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## Touristic Processes, Generic Rurality and Local Development

### Introduction

#### Tourism and the rural world in economies of signs and spaces

The tourism industry has proven to be one of the most dynamic since the turn of the last century, transforming global and regional economies, regional policies and local labour markets. Its development has also been one of the most important processes in the restructuring of the rural world and its configuration as a place increasingly organised around the consumption of its signs, spaces and representations (Clope *et al.*, 2006; Lash & Urry, 1987, 1994; Marsden, 1999; Woods, 2005). In addition, tourism has developed in the context of the growing revaluation of representations of the rural within the unfolding ideological-cultural framework of post-modernity (Harvey, 1989b), which began to emerge as a response to the crisis of 'Fordist modernisation' at the end of the 1970s. A 'neo-rustic' imaginary (Morin, 1973) associated with all areas of social life (health, food, nature, etc.).

Moreover, tourism has become an increasingly widespread social practice in industrialised countries and is considered by many individuals to be just as necessary a part of life as is the home or the automobile (World Tourism Organization, 2004). Its maturation as a mass consumer industry has stimulated a continuing diversification of touristic destinations, attractions and practices that were hardly foreseeable a few decades ago (Hall *et al.*, 2003). As a result, there has been a huge increase in tourism spaces (protected areas, residential areas, leisure and health centres, etc.), prod-

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ucts (landscapes, routes, gastronomy, sporting events, etc.) and narratives (place branding, rural marketing). As Perkins suggests from a broader perspective related to the process of rural commodification, this “commodification is an integral part of the re-sourcing of rural areas” (2006: 254).

Territories, regions and localities compete in this international division of the consumption of signs and places to attract tourists, investment, residents and projects. This strategy determined development models during the recent expansive economic cycle characterised by easy access to cheap credit and the emergence of rural development initiatives in the European Union. As a result, the interrelationship between tourism and rural development has both its bright spots and its negatives and must be analysed as both general process and through specific experiences if we are to draw the necessary conclusions. This is the focus of this paper.

### **Structure of this article**

In the next section we will analyse the relations, discourses and strategies that link rural tourism with development and the processes arising from the social interactions and practices that comprise the touristic experience. Following, we present the overall objectives of this text and then in a separate section, discuss the peculiarities of the Spanish case and the specific area in Spain some of our observations refer to. The methodological approach used, which hinges on the analysis of three representative processes in these relationships (social narratives, seasonal residence and sports tourism) is explained in section five. The next section discusses the main findings and results regarding each of these processes. Finally, the last section summarises the main conclusions and the issues opened up by our research

### **Post-tourism, generic rurality and development**

#### **Place branding and rural marketing**

The representations and iconography that produce *rural charm* form part of the imaginary substrate of the Western world (Girouad, 1985; Merchant, 2004; Short, 1991; Williams, 1973), but they acquire their own form in the marketing of the rural oriented toward post-modern consumer sensibilities. As Figueiredo and Raschi (2011) have shown, rural areas are promoted and marketed as reinvented tourist attractions:

This kind of reinvention may have profound effect on local contexts and identities, transforming the physiognomy of places, apparently more in accordance with urban constructs and ideal than with local values and needs (2011: 16).

And in a social reality mediated by communication processes and the consumption of experiences, their meanings flow as ideology (Goldman & Dickens, 1983) and take the form of a sort of 'generic rurality' (Oliva, 2012). We have borrowed the concept that Koolhaas (1997) applied to the contemporary city to conceptualise the impact of a spectral rurality that can be incarnated and replicated anywhere (theme parks, touristic performances, malls or restaurants, websites, etc.) and that produces spaces, goods and narratives. For example, Relph (1976), Augé (1992, 1997) and Baudrillard (1997) have shown the proliferation of thematic 'non-places' created by the tourism industry. From a more general perspective, rural commodification is analysed by Perkins (2006) as a successive transformation of new commodities (new foods, new residential areas, new tourism opportunities, etc.), which can then be formulated as spectacle and finally as simulacrum. In this context, we consider rural tourism, in contrast to other tourism, to be more sustained by the ideological. A post-rural imaginary (Hopkins, 1998) that functions as a floating and transferable signifier. As pointed out by Goldman and Dickens (1983):

It is not simply that consumer goods are linked to rural images, but rather these images are framed and presented in such a manner that a consistent ideological program is also communicated [...] This packaging of the images and value system of rural life as if they are contained in the commodity with which they are being associated we term 'the commodification of the rural myth' (1983: 585).

The very narratives oriented toward the management of territories like businesses and their commercial labelling (place branding) have functioned as an ideology for local development aimed not only at tourism or investment but also at local communities themselves. Embodied in policy makers, experts and stakeholders, these discourses have served to connect both objectives. Studies describing experiences of participatory development of these narratives or models of governance of rural tourism with stakeholders (Daugstad, 2008; Fløysand & Jakobson, 2007; Saxena & Ilbery, 2010; Sims, 2010) refer to them as paradigmatic cases far from the norm.

Place branding strategies involve thematic territorial segmentation (Burgues, 1982) based on an assessment of the rural imaginary of potential consumers. These narratives promote a reorganisation of the territory based on their objectives (e.g. the necessary infrastructure to ensure accessibility to tourist attractions). Objectified as development programmes, these discourses often operate as internal coercive powers that define priorities and investments, burying contradictions beneath supposed miraculous projects or poorly negotiated proposals (Harvey, 1989a). Their powerful appeal to politicians, policymakers and land managers during the recent decades of economic and financial boom has enhanced the effects of tourism processes.

### Sustainable development and rural tourism

Rural tourism has been raised repeatedly as a route to sustainable development, especially for those areas most suffering the problems of depopulation, isolation and lack of employment. The growth and diversification of tourism initiatives, businesses and policies aimed at tourism have certainly revitalised local economies (Hall *et al.*, 2003). For example, the LEADER I initiative in the European Union turned into a programme to promote rural tourism (Canovés *et al.*, 2006), allocating more than half of its funding to this objective (30% in the LEADER II). In 2008, 33% of tourist accommodations were in rural areas in the European Union (EU-27) (European Union, 2010).

The paradox of the potential of rural tourism is that it can transform or destroy the very resources it markets. For example, it is not always clear that tourism processes generate stable, quality local employment. As noted by Figueiredo, "instituting rural spaces into environmental and natural conservation areas can also present important constraints" (2008: 160). Diverse studies document rural tourism's environmental costs, the problems it generates in local daily life or the differences in its acceptance among rural populations (Barque, 2004; Boissevain, 1996; Butler *et al.* 1998; Hall *et al.* 2003; Ribeiro & Marques, 2002; Roberts & Hall, 2001). At times, the policies developed to promote tourism represent a *de facto* regulation of access to certain highly valued rural areas that provides preferential treatment to some groups over others. For example, in some areas of the Spanish Pyrenees regional administrations have targeted projects to attract tourists and vacationers from the urban middle classes while at the same time limiting the projects of *neo-rural* young people to revitalise abandoned villages<sup>2</sup>. And in some Catalan counties in the Pyrenees, the new residential role of their municipalities, increasingly colonised by residents from the metropolitan area of Barcelona, has created pressure to relocate traditional farming activities.

In official documents of the European Union, sustainable tourism is associated with a multifunctional rurality, which produces food and landscapes, conserves biodiversity and creates employment (McAreavey & McDonagh, 2010). However, beyond these narratives, 'sustainability' means different things depending on the model implemented, the contexts

<sup>2</sup> In several towns in this area having about one hundred residents, such latent tensions have led to promoting or blocking registration by certain people because of disputes over local power. Town councils are very powerful in urban planning in Spain and the right to vote is determined by registration on the electoral roll in the place of residence. This has been used by speculators in some rural areas. In 2006, the National Statistics Institute began a thorough review of the register in municipalities having less than 2,000 inhabitants with a view to checking residents and avoiding what happened in the local elections in 1999 and 2003 when a number of cases of dubious registrations were reported in the run-up to the elections.

where it is carried out and the way its promoters interpret it (Ribeiro & Marques, 2002; Weaver, 2004). The concept of sustainability can function as both an ideology in discourses of development and as a way of developing commerce and promoting tourism. In contrast, the sense given in the concrete experiences in the governance of tourism, as political process aimed at sustainability (social, environmental and economic), has drawn less attention. Although this terminology is widely accepted and widespread in technical, political or academic discourses, its empirical realisation remains much more obscure (Sonnino, 2004). As noted by Sharpley & Roberts (2004),

the concept of sustainable tourism development as a universal blueprint for "appropriate" tourism development remains contested both generally and within the rural tourism context (2004: 121).

Strategies have emerged to make it possible to more clearly understand and evaluate the relationship between rural tourism and development. In general, these strategies call for greater effort organising the participation of different stakeholders (residents, businesses, tourists, etc.) in more integrated governance. Garrod *et al.* (2006) proposed the concept of 'countryside capital': A redefinition of local resources that would focus on the value chain that tourism supports and the need to promote sustainable relationships. This strategy seeks to objectify and reveal those activities that degrade the stock of this capital and identify those who invest in its maintenance. Other contributions (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008; Saxena & Ilbery, 2010) reveal the potential of models integrating social, environmental and touristic sustainability in a process of empowerment and negotiation between different local groups and stakeholders ('Integrated Rural Tourism').

All these issues invite us to reflect on the processes arising from the social interactions and practices that comprise the touristic experience and on the role played by the different social representations of the rural in them.

### **Rural performances, visual games and reflexivity**

Tourists and summer visitors who stay for short periods in villages taking photos, looking round, asking questions, buying local products, visiting local monuments, etc. are becoming omnipresent in rural scenarios. As tourism is adopted as a regular social practice by increasing numbers of social groups and sub-cultures, the reasons for visiting rural areas become more diverse (cultural, green, adventure tourism, etc.) and practically all rural resources (nature, rituals, identity, heritage, etc.) can be consumed by tourists. As a modern social type, tourists could be seen as people who search for 'authenticity' and try to overcome the dissatisfaction caused by the emptiness and artificiality of modern life (MacCannell, 1976). Bauman

found a revealing metaphor of post-modern technologies of the self in this type, which he described as «conscious and systematic seekers of experience» (1996: 29). And Coleman and Grang (2002) stated that tourists participate in a performance in which they play the part of tourists and the places visited are flows. So, for a few days, tourists seek to become ideal inhabitants of mountains, islands, a farm, etc.

several theoretical stories about tourism have relied upon a number of assumptions about places and tourist practices as relatively fixed entities [...], we need to see them as fluid and created through performance (2002: 7).

As Urry (1990) suggested, for the most part, tourism is little more than looking. He examined the characteristics of this type of 'looking' which arose during the Romantic period and has been gradually moulded and streamlined. Also stresses the transforming capacity of a look, which can lead to a place being remodelled to make it the object of mass consumption as part of the general performance. For example, farmers who take in guests say that, after the first few days, visitors often become bored. Having been socialised as viewers of the mass media, they need to be entertained. Another woman rural hotel manager interviewed by García-Ramón (1995) described how they look after their premises and the surroundings when tourists are expected so that everything looks idyllic. They do not present the everyday working place but rather prepare a stage (they sweep the street, trim the shrubs, tidy up the paths, etc.). The metaphors of 'guardians of nature' or 'gardeners of the countryside' used in the European Union reports to refer to the new roles of farmers in post-productive rurality seem to point towards this type of staging. The process of converting all those involved into actors sometimes leads tourism entrepreneurs to question the roles they are expected to play in these false utopias. As stated by the owner of a local tourism business in the Navarran mountains, "they seek a non-existent hamlet... sometimes I think they would like the village to be as it was a century ago... but we want to live in it as it is today" (Oliva & Camarero, 2002).

Rural inhabitants have learnt to cope and to adapt at times when the population of their location almost doubles. Our research has revealed the tensions and symbolic conflicts that arise in the day-to-day life of many Spanish rural locations during the summer months and other tourist seasons – queues in the shops, traffic congestion, lack of parking space, nighttime noise, etc. As stated by a local resident interviewed "They leave their car badly-parked. They block off the paths, leaving it at the entrance to your garage, on the edge of the road" (Oliva, 2004). Nogués (1996) and Crain (1996), describe the resistance of the locals to certain tourist businesses that affect their timing and spaces, sell their culture and transform their activities into tourist attractions (for example, protecting certain beaches or

woods that are known only to the locals, or holding certain rituals or festivals outside the tourist season, etc.). In some cases, however the result is different, and changes in local life symbolise the integration of the new actors in the local timing and festive events. For example, Garcia *et al.* (1991) mention the creation in some parts of Extremadura of local festivals specifically for tourists and summer holidaymakers.

The local discourse could establish a complex set of morals regarding the way the place should be used (timing, space, etc.). The people who visit at weekends or in summer, the 'people who come to the countryside to eat' sometimes are seen as not respecting local customs, as crossing imaginary red lines, taking over the country that the locals work to maintain. As one local resident interviewed in other fieldwork said: "they are tourists who come for lunch, going all over the place by car. They behave as if everything in the countryside is everyone's property" (Oliva, 2004). Some areas are carrying out a sophisticated debate on the ethics of visits, on visitors' participation in local events or on the use being made of their resources. For example, the managers of the Orgi Nature Park in Navarre have drawn up a Declaration Guide to encourage ethical use of the park, explaining how to travel round the park and relate with the locals.

The interaction between the tourist or visitor and the host involves a complex visual game. Some authors (Daugstad, 2008; Smith, 1977; Wrobel & Long, 2001) suggest that the interaction between the locals and their visitors takes the form of a reflexive game in which neither side wins because they both make emotional investments and hold expectations that eventually restructure, erode or reinforce their identities. The tourist is described in our interviews as a person who appears in the middle of daily life and expresses an interest in the history and social meanings of the place, thus sowing a questioning attitude amongst the local residents. As stated by the owner of a tourism business in the Pyrenees in Navarre, "we often wonder how tourists see us" (Oliva & Camarero, 2002). This leads to a greater examination of identity (including territorial, cultural and figurative aspects). As a young farmer in the Navarran Pyrenees stated, "maybe we don't know how to appreciate what we have as well as outsiders do – nature, all the wonders that surround us" (Oliva & Camarero, 2002).

### **Main Objectives**

Our work explores the interrelationships between rural tourism and local development in the context of a polarisation between productive and post-productive rurality. We analyse some of the contradictions and narratives, products and spaces these interrelationships give rise to, and the social representations with which they are interpreted by the different actors involved. We also explore how diversity, an essential element of Europe's rural heritage that community development policies promote, may

be eroded by the success of rural marketing strategies that are shaping a 'generic rurality' closely connected to the patterns, sensibility and social imaginary of the new postmodern outlook. It is our aim to show how all these processes constitute an effective dynamic generating rural development but also contain problems and tensions that must be understood.

### Methodology

Our approach adapts Halfacree's (2006, 2007) triad of facets for analysing the rural – «rural localities» (related to the production or consumption of the rural); formal «representations of the rural» (developed by policymakers, planners, etc.) and everyday «lives of the rural» (subjective, diverse and not necessarily consistent with the other facets) – to the analysis of rural tourism. This model «with which to interrogate rural space» (Halfacree 2007: 128) allows us to explore three representative processes of the relationship between tourism and rural development: First, the narratives of rural marketing as ideology producing intervention models, spaces and discursive resistance; secondly, the phenomenon of second homes as an illustration of the changing representations of locality and community and finally, sports tourism as an experience tied to empty spaces, outdoor activities and nature disconnected from people – a tourism proposal that does not 'consume' the usual imaginary of rurality as a social space.

These processes have been documented in several studies conducted during the past decade across Spain (Camarero, 2009; Camarero, Sampe dro & Oliva, 2011; Oliva, 2010; Oliva & Camarero, 2002; Oliva *et al.* 2000). Different doctoral dissertations directed by the authors have specifically dealt with the phenomenon of second homes in rural areas (Del Pino, 2012), the issue of development in the Western Pyrenean valleys of Navarre (Sanz, 2009) and sports tourism in relation to rural development (Moscoso, 2009). The quotations that illustrate the results that follow come from the fieldwork carried out in the Western Pyrenees, in the valleys of Aezkoa, Salazar & Roncal in Navarre, a pioneering zone in Spain in terms of rural tourism accommodation (country houses) and as a destination for nature or sports tourism (mountaineering, hiking,...). This fieldwork was carried out through in-depth interviews and focus groups as part of the Cross-border Project to Study the Role of Traditional Institutions in the Processes of Development of Mountain Areas, funded by the Public University of Navarre and in coordination with a parallel study conducted in France by professors F. Dascon and M.A. Granie at the University of Toulouse.

The area under study presents certain demographic characteristics common to mountain areas. There is a significant seasonality to residence and tourism, with a registered year-round population in 2012 of only 4,188 in-



habitants dispersed across approximately thirty municipalities. Population densities do not exceed 6 inhabitants per square kilometre. This population is highly masculinised and ageing, with more than 300 persons over 65 for every 100 persons under 15 years of age and the proportion of children (under 15) accounting for less than 9% of the total population. Furthermore, these valleys are a reference for Basque and Navarran identity and their agro-pastoral traditions, language, landscapes and architecture comprise a cultural heritage that reaches to the neighbouring French Basque valleys, making it an important tourist destination. Internet advertising of the country houses in the area often focuses on these images and content (nature, customs, festivals, local products, the Basque language -Euskara-, etc.) (Sanz, 2009).

The area is home to more than a dozen protected spaces (protected nature areas, bird sanctuaries and biotopes, wildlife preserves, etc.) and protected species such as bears or grouses, and more than half of the protected space in the broader region is found here. Unlike the Western Pyrenees, until recently the area had not been the site of major tourism infrastructure projects. However, the opposing positions and discourses regarding successive projects proposed for these valleys (Natural Park, Nordic Ski Centre, the reintroduction of bears) and their reach into regional political debate (in the parliament, the press, etc.) have been a constant (Sanz, 2009).

During the fieldwork in-depth interviews were carried out with politicians, young people running active tourism companies, farmers, restaurateurs and residents. In addition, three focus groups based on specific sociological profiles were conducted with participants from the three valleys. The first (G1- middle-aged men) was made up of 7 men between 33 and 50 years of age active in tourism, livestock farming and forestry. The second (G2-young people) was comprised of six young people (3 women and 3 men) between 23 and 35 years of age and employed in different sectors including public services and students. The third group (G3- middle-aged women) consisted of six women between 39 and 56 years of age that were active in hotel/restaurant businesses and public services or were housewives.

The contextualisation of the analysis in this case study has made it possible to illustrate the complex relationship of tourism with rural marketing and local development, as well as the social representations of the rural held by the different social actors involved. Mountain areas concentrate in a unique manner the signs, values and spaces that the postmodern imaginary attaches to the rural world, such as those related to the environment (nature, landscape), cultural tradition (heritage, folklore) and quality of life (health, leisure, natural foods). The diversity of proposals for the consumption and use of these areas (regarding residence, conservation, tourism, etc.) indicates the expectations many have and reveals the crossroads the processes analysed comprise for their future.

## Main Results: the production of rural tourism

### Tourism models and narratives

Conceptual systems of 'place-branding' and 'rural marketing' have exerted a powerful attraction on local and regional governments, which, in the early stages of the development of rural tourism in Spain were forced to design and implement their projects without the experience and technical resources needed. There was more emphasis placed on advertising the place and the establishment of a hitherto non-existent product than on planning and reflection. As one young respondent explained,

we have done a huge amount of advertising what we have here, but then we haven't organised or managed anything, you know? [...] we've created a demand that we don't attend to (E2, young, male, active tourism company).

Despite their strong ideological component, strategies have been presented as 'a-political' as formulas outside of partisan conflict and based on objective prescriptions for success. As a local mayor explained, "We don't participate in politics [...]; we work as a business. For us this is a company, and what we do is sell our product and we sell it to anyone'. This denial of the socio-political nature of tourism and development models ignores internal contradictions in the interest of an economic goal (to sell the place) that supposedly benefits everyone and for which no dissent is recognised. The need to compete to 'situate' the place and market its 'products', thus, has a coercive function (Harvey, 1989a):

My city council has always been involved in so many problems [...] bears, the park, whatever, always a battle over something that seemed to be the solution to everything, but ended up as nothing, in which the majority in favour was always right and those of us who had a different idea couldn't say anything (G1, hotels and restaurants).

These narratives, as our interviewee said, have turned local governments into businesses oriented toward the exterior, toward regional and national political arenas, to capture projects and investments. This has had two consequences. First, the possibilities of organising processes of governance that integrate involved stakeholders in models for sustainable social, economic and environmental development have been underestimated. Secondly, the argument of the existence of international competition for the consumption of signs and places has also made collaboration difficult in early stages, as each locality has perceived itself to be engaged in a race to define and reinvent its own distinctive resources: "we recently left the Consortium of the Pyrenees [...] we think we have to first develop a local

product, a product from this area" (E1, local politician). But methodologies have led to the repeat of successful proposals, reproducing similar spaces and similar idealised discourses on rural representations:

I think there are four levels: to make a product of nature, make a sports product, a cultural product, based on our cultural heritage, and another related to quality of service [...] but our flagship product was the natural recreation area" (E1, local politician).

Strategies for identifying and developing local resources as products involve local governments acting as mediators between the sensibilities of tourism associated with the new economies of signs and space and the local reality. This requires, for example, formulating the elements that define rural referents (tradition, history, landscape, etc.) as the basis for the touristic experience: "the quality of a destination partly depends on having attractions and events that meet visitors' expectations and ensure that they are well occupied" (European Commission, 1999). Moreover, the omnipotence of the visual in post-modern societies, overshadowing everything that is not presented as spectacle, has guided rural marketing strategies – for example, the revalorisation of natural spaces (views, trails, etc.). The transformation of a place into a resource for tourism requires its preparation for the staging, organisation and interpretation of a visual performance. The process of the *museumification* of nature and of representations of the rural takes place through proposals that offer the tourist things to do, but above all to see, so that tourists can return from their trips with the images they already suspected they would see before going (Augé, 1997). The voracity of the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990) leads to a proliferation of local performances:

We are trying to create a network of museums...an ethnographic museum in [anonymized village A], a museum of the river rafts in [anonymized village B]. There is a cheese museum in [anonymized village C]. We are developing a museum project in [anonymized village D]; in [anonymized village E] there are now several museums. In [anonymized village F], there is the nature centre... and we are also working on two other museums for [anonymized village G] and [anonymized village H], which are the remaining two villages" (E1, local politician).

The process of visualising and recreating resources and products for tourism and producing the spaces for their representation, ultimately extends to the very remodelling of local public space. As explained by our interviewee,

We have worked along those lines, in creating a few reference points in the town [...], which would then boost, for example, the world of the shepherds,

and we built a monument to ranchers [...] we have another one built in the traditional form of the espadrille, [...] a raft built by the river" (E1, local politician).

But these narratives and models also generate resistance. Especially in areas such as the Pyrenees, where conflicting expectations converge as do many of the signs and spaces valued by new tourism economies, resulting in projects sometimes acquiring a significance beyond the local and involving social actors with their own discourses and representations of the rural (agricultural unions, tourism developers, environmental groups, historical preservation groups, etc.) (Sanz, 2009). Local dissent can be found within the tourism industry itself – "they are determined to do something to solve everything all at once" (G1-man, tourism sector) – but especially among young people: "it's out of control" (E2, young man, active tourism company). Young people are traditionally (self) excluded from institutional forums and are not incorporated into the political process of local development. In their representations of the rural, these actors have a clearer perception of the limitations behind these touristic narratives and models:

We need to specify what kind of tourism we want, right? In other words, mass tourism [...] or do we want a different kind of tourism where we will [...] preserve our heritage, not only nature, but also artistic, the dolmens [...] to focus tourism on a certain kind of tourism (G2-young people, student).

### **Second homes and representations of rurality**

Incorporating the conceptual paradigm of mobility to rural studies invalidates the sedentarist principle, which separated different categories of rural residents based on their origin. In addition to the traditional differentiation between new and old residents, there is now a new distinction between permanent and seasonal residents. The earlier dichotomy related social structure to lifestyles and both categories of residents with permanence: A binary model supported by the centrality of locality over community; in other words, in this sedentarist sociology, community membership was determined by belonging or not to the locality.

However, the accelerated process of space time compression experienced in contemporary society has revealed new forms of being neighbours not necessarily associated with continuous spatial proximity. It is in this context that we analyse the phenomenon of second homes and their importance in shaping locality.

In Spain, one out of every three homes in rural municipalities is a second home<sup>3</sup>, and the percentage of second homes as a proportion of total

<sup>3</sup> According to the 2001 census, in municipalities with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, there were a total of 2,175,776 occupied dwellings, of which 730,046 were second homes (33.6%).

dwellings registered by the last census in 2001 in the valleys analysed in our fieldwork ranged between 17% and 40%, surpassing primary dwellings in certain municipalities (Sanz, 2009). Weekend residents who work in the regional capital and summer vacationers are typical of the sociological profiles of these homeowners. The high volume and impact of second homes is also evident elsewhere in Europe, for example in Norway, where 201 municipalities out of a total of 430 have been classified as 'rural second home municipalities'<sup>4</sup>.

Locality, in the sense proposed by Halfacree (2012), as a place shaped by spatial practices, is made up of permanent and temporary residences. In its classic conception, community was based on neighbourhood as an expression of residence and it was formed by those who resided permanently in the locality. With the spread of seasonal or temporary residences (cyclical residence), the community is no longer confined to the boundaries of the locality. Halfacree prefers the term, 'multi-residence' to indicate that the time spent in the locality is not relevant. But he goes further when he uses the term 'heterolocal' to refer to the diversity of identities in rural areas. Second home residents are not 'others' but are also rural as they develop social practices in rural areas and become producers of representations of rural life.

The incorporation of second residents into a community raises new questions about the relationship between tourism and rural development and their role in shaping current rurality. Huijbens (2012) distinguishes two types of 'second residents' in a community: Those characterised by a kinship relationship with the locality, having family and emotional as well as property ties, and those whose links to the community are characterised by lifestyle choices related to recreation and leisure. His conclusion is paradoxical: The second group, consisting of those without roots in the locality, is often more active in community activities than the first group, while those who are 'children of the locality' only passively participate in the interaction between permanent and second residents.

To analyse the relationships that different groups of residents have with the locality (based on time and ties - including generational), the conceptual triad developed by Halfacree (2007) on the production of rural space (rural localities, everyday life of the rural and formal representations of the rural) is very useful. These concepts serve to emphasise both the productive and consumer value of the locality. Permanent residents, anchored in the locality, reproduce rural life, while seasonal residents tend to consume rurality and through these experiences produce representations of rural life, such as the popular notion of the 'rural idyll'.

The work of Vepsäläinen and Pitkänen (2010) suggests that there is a mechanism of interaction between permanent and seasonal residents for

<sup>4</sup> These are rural municipalities in which there are more than 125 second homes per 1,000 inhabitants.

the production of locality. Second home residents seek to reproduce traditional lifestyles in their practices, yet it is precisely the impact and growth of second homes that forms a distinctly post-productive rurality, which is far from traditional representations. This suggests, in the context of the rural idyll, that representations of the rural produced by second home residents do revive rural lifestyles, but now no longer linked to the production or reproduction of local life but as 'styles' of consumption.

The relationship between old and new residents has also been examined in terms of conflict. For example, in our fieldwork we frequently heard expressions of antagonism among permanent residents:

those of us who have been living here, I think we care more about the reality of the valley. Those who come from outside, it makes my blood boil when I see them relaxing playing cards in the bar, and they have the right to, don't they? They have had their hard week in the factory and it's normal [...] I also do it, but if I see that they don't give a damn? (G2-young people).

Permanent residents accuse seasonal residents of having a life outside of the locality. The distance represented by the different experiences of this life tends to be expressed as if there were two different localities, although only one community:

There are two villages, we have a concept of struggle for two villages: one that's for the residents and another that responds to the needs of the person that comes from outside, who may have no roots in the village and is looking... does not have to get involved in anything, but is looking for a place, his dog, his story, his car and his nature (E1, local politician).

However, despite the appearance of conflict, there is constant interaction between permanent and seasonal residents, an interaction of experiences and representations. It is in this context that the issue of conflict between them must be explored. The above statements from residents reproduce the differences between their representations and experiences. However, analyses from Nordic countries (Hidle, Ellingsen and Cruikshank, 2010; Huijbens, 2012; Rye, 2011; Vepsäläinen and Pitkänen, 2010) show that differences in the time residing in a locality do not lead to conflict between social groups. In the words of Rye, "the myth of the second home unifies rather than divides the population" (2011: 272). In practice, local life is built on the existence of second residences, first of all, because they strengthen development. For example, Rye's studies show how rural communities consider second homes beneficial, a source of employment; at the same time, they do not feel that second homes are changing local life. Only one in six residents expressed agreement with the statement that "the second home phenomenon destroys the genuine character of my municipality" (2011: 268).

Two models of second residency have been described to refer to their social impact on an area: endemic and epidemic. The endemic model refers to second residences as a necessity for the recreational needs of urban dwellers. This serves as an urban-rural bridge as these are often second homes of families that left the locality in an earlier rural exodus or that have a specific appreciation of it. In contrast, the epidemic model is defined by volume and the effects of rapid, disproportionate growth, and where there is no link or appreciation of the locality by seasonal residents. As one local politician interviewed in our fieldwork said:

I mean, what's going to happen is that if we do a good job, our greatest fortune will be if people come. If we don't do a good job, this will turn into a second home community... where people come for the weekend, which is what is happening now, but it will be even more pronounced" (E1, local politician).

Local communities have gradually incorporated the dynamic role of the secondary residence. It is valued as an endemic phenomenon, as a bridge between rural and urban areas and a motor for local development. In the Lefebvrian sense used by Halfacree, the production of locality and rurality incorporates the experience of second home residence into rural life. In the Spanish case, recent studies (Del Pino 2012) reveal the link between first and second residences. In rural areas in the interior, second homes increase where there is also growth in first homes and vice versa; that is, the economic and social dynamism of rural areas appears to be linked to second home residence.

Furthermore, this phenomenon represents both an economic and development opportunity. Hilde, Ellingsen and Cruickshank (2010) show that second homes respond to a tradition and imaginary that is passed down from generation to generation, and are important in connecting regions and generations. For example, a recent study on second residences in Portugal (Gillot, João and Novais; 2012) shows the differential use made of the second home depending on whether the resident is a member of the first generation using the second home or the second generation. The first group uses the second home more regularly, the second group, more sporadically. These authors note that the new generations incorporate tourism into the use of the area. Other studies in Spain (Perez and Garcia, 2005) suggest the role of individuals returning to their roots in rural tourism, through the category of 'tourism of the locals'.

The question remains unanswered as to how generational change in the use of second homes contributes to the production of the representation of rural life; second residences are now a part of rural life, and second home residents have their own lifestyles that reinterpret that life.

### Nature sports and tourism without locality

Among the trends that have shaped the development of rural tourism in the last decade, the increased interest in health, sports tourism and active vacations stands out (Little, 2012). The Pyrenees have been pioneering in Spain in these initiatives. On the one hand, the dominant model of 'winter tourism' in the Western Pyrenees reproduces the mass tourism of the coastal areas, most recently incorporating additional active tourism possibilities (snowboarding, ice diving, sledding, snowmobiling, ski biking,...). The success of these experiences in Spain and in areas of the French Pyrenees has had some influence in our study area, as can be seen with the proposal for the establishment of a Nordic Ski Centre: "it is a project... shall we say..., key [...] key for local development because it means [...] an investment [...] with a huge impact on everything that has to do with the valley's economy"» (E1, local politician). This project generated a conflict involving local municipal governments, civic associations and sectors of the local population in regional forums (the parliament, the press, etc.)<sup>5</sup>. The controversy was over different forms of living a rural life and the representation of the rural. While some discourses criticised the views of environmentalists or mountaineers for ignoring the economic reality of the valley or symbolic rights of its residents, other denounced a model based on economic rationalisation of the mountains.

Sporting events and adventure recreation have been developed as tourist products that make a different use of space and the representations of rurality. For example, one of the most successful events in the Pyrenees is the *Grand Prize Pirena*. A race in stages with sleds drawn by dogs through the mountains from east to west and passing through France, Spain and Andorra. Having been run over twenty times, it counts toward the European Cup and the World Cup in this speciality. These rural practices and their referents are associated with a model of elite sport that organises events as performances (spectacles) that recreate adventure or sporting effort and that offer various forms of participation as a competitor and/or spectator. Some of these, such as 'bicycle tourism races', can gather together thousands of people. As a local mayor interviewee explained,

<sup>5</sup> In 2003 the Council of Valle de Roncal drafted an initial project that was heavily criticised by environmental and mountaineering groups as well as by sectors of the local population for its effect on the Natural Reserve of Larra, in contradiction with the Regional Law on Natural spaces. The limits of the law were adapted by amending it in parliament and in 2006 the Council developed a new project with changes and improvements. The Ski Resort Valle de Roncal was inaugurated in 2008 and is part of the NORDIC-6 network formed by the resorts of Western Pyrenees in French and Spanish sides. It depends on the Navarra Regional Government and has 27 kilometers of trails for cross-country skiing and other activities.



we created a sporting event [...]. Right now, in the bicycle tourism world [...] the first division is an elite in cycling tourist races, we enter [...] with a neighbouring town [...] it is the second pass in France, [...] now our race will be the most difficult cycling tourism race in Spain, and in Europe among the most difficult. So, here we have elite cyclists, biking fans [...] and well, it is a great day (E1, local politician).

The dematerialisation of rural referents in tourism marketing makes it possible to connect different signifiers through these events in a symbolic reinvention of the past formulated as their justification. For example, the transformation of an old cattle trail into a cycling competition under the model of a bicycle rally: "we're making another product for sports tourism, which is trip through the Roncaleses old cattle route [...] and doing it with mountain bikes, a "Californian-style" race..." (E1, local politician). As noted by our interviewee, the cycle route proposed for the ravine is inspired by the 'Amgen Tour of California'<sup>6</sup>, an event that supports an advertising caravan promoting sporting lifestyles associated with urban professionals.

In these discourses and representations of sports tourism, place-branding and rural marketing intertwine, connecting places (Nordic skiing in the south of Europe, 'Californian-Style' bike races in Navarra, etc.) that do not project their local identity on the proposed sporting activity. Skiing and cycling are associated with consumption practices disconnected from identity or territorial particularities. The proposed experience is linked to a personalised relationship with nature and rural spaces that do not incorporate local opportunities and identities. Value is not placed on the cultural specificity of the territory. Sport is used to 'delocalise' the referents of the locality. It inspires a form of production of locality, which specifically avoids the singularity of the local.

The literature on sporting practices in connection with rural tourism is very limited. The few studies that have been done have focused on the place branding aspect. Fløisand and Jakobsen (2007) analysed the role of sport as a narrative for development. In Andalusia, a study by Moscoso (2009) addressed the practices of outdoor sports in nature. He found a significant level of conflict between practitioners of these activities and the local population – conflict both at the symbolic level of the meaning of the place and over use. Sporting activities divide local populations by causing competition over land use between 'productivist' groups and promoters of 'post-productive' uses, such as entrepreneurs of active or nature tourism. But they also lead to conflict between the promoters of sports-tourism

<sup>6</sup> Amgen is a biotechnology company in Conejo Valley (California). Among its flagship products is epotin-a synthetic version of the hormone EPO. Listed on the NASDAQ, in 2006 it began sponsoring the Tour of California one of only two cycling stage races recognised by the UCI in the United States.

activities and practitioners in the sphere of representation. While practitioners/consumers conceive of nature without a connection to local populations, those local populations view nature as a resource, for many groups as a resource that belongs to them.

Sporting practices offer us situations in which the differences in representations of the rural are extreme. In these imaginaries local populations are sometimes productive, agro-pastoral and forest areas or they represent a natural space (that supports business activities) but without territorial reference. Meanwhile, the participants in sporting activities value the area for its nature and their representations ignore local regulations. For some it is their land, for others free land. A young interviewee, the head of an active tourism company, explained in the following way access to a natural mountain reserve:

I think the entrance should be up [...], not like it is today, but just the opposite. Today it is..., you can't do organised activities, I mean, you can't go if I'm going as your guide, you can go alone, and I think it should be just the opposite... restricted, you can only enter with guides (E2, young man, active tourism company).

Sporting practices reveal in paradigmatic form the effect that representations have on tourism in natural spaces. By analogy these comments could be extended to other activities that also produce tourist spaces and localities. Attention to the difficulties of connection between representations, between different social groups, is crucial to increase the value of the tourism resources in rural areas. As stated by a young local running active tourism company:

We offer everything... in terms of outdoor activities...in the autumn visits to Irati, an indigenous forest, to Larra, a nature reserve... but not only a guided visit but with an environmental activity or something a little more elaborate. Visitors can be a typical retired person on a Sunday outing or even university biology students... In winter, of course, logically, skiing and snowshoeing is more typical. In spring, water, especially the river. And in summer, canyoning, climbing and a bit of hiking" (E2, young man, active tourism company).

Sport may be an extreme case for observing these differences, but it highlights the central role of representations in producing rural spaces. Analysis suggests that in projects to develop tourism in rural areas incorporating local identities is essential to provide natural spaces, places where there can be an enormous diversity of social practices, with a unique character. Only in this way can the area be endowed with shared meanings.

## Conclusions

Tourism has transformed rural economies, acting as a stimulus enhancing their products. In the context of the new economies of signs and spaces, the strategies of rural marketing and place branding have revitalised and multiplied the resources of rural areas through the development of new narratives and representations of rurality. However, these proposals for the development of tourism have not dealt with the problems of rural sustainability (demographic, economic and environmental). While they have managed to connect new rural tourism products to the codes and patterns of consumption of post-modern societies, this has been in exchange for selling an idealised imaginary, remodelling local time and space and exploiting the environment. The future of tourism as a model for rural development depends on its capacity to be organised based on integrated and more participatory governance, focused on the specific social realities of localities.

As we have shown, in these tourism development processes an essential role is played by the different experiences and representations of the rural, which modulate the social interactions organised by tourism. We have seen, for example, how the phenomenon of the second residence has been a means of survival for many rural areas. But we have also tried to show the rise and implications of certain touristic proposals and demands, such as sports tourism, which are linked to a rurality of empty spaces in which local identity is diminished. One of the threats that the interrelationship of tourism and rural development reveals lies precisely in its success. The enormous synergy of tourism and development in the rural areas often has as its counterpart the selling and production of a 'generic rurality' that the inhabitants do not want to experience and the tourists do not want to consume.

In the search for representations shared among inhabitants and tourists that can provide meanings that transcend consumption and support the sustainability of localities, identity plays a crucial role. The challenge will be to explore how rural identities that support these representations gradually come to be associated with lifestyles to a greater extent than with place. We cannot forget that the language of rural tourism is the language of representations.

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