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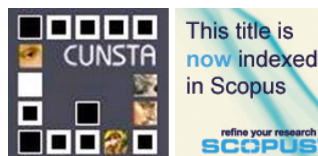
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# The management of cultural heritage and landscape in inner areas

edited by Mara Cerquetti, Leonardo J.  
Sánchez-Mesa Martínez, Carmen Vitale

Guardo le canoe che fendono l'acqua, le barche che sfiorano il campanile, i bagnanti che si stendono a prendere il sole. Li osservo e mi sforzo di comprendere. Nessuno può capire cosa c'è sotto le cose. Non c'è tempo per fermarsi a dolersi di quello che è stato quando non c'eravamo. Andare avanti, come diceva Ma', è l'unica direzione concessa. Altrimenti Dio ci avrebbe messo gli occhi di lato. Come i pesci<sup>1</sup>.

Quando cammino nei prati attorno al Santuario, quasi sempre solo, ripenso a nonno Venanzio che, da giovane biscino, pascolava il gregge negli stessi terreni. Mi affascina il fatto che in questo luogo la cui cifra, agli occhi di chi guarda adesso la mia scelta di vita, è la solitudine, nei secoli addietro abitassero oltre duecento persone. Ancora negli anni Cinquanta, ricorda mio nonno, erano quasi un centinaio gli abitanti di Casette di Macereto tra contadini, mezzadri, mogli, pastori e un nugolo di bambini che costringeva il maestro a salire ogni giorno da Visso per fare lezione a domicilio.

Era una comunità compatta, coordinata come lo può essere quella delle società operose degli insetti: api, formiche, termiti, ma cosa più sorprendente che mai, una comunità niente affatto statica o chiusa<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Balzano M. (2018), *Resto qui*, Torino: Einaudi, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Scolastici M. (2018), *Una yurta sull'Appennino*, Torino: Einaudi, p. 50.

# Planning territorial policies against inner areas depopulation in Spain: keys for sustainable management of cultural and environmental resources

Leonardo J. Sánchez-Mesa Martínez\*

## *Abstract*

Depopulation is a phenomenon that seriously affects the Spanish rural environment, especially in inner areas of the country. The consequences of this phenomenon have an impact on these communities at all levels, including the management of their cultural and natural heritage. However, this heritage has great potential to contribute to the regeneration of these populations and their economic activity. In this paper, we will first analyze the various sectoral planning instruments that attempt to face the problem of depopulation, in order to evaluate the degree of sensitivity offered towards the needs and the potentialities of cultural heritage. Secondly, we will proceed to assess the level of efficiency of the articulation of these planning instruments. Finally, we will propose guideline principles to achieve a suitable treatment of these resources.

Lo spopolamento è un fenomeno che colpisce fortemente lo sviluppo rurale della Spagna, specialmente nelle aree interne del paese. Le conseguenze di questo fenomeno hanno un impatto su queste comunità a tutti i livelli, incluso quello della gestione del patrimonio culturale e naturale. Tuttavia, proprio il patrimonio culturale può contribuire allo sviluppo dell'economia locale di queste comunità. In questo saggio si analizzeranno innanzitutto i vari

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strumenti di pianificazione che cercano di affrontare la questione dello spopolamento, per valutare il grado di sensibilità delle risposte alle esigenze e alle potenzialità del patrimonio culturale. In secondo luogo, si procederà ad una valutazione del livello di efficienza dell'articolazione di tali strumenti di pianificazione. In ultimo, verranno indicati alcuni principi fondamentali per ottenere un'adeguata gestione di tali risorse.

### 1. *Some data about the phenomenon of depopulation in Spain*

Only a few days ago, a prominent Spanish newspaper published the results of a study that analyzed the evolution of the Spanish population in 2017<sup>1</sup>. Although the data indicated that the Spanish population has experienced a very slight growth (0.3%), the cartographic information provided was enormously illustrative of the disparate demographic evolution experienced by regions and provinces. In the representative map of population variation, a clear image can be obtained of how the phenomenon of depopulation, associated with a clear rural exodus, affects more intensely the inner provinces and municipalities included in the Regions (hereinafter, CCAA) of Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, Castilla y León, Aragón, Asturias and Galicia.

Starting from an analysis by Provinces, we can highlight the especially serious situation experienced in Soria, Teruel and Cuenca, which have the sad recognition of “sparsely populated territory” with the NUTS 3 level (less than 12.5 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>), based on the classification system drawn up by the EU as a basis for articulating its various territorial cohesion policies<sup>2</sup>. Always within the framework of this European system, descending to a local scale (LAU zoning: Local Administrative Units), the examples of sparsely populated areas (LAU 2) increase exponentially in number for Spain's case<sup>3</sup> (see figures 1 and 2).

These data about the current depopulation confirm to a large extent the forecasts made by the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (hereinafter, INE),

<sup>1</sup> See the newspaper article cited under the title *¿Cuáles son las provincias que ganan población y cuáles las que la pierden?*, by Rodríguez-Pina and Clemente, for the digital edition of «El País», of June 26, 2018, <[https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/06/25/media/1529946912\\_509745.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/06/25/media/1529946912_509745.html)>, 30.06.2018.

<sup>2</sup> The acronym NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) was chosen to denominate the basic classification system for regional data with which the EU operates. This classification is structured in 3 levels: NUTS 1: major socio-economic regions; NUTS 2: basic regions for the application of regional policies; and NUTS 3: small regions for specific diagnoses. The current NUTS classification, operated in 2016 and valid as of 2018, includes a total of 104 regions in the NUTS 1 level, 281 in the NUTS 2 and 1,348 in the NUTS 3 (for more information go to the Eurostat website: <<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/background>>, 06.30.2018).

<sup>3</sup> In order to download the population data table corresponding to the LAU-NUTS zoning made by Eurostat, structured in global terms and by country, go to the following website: <[http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/345175/501971/EU-28\\_LAU\\_2017\\_NUTS\\_2016.xlsx](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/345175/501971/EU-28_LAU_2017_NUTS_2016.xlsx)>, 30.06.2018.

derived from its analysis on the projection of the population in Spain 2014-2064, where the aforementioned regions were among the most affected by the negative balance of migratory flows<sup>4</sup>.

Even more conclusive are the data provided by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (hereinafter, FEMP), one of the institutions that have made greater efforts in recent times to warn about the serious situation and the uncertain future concerning inner areas of the Iberian Peninsula. According to their analysis, half of the 8,124 Spanish municipalities are in danger of extinction. Some of the figures obtained by the FEMP Depopulation Commission<sup>5</sup> should be highlighted:

- only 3.15% of the population lives in 61% of the municipalities;
- the municipalities with less than 100 inhabitants grew from 928 to 1,286 in the period 2000-2006;
- the municipalities with less than 500 inhabitants grew from 3,800 to almost 4,000 in the period 2000-2006;
- in 14 of the 52 Spanish provinces, more than 80% of their municipalities have less than 1,000 inhabitants.

The results obtained from this analysis lead the Commission to two global conclusions regarding the Spanish demographic reality, which are extremely significant for the present study. First, that depopulation reaches critical and continuous levels in the same provinces where it began to appear decades ago. Second, that the most worrisome situations coincide geographically with the inner rural areas, which have come to be nicknamed the “rural non-competitive inner Spain”<sup>6</sup>. The volume of municipalities affected by this phenomenon of depopulation and the seriousness of the data evolution (about 4,000 municipalities are identified as being “at risk of extinction”) determine the FEMP Commission recommendation in order to consider this problem as a real national issue<sup>7</sup>.

Despite these data, Spain stands out for not having a national strategy to fight against depopulation. The recently ceased Government had committed to elaborate one after the Agreement reached on January 17, 2017 within the framework of the Conference of Presidents of the Senate, and proceed, shortly after, to appoint a specific Commissioner for the Demographic Challenge. In the last year, however,

<sup>4</sup> INE Document “Proyección de la Población de España 2014–2064” 2014.

<sup>5</sup> *Población y Despoblación en España 2016* 2016, pp. 5 ff.

<sup>6</sup> To read about this classification of the Spanish territory and its characterization see Blanco *et al.* 2015, pp. 374 ff.

<sup>7</sup> The still recent local reform of 2013, operated by Law No. 27/2013, of December 27, has tried to incorporate rationalization instruments for municipal organizations. Although it was not an initiative focused directly on the phenomenon of depopulation, the impulse given to eventual voluntary joining of municipalities (see Almeida 2015) was a measure that could have contributed to alleviate the problems of management and financing of small municipalities, thus also curbing one of the factors that drive the rural exodus. However, after almost 5 years, satisfactory results have not been obtained (see Carbonell 2018, p. 19).

the most significant action was the forecast of a package of measures in the State Budget Law for 2018, endowed with a financing of 1,443 million euros. The aforementioned strategy, however, has not yet been developed.

The absence of this national regulation, nevertheless, has not been an obstacle for the CCAA to offer earlier responses against these needs, nowadays consolidated in some cases. It should be considered, in this sense, that the regional level plays an important role if we take into account the high levels of decentralization existing in relation to the competences (among others, tourism, culture, territorial planning, etc.) that should be activated to address the necessary cross-cutting approach to the problem of depopulation. In this sense, in 2013, the 13 CCAA most affected by depopulation founded the FREDD (Forum of Spanish Regions with Demographic Challenges), which is one of the most active political discussion poles in this area. Most of the earliest initiatives offering transverse planning tools against the phenomenon of depopulation came from some of those CCAA (for example, the *Agenda para la Población de Castilla y León 2010-2020*), as well as other more recent did, such as the *Directriz Especial de Ordenación Territorial de Política Demográfica y contra la Despoblación* (2017) in Aragón, and so the *Plan Demográfico del Principado de Asturias 2017-2027*.

### 1.1 *Depopulation and cultural heritage of rural inner areas*

The negative consequences of the depopulation of rural areas are multiple and have very diverse effects. They are projected both on a social and economic scale, affecting a large set of realities. One of them is the cultural heritage, a reality that is far from being irrelevant in the Spanish case, for multiple reasons. Among others, it must be remembered that Spain is among the richest countries in the world in cultural properties. The high value and the outstanding consideration that has been given to this heritage by public institutions take shape in intense legislative activity. Its result is a complex and rich normative system devoted to cultural heritage protection and promotion, as well as intense interventionism by the public institutions, backed by wide powers and prerogatives that are justified by its important social function. No less is the awareness of its economic importance for a country where the tourism industry and the third sector are vital in the generation of wealth<sup>8</sup>.

Within the framework of our study, defined by the worrying impact of the progressive depopulation of rural inner areas, cultural heritage deserves special attention as a seriously affected reality. A double approach is needed: on the one hand, abandonment of these zones increases the risk of deterioration and

<sup>8</sup> Although it is already complex to determine what could be the market value of this voluminous heritage (see, in this regard, the reflections raised in Tamames 2012, pp. 26ff), it is not so hard to



loss of the heritage located in them<sup>9</sup>; on the other hand, at the same time, that heritage can be one of the poles of action from which measures capable of reversing the phenomenon of depopulation can be undertaken. Therefore, we find two points to face: depopulation as a threat to cultural heritage and cultural heritage as a key resource against depopulation.

In relation to the first approach, it is necessary to highlight a fact that makes it even more relevant: contrary to what might be expected, rural areas in Spain concentrate most of the protected cultural heritage<sup>10</sup>. Although it does not always consist of highly relevant goods, the truth is that these areas, which are very extensive, have a heritage wealth sometimes higher in number than urban or peri-urban areas, especially in relation to certain categories or typologies (archaeological heritage or cultural landscapes, taking into account the habitual greater relation with the landscape that the rural environments display). In the same way, factors such as the strong orographic and climatic contrasts present in Spanish territory, added to the richness and variety of the cultural past manifested in its inner regions, contribute to conform the great cultural diversity present in rural Spain. This gives rise, in turn, to a great diversity of heritage, which is particularly evident in the richness of the categories of intangible heritage, as well as those of the ethnological and industrial heritage, which could be grouped under the concept of “vernacular” or “traditional”

calculate the impact on Spanish economy of the industries and productive activities connected to it. That impact was estimated, in 2015, at a percentage close to 2.8% of GDP, almost equivalent to the derivative of agriculture (this and other data can be consulted in *Notas sobre el Anuario de Estadísticas Culturales 2017* 2017).

<sup>9</sup> «El vaciamiento de los pueblos conlleva también problemas para garantizar la seguridad del patrimonio histórico-artístico, y supone un factor de riesgo para la conservación del medio natural. El abandono del territorio y la extinción de actividades agrícolas y ganaderas, además de la pérdida de valores y modos de vida tradicionales, provoca transformaciones paisajísticas visibles, pues favorece la recolonización descontrolada por ciertas especies de fauna o de vegetación. Además, la menor capacidad de control sobre el territorio, facilita la ocupación de canteras y minas, la tala de árboles, y el expolio del patrimonio artístico» (*Informe “El medio rural y su vertebración social y territorial”* 2018, p. 31).

<sup>10</sup> The Preamble of Law No. 45/2007, December 13, “Ley para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Medio Rural”, states at its very beginning as follows: «La importancia actual del medio rural en España, que integra al 20 por ciento de la población, que se elevaría hasta el 35 por ciento si se incluyen las zonas periurbanas y afecta al 90 por ciento del territorio, y el hecho de que en este inmenso territorio rural se encuentran la totalidad de nuestros recursos naturales y una parte significativa de nuestro patrimonio cultural, así como las nuevas tendencias observadas en la localización de la actividad económica y residencial, confieren a este medio una relevancia mayor de la concedida en nuestra historia reciente». On the other hand, the aforementioned report *Informe España 2015*, referring to the rural territories affected by the inhabitants’ depopulation and aging, recalls as follows: «sin embargo, son precisamente estos territorios en los que se mantienen más profundamente las esencias del pueblo, son estas sociedades rurales, sus gentes, las que mantienen el patrimonio rural, artístico, arquitectónico, religioso, musical, artesanal, gastronómico y natural, las que defienden nuestras tradiciones y nuestra cultura y quienes pueden seguir trasmitiéndolas a las futuras generaciones» (see Blanco *et al.* 2015, p. 377).

heritage (not so used within our normative categories). All this enormous cultural wealth is inevitably threatened by depopulation:

- the lack of inhabitants causes the abandonment and disuse of the buildings;
- with the absence of future generations, all traditions, techniques and unique constructive typologies, trades, knowledge and local uses (already under pressure by industrial progress and the modernization of increasingly urbanized societies), many of them linked to economic activities in slope, are bound to disappear;
- the protection and surveillance of goods become too difficult in depopulated areas, as they are not close enough to sufficiently significant population centers, and are also far away from administrations (a particularly common problem in the specific case of archaeological sites, frequently located in rural areas that are now sparsely populated).

In brief, the effects of depopulation present an unquestionable negative impact on the preservation and effective control of cultural heritage, especially if located in rural inner areas, where the phenomenon gets more intense. However, in the same way a disease that ends up affecting several vital organs of a living being can be healed by treating one of them in a specific way, the intervention in cultural heritage through the stimulation of its potential as an economic resource can help alleviate the effects of depopulation, slowing them down or even reversing them. This particular potential that cultural heritage can offer as a possible backbone of development policies for rural inner areas acquires viability and solidity thanks to other current positive factors, offering a counterweight to those that motivate depopulation. Among them, the following stand out:

- the ever-growing evolution of cultural tourism, a tourist modality that, while it may be complex to define<sup>11</sup>, undoubtedly includes all commercial and consumer activity linked to the access and enjoyment of cultural heritage. This trend confirms the rising potential (with wide margins of improvement) of heritage as a resource to generate wealth<sup>12</sup>;

<sup>11</sup> The conceptualization proposal by Vizcaíno Ponferrada offers a concept of cultural tourism that includes activities as the visiting of monuments and exhibitions; attendance at religious events or pilgrimages, congresses or shows and musical contests (flamenco); the enjoyment of gastronomy; as well as those associated with language learning (see Vizcaíno 2015, pp. 86-87).

<sup>12</sup> Just to express this evolution through some data obtained by the INE: the total of trips made mainly for cultural reasons that were destined to Spain in 2016 amounted to 14,419,400 in the case of travelers residing in Spain (increasing the figures of the previous year in more than 300,000 trips). This type of tourism accounted for about 17% of all trips made for leisure, recreation or vacation and almost 8% of all trips recorded, estimating at a total of 7,339,000,000 the expenses incurred (which increase in almost 600 million euros those registered in 2015). On the other hand, in the same year 2016, a total of 8,014,200 entries of foreign visitors in Spain were calculated for leisure, recreation or vacation also marked for cultural reasons (almost one million more than in 2015), which allows to estimate that 12.5% of foreign tourism in Spain was mainly cultural in nature. International cultural tourism's estimated incomes in Spain were over 8,567,100,000 € in 2016, increasing 870 million euros the figures for 2015 (see *Anuario de Estadísticas Culturales*

- the progressive consolidation and evolution of rural tourism in Spain in the last few years<sup>13</sup>. This tourism modality is based on a particular demand for leisure that includes aspects of active tourism, health and nature as main elements. However, it is often complemented (intensely, on many occasions) with a strong cultural component (focused on the varied offer represented by the rural cultural heritage: not only monuments and landscape, but also parties, traditions, gastronomy, etc.). The analysis of the available regional data in Spain offers diverse results depending on the CA, but allows us to appreciate, in general terms, the positive results of rural tourism regional policies in order to improve their potential to attract wealth to the most depressed areas, as it can be seen in the following table:

Evolution of RURAL TOURISM 2001-2017 in a sample of 4 inner regions (CCAA) especially affected by depopulation										
	Total of travelers		Travelers who are not Spanish residents		Estimated rural accommodation places offered		% occupancy per places / rooms		Employee staff	
	2001	2017	2001	2017	2001	2017	2001	2017	2001	2017
Aragón	92,378	182,926	7,951	18,479	4,610	9,386	20.07/ 22.86	14.95/ 17.40	761	1,336
Extremadura	30,193	191,648	1,945	15,573	1,019	7,051	19.31/ 19.85	16.65/ 21.58	188	884
Castilla y León	225,510	748,307	8,106	64,954	7,743	30,021	21.70/ 23.88	15.08/ 18.39	1,519	4,535
Castilla -La Mancha	58,320	283,251	882	13,927	2,937	14,013	16.60/ 17.77	12.64/ 15.27	550	2,060

Tab. 1. Evolution of rural tourism in inner regions (Source: own elaboration with data obtained from INE 2001-2017)

2017, pp. 157-164).

<sup>13</sup> While in 2001 a number of 1,210,890 entries in rural accommodation took place in Spain, of which only 124,125 corresponded to foreign tourists, in 2017 they have grown to 4,023,983, with a share of foreign visitors of 790,430 individuals. This means that since 2001 (when the effects of rural depopulation were already evident), in a period of 17 years, the flows of tourists to rural areas have increased, in absolute terms, by 332%. This expansion of the sector is also measurable in the infrastructures of tourist accommodation. According to estimated data, it has gone from 5,865 active rural accommodations and an offer of 46,354 places in 2001 to an estimated total of 16,283 rural accommodations and 154,904 places in 2017 (which means, respectively, increases of 277% in the offer of accommodation and 334% in the number of places). On the other hand, always within the same period 2001-2017, the volume of workers employed in this sector grew from an annual average of 7,973 to 23,430 employees (data obtained from *INE Document "Rural Tourism Accommodation Occupancy Survey. National, Autonomous Communities, provinces and tourist areas and sites"* 2018).

- the promotion of intangible heritage policies, especially reinforced by UNESCO policies, based on the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage approved in 2003. Many countries, including Spain, have implemented rules to pay specific attention to the protection and enhancement of a very rich heritage, especially linked to the rural world, its own traditions and activities. As a main factor, the need for this normative implementation was due to its special risk of disappearance, precisely because of the abandonment of rural areas and its disastrous effects on the transmission of cultural heritage to new generations, among other phenomena;
- related to the previous factor, the rise of interest in vernacular or traditional heritage, so important to promote local identities. Cultural globalization has an almost natural tendency towards a certain homogenization that has an undoubted point of reference in urban culture. In this situation, the return to the local becomes an exotic and, therefore, attractive element (especially for tourism). At the same time, the local community itself, aiming to preserve its singularities, also claims for traditional heritage care and attention: cultural diversity becomes an asset worthy of protection against the homogenizing effects of cultural globalization<sup>14</sup>.

The combination of the first two factors allows to perceive the presence of a significant tourist interest share, articulated on the binomial of rural and cultural. This interest can have a crucial impact on the generation of a pole of wealth. Such a resource must be capable, at least, to slow down the progress of depopulation in economically depressed inner areas. Regarding the last two factors, both could offer spaces for the implementation of policies for the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage. Those policies must focus very especially on rural inner areas in order to help to reactivate their attractiveness or, at least, to avoid their economic and demographic decline.

### *1.2 Getting aware of the binomial “depopulation+cultural heritage” and its singularities: the articulation of a new social and institutional sensitivity*

The awareness of the effects that the phenomenon of depopulation has on cultural heritage, as well as the appreciation of heritage potential to fight against this phenomenon, have been consolidated in Spain in recent years in very varied areas and scales.

The following section will show the leadership that some CCAA, those most affected by the depopulation, have had in this area. Meanwhile, the central Administration has not yet focused its attention on these issues (probably due

<sup>14</sup> Concerning the impact of globalization on cultural policies and cultural heritage management, allow us to send it back to Sánchez-Mesa 2013, pp. 15-18.

to its limited competence in the subject matter of tutelage and conservation of cultural heritage). In fact, there is no basic national planning to allow tackling the problems with the appropriate transversal and multilevel perspective. However, besides the CCAA – and in some cases even before them – other actors that have been insisting for some time on the need to focus attention in this area through specific actions, generating unique experiences, can be identified.

First, the own action of the Municipalities has represented a point of reference in Spain in this issue, starting by the specific experiences developed by them, all alone or with the support of supra-municipal administrative structures (such as the “Diputaciones Provinciales”) or the associative figures provided by the Law (such as the “Mancomunidades” and the “Comarcas”)<sup>15</sup>. Besides that, it must be especially highlighted, due to the intensity and impact of their work, associative experiences such as those of the aforementioned FEMP (endowed with a specific Commission on Depopulation) or the Spanish Association of Mountain Municipalities (esMONTAÑAS). Both took an active role – together with other entities – at the specialized committees of the Senate on depopulation, including always among its objects of analysis and proposals the necessary conservation and exploitation of cultural heritage located in these areas as an important economic resource<sup>16</sup>. The first one, in their recent *Document of Action: List of measures to fight against depopulation in Spain* (2017), includes

<sup>15</sup> To cite one of the traditionally considered leader cases in Spain in this regard, we can refer to the experience developed in the municipality of Albarracín, province of Teruel (one of the most affected by the phenomenon of depopulation), supported even by the UE Parliament’s Culture Committee (during its visit in 2015). Its tourism model’s been based on combined policies for the conservation and rehabilitation of the Heritage. The promotion of cultural tourism developed in this small town (1,054 inhabitants) has reached a considerable success, providing annual averages of visitors exceeding 100,000 individuals (for a more in-depth analysis of this specific case, see the data and assessments provided in Rubio 2008, pp. 21-48). Without leaving the same province, we can also refer to the case of the Comarca de Gúdar-Jabalambre as an example of supra-municipal administrative structure. This Comarca is located in a mountainous area (*Sistema Ibérico*), including 24 small municipalities with a total population of 8,692 inhabitants and a rich cultural and landscape heritage. The Comarca has been acting a development policy that takes into account cultural heritage as one of its central resources. This policy is based on the cultural competences recognized to this Comarca since 1993, due to the CA of Aragón measures in order to promote the role of the supra-municipal administrative structures (see articles 18 – Culture – and 19 – Cultural Heritage and Popular Traditions – of Legislative Decree No. 1/2006, of December 27, which approves the Aragón Regionalization Act). The intense promotional activity linked to heritage, the diffusion of its traditions and gastronomy, or the attraction of training activities and congresses have been enhanced, among others, as factors for attracting economic activity and tourism. In the promotion of these lines, the approval in 2010 of the *Plan Comarcal de Desarrollo Rural Sostenible* (a document accessible on the following website: <[http://www.aragon.es/estaticos/celia/1ISA\\_GUDAR\\_JAVALAMBRE.pdf](http://www.aragon.es/estaticos/celia/1ISA_GUDAR_JAVALAMBRE.pdf)>, 30.06.2018) had a major influence. This Plan focuses on the potential of varied heritage, which includes both intangible and tangible cultural elements.

<sup>16</sup> To access the documents of the most recent sessions of the Special Committee of the Senate on Demographic Evolution in Spain, you can consult the repository, accessible at <<http://www.senado.es/web/actividadparlamentaria/sesionescomision/detallecomisiones/composicion/index.html?id=S014001&legis=12&order=photos&reports=true>>, 30.06.2018.

important proposals within the sections on economy and employment, housing and infrastructure improvement<sup>17</sup>. In the case of esMONTAÑAS, one of its reference documents, the *Guide for the Governance of Mountains*<sup>18</sup>, deals with great attention the role of heritage in these areas, proposing lines of action for local mountain cultures and vernacular knowledge (Chapter 7)<sup>19</sup> and new cultural heritage management models (Chapter 9)<sup>20</sup>.

In this process of raising awareness about the importance of cultural heritage, considering not only the risks it takes towards the phenomenon of depopulation but also its possible role as “engine of development”, the activity developed from non-profit structures should also be highlighted. A first model is given by associations and foundations specifically dedicated to cultural heritage. That is the case of Hispania Nostra association, which has articulated in its Red List of Heritage special attention to heritage at risk of destruction in rural inner areas. The Santa María la Real Foundation represents a current reference of a particular model for the promotion of local cultural heritage that puts together both public and private forces. This specific model has contributed to make Castilla y León a real reference in policies for the promotion of cultural heritage as a development resource for inner areas. Along with these specialized structures, we can also mention the contribution of those associations traditionally known as “Amigos del Patrimonio”. Mainly characterized by their localism and their citizen-based nature, they are often particularly active monitoring and denouncing the abandonment and aggressions suffered by local heritage<sup>21</sup>. In the same line, we could also mention the specific actions of non-specialized associations, created with the aim of articulating the claims of depopulated areas (known examples are provided by associations such as “Teruelexiste” or “Soria ¡Ya!”).

<sup>17</sup> Here are some examples: the development of professional training programs in the agricultural sector, with specific reference to companies and professionals who can contribute to create employment, fix population and take care of rural heritage; the implementation of coordinated inter-institutional programs for the recovery of the monumental heritage of rural areas (promoting investment reinforcement and avoiding the dispersion of specific actions); or the recommendation of a design of the housing policy sensitive to the need to respect and conserve the heritage as an one of the rural areas most attractive values (see *Documento de Acción: Listado de medidas para luchar contra la despoblación en España* 2017).

<sup>18</sup> See *Guía para la Gobernanza de las Montañas* 2017.

<sup>19</sup> The lines of action and tools included in this chapter aim to recover and promote traditional agricultural and livestock exploitations, as well as to promote training programs related to traditional knowledge associated to them in order to guarantee their effective application to productive activities (*Guía para la Gobernanza de las Montañas* 2017, p. 45 and pp. 95-97).

<sup>20</sup> In this section, the Guide offers three different objectives: 1. activating the built heritage through the allocation of new uses (cultural, educational, tourist or sporting uses); 2. linking cultural heritage assets to productive activities; 3. cataloging and broadcasting intangible heritage, not only in order to its preservation and study, but also to generate territorial marketing resources (*Guía para la Gobernanza de las Montañas* 2017, p. 53 and pp. 103-105).

<sup>21</sup> On the collective articulation of citizen action on cultural heritage, let us forward to Sánchez-Mesa 2014, spec. pp. 369-371.



The combined action of all these agents draws essentially the priorities and concerns of the most affected local entities and of the groups of citizens themselves. It has contributed decisively in the political and institutional awareness of higher territorial spheres (CCAA and State), stimulating the design and adoption of specific strategies and tools. A good example of the current level of awareness of the important role that heritage can play in addressing the problem of depopulation of rural inner areas can be appreciated in the most recent report of the Spanish “Consejo Económico y Social” (hereinafter, CES), issued in 2018 under the title “The Rural Environment and its Social and Territorial Structure”.

This report, which features a specific chapter dedicated to environmental and cultural heritage, clearly calls policies to be sensitive to the needs and potential of cultural heritage in rural inner areas. In this sense, the CES warns about «the opportunities they offer for the revitalization of the rural environment, given that the solutions aimed at its reactivation go through both the promotion of traditional activities (hunting, fishing, handicrafts...) from a sustainability perspective, as well as new alternatives related to tourism and leisure»<sup>22</sup>.

## *2. The legal basis for an approach to the double objective: planning conservation and cultural heritage's yields in inner areas*

Article 46 of the Spanish Constitution (hereinafter CE) commands the public authorities to guarantee the conservation of cultural heritage and the promotion of its enrichment. In this sense, it is widely shared by the doctrine that the legislative developments of this precept have been characterized by focusing especially on the section of conservation, leaving in the background the facet of its yields as an economic resource (always conditioned, due to its special value, to the effective respect of the integrity of its values). However, after several decades, this second side has been gaining more and more weight in cultural heritage regulation<sup>23</sup>, as well as the awareness of the need of a transversal treatment (from multiple sectors) in order to reach optimal global heritage management<sup>24</sup>. The very multiplicity of the values of cultural heritage (social,

<sup>22</sup> Informe “El medio rural y su vertebración social y territorial” 2018, p. 13 (own translation).

<sup>23</sup> Spanish system has shown a traditional tendency to prioritize tutelage, translated into intense limitations on property rights, considered as excessive by the doctrine. Not surprisingly, a recent turn towards the implementation of promotion techniques can be appreciated, especially in the case of the regulation offered by the autonomic law (allow here the reference to what is analyzed in Sánchez-Mesa 2015, pp. 495-531).

<sup>24</sup> In this sense, EU law itself has been a strong stimulus, based on the command set out in Article 13 of the consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union: «In formulating and implementing the Union's agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development and space policies, the Union and the Member States shall,

economic, scientific, etc.) push us to admit that it cannot be circumscribed in a single closed competence compartment. We will find that, because of this particular nature, a succeeding global policy needs to be compliant with basic coordination and planning requirements.

The need of planning the public intervention in cultural heritage derives from several causes, starting by the high costs that its conservation implies in the face of the insufficient public resources allocated for this purpose (so planning fixes the criteria that allow prioritizing some interventions over others). It is also a need that is projected on the economic activity to be developed over the cultural heritage, in order to guarantee an adequate and balanced use of goods, respecting their values and their proper preservation as “not renewable” goods (planning contributes here to offer the criteria that guarantee the sustainability of their economic exploitation). And, last but not least, this planning activity should necessarily have an articulated design, in order to connect the different territorial levels and the different sectorial areas related to cultural heritage, either to preserve it or to instrumentalize it with the purpose of fulfilling other public interest purposes (such as generating wealth, increasing employment or contributing to fix the population or even to attract it into depressed areas). It is necessary to verify, in the first place, the degree of sensitivity of the planning tools towards the needs and potentialities of cultural heritage among the set of available resources in order to face the problem of depopulation; secondly, to assess the effective articulation of those different planning instruments.

### *2.1 Heritage, depopulation and rural inner areas in State planning activity*

We can advance that the sensitivity manifested from the instruments of state planning towards the needs and potential of cultural heritage as an instrument to fight against depopulation and for the revitalization of inner depressed areas is not homogeneous among the different sectors involved. To begin with, we have already mentioned the lack of a specific strategy in demographic national policy for the fight against depopulation. Not even the incipient measures adopted under a recent awareness-raising process have had a significant impact on this matter.

In the same sense, State tourism planning rules cultural resources only in a timely manner and usually does so without a reference or specific link to the phenomenon of depopulation. The *Plan Nacional e Integral de Turismo 2012-2015* only provided for specific promotional actions, aimed at integrating cultural heritage into the tourist offer and technical aspects related to networking, focusing on options such as the promotion of the touristic use

since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage».



of rural roads and non-motorized itineraries or the promotion of wine and gastronomic products. On the other hand, we find both the *Plan Sectorial de Turismo de Naturaleza y Biodiversidad 2014-2020* and the *Plan de Turismo Español Horizonte 2020*. Even though they identify the value of the heritage associated to natural elements and to inland tourism as real strengths<sup>25</sup>, neither their guidelines nor specific proposed actions delve into the peculiarities of this resource or its possible connection with the problem of depopulation.

Dealing with environmental planning, we also have a similar approach, perhaps more attentive here to the peculiar situation that affects rural ecosystems, as it can be seen in the approach given to the *Plan Estratégico del Patrimonio Natural y la Biodiversidad 2011-2017*, although no reference is made to the problem of depopulation<sup>26</sup>. The Plan, which features a wide and integrating approach, incorporates a clear awareness of the link that bonds the natural and the cultural<sup>27</sup>. It includes lines of action that not only affect the section of conservation of certain cultural elements (such as transhumance<sup>28</sup>,

<sup>25</sup> In section II, dedicated to nature tourism model pursued by the Plan, it is declared as it follows: «España se encuentra en una posición privilegiada para el turismo de naturaleza, tanto en el mercado nacional como en el europeo, que puede ofrecer productos y destinos exclusivos, diferenciados y de calidad teniendo en cuenta nuestros ecosistemas, paisajes y modos de vida tradicionales que representan un gran atractivo para muchos turistas». The Plan highlights the current tendency to abandon the preference for investment in accommodation (considering imbalances between offer and the real demand) to prioritize attention on specific points: «la creación de oferta de actividades, centradas en el patrimonio cultural o natural de sus territorios, y así se han desarrollado numerosos proyectos de turismo de naturaleza (inventario de recursos, diseño y señalización de rutas, adecuación de equipamientos, formación, edición de folletos, promoción en ferias, etc.)». On the other hand, in the analysis carried out by the *Plan del Turismo Español Horizonte 2020*, the following strengths of the Spanish tourism sector are specified: «Gran variedad de recursos culturales – en ocasiones, de notoriedad mundial – distribuidos a lo largo de todo el territorio [y] numerosos destinos turísticos emergentes con elevado potencial de crecimiento competitivo, sobre todo en las grandes ciudades y en los entornos de interior». The Plan analysis of cultural heritage's role as these inland areas resource, however, operates outside the problem of depopulation, focusing on its potential as a complementary touristic resource and fighting *seasonality* (attracting tourism out of high season), in need of improvements in their offer's design and advertising.

<sup>26</sup> «Los servicios de los ecosistemas más afectados son los de regulación, los culturales relacionados con la población rural y los servicios de abastecimiento gestionados de manera tradicional. El 63% de los servicios de abastecimiento, el 87% de regulación y el 29% de los servicios culturales se encuentran en estado crítico o vulnerable a escala estatal. En cambio, están mejorando los servicios de abastecimiento tecnificados o los culturales que responden a la demanda urbana» (see *Plan Estratégico del Patrimonio Natural y la biodiversidad 2011-2017*, p. 31).

<sup>27</sup> In the Preamble of the aforementioned Plan, it is stated as follows: «La biodiversidad está íntimamente ligada a la cultura de todos los pueblos y forma parte de su identidad. Es una fuente de inspiración y reflexión inigualable y tiene múltiples valores científicos, estéticos, recreativos, educativos e incluso religiosos llegando a trascender al ámbito moral».

<sup>28</sup> Transhumance is the term assigned to the action of transferring cattle from winter pastures to summer pastures and vice versa. This ancestral practice has associated a whole series of customs and norms linked to this transfer. Its ethnological value and its environmental benefits made possible the declaration in 2017 as “Manifestación Representativa del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial”. According to Law No. 10/2015, of May 26, for the safeguarding of the Intangible

geological or hydrological<sup>29</sup> heritage), but recognizes and encourages their economic use, always under the slogan of their sustainability and monitoring the environmental impact of activities (especially tourism).

The focus of state planning tools concerning Rural Development is quite different. This is no surprise considering the full coincidence between the fields of this policy and the areas affected by the phenomenon of depopulation (rural inner Spain). Here, the Planning instruments and the Programs developed under their aegis will manifest themselves as sensitive to the phenomenon and, simultaneously, they will not fail to pay attention to the specific chapter of cultural heritage within this scenario. The *Programa de Desarrollo Rural Sostenible 2010-2014*, approved in accordance with the requirements of the aforementioned Law No. 45/2007, of December 13, for the sustainable development of rural areas, gives us a first example. Chapter 1, devoted to the analysis and diagnosis of rural areas, highlights the problem of depopulation. At the same time, rural cultural heritage, despite having been “traditionally undervalued”, is considered as an element that «helps the transmission of the historical legacy to the new generations in better conditions while it serves as an important claim for the increasingly important rural tourism». The current *Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Rural 2014-2020* moves on the same line, equally sensitive to the problem of depopulation<sup>30</sup> and focused on three kinds of actions: those of supra-regional scope, actions of general interest, or whose competence corresponds to the General State Administration (this way it guarantees its compatibility with the regional programs to be developed by each CA). Here, the role of cultural heritage will be emphasized as a resource that could provide economic diversification in rural areas, especially considering the objectives of making sustainable rural tourism an effective instrument to catalyze the interest on natural and cultural heritage. At the same time, the enhancement of this heritage is seen as a way to achieve other transversal objectives (improvement of the environment and adaptation to climate change, for example). In such a framework, the State program will propose actions of supra-regional scope, such as a strategy for the promotion of sustainable

Cultural Heritage, this figure means the highest protection level in state regulation for this kind of heritage (in some CCAA, as is the case of Aragón, transhumance already had the declaration of Intangible Cultural Interest since 2011).

<sup>29</sup> In the case of the so-called Hydrological Heritage, the Plan refers to the National Strategy for the Restoration of Rivers. This project affects the recovery of ethnological and industrial heritage elements linked to the traditional uses of water (dams, ditches, water mills, traditional irrigation systems).

<sup>30</sup> «En general, las carencias que se encuentran en las zonas rurales se centran en dos aspectos: despoblamiento, fundamentalmente centrada en grandes zonas de la meseta y gran incidencia del paro – y por añadidura exclusión – en las zonas del sur peninsular y Canarias» (conclusions of SWOT analysis carried out in the *Programa de Desarrollo Rural 2014-2020*, p. 106).

tourism in Protected Natural Spaces or programs to promote the touristic use of natural roads and greenways<sup>31</sup>.

Finally, it is also necessary to consider the State's own planning activity within the cultural heritage sector, centralized by the "Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural de España" (hereinafter, IPCE). There are many areas developed within this sector and they cover very different types of heritage. The impact of depopulation acquired a special significance among some of them (we mentioned above the cases of both archaeological and immaterial heritage). In this sense, the attention given to the phenomenon of depopulation in the set of these plans is not homogeneous. On the one hand, we have examples such as the *Plan Nacional de Arquitectura Tradicional* (2015), where depopulation is considered within the analysis of risks suffered by this heritage modality (especially in rural areas)<sup>32</sup>. Its possible active role, as well as the traditional techniques in which it is based, is intensely highlighted in its many facets: its balance with the territory, sustainable development values, environmental efficiency and durability, suitability to sustain traditional economic activities, ability to generate jobs and skilled trades or tourist attraction<sup>33</sup>. In other specific Plans, however, we will not find the same attitude, which in some specific cases can be somewhat surprising if we take into account the importance that the phenomenon of depopulation presents for some types of heritage. Think of the case of the *Plan Nacional para la Salvaguardia del Patrimonio cultural inmaterial* (2015), where depopulation is not mentioned among the vulnerability factors of this type of heritage, so rooted in a rural environment in constant demographic decline. The same happens in the case of the *Plan Nacional de Paisaje Cultural* (2015), where there are many references to its value in terms of tourism resource and proposals for its use under sustainability criteria, but where no mention is made to the risk factor represented by the depopulation of those rural areas.

Although we will insist on these aspects in the final assessments of this paper, we can advance briefly two first conclusions. First, the sensitivity towards the phenomenon of depopulation is uneven in the State's planning activity. Second,

<sup>31</sup> This section also includes "custody of the territory" initiatives promoted by Law No. 42/2007 on Natural Heritage and Biodiversity.

<sup>32</sup> The Plan warns of the risk of loss affecting cultural heritage functional values and even its own identity. In fact, some factors such as the progressive disappearance of traditional ways of life and production practices, especially in rural areas, have led to a process of depopulation and the consequent abandonment of its architecture. Other risks are also inevitably linked to the factor of depopulation. That is the case of the rising difficulty of finding people acquainted to traditional construction techniques. The same happens to the devaluation of this part of rural culture (even by the same inhabitants) or the plundering and vandalism arising due to abandonment and lack of sensitivity.

<sup>33</sup> In this sense, it is important to pay attention to the contents set forth in section 2.2 of the aforementioned Plan, dedicated to the Plan's methodological criteria. This section offers a very detailed analysis of the innumerable active values of traditional built heritage and its techniques as stimulating factors for the economic development of the areas in which it is located (*Plan Nacional de Arquitectura Tradicional* 2015, pp. 28 ff).

the same happens to the need for articulating the different sectors involved: it does not seem, at first sight, very solid (especially if we start from the absence of a treatment to the issue, from which it should be its adequate base: the development of a specific demographic policy for these specific geographical areas). As we pointed out, in many cases, the lack of deepening in this phenomenon can be understood if we consider State's competence limits in comparison with those of the CCAA (a situation that makes it necessary to turn our sight to the regional planning instruments, as we will do into the next section). In any case, this situation does not seem reasonable if we talk about demographic policy, given the marked condition of "national problem" present at this depopulation phenomenon.

## 2.2 *The regional planning concerning demographic policy*

It would be excessive in this study to carry out an analysis similar to the previous one in relation to the very varied and numerous planning tools existing in the different sectorial areas within the regional panorama. The casuistry of regional plans abounds in all the referred areas: rural development<sup>34</sup>, planning of the tourist activity or of the public intervention in cultural heritage. We can often find references to the cultural heritage issue, sometimes taking into account the peculiarities of their conservation and protection in rural areas and their potential as an economic resource for the structuring of these economically and demographically depressed zones<sup>35</sup>. We will focus then on the concrete planning initiatives developed by the CCAA through their Territorial Planning competencies, especially aimed to address the demographic issue. These specific territorial plans are generally a recent tool in the Spanish autonomous framework. Thanks to their characteristic transversality, they represent optimal tools to articulate integrated actions, useful to address the phenomenon of depopulation in all its facets. The reference to the richness of the natural and

<sup>34</sup> The set of regional Rural Development Plans for the period 2014-2022 are accessible at the following site: <<http://www.mapama.gob.es/es/desarrollo-rural/temas/programas-ue/periodo-2014-2020/programas-de-desarrollo-rural/programas-autonomicos>>, 30.06.2018.

<sup>35</sup> Concerning tourism, it is interesting to highlight the model offered by the *Estrategia de Turismo de Interior* (2016) approved in Andalusia, as a development of the *Plan General de Turismo Sostenible de Andalucía Horizonte 2020*. It identifies cultural heritage as a strategic resource, a real "endogenous potential" with wide future possibilities, chasing the objective «to achieve a harmonious synthesis between tourism development in rural areas and conservation of this natural and cultural heritage» (see *Estrategia de Turismo de Interior* 2016, p. 23, own translation). The document, which includes this specific strategy for the inner areas of Andalusia, takes into consideration specific modalities of heritage, of strong rural roots (ethnological and immaterial heritage), as well as very specific tourism modalities typical from Andalusian inner areas and linked to the factor of cultural identity. That is the case of the so-called "tourism of roots" (search for a return to family origins) or the touristic phenomenon consisting of the eventual and temporary returning of emigrants.

cultural heritage as the backbone of the zones at risk of depopulation will be a constant. In this regard, the specific experiences developed in three CCAA are particularly noteworthy: Castilla y León and, more recently, Aragón and Asturias, where three different models of specific Plans have been designed in order to face the problem of depopulation.

The earliest instrument was the *Agenda para la Población de Castilla y León 2010-2020*, a document that has gone through several updates. Starting from the identification of depopulation as a true “differential fact” of the CA, the Plan also declares its great wealth in cultural and natural heritage as one of this territory’s values to live in it. This appreciation will appear in several of the lines that make up the set of “Programs or Policies that aim to set, integrate, and increase population” within the framework of economic and industrial policies, highlighting the following:

- the promotion of tourism, especially rural tourism, as a factor for regional development, increasing its internationalization, as well as policies and programs that place value on cultural, architectural and natural heritage as determining elements of sustainable tourism growth, valuing the importance that this activity has in the creation of employment, especially female employment, in the rural world;
- the adoption of new tools such as the Territorial Heritage Systems (STP) and “Cultural Projects” (PC), introduced by the *Plan PAHIS 2020 del Patrimonio Cultural de Castilla y León* (2015), as new instruments for the sustainable management of cultural heritage, useful in order to articulate public institutions and private initiative;
- the promotion of actions affecting buildings with the highest level of cultural protection (“Bienes de Interés Cultural”, hereafter BIC) located in rural areas, looking for the benefit of resident families;
- the improvement of Castilla y León’s image through campaigns concerning the areas of culture and tourism, within the measures to stimulate immigration from other CCAA;
- the promotion of specific programs to increase the value of natural spaces, contemplating their employment sources and occupational possibilities;
- development of training activities in rural areas leading to the obtaining of certificates of professionalism linked to the different territorial needs and potentials (including tourism and socio-cultural services associated with those heritage resources).

The most prolific model, however, is provided by the *Directriz Especial de Política Demográfica y contra la Despoblación*, approved in Aragón in 2017<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> The Government of Aragon approved on March 22, 2016, to initiate the elaboration of the *Directriz Especial de Política Demográfica y contra la Despoblación*, 2017. The revision of the Demographic Plan included in strategy 10.3.E3 of the *Strategy for the Territory of Aragon* (EOTA) is equated to this type of territorial planning included in article 21 of Legislative Decree No. 2/2015, of November 17, which approves the revised text of the Law of Regional Planning of Aragon.

This document contains a great number of measures that take cultural heritage into consideration, proposals from a deep sensitivity to its particularities over the depopulated areas<sup>37</sup>. A good number of them deal with issues that have already been treated in the Castilla y León's experience, but new interesting proposals are also provided with a very detailed development. There are contents standing out in several areas: economic activities and the labor market (Axis 1), the "living scenario" and territorial heritage (Axis 6), environmental limits and natural resources management (Axis 7) and the settlement system (Axis 10). We will find here most of the lines of action concerning cultural heritage:

- promotion of artisanal activity, traditional activities and services (taking into consideration their traditional values but also innovation, seeking the incorporation of design and new digital markets, promoting the generation of public spaces for trade);
- Promotion of strategies to enhance cultural and natural heritage, including:
  - the impulse of the creation and maintenance of "Parques Culturales" (endowment of subsidies for conservation and articulation of both public and private initiatives in the implementation of these institutions);
  - the promotion of planning revisions and management tools for natural spaces and resources (improving financing for management and interpretation centers, as well as preparing plans and promoting resource planning in order to improve the settlement of population in the territory);
  - the implementation of collaboration with educational and social entities to improve the communication of local territory values (promotion of agreements);
  - the valorization of linguistic heritage as a generator of economic activity, especially in tourism (language tourism);
  - the promotion of sustainable traditional culture, as a social reference and value with economic potential, connected to the population roots and useful in order to promote rooting in the territory (the updating of heritage inventories and the edition of good practices manuals to rule buildings rehabilitation and preserve traditional construction techniques are some of the concrete actions);

<sup>37</sup> «La pérdida de población de una gran extensión del territorio aragonés lleva aparejada en la actualidad el abandono paulatino de los recursos naturales, culturales y paisajísticos existentes en esos ámbitos. Esto se traduce implícitamente en un deterioro del atractivo de estos lugares para los habitantes residentes y para los potenciales que pudieran llegar de forma temporal o permanente si confluyesen otro tipo de condiciones» (see *Directriz Especial de Política Demográfica y contra la Despoblación* 2017, Volume I, p. 125). Regarding the natural environment, the starting point seems to be the opposite: according to the evaluations made in the Guideline, natural spaces with less human activities pressure offer better conditions due to their best natural conservation.



- the development and use of heritage located in the “empty territories” (offering outdoor scenarios for film productions, for example);
- specific attention to heritage in uninhabited areas, with proposals pointing to its proper cataloging and study, or its preferential selection as places to promote ecomuseums (to value human activities related to culture and traditional language and generate economic activity and jobs);
- the promotion of actions based on the institution called “custody of the territory” (articulation of public and private agreements combining measures of conservation and grants focused on natural and cultural resources in disuse or abandonment)<sup>38</sup>;
- the promotion of female employment, based on new employment sites associated with the productive activities to be promoted (rural tourism and heritage and cultural services, are expressly mentioned among others).

The most recently approved regional planning tool, the *Plan Demográfico del Principado de Asturias 2017-2020*, offers also some interesting notes. As it happened in the previous CCAA, Asturias, even though it cannot be considered a depressed region in global terms, has suffered the effects of depopulation in its inner and mountain areas in comparable terms. That is why this Plan pays special attention to the loss of population in rural areas, based on the idea that «any measure aimed at improving the conditions for their permanence is a priority, while the rural environment has significant potential as the quality of the Asturian natural environment and its cultural heritage»<sup>39</sup>. The document will insist on these cultural heritage values, particularly in its axis dedicated to the planning of measures to promote territorial rebalancing:

Among the tasks necessary to achieve territorial rebalancing is the conservation and recovery of heritage in a wide sense, both cultural and environmental. It is an element that improves cohesion and so the community's internal territorial balance, especially in rural areas; it has a great identity value and is decisive to measure territories quality. An adequate recovery, maintenance and enhancement of heritage makes itself a factor for the generation of activity, a sense of community, wealth and opportunities for development, especially in rural areas<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> According to Law No. 42/2007, of Natural Heritage and Biodiversity, the “custody of the territory” is defined as follows: «el conjunto de estrategias o técnicas jurídicas a través de las cuales se implican a los propietarios y usuarios del territorio en la conservación y uso de los valores y los recursos naturales, culturales y paisajísticos». A “custody agreement” is a voluntary procedure between the property and a custody entity to agree on how to conserve and manage a territory; the agreement can be verbal or written. Custody entities are public or private non-profit organizations that actively participate in territory's conservation (may include neighborhood associations, conservation organizations, foundations, municipalities, consortiums or other types of public entities). This intervention model, according to the Guideline, can provide a valid way to stop its deterioration on the territory, to increase the field-city relations and to effectively support whoever holds the ownership of certain productions for maintenance (see *Directriz Especial de Política Demográfica y contra la Despoblación 2017*, Volume I, p. 125).

<sup>39</sup> *Plan Demográfico del Principado de Asturias 2017-2020*, p. 7 (own translation).

<sup>40</sup> *Plan Demográfico del Principado de Asturias 2017-2020*, p. 147 (own translation).

This fast approach to these regional specific plans concerning demographic policy, allows us to consider their suitability to face depopulation as the structural problem that it really is. Its approach requires, as expressly proclaimed in the Plan, «specific and joint responses, focused with a medium-long term temporary perspective»<sup>41</sup>. The legal basis to offer such responses (to be translated later into concrete measures), cannot be other than specific and – at the same time – transversal planning instruments.

### *3. Some final assessments: transversality and sustainability as guidelines to activate cultural heritage as a resource against depopulation*

Sectoral regulations, each one according to its own objectives and purposes, offer specific tools focused on cultural heritage that are being applied in many cases to protect or to highlight it. However, the sectoral approach does not always allow to make the desired positive impact to guarantee improvements concerning the phenomenon of depopulation, a very serious (and basic) problem for rural inner areas.

Thanks to the singular development procured by the CCAA, the cultural heritage legislation shows an increasing number of protection instruments particularly adapted to the protection of heritage located in those particular territories. Such is the case of the aforementioned “Parques Culturales” in Aragón, as well as the “Zonas Patrimoniales” in Andalucía or many others more widespread (“Lugares de Interés Etnológico” or “Paisajes Culturales”, for example). All these figures and the common measures associated with them tend to have a stronger impact on the side of heritage protection. That is why they mainly produce legal systems essentially based on the limitation of private activities, which may become an obstacle to a suitable (and necessarily balanced) economic exploitation of cultural heritage. In summary, many of the classic tools for the protection of cultural heritage are “contaminated” by the traditional tendency to prioritize conservation over its value enhancement, mainly resorting to administrative techniques of limitation (prohibitions, authorizations, controls, etc., often accumulated with those required from other sectors). It is true, however, that some other recent tendencies are starting to offer new paths to rebalance the situation, such as the progressive implementation of promotion measures through heritage regional laws, the prioritization of positive measures or the value enhancement in the case of concrete heritage modalities, as it is the case of intangible cultural heritage. In any case, there are areas that have not been yet fully addressed (for example, the musealization

<sup>41</sup> *Plan Demográfico del Principado de Asturias 2017-2020*, p. 7 (own translation).



of the intangible heritage of the ethnological and rural areas)<sup>42</sup> and a clear margin for improvement in specific aspects that could greatly contribute to the implementation of heritage's role in inner rural areas recovery.

Something similar can be said about the measures adopted from the sectoral regulations on tourism in relation to cultural heritage. The real aim of their measures (the declaration of “Municipios de Interés Turístico” or other mentions established in the same sense for festivals and popular traditions) has traditionally been none other than stimulating the growth of an industry, increasing the number of tourists and improving economic data. Only recent instruments have introduced some corrections by trying to focus on guaranteeing the quality of the tourist offer or the sustainability factor, in order to protect the resource that generates wealth (some corrections that become crucial in the case of such a vulnerable resource as the natural and cultural heritage)<sup>43</sup>.

Given the binomial conservation+exploitation of cultural and natural heritage, a sectoral intervention is not satisfactory. This need is further exacerbated in the case of heritage located in areas that are depopulated or in danger of depopulation, where it is intended to generate a development engine from it. Therefore, both safeguarding the resource itself and obtaining adequate economic returns depend on the choice of actions articulated from the different sectors involved. Think, for example, of the strategies generated by “cultural routes”, an instrument more than suitable for promoting the development of rural areas and a source of work and wealth to alleviate the depopulation effects<sup>44</sup>. They have been designed and formulated mostly by tourism authorities

<sup>42</sup> In this section, the results, quality and effective impact of the different experiences are very different. Ethnological museums (often promoted thanks to the local voluntarism), “ecomuseums” and interpretation centers can implement their potential effect of wealth generating in rural areas through modernization of their approaches or the creation of specific museum networks (see Roigé *et al.* 2008, spec. pp. 25 ff).

<sup>43</sup> Referring to Andalusia, in the first case, we can highlight the new regulation given to the figure of “Municipio Turístico” (Decree No. 72/2017, of June 13), that has proceeded to implement its regime incorporating periodical review mechanisms for the requirements to be met by the Municipality: once the mention is given, in case it fails to meet the requirements, its revocation is still possible. In the second case, it is interesting the declaration of “Espacios Turísticamente Saturados o en peligro de estarlo”, as an instrument capable of curbing the negative effects of overpopulation generated by tourism impact (see articles 12 and 14 of Andalusia's Tourism Act, approved by Law No. 13/2011, of December 23).

<sup>44</sup> To this aim, some projects have taken into consideration their potential positive impact over the problem of depopulation. For example, the Celtiberian Route (“Ruta Celtibérica”), promoted since 2008 by the Center for Celtiberian Studies of Segeda and the City Council of Calatayud (Aragón), aims to impact in an inner area, notably depressed from the demographic point, including territories of Aragón, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León, Navarra and La Rioja (for further information, see *Ruta Celtibérica: Documento para el reconocimiento como Ruta Cultural Europea* 2014). By the way, Spain holds several *European Cultural Route* declarations: “el Camino de Santiago” (first of all the European Cultural Routes, declared in 1987), “la Ruta del Legado Andalusi” (1997), the Spanish Language Path and its Mediterranean Expansion: “la Ruta de los Sefardíes” (2002) and “la Ruta de Don Quijote” (2007). In the same line of cultural itineraries, it is

and their eventual bad results have often been due to their lack of articulation with other policies, which would have been able to implement their effects (uses of land, infrastructures, etc.)<sup>45</sup>.

Cultural heritage accumulates many different values inside, so it must not come as a surprise that its regulation requires a multiple approach<sup>46</sup>. The number of territorial scenarios marked by the disastrous consequences of depopulation has helped to accept that a traditional approach to public intervention in cultural heritage, focused almost exclusively on its conservation and the protection of its original values, is no longer recommended and, frequently, is not even feasible. In these cases, the priorities of the institutions or the dominant public interest itself must abandon a purist or classical approach (anchored to conservation, to authenticity, to the principle of minimum intervention). It is now necessary to focus on the economic value of cultural heritage, on its potential as a backbone of economic activity, of generating employment, giving also a share of leadership to policies raised from other sectors (tourism, rural development, housing, infrastructure, etc.). These two poles make the search for a balance inevitable, the activation of the principle of sustainability. Therefore, here is another factor that pushes the need to opt for integrated and multidisciplinary policies and measures: sustainability becomes a difficult objective to achieve when we face a complicated issue only under sectoral approaches, without effective coordination between them.

In the analysis carried out on the Spanish case, the following characterizing notes can be highlighted, by way of summary:

- sectoral regulations may provide some particular tools ideally suited to fight the problem of depopulation taking into account cultural heritage potential but, under a global perspective, these regulations offer a mixed and irregular picture regarding their sensitivity to the values of cultural heritage as an economic resource and its effective activation in the case of unpopulated rural areas;
- the State planning instruments deserve similar valuation: their attention to the role played by cultural heritage is different depending on the sector (especially intense in rural development, unexpectedly low in the case of cultural heritage plans and non-existent in demographic planning that is still expected). On the other hand, its effective impact is very limited due to the regional authorities' leadership (CCAA) over many strategic areas (tourism, cultural heritage, land planning);

interesting to mention the recent impulse that the projects of recovery of historical trains and their routes are having, for their tourist attraction, as other potential resources in order to stimulate the development of zones at risk of depopulation.

<sup>45</sup> On the convenience of following a serious methodology and sensitive to the multiple sectoral profiles imposed by the figure of cultural routes, it is interesting the reading of Martos 2014, spec. pp. 69ff.

<sup>46</sup> Allow here the resubmission to what analyzed in Sánchez-Mesa 2004, pp. 47-49.

- the regional planning instruments also represent a diversified panorama, where the most positive side is provided by those CCAA most affected by the phenomenon of depopulation: the specific plans of demographic policies offer an integrating approach to the different public intervention areas involved and they show a high degree of sensitivity towards the role of cultural heritage as a resource to achieve greater development and a better territorial cohesion.

Thus, there is an incipient sensitivity to the role of cultural heritage in depopulated rural areas, which starts to take into account both its great potential and the special risks that hover over it in this particular scenario. Nevertheless, this new sensitivity is not homogenous either territorially (not at all administrative levels) or transversally (in all areas), so we are still far from having a satisfactory performance framework that allows to maximize this particular resource. In this sense and despite the positive assessment that many of the advances and innovations pointed out deserve, three very basic guidelines must be highlighted. They could definitely contribute to what we understand to be the correct direction in order to address the role that cultural heritage can play in fragile territorial areas.

First, regarding the use of protection techniques and typical tools present at cultural heritage sectoral regulations, it is advisable to warn of the need to maintain a certain prudence. Those protection modalities are not mere advertising instruments or tourist claims: the effective declaration of some of these figures, often abused in our days<sup>47</sup>, imply serious conditions for future interventions and uses. Sometimes they become determining limits to cultural heritage possibilities in order to produce social and economic outputs. In this sense, it is convenient not to overprotect heritage located in depressed rural areas (avoiding maximum level categories) unless its special value (only for very specific cases) makes it essential.

Second, we have tried to substantiate the importance of enhancing instruments in order to guarantee an integrated approach to cultural heritage management, addressing their problems and their potential from all possible areas. It is convenient to follow this transversal approach from the very beginning, both in the planning itself and in the singular measures adopted to its development. In this sense, at different levels, the planning tools offered by the Territorial Planning sector, due to their cross-cutting approach, seem to be the most suitable to draw the general framework here, whenever it is guaranteed the effective collaboration and coordination of all competent administrations. We can also find the aforementioned transversal approach over other instruments,

<sup>47</sup> Concerning the BIC declaration (the highest level of cultural protection in Spain) in the modality called “conjuntos históricos” (usually affecting entire urban old areas), it is very interesting to consider the criticisms expressed by Ramón Fernández in relation to their exponential growth in recent years and its dangerous consequences in terms of blockage for urban development (See Fernández 2001, pp. 241-254).

such as the “Integrated Territorial Investments” (ITIs), designed to develop more local actions)<sup>48</sup>. On the other hand, as proposed by integrating institutions such as the aforementioned “custody of the territory” formulas, it is important not to forget the importance of private initiative participation, starting by the inhabitants and entrepreneurs of the affected rural areas (the articulation of policies cannot be reduced to merely institutional intervention).

Finally, given the nature of the heritage as a non-renewable resource (due to the value of its originality), we will remember that any measure activated in order to facilitate its exploitation must be presided over by sustainability parameters. The consolidation of this approach to sustainable development is especially important in terms of touristic uses, given its special impact on this heritage and its environment. In this sense, if the depopulation is negative for a territory and for the conservation of the unique values that give it its unique character, the massive assistance of visitors or any oversized tourist exploitation can be equally negative, if not more. Only the consolidation of sustainable development principles in the management of this heritage can guarantee that rural areas will not lose what really define their natural and cultural essence. On the other hand, we should not lose track of the fact that the proper preservation-exploitation balance becomes an easier aim when the real aspirations in most of affected rural areas, far from being characterized by a high ambition, tend to be rather pragmatic and adjusted to reality in their objectives. Actually, rather than discovering an authentic “gold mine”, it is more about incorporating a new resource where there are few; rather than turning a municipality into a focus of massive emigration, it is about attracting enough inhabitants to sustain its active population and to guarantee its stability in the future; rather than transforming the town into a city (in terms of services and amenities offer), it is about guaranteeing worthy and solvent basic standards (which do not currently exist) that will allow these rural populations to progress in well-being without losing, therefore, the very essence that makes them valuable and attractive.

In any case, it is very important not to lose sight of the singularity of the cultural heritage as a resource. Above all the values that it can offer, the one that arises from the appreciation of the citizens, its socio-cultural value, its strong connection with popular identity (a feature that is further intensified at a local scale), is its most essential value, also in the eyes of the legislator himself. In

<sup>48</sup> ITIs are a tool contemplated in Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013, of the European Parliament and the Council, of December 17, 2013, to improve the investments of the various European Funds linked to regional development, adapting to the special needs of territorial areas with particular structural problems. Depopulation and its economic effects are often one of the factors considered. That is the case, for example, of the ITI formulated for depopulated areas of Castilla-La Mancha, which will involve investments worth 490 million euros (more data can be consulted, as well as the characteristics of the affected areas, on the official website of the Government of Castilla-La Mancha <<http://www.castillalamancha.es/gobierno/vicepresidenciaprimera/estructura/dgvcyp/actuaciones/inversi%C3%B3n-territorial-integrada-iti-castilla-la-mancha-2014-2020>>, 30.06.2018).

this framework, cultural heritage does not have full meaning if it is separated from the people who appreciate it, nor if the next generations called to preserve it lose their identity link to it (not to mention the cases in which, due to the demographic exodus, the very existence of a future generation who appreciate and preserve this heritage is not even guaranteed). In many ways, therefore, public intervention to preserve and promote cultural heritage and public intervention to fight against depopulation in our most ancestral environment (the rural areas) are two subjects in which the same purposes converge: the effort to avoid the disappearance of our origins, our identity, all that we have been and, on the other hand, the attempt to transmit those to generations that have not yet been born, as is their right and our responsibility.

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Appendix

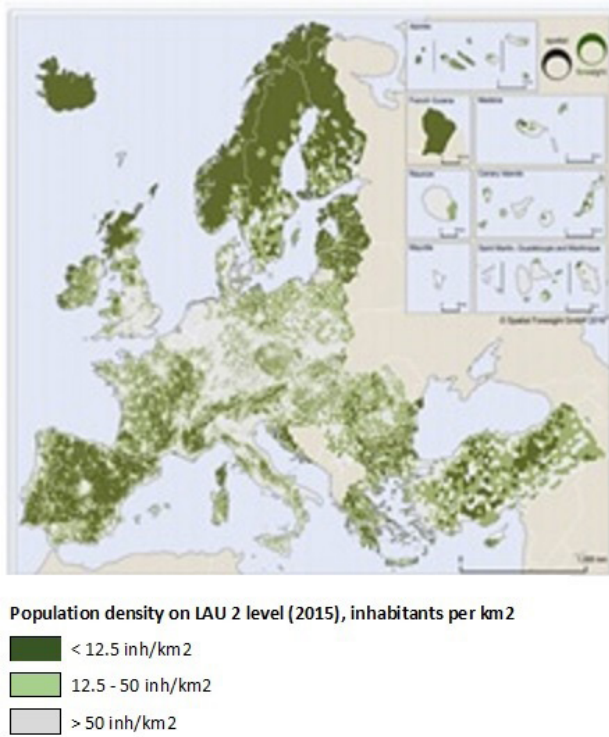


Fig. 1. LAU 2 Zoning (source: EUROSTAT)

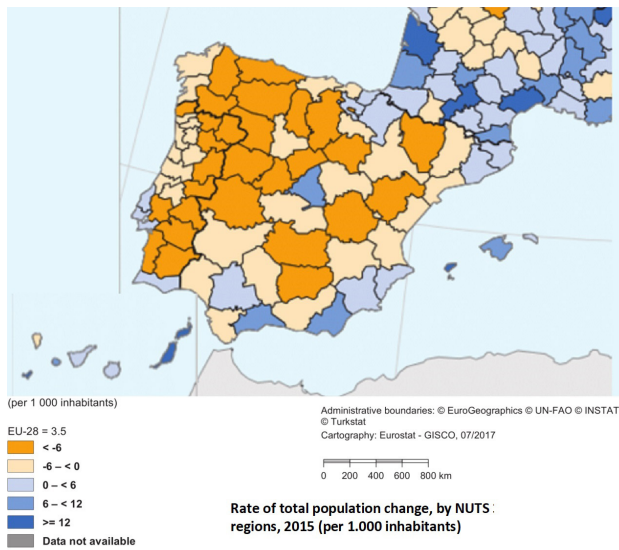


Fig. 2. NUTS 3 Zoning (source: EUROSTAT)

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