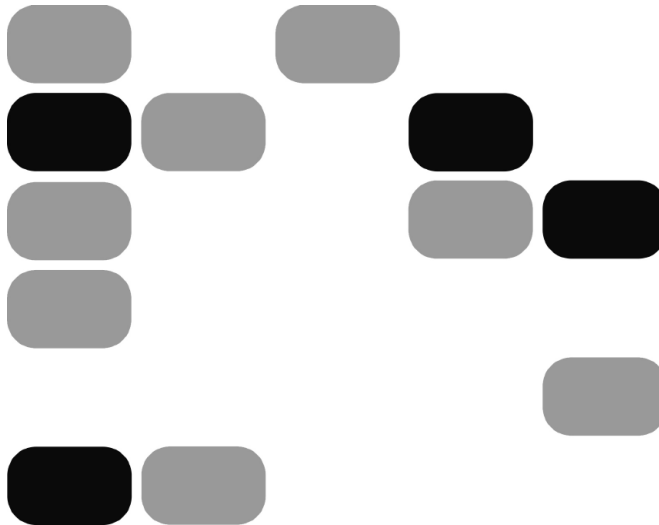


Extended abstract

*Rural Depopulation and Revaluation
of Heritage Resources Preliminary
Analyssis in Campo de Montiel
(Castilla-La Mancha, Spain)*



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Extended abstract

1. Introduction and justification

By analysing part-time farming (PTF) – a form of organisation currently operating in European agricultural systems – we can examine and characterize the continuity of family farms under de-agrarianisation processes. It has been suggested that PTF is a stage in adaptation towards capitalism via the proletarianisation of the peasantry that allows the circumstantial reproduction of small family farms. On the other hand, de-agrarianisation processes refer to the widespread elimination of such farms and assets and the erosion of agriculture as the economic and structural basis for social relations.

In this article we discuss whether the continuity of PTF responds to the same interests as those of the past or whether new forms of PTF with new strategies and new interests exist. We also analyse how agro-industrial markets, new agricultural technologies, outsourcing, gender, genealogy and heritage symbolic value have influenced contemporary part-time strategies. Finally, we discuss the role played by part-time farms in the de-agrarianisation process.

2. Objectives, methodology, sources, and areas of study

We explore the origins, strategies, transformations and contemporary forms of PTF in a viticultural context. We also analyse the trajectories of part-time farms in second generations to interpret their (dis)continuities under de-agrarianisation processes. To do so, we use the ethnographic method from an intergenerational perspective.

Our data were collected through non-participant observation and in-depth interviews with sixteen informants from four families involved in part-time viticulture. Three of those farms are run by men and one is run by a woman. Our area of study is the Alt Penedès (Barcelona) and Baix Penedès (Tarragona) regions of Catalonia, both of which are characterised by heavy specialisation in viticulture and a strong presence of PTF.

3. Results

Origins of part-time farming

For first-generation part-time farmers, the industrialisation of the Penedès led to a contraction of the agricultural sector and greater access to safer and better-paid jobs. Young men began to adopt PTF strategies as part of a gradual process towards acquiring knowledge and progressively engaging in their family's agricultural business while simultaneously holding down another major occupation. The woman, on the other hand, adopted a different strategy that saw her take up PTF in their later years even though she did not have sufficient resources or knowledge. Indeed, gender and genealogical position conditioned socialisation regarding agricultural work and the adoption of PTF strategies.

Strategy deployment

The strategies employed by men who practise PTF are different from those employed by the woman. Men combine employment in industry with agricultural work, aiming to expand and modernise their farms. They purchase land not merely to ensure the continuity of their farms but also to improve their profitability and complement their main occupation. The woman, on the other hand, has not extended her farm and is responsible for only a section of her family's land. One farm envisaged strategies for diversifying into viniculture, while all families recognise the self-exploitation suffered by those involved in PTF, the impact of which on female spouses is profound. Industrial working conditions, technification, inter-cooperation, and the outsourcing of labour have proved vital to the introduction of part-time strategies. In turn, this has led to the erosion of family work, which is perceived as both a logical process and the result of administrative control over hiring procedures.

Farm succession and future trajectories

Two of the farms we analysed will disappear with no one to take up the baton. The heirs to those families admit that they are likely to retain ownership of the land but will not continue to work on it. Unlike their female counterparts, male heirs believe they would become self-employed farmers, but only 'as a last resort'. However, agriculture, knowledge, and inherited property may be essential for maintaining one's livelihood. In one case, part-time agrarian succession has already taken place although the successor considers switching to agriculture exclusive dedication in a near future. In another farm, second generations pose a part-time succession based

on wine production and a reduction in the vineyard surface. The three heirs to that family, all of whom are women, press their father to transmit agricultural skills and knowledge, which are strongly gender biased.

4. Discussion

The continuous industrial working day (with no split shift), technification and inter-cooperation favour PTF as a complement to the main activity. Mechanisation has eroded family work and weakened the attachment of second generations to land and agricultural lifestyle. At the same time, greater outsourcing illustrates the evolution of social and territorial processes and reflects adaptation to pluriactivity. Despite these conditions, however, the part-time farmer, whose lifestyle is still characterised by simple commercial production, is overexploited.

Gender is also an important factor in PTF. While their husbands engage in pluriactivity, farmers' wives are present in multiple environments – working inside and outside the home, on the farm, and in domestic and caregiving duties. Hierarchies based on gender and position in the family have also had an impact on generational succession: farmers' daughters are less likely to be identified as valid heirs, which in turn hinders their access to the knowledge required to bring about that succession.

Future prospects call into question linear trends in reproduction and disappearance. Farms without successor will lose all agricultural activity when those responsible for running them retire. The heirs to these farms consider the land a provider of financial security and a symbolic value whose ownership they intend to preserve. The experience of these families reflects an intermediate phase of a reverse agricultural reform in which ownership shifts from small vine-growers to large-scale owners and producers.

In one case we analysed, PTF was characterised by a resizing of the farm to enable the exclusive dedication of the second generation to the agricultural sector. This rare occurrence involves a reversal of the process of proletarianisation.

Diversified farms make agrarian succession more attractive while facilitating refeminisation. Future prospects in the context of these farms points towards a refeminised PTF and a decrease in both production capacity and workload, but also the re-agrarianisation of second generations.

Highlights:

1. Depopulation processes are increasing in many Spanish rural spaces, aggravating socio-territorial crisis.
2. Sparsely populated areas must design endogenous strategies to boost their territorial development.
3. The revaluation of heritage resources is an opportunity to implement territorial development strategies.
4. Heritage resources are a key factor in strengthening territorial competitiveness.
5. The territory shows a remarkable natural and cultural heritage, both valued and not valued.

Abstract: A large part of the rural municipalities of inland Spain are suffering significant depopulation problems. The Campo de Montiel region, located in the south of Castilla-La Mancha (Spain), is a clear example of these kind of phenomena. The limited capacity of economic activities to energize and fix the population, especially traditional agricultural structures, motivates the gradual abandonment and landscape transformation of these spaces and leads to the disappearance of customs and material elements that are an expression of a unique heritage. The main objective of this paper is to make a first approach to heritage resources that, suitably revalued, can promote not only territorial competitiveness, but also the implementation of sustainable territorial development strategies. The methodology is based on the tools of demographic analysis and on an exhaustive field research that provides a first catalogue of groups of heritage resources. The results show the existence of numerous resources that are already recognized and protected, along with other members of a forgotten, unrecognized and unprotected heritage.

Keywords: Depopulation, rural resilience, territorial competitiveness, forgotten heritage, strategy.

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