural and a positive process for the development of rural areas. Only some groups of actors that may be located either in urban or rural areas protest against the negative effects of urban pressure, but very often protests focus on the protection of particular natural or cultural assets.

Pressure on land and other natural and cultural resources which is derived from an increasing urban demand for RGS seems to be an unavoidable trend, and it clearly prevails over more sustainable alternatives for rural areas. In rural areas, it can be seen how the widely promoted ‘multi-functionality’ has resulted in a reduction in the importance of traditional activities that have been relegated to being part-time activities, while new ‘urban-led’ functions are increasing in importance.

As can be deduced from literature and from analysing data, not only households but also tourists or second home owners want to become ‘rurals’ when they decide to move to a rural area. They usually take their urban way of life with them and rural areas only supply green and open spaces at most. Different ways of perceiving the same rural reality reflect the functional diversity of most European rural areas.

Solutions to transform urban pressure into sustainable benefits for rural areas could include, for instance, the promotion of innovative ideas to render rural public goods as commodities that have a renewed role in a context of the post-productive economy and rural multi-functionality, and which enhance the rural environment and landscapes. Nonetheless, it is also necessary that public administrations introduce compensation payments and measures in order to ensure the conservation and sustainability of rural resources that would unavoidably be transformed or destroyed under market forces.

The notion of rural–urban relationships emphasizes the promotion of an integrated conception of town/city and countryside corresponding to functional linkages. The most important trend with a potential to stress rural values is the need for environmental preservation and sustainability. In those rural areas situated close to important urban centres—be these metropolitan or tourist—the so-called ‘functional region’ usually becomes more expansive and includes urban and rural areas with various new types of functional relationships. The complexity of rural–urban relationships has been increasing over the last decade.

What seems to be clear is that rural–urban partnerships function most effectively when the various actors clearly have common objectives and where the regional administration is fairly strong. The current dualism between city and countryside still dominates policy approaches, especially at European level (European Commission, 2000). There are few links between policies addressing the development of rural areas and those addressing the development of urban areas. This is a further challenge for the development of rural areas under urban pressure.

Finally, three groups of action could be highlighted.

- (1) The territorial view, looking for socio-economic as well as land development. This view is linked to LEADER Initiative objectives.
- (2) Administrative decentralization in the new territorial cooperation framework (ESDP) and new governance which should be based on rural–urban partnerships.
- (3) The environmental aspects of the CAP, which might contribute to territorial sustainability, revalorization of agri-rural landscapes and the use of minimum environmental standards.

Notes

1. Both definitions can be found in *A Dictionary of Geography* (Mayhew, 2004), *Oxford Reference Online* (Oxford University Press). Universidad de Valencia, 15 julio 2006. Available at <http://www.oxfordreference.com/>.
2. As *Friends of the Earth* reported, the CAP contributed to pushing small farmers out of production with the consequent perverse effects on rural habitats (<http://www.choosefoodchoosefarming.org/index.htm/>).

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