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Alternative countrysides: anthropology and rural West Europe today

Jeremy MacClancy

I remember the moment well. I was doing fieldwork in Navarre, northern Spain, in the mid-1980s. Taking a weekend break, I was due to visit a commune in a hilly valley at the foot of the Pyrenees. Local friends had established it in a deserted village two years earlier. Before making the trek to their homes, my companion, who was from the area, wanted to show me Lakabe, the long-established, very successful commune on the other side of the narrow valley. As we walked down the valley's sole road, we met a group of some twenty youths, all carrying shovels, picks and hoes. 'They're a work party from the drug rehabilitation centre in the next village,' she said. 'And in the village after that, Buddhists from Bilbao are renovating the houses for a meditation centre.'

Her words made me realise, with a sudden flash, that almost the entire valley was being repopulated by a variety of alternatives: organic communards, Indophilic mystics, and addicts digging their way out of their habit. The indigenes had fled the area two decades before, for the sake of jobs in Pamplona. Now a new generation, of the disenchanted and the unemployed, had come in to renovate their collapsing houses, clear their fields, push the forest back, and start afresh. The Navarran regional government usually approved of this re-appropriation and would even consider giving them title to the lands they were working.

My second realisation was that this style of rural repopulation was relatively general and gravely understudied. Wright, in a 1992 review of recent ethnography on rural Britain, could only cite five examples, and only one of those (Strathern 1981) took the topic of incomers as a worthwhile theme (Wright 1992).The new arrivals into rurality were not given due space in contemporary studies. Other than some work by Edwin Ardener and a few of his Oxford students in the late 1970s, the topic appeared to have been neglected (e.g. Ardener 1985; Macdonald 1989). So I convened a conference, held at Oxford Brookes University, some of whose papers, appropriately revised, are included here.

In fact, the lack of interest in rurality went further than I originally realised. To my surprise, when I emailed a UK colleague inviting him to attend, he replied: 'The problem with "countryside studies" is that the latest trend is to study urban ethnic landscapes and not rural settings.' In France the shift is equally marked:

'Where interest was once focused on the village, it was now focused on members of Alcoholics Anonymous or the homeless who slept in the Paris metro' (Abélès 1998: 405; see also Rogers 2001: 492). To anthropologists of France, this geographical move was also one of temporality and development: 'out of the archaic countryside and into the present' (Rogers 2001: 494). European anthropology grew out of Mediterranean anthropology, a post-war endeavour primarily concerned with importing anthropological perspectives into the study of Southern Europe. Its pioneer anthropologists imitated their Africanist colleagues by deliberately seeking to live in small-scale rural communities. Even when their focus of interest began to extend beyond the village, they still tended to concentrate on rural regions, ones that lacked conurbations. With the rise of the European Union (EU), the decimation of peasantry in Western Europe (Macfarlane 1996: ix), and the increasing need to produce work that appeared socially relevant, anthropologists slowly switched their interest from the countryside to the city. Studies on immigration, racism, and interethnic conflict began to replace ones on kinship, honour, and property transmission. For example, a recent collection on the anthropology of the EU (Bellier and Wilson 2000) does not include anything on rural areas, the countryside, or the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP); another, on movement within and into Europe, is similarly silent on rural immigration (Stacul, Moutsou, and Kopnina 2006), while a review article on 'Europeanization' has almost nothing on the agricultural or rural policies of the EU and their effects (Borneman and Fowler 1997). As Marion Demossier, an anthropologist of rural France, puts it, this lack of anthropological interest into West European ruralities is 'puzzling' (Demossier 2011: 114). What happens in villages, it seems, no longer attracts the attention of many.

Moreover, those few anthropologists who have looked at rural issues in recent times have tended to concentrate on traditional populations. For example, de la Pradelle, in her delightful study of a Provençal farmers' market, focuses on the style of interaction between local buyers and established stallholders (de la Pradelle 2006). The newcomers, hippies, and African immigrants granted pitches are left on the very margins – of the market and her ethnography. Much of the academic work I refer to in this chapter thus comes from rural geographers, not anthropologists.

These negative attitudes towards rural realities, issues, and policies, by so many anthropologists of Europe, are misplaced. Just because cities concentrate people who continue to produce new and unexpected forms of social organisation does not mean rurality becomes the emptying home of a tired traditionalism.[1] Far from it. As our contributors demonstrate, the countryside remains a lively, contested site of new demographics, new social movements, new workplace patterns, new cross-ethnic mixes, and new conceptions of how life is to be lived. Since the city is only defined by opposition to the countryside, and since rural movements have urban effects, we cannot ignore the changes taking place in hamlets, villages, and rural towns throughout Western Europe. They are an integral part and parcel of life in Europe today.

The key aim of this book is to redress this academic imbalance, by examining some of the central changes in the rural zones of contemporary Western Europe. In particular, most contributors look at the newcomers to these areas and the rainbow variety of effects they are having. The 'alternative' in our title is to be understood broadly. The contributors are not just looking at the self-proclaimed alternatives (hippies, New Agers, back-to-nature types, etc.) but at labour migrants from outside Western Europe and affluent resettlers as well. Members of all these groups are, in their own way, contributing towards the construction of a non-traditional countryside. All of them help to maintain life in rural areas which would otherwise be emptying of residents. Of course, 'alternative' is itself a relative term, whose application is contextual and temporal. As several chapters demonstrate, much of what was considered alternative thirty years ago is now well on the way to becoming mainstream. Who knows what a book on 'alternative countrysides' published in thirty years' time might contain, or if that term would then make any sense?

Anthropologists are trained specialists in studying 'from the bottom up'. As such, they are particularly well-placed observers of rural evolution, providing critical, analytical accounts of what exactly is going on in West European villages in present times. It is above all thanks to the exploratory, open-ended nature of intensive fieldwork that they are able to question conventional knowledge about contemporary rurality, and to discuss its complexities: both local specificities and continental commonalities. In fine-grained studies based on long-term research, they are able to tease out the various discourses employed by relevant parties in different contexts. In other words, anthropologists strive to ascertain who says and does what, how, when, why, and to what effect. Carefully deployed, fieldwork is a very powerful and subtle mode of analysis, especially good at unearthing the unforeseen. As such, it is a particularly appropriate style of investigation for studying the varied realities and ramifications of rural life today.[2]

In this book we broach a range of interrelated themes which, for the sake of expository convenience, I have grouped into: ruralities, discourses, and practices; incomers from elsewhere in West Europe; and incomers from beyond West Europe.

Ruralities, discourses, and practices

We all have a notion of 'the rural' and of 'the city', whether analysed or not. Thanks to our upbringing in Western homes, we have all been reared on particular ideas of that contrastive set. Raymond Williams, in a classical study of this theme, demonstrated how historically grounded this pair of framing ideas is and how English understanding of the tension between the two has evolved over the last four hundred years. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the city was associated with money; the next century with wealth and luxury, then with the mob and the masses; and in the twentieth century with mobility and isolation. In turn '"the country" has at times meant everything from independence to deprivation', from settlement to rural

retreat, from a home of cultivated 'honest' growth to the site of a wild, unspoiled, isolated nature (Williams 1973: 290–1). Similar, though locally inflected statements could well be made about the evolution of these conceptions in many other West European countries.

While what is meant by 'the rural' may change over times, it appears reassuringly unproblematic to most at any one time. In contrast, rural geographers have in recent decades questioned the ability to make a significant distinction between 'the rural' and 'the urban'. They query whether it is possible to define 'the rural' in an unambiguous, meaningful manner. They all, however, recognise the salience of the rural imagination in popular parlance, and the fact it is 'irredeemably contextual' (Halfacree, 2004: 303; see also Copp 1972; Hoggart 1990; Hillyard 2007). If 'the rural' cannot act as a precise conceptual category for purposes of academic comparison, the academics' job then becomes the investigation of what constitutes 'the rural' in different spaces and times, and the ways those ideas both structure and are structured by socio-economic conditions. We thus need to speak of 'ruralities' and not some singular concept.

The geographer Keith Halfacree, in a review of these positions, argues that the common turn to view the rural as residual, as that which is not yet urbanised, has to be resisted. Stressing that rural worlds are not relatively independent zones unto themselves, he contends that 'If urbanization is taken as a reasonable synonym for capitalism in its most highly developed guise, then rural places are as "urban" as the city' (Halfacree 2004: 303). The point is well made and underlines the common economic system that helps structure both types of space.

These literary and learned discourses of ruralities need to be placed alongside the corresponding political discourses. Since European nations are defined partly but importantly by territory, most nationalist ideologues have sung the praises of the land within their boundaries, especially the countryside and all they make it stand for. Thus Sabino Arana, the nineteenth-century prophet of Basque nationalism, extolled the mountains, hills, and valleys of his native Basqueland. For him and his followers, the local landscape sustained an exemplary, ethnic way of life which had maintained the moral values his movement held most dear. Nothing similar could be expected from city life (MacClancy 2007). Similarly, in Galicia, north-west Spain, local nationalists have made a traditional rurality so central to Galician cultural identity that today native urbanites with the money to do so perceive it their moral responsibility to buy and restore rural houses (Rodríguez 2008: 152–3, 167). In fact, it is hard to think of a European nationalism whose ideologues have not produced paeans about their countryside (e.g. on Ireland, see Goldring 1993: 63–74).

Jaro Stacul, in his contribution, gives an Italian example with an unexpected twist. He discusses the rise of the *Lega Nord* (Northern League) in the 1990s, a time of national disenchantment with established parties, then widely seen as deeply corrupt. Leaders of the populist *Lega* called for the recreation of a lost 'authenticity' and

a traditional sense of community. They thus propagated an idea of a north Italian culture, denigrated southerners as lazy and parasitic, and criticised the State as the distant imposer of an alienating 'civilisation'. To these rhetoricians, it was the northern countryside which was the repository of laudatory values, in particular an ethic of hard work. To the Trentino villagers, with whom he did fieldwork and whose area had not been incorporated into Italy until the end of the First World War, the *Lega* was attractive because they regarded the State as remote, if not indeed foreign, and as responsible for creating a national park in their area. The State saw the park as a wild, public space; locals saw it as a restrictive regulation that curtailed the exercise of their traditional practices, such as hunting, which they had carried out on land they regarded as cultivated, in effect private property. This developed conception of land as cared for and controlled by locals chimed well with the privatisation policies then pursued by *Lega* politicians; thus both villagers and politicos could portray the state as a common enemy.

Until recently, West European governments regarded and spoke of the countryside as primarily a productive resource, for the cultivation of crops and rearing of livestock. To these governments, maintaining farms was essential for feeding the nation and to keep up at least a limited sense of national self-sufficiency. For successive French governments, national identity was so closely linked to the image of the small farmer that they assisted farmers with a range of state-sponsored forms of insurance (health, property, livestock, and crops). They also provided 'generous government credits, bonuses, tax breaks, and supervision and guarantees of farm loans' (Rogers 1991: 130). One consequence has been the strengthening of an allegedly archaic mode of agricultural organisation: the *ostal*, or stem-family farming household (Rogers 1991). The British government has been similarly concerned to assist small farmers in many areas, e.g. the hill farms of the Peak District, whose livelihoods would be gravely threatened without grants, and whose disappearance would radically change the local scene.

Today, the prominence of national governments has waned somewhat, thanks to the rise of the EU, with the European Commission (EC) long established as the major player in the evolution of rural Western Europe. From its beginning, the CAP has been a central component in the EU's budget. An enduring goal of the CAP has been social: to preserve family farms, seen as the condition of rural society, even at the cost of increasing efficiency (Gray 2000: 34). In recent times, evolving priorities, with the entrance of new members from Eastern Europe, have led to the progressive reduction of subsidies to farmers in Western Europe. Since most farms are today economically unviable without external support, agents of the EC have increasingly encouraged small farmers to diversify their sources of income: the farmer's wife turns their house into a B&B or *gîte*, or looks for an off-farm job. In the Basque provinces of France, some sell produce directly from the farm, identifying them with certified labels of origin or quality, in order to capitalise on new tourism markets (Welch-Devine and Murray 2011: 75).

The rural policies of the EU may seem relatively clear; their reception and interpretation are clearly not so. Many farmers have not simply accepted these policy changes with resignation but have taken great advantage of the opportunities offered, in ways not planned by the EU. While locals are guided by the offer of grants, they actively strive to steer them to their own benefit. As a Dubliner resettled in Connemara confessed, 'So deeply ingrained has the culture of grant aid become, in what the EC has determined as "Deprived Areas", it almost goes without saying that every action is influenced to an enormous extent by its eligibility for grant aid' (Williams 1998: 84). Some agriculturalists went further: for instance, in Greece, they learned to circumvent the Commission and criminally exploit its largesse to their own considerable gain. According to Christopher Lawrence, who did fieldwork in rural Greece,

> The early days of EU membership are still remembered fondly by agriculturalists in Argolida. Money was there for the taking. In a climate of large subsidies and lax controls, frauds and scams proliferated … Since those early years controls over subsidy disbursements have increased, but defrauding EU subsidy programs remains an active sport. (Lawrence 2007: 150)

In 2009 one rural Irish entrepreneur told me the application forms for EU grants were so long and complex that 'one has to lie'.

With the development of global agro-business, the economic importance of local food production has declined greatly in West Europe. In consequence, the EC now views the countryside in multifunctional terms (Gray 2009; Heatherington 2011: 3). It has come to see farmers less as exploiters of agricultural potential, and more as 'guardians' or 'stewards' of the land they own, and who deserve to be subsidised accordingly. In this political discourse, rural zones become partly aesthetic resources, areas for the conservation of biodiversity and the management (if not invention) of heritage, to be exploited for the boosting of agro- and ecotourism and other leisure industries. Thus Elena Freire, in her contribution, shows how the Galician Autonomous Community, working in league with the EC, stimulated the revival of autochthonous pottery and paid for the unemployed to train as potters. Of course, as she demonstrates, the objects they turned might appear traditional and archetypally Galician but were in fact produced for non-traditional, decorative purposes for sale to those who wished to buy into a regionalist myth. By promoting a postmodern form of authenticity, the new potters, who did not come from the ranks of the traditional, long-established potter-families of the area, were selling a carefully managed dream of Galician rurality.

Balancing the different needs and desires of farmers, tourists, and others, brings its own problems in its train. For instance, the agendas of ecologists may, on occasion, be opposed to those of agriculturalists or fish farmers. Deliberately restocking wolf populations in north-west Spain is more attractive to wildlife spotters than to shepherds. In the French Pyrenees outdoor leisure activities have become so popular

there is now conflict between recreational and traditional users of the area, particularly during the summer transhumance (Welch-Devine and Murray 2011: 81).

Rural emigration also led to increasing areas of former farmland gradually reverting towards a primordial state. Forests began to expand and encroach on villages. Thus in some places, faunal repopulation went hand in hand with rural depopulation. For instance, the number of wild boar is on the rise in many parts of Western Europe. In Tuscany today, local bodies and entrepreneurs are trying to take advantage of this increase by promoting wild boar cuisine. These recipes may be modern, but they are, or its main ingredient is, presented as traditional. Thus this initiative dovetails with the EU policy of stimulating rural economies by boosting the image of markedly local dishes. At the same time, the decimation of the gun-toting peasantry has had a further unintended effect: an animal once regarded as fit only for hunting has become a valued symbol of the edible wildness that urbanites seek on their time off. It adds a taste to their sense of rurality.

This new political discourse that aestheticises the countryside for mainly commercial reasons is not, however, as well-rooted as might at first appear. Thus increasing fears about the effects of climate change and global security have recently led some to calls for increasing agricultural productivity in the EU (Doward 2009). According to this line of argument, if governments are to be sure of feeding their populations, they must strive to meet these needs as much as possible from within their own borders. Political discourses of rurality are not stable, and it is the job of anthropologists to track and analyse their continuing evolution.

Incomers from elsewhere in West Europe

The new rural immigrants of recent decades are not a homogenous group but a variety of social types, each with their agendas. In the 1970s the sociologist Howard Newby, working in the English county of Suffolk, was able to categorise the incomers as simply middle class in background. They were mainly retired couples and second-homers seeking cheaper housing and the chance to live out their stereotype of an ossified rural idyll. Their arrival pushed up housing prices and divided villages, whose indigenous inhabitants were ready to accept agricultural change if it increased production. But by the 1990s, the colonising newcomers had become so varied that they could not be usefully classed as just 'middle class', but rather as coming from a range of different fractions from within that expanding class, broadly conceived (Cloke *et al.* 1995; Urry 1995).[3] On top of that, their increasing number had contributed in some cases to the destruction of the very rurality they sought.

In many cases these immigrants have come in a series of identifiably different waves, and they need to be distinguished as such. For instance while MacClancy, who worked in the west of Ireland, found that the majority of incomers there were patently alternative types fleeing the urban cultures of their upbringing, there are important distinctions within that general group: the hippies who came over in the

early 1970s; the much more politicised 'crusties' who arrived a decade later; and the latest wave, which started in 1990s, of less radicalised urbanite escapees who strive to combine the value of living rurally with the benefits of information technology. Similarly Donald Macleod, who fieldworked on the island of La Gomera in the Canaries, differentiated between the German and the British settlers there. But keen not to overgeneralise, he underlined the variety within these two groups he had isolated (Macleod 2004).

In other areas the incomers may be of a different complexion. In the south-west of France, the majority of non-French incomers are not youthful alternatives but incomers seeking a base for holidays, a place to retire in or, more recently, a new home, usually grander than the one they sold in their native land. According to the sociologist Michaela Benson, who studied English incomers in the Lot, France, though these migrants could be generalised as chasing a rural vision that they considered increasingly hard to encounter in the UK, more significantly they could be subdivided into midlife, retirement, and family migrants. Their degree of integration into local communities did not necessarily improve, but could vary over time: those who had friends via contacts made through their children, might lose them when their offspring grew up and left the area. She found that successful integration depended less on learning French than on migrants' motivation and their pursuit of interests that they could share with locals (Benson 2009). In stark contrast, the French anthropologist Jean-Francois Baré, who has also done work in the Lot, observed a gentle clash of mutual misconceptions in social, cultural, linguistic, and economic spheres between polite middle-class Britons and their equally well-mannered indigenous neighbours. Moreover, by failing to speak a common language, the monolingual majority of both French and British local populations usually did not even realise the confusion they are causing (Baré n.d.). They resided in the same areas but occupied different worlds. It is as though, mutually unaware, they almost glided past one another. The same happened in the Mallorcan village of Deia, whose famous resident Robert Graves attracted a colony of expatriate artists. As one of the colony, who later became its ethnographer, stated: 'Unless something occurred which directly involved a local and a foreigner, everyone practised the adage "Live and let live". At times, it seemed as if each group carried on as though the other were not there' (Waldren 1996: 235).

In some areas incomers agglomerate into mononational or monolingual communities. The Mediterranean coastline of Spain is peppered with such colonies. The concentration of Norwegians in the Alicantine village of Altea, which even has its own Norwegian school funded by its home government, is perhaps an extreme example of these compatriot groupings. In many other cases diversity is the norm, and that diversity is growing. In the early 1990s, when one Briton went to live in a hamlet of the remote Las Alpurrajas region south of Granada, he found 'a few Danes and Dutch, and some English scattered thinly here and there'. By 2014 the incomer mix had become far more international and transregional:

> There are Algerians, Argentines, Americans, Chinese, French, Germans, Romanians, Czechs, Moroccans, Sahrawis, Poles, Dutch, Lebanese, Uzbeks, Iranians, English, Swedes, Danes, Bulgarians and Turks … to say nothing of the more local *Zamoranos, Leoneses, Madrilenos, Jiennenses, Gaditanos* and *Onubenses*. (Stewart 2014: 268, orig. ital.)

Some people form what are termed 'intentional communities', with explicit lists of regulations. One of the most durable of these in Spain, Beneficio, is in the region Stewart describes. But self-formed communities are not necessarily all hippie in tone or style. Some may be Christians fleeing nearby cities for the silence of the countryside: for example, the Catholic community established in 1980s in Turballos, Muro de Alcoy, south-eastern Spain, dedicated to self-sufficiency, simplicity, and non-violence.[4] These communities may not all be on the left or leaning towards the liberal: in the mid-1990s, an international far-right organisation occupied a semi-abandoned hamlet near Valencia, east Spain, which they tried to turn into a neo-Nazi haven.[5] Some intentional communities may be formed by the villagers themselves: the long-established socialist utopia of Marinaleda, Andalusia, southern Spain, is so successful it has spawned imitators elsewhere in the region (Hancox 2013). What is striking about all these different settlements, founded from the late 1970s on, is that none appears to acknowledge their interwar predecessors, who had established their own ideologically grounded communities. It is as though utopia has to be created anew, without forebears, every time.

Incomers who have not committed themselves to intentional communities may leave open how long they will stay and how they regard their futures. Many of the British incomers to France should not be regarded as permanent resettlers, but as stopping over there in the course of their migrant trajectory. Since their main goal is a particular dream of rurality in an economic setting, they may well move on, or back if the cost of living rises, or the budget airline stops flights to their nearby airport. In recent years some have sold up for cheaper climes in Eastern Europe or North Africa (Ferbrache 2011). In the process, these lifestyle migrants become true transnationals.

Incomers need not come from afar. Some may be local returnees. In his chapter, Josetxu Martínez, an anthropologist of his home region, studied the evolving patterns of residency and sociability in the Basque province of Alava. Between the 1960s and 1980s, villagers left for the sake of jobs in the provincial city. But from the 1980s, in part stimulated by the local implementation of the EU's rural interventionist programmes, these same villagers started to make seasonal returns to their natal villages. Financially secure thanks to their urban employment, they now saw the countryside not as the site of ill-paid drudgery but as a recreational space in which to relax and socialise among their kin and affines. Though ageing locals saw them as outsiders because they were no longer tied to the soil, these urban escapees continued to regard themselves as in some sense insiders. They did not see themselves as returning to a home they had earlier abandoned because, Martínez argues, they were not aware of having ever left it. They had moved to the city physically, not

emotionally. Thus he contends we should speak of a new rural-urban continuum in the area, which is replacing the previously well-established separation between the two.

At the same time, new forms of sociability are emerging, which transcend individual villages. Martínez discusses a recently invented ritual, which gathers the inhabitants of several villages within a recognised geographical area – the mountainous region of Alava. This novel style of community celebration shows that the space in which they socialise is no longer defined by the limits of their village but can encompass all the villages of their particular region. This space is doubly broadened for them, for of course at these rituals they share participation with the returnees who, sentimentally, feel they never went away.

Kepa Fernández de Larrinoa, a Basque anthropologist who now lives in the village he has studied since the 1970s, gives a more intricate case, and so underlines how multifaceted these evolutions can be. Alkiza is in a small mountainous valley twenty minutes' drive south of the coastal city of San Sebastián/Donostia. As in Martinez's study area, the distinction between rural and urban spaces is increasingly blurred, with villagers no longer understanding their identity in purely rural terms but in urban-rural ones. In the 1970s and 1980s, educated Basque urbanites moved in to participate in local activities and so live their ideal of cultural authenticity. But local forms of sociability are so narrowly organised that the only public events in which they could take part were the very ones they themselves created and which so define them. In the 1990s and 2000s the town hall recategorised some rural land as urban in a bid to retain the local population. However, many of the subsequent buildings were bought by city dwellers, forced out of San Sebastián by property speculation, and whose idea of a rural idyll does not include participation in local events. In the process a village whose inhabitants once upheld something approaching a unified local vision of the world is now the home of a much more complex, varied, and socially fractured reality.

Besides creating ceremonies, incomers can bring a variety of changes to their area of chosen residence: for example, restoring and revalorising old buildings; introducing new styles of architecture and farming (Figures 1.1 and 1.2); cultivating a much broader range of foods; augmenting local small-scale forms of production, such as cheesemaking; reviving abandoned modes of cooking; creating new artisanal products (such as different types of honey); establishing alternative schools; and maintaining non-conventional relationships (Bertran 1996; Cantarero 2002; Cáceres and Espeitx 2003; Robertson 2012; MacClancy this volume). In Puglia, south-eastern Italy, for example, well-to-do North Europeans have bought decaying *trulli*, distinctive conically roofed stone sheds, and then paid local craftsman to convert them into holiday homes. As one *trullaro* acknowledged, 'They gave us work and a bit of well-being – they brought our abandoned land back to life' (Mitzman 2013).

In La Gomera some made a potentially longer-lasting change, by marrying locals: they have both influenced local mores and in turn been influenced by them

Figure 1.1 Fairy-tale turreted house, for a blow-in cheesemaker, County Clare, west Ireland.

Figure 1.2 Locals thought this blow-in carpenter 'mad' to construct a wooden house in such a gale-swept area as County Clare, west Ireland. More than a decade later, the house still stood, in good shape.

(Macleod 2004). Moreover, it is often these North European immigrants who are among the first to exploit EU grants offered for rural development. In many cases, it tends to be the incomers who take the initiative, forming the groups necessary for a grant application. In Donegal, north-west Ireland, for instance, incomers and previously marginalised locals were able to form bodies which won EU LEADER[6] project money and so challenged the hitherto dominant 'Donegal mafia', a transgenerational coterie drawn from a few powerful families which had long controlled much of the county (Collinson 1999).

In some areas the predicament is so dire that town halls and estate agents are increasingly keen to attract outsiders with grand vision and deep pockets. I have already mentioned the disposition of the Deputation of Navarre to grant freehold to deserted villages to groups of serious migrants. In 2013, in Galicia, north-west Spain, the mayor of Cortegada put up for free an abandoned hamlet within the municipality to anyone with a viable project to restore and develop its buildings, as long as local jobs were generated in the process.[7] Some Spanish estate agents today have websites dedicated to the sale of whole, emptied villages, though they take care to forewarn the interested that buying a village is not the same as 'purchasing a packet of nibbles'.[8] Local historians are not far behind, producing for tourists and the curious illustrated blogs and books on the deserted villages in their area.[9]

Ethnographies/travelogues

Since anthropologists have written so relatively little about these areas, whether colonised by ex-hippies or ex-workers, I am forced to turn for further clues about the nature of life within them to the expatriate literature that has boomed on the British market in the last twenty years.

These exoticised accounts of life among not so very different others can yet provide further evidence for the sorts of changes incomers can bring: restoring old styles of new styles of naming farm animals; introducing sheep and mechanised sheep-shearing to a region; wanting to win the locals over to organic farming; and reviving old customs, such as parties at home of traditional music and dance (Williams 1987: ch. 12; 1989: 68–71; Stewart 1999: 97–110; 2002: 45; 2006: 26, 29; Jacobs 2003: 167). They also suggest the rainbow-like variety of groups that can colonise areas. Chris Stewart, resident in the Alpujarras, speaks of the variety of oriental religions upheld in the valley and of the local 'expat community engulfed in a raft of alternative diets, from straightforward vegetarianism through to vegan, ovo-lacto-vegan, macrobiotic and ayurvedic. There is also a small but significant minority of crudo-vegans, who eat only raw food' (Stewart 2002: 140; 2006: 176). These authors also show that conflict may arise not just between incomers and locals, but between different factions of the incomers, e.g. between hippies-turned-farmers and their eco-fundamentalist neighbours (Stewart 1999: 109–10). Most communes split apart, though their effects may linger. A British writer in the Valencian Sierra asks a local what happened to the one in that area: 'Oh, they all left', the man says. 'Sex scandal of some sort … Some of them

still meet up here once a year, though. Get transformed into animal spirits – eagles and bears, that kind of thing: shamans' (Webster 2009: 61–2).

Further, if these authors are at least partially dependent on their writing to survive, then they are forced to turn their own lives and thus those around them into a literary product (see Williams 1995: 12). But if their works turn into bestsellers, then villagers, unwittingly or not, become involved in the process too: imposing tourists arrive to photograph the characters they have read so much about; businesses do well out of the increased trade; estate agents make money trumpeting the village as 'the one made famous by X's book'.[10] In the process the less entrepreneurial of the villagers become objects of visual consumption in a broadened context scripted by others and ever more alien to them. It is part of the quotidian surreality ever more common in today's countryside.

Resistance

There are, of course, ways for locals to resist the incomers, even those who learn the language, e.g. denigration, stereotyping, withdrawal, verbal aggression.[11] One local told Samantha Hurn, who did fieldwork in a west Wales sheep farming area:

> They [incomers] complain that they had to move away 'because of all the "foreigners" *[said in a fake Brummie accent]*: that they didn't feel safe going out at night. Then they move here and bring their prejudices and double standards with them. Can't they see that they're doing what they accuse blacks [sic] of doing in England? Taking over the place. (Quoted in Hurn forthcoming)

She found that those incomers who do not try to fit in, but are seen as intent on changing the local culture, are regarded in a hostile manner. Emma James, a Welsh-speaking sociologist who studied her natal community, uncovered similar attitudes and found that natives had complementary strategies for cutting down almost any immigrant. Those seen as unwilling to engage in village activities were condemned as antisocial, while those who did try to join in were branded as 'interfering' and 'overbearing'. Of course, the line between 'integration' and 'interference' could be very fine indeed, and where the locals chose to draw it at any one time was up to them (James 2003).

Modes of resistance may be seen as almost necessary here, by those who wish to retain their position or at least a modicum of dignity, against outsiders who may well be seen as socially or culturally superior, and who may think they can act as such. Even as early as 1986, a trio of geographers could describe Cornwall as 'swamped by a flood of middle-class, middle-aged, middle-browed city dwellers who effectively imposed their standards upon local society' (Perry, Dean, and Brown 1986: 129). The danger, of course, is that incomers may be scapegoated as the causes for a variety of contemporary social ills, just as tourists in Sri Lanka were blamed for social change, though in fact that process had begun some time before their arrival and continued in a somewhat independent manner afterwards (Crick 1994). For

instance, in the rural areas of the province of Alicante, south-eastern Spain, where I have been conducting part-time fieldwork for several years, North European residents are often typed pejoratively as 'invaders', threatening or damaging diverse aspects of provincial social life. Usually excluded from membership of local moral communities, they are regarded as 'fair game' by many locals, to be exploited economically whenever the occasion arises.

It is important not to overgeneralise: not all locals engage in xenophobic discrimination or exploitative stereotyping. Many welcome or at least accept the incomers. These internal differences can create local tension, as one expatriate based in southern Spain related:

> My neighbour Domingo once went to town to buy some beans to sow. Our Dutch neighbour, Bernardo, asked him to buy a bag for him, too. Arriving at the seed merchants, Domingo said, 'Give me a kilo of beans and another for Bernardo.' The manager looked at him and said, 'I don't sell to foreigners.' 'OK,' said Domingo. 'Make that two kilos for me, then.' (Stewart 2014: 268)

Collinson, in his contribution, gives another twist to the stereotyping of incomers. Based on his fieldwork in Donegal, north-west Ireland, he shows that denizens deploy 'blow-in' as a derogatory term to castigate those they wish to crab. However, in a rural area like this where an extreme localism holds sway, just who is branded 'incomer' can take unexpected turns. Even a man born and bred in a Donegal village may be called an incomer just because his parents were products of a town all of thirty miles away. Collinson discusses a dispute between the residents' association of a rural housing estate, its estate-based opponents, and locally resident county councillors. Each tries to undercut the argument of the other by claiming that their adversaries are blow-ins, and that therefore their views have less weight. In contexts such as these, words like 'incomer' become flip-flop terms, whose meaning is ever open to interpretation; only its negative charge remains the same.

Stereotyping, of course, can be ignorantly deployed, especially when tourists join the social stage. One writer, relocated from the USA, discloses the postmodern confusions incomers can find themselves caught in. Based in Cork, south-west Ireland, he goes fishing one day,

> So I worked myself downstream … Behind me, I discovered a pack of Aran sweater-bedecked Americans oohing and aahing and busily photographing my every move, as if I was now the embodiment of Ireland's timeless bucolic ways – the original postcard Celt. Such was the barminess that had taken over my identity. (Monaghan 2004: 112)

Occupation or cooperation?

It is all too easy for anthropologists, still fascinated by native systems of classification, to focus on definitional strategies. But it is just as important to examine cross-cutting modes of cooperation. Thus Hurn found that incomers who supported local agrarian culture were lauded, regardless of where they came from (Hurn

forthcoming). MacClancy demonstrates that while indigenous Irish of Country Clare might at times separate themselves from those they label 'blow-ins', they are also ready to acknowledge that some can be relied upon to give a hand in times of need and that assistance can be as valued as rootedness (for a Hebridean example, see Kohn 2002). The geographers Scott Willis and Hugh Campbell recognise a similar phenomenon in the Parc National des Cévennes, southern France. There once free-loving hippies, the *Néos,* have captured the moral terrain and the grudging acceptance of locals, whether ageing residents or absentee indigenes, by their 'praxis of belonging'. For they are best placed to negotiate the local bureaucracy and administration; they occupy the land; 'they are the ones who produce "authentic" local goods, they are the ones who rebuild ruined farm houses in an authentic fashion, they are the ones who carry the vision of *patrimonie* ("heritage") held by both the Parc and the Absentees into praxis' (Willis and Campbell 2004: 327).[12] Willis and Campbell felicitously phrase the result a 'chestnut economy'. A long-term resident of the area recently argued that one reason so many from both groups here cohabit successfully is their mutual participation in a tradition of resisting the outside world. Though arising from different contexts they share an anti-progress ethic. In the words of one energetic but frustrated native, 'Some people would rather stay poor with a quiet life. They have got just enough to live on, so who can blame them?' (Bremner 2013).

On the Larzac Plateau, north-west of the Cévennes, the incomers have had an even greater effect. In 1970 locals who publicly opposed plans to expand massively a military camp there were joined by Maoists, anarchists, socialists, hippies, ecologists, revolutionaries, pacifists, intellectuals, and members of the Catholic clergy. The years of ultimately successful protest led to many activists finally residing there, and becoming a beacon of the antiglobalisation movement. The zone has today achieved a quasi-mythical status throughout Europe among members of the movement. Permanently based activists now outnumber indigenes (Williams 2008).

There is, however, a dark side to this repopulation, for the state may all too easily misunderstand the motives and actions of the politically inclined who chose to abandon the cities for a simpler, rural life. On November 2008, a squad of balaclava-clad gendarmes, backed up by helicopters, swooped on the small village of Tarnac, north of the Larzac Plateau, to arrest nine anticapitalists. Authorities considered them anarchist terrorists plotting to overthrow the state. The families of these middle-class graduates, villagers, and other supporters quickly helped raise international protests. All but one were soon released.[13] It is not just the agents of the state, but the locals as well who may choose to act against the incomers, moving beyond stereotyping strategies and taking matters into their own fists. The very successful Navarran commune I mentioned at the beginning had nearly burnt down the year before when a young man from nearby, disgruntled at the continued presence of these alternative activists, set the surrounding countryside alight. The flames had reached within a few metres of the buildings.

Political activity among incomers is not confined to the ranks of youthful rebels. Older, lifestyle migrants can also engage in patently political behaviour, enabling new coalitions. In 1994 on La Gomera, for the first time settlers and local left-wingers formed a coalition to successfully oppose development plans promoted by the area's right-wing elite (Macleod 2004).

The behaviour of some incomers also displays incipient signs of an emerging, grass-roots 'Euro-democracy', by getting elected to their village councils. This pattern, although still minor in national terms, is already electorally evident in a broad survey of French rural town halls (Collard 2010). Continuing fieldwork of my own in the Spanish province of Alicante evidences a similar development. Here though, local representatives of national parties may practise a hard-nosed strategy of recruiting foreign incomers in order to win their compatriots' votes. In at least one municipality this has even led to the election as councillors, of migrants who do not speak Spanish.

In some cases, corrupt indigenous practice can directly stimulate an agglomerating sense of common victimhood among incomers, who join hands with similarly afflicted locals. In the Valencian Autonomous Community of the late 1990s and early 2000s, thousands of expatriates suffered a swathe of expropriations, initiated by the regional government and extended by bankrupt town halls. In reaction threatened incomers from throughout the region formed cross-national coalitions to protest the legality of these land grabs. They deftly sidestepped the implementation of suddenly revived legislation from the early modern period of the area, by taking their case to the EU, which made further subsidies to the area dependent on revision of these outdated legalities. Also, during this period, a newly formed group of affected expatriates entered into coalition with local activists in one Alicantine municipality. Working together, they deliberately and explicitly got themselves elected as councillors in order to overturn the expropriative measures of the previous administration.

Out of common adversity, whether acting as exclusively expatriate groups or allying with aggrieved locals, incomers are beginning to organise themselves politically and to emerge as electoral forces in their own right.

Incomers from beyond West Europe

An English travel-writer is driving south through Italy in a carful of Italians:

> My eye is drawn to a bonfire burning in the middle of the field we're passing; and to the small group of people standing around it. Not just people; they're all women. And this is obviously a hallucination … Because the women appear to me to be Black African women, dressed in traditional African clothing. There seem to be about a dozen of them, laughing and chatting among themselves, ebony skins gleaming in the firelight … I check my fellow travellers for any sign that they too have just seen a clip from some documentary about African village life, inexplicably projected on to the Calabrian landscape …

> 'Probably just there for the tomato harvest,' says Ciccio, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. 'Too late for the grapes, isn't it? But the Senegalese do the peaches around Cozena in June and July, definitively …'
>
> Where are all the simple Southern farming folk you always imagine down in these parts? … Was I really expecting to see troupes of olive-skinned damsels? … Next time I open a tin of tomatoes, I shall make sure I concentrate on vizualising the much more modern and likely picture of a bunch of West African women standing at dusk around a bonfire in some strange Italian field, far, far from home. (Hawes 2005: 65–6)

It is not just neo-hippies and wealthy pensioners who are moving into the countryside. Labour migrants from beyond the borders of Western Europe are also rapidly increasing in number. Anthropologists of the area have long studied the labour migration of the original communities they have investigated, usually of South Europeans moving into urban Northern Europe (e.g. Davis 1977: 29–41; Brettell 1986). But it is only in the last decade that some have begun to examine the social consequences of the arrival of rural jobseekers from outside these countries. The almost continuous nature of this immigration and its high profile in the mass media only serve to make its anthropological investigation all the more urgent.

The reasons for this immigration are multiple. First must come the voluntary abandonment of agriculture by people whose predecessors were forced into farming labour. In my Navarran fieldsite in the 1980s, the decreasing profitability and prestige of tilling the land or husbanding livestock encouraged many young men to seek work elsewhere. Thanks to the great, recent expansion of State secondary and tertiary education, many had managed to gain the skills which got them salaried jobs outside the village. That way they also stood a better chance of marriage: few young women wished to marry an agriculturalist. As several of them stated to me, 'Farmers treat their cows better than their wives.' Lawrence argues that in rural Greece it is the women and children, previously dragooned into farm work, who have given up the drudgery of agricultural tasks for the sake of more attractive, less onerous alternatives. Women now enter the formal economy while children have become primarily consumers rather than juvenile workers contributing to the domestic economy (Lawrence 2007: 164).

Second, several ethnographers have argued that immigration controls are so weak that their governments implicitly enable these mass arrivals. Tacitly recognising the central role of the informal sector in their economies, they effectively allow non-EU immigrants to fill, if not boost, the ranks of this workforce. Trouble is, the legal status of the incomers is so uncertain and their desire for work so great that employers may exploit them savagely. Some of them do so. All too often these rural incomers do the jobs natives do not wish to, and at a lower cost to employers (Hanus 2013; Souchard 2013). They can be, as one anthropologist put it, a 'windfall' for the unscrupulous (Filhol 2013). What emerges from this systemised mess is a neo-feudalism in the modern age, where immigrants eager for long-term work permits are forced to become 'ritual supplicants' to the state, while rural bosses create a twenty-first-century

clientelism, acting as patrons to foreign jobseekers who know they must be submissive, at times servile, to gain even a temporary income (Cole and Booth 2007; Lawrence 2007; see also Suárez-Navaz 2004). Multiply marginalised; they may be obliged to live in the dilapidated sections of ghettos, moving into the most derelict buildings, subject both to the intolerance of denizens and heightened levels of surveillance (Perrotta 2013; Zeneidi 2013). In effect immigrants, poor in rights, are made to fill the ranks of a new, rural underclass, one even weaker and more vulnerable than that of their indigenous predecessors (Mésini 2013). The natives, after all, cannot be threatened with deportation. As one migrant labourer put it, 'They made us work like *perros*. No, worse than dogs. I have never seen dogs treated the way they treated us on that farm' (Webster 2004: 46).

The rise of this migrant workforce has facilitated the remarkably rapid development of labour-intensive agriculture. Indeed some commentators claim there are now so many rural migrant labourers that, without their contribution, agriculture would simply stop in much of Western Europe today. It is not just that farming would fail to make any economic sense. There would also be far too few workers to tend and harvest the crops. The economic potential of exploiting these incomers is so great that it can exert a major influence on farmers' decisions over exactly which crops to plant and where to invest. Thus in Levantine Spain, some landowners have substituted fruit trees for cereal crops or draped their fields with polytunnels. Even though this switch means cheap migrant labour becomes essential to profitability – which may be very high – employers, by only offering short-term contracts and constantly renovating their workforce, can usually keep their employees docile and make them feel they are marginal, not central to their agribusiness (Martínez 2001; Cole and Booth 2007). Marx would not have been surprised.

If this situation is so dire yet so widespread, why has it been so little studied? Lawrence, for instance, refers to a 'paucity of material on the phenomenon' (Lawrence 2007: 68). One partial answer might be the illegal nature of so much of this labour migration, and some anthropologists' desire to steer clear of documenting shady practice for fear of not getting their research approved by their university's ethics committee. Another part answer might be the politically very sensitive nature of much of this material. This was highlighted in the (at times) heated debate within Spanish anthropology raised by the publication in 2001 by Basque anthropologist, Mikel Azurmendi, of a 'reportage' about relations between locals and migrant labourers in a rural town that had experienced a series of violent events (Azurmendi 2002; Martínez 2002; Hadji 2003. The original public statement against Azurmendi's book, signed by over sixty Spanish anthropologists, appeared in *Página Abierta*, 128, año 12:46–7). But both the fear of participant-observing illegal activity and of straying into polemical terrain are insufficient reasons why anthropologists have ignored this pattern of migration for so long. More satisfying answers so far elude me.

What is clear is that this style of immigration is not new. Only its present scale is novel. Thus Chantal Crenn, in her contribution, points out that Moroccans have

resided in rural France for several decades. The original migrants came to work on vineyards, for which they now feel great affection. Their patent, learned skilfulness at tending the vines became a central part of their evolving, now transnational identity. But since the 1990s increasing mechanisation has made their livelihood ever more precarious. So their better-educated offspring today seek jobs in the nearby towns. Although several of this new generation marry locals, as a whole, the Moroccans are still regarded as outsiders. As Crenn found in her fieldwork, many of the locals continued to ignore them completely and 'were surprised by our theme of fieldwork on a minority they had never even considered as an identified group' (Crenn, ch. 4; Crenn 2003). To these denizens, the migrants in their midst, no matter how long established, were but long-term marginals unworthy of an identity.

The next stage in this tale came in 2002 when almost all EU States, bar the UK and Ireland, allowed citizens from certain Central European countries to enter without visas. However, they were only allowed to enter as tourists and for up to three months at a time. The predictable result was that hundreds of thousands of East European workers became 'labour tourists', outstaying their visas and gaining illegal, temporary employment at low rates. For instance, by 2013 in the polytunnels of Levantine Spain, Romanians had become the workers of choice for agri-farmers (Hartman 2008; on disgruntled Central Europeans working in the British countryside, see Ivancheva 2007). According to one observer, the Romanians, although they are exploited similarly to Africans and could therefore share an underclass consciousness, in fact deploy racist justifications to distance themselves as much as possible from their fellow workers, and so boost their own chances of employment (Potot 2008). One consequence is that North Africans, as they had feared, have been pushed down a rung of the racialised hierarchy of local employability. Another consequence is that the emigration of husband-and-wife pairs to the picking fields of Western Europe has in Romania led to the recognised phenomenon of 'strawberry orphans': children separated from their parents, brought up by aged kin or other carers, and maintained by remittances (Bilefsky 2009). In fact so many workers left the country that in 2008 Romanian ministers toured West European centres of compatriot emigration to persuade them to come home (Fabra 2008; Galán 2009). In Latvia so many rural emigrants have joined what is termed 'the great departure' that it is felt they have left the countryside 'empty', stripped of life, 'near apocalypse' (Dzenovska 2011; Dzenovska and Aistra 2013: 2). What is distinctive, at least in Britain and Spain, is that, unlike their West European predecessors who were usually uneducated and lowly skilled, many of these new rural incomers, whether from West or East Europe, are highly qualified (Potot 2008; Pina and Corkill 2010). This leads to the unusual sight of migrant doctors, teachers, and lawyers engaged in the '3 Ps': plucking, picking, and packing.

It is also noteworthy that there appears to be a geographical separation between the labour migrants and the back-to-nature types. The great majority of migrants go

to work in areas of high agricultural production, of easy access for large trucks: there is money for farmers to make, and more offers of jobs. Hippies and other alternatives establish themselves in zones that are of low production and inaccessible to leviathan lorries: the land is cheaper; there is less competition, because of less profit for working it.

In recent years illuminating exceptions to many of these generalities have begun to emerge. Maybe we are witnessing the creation of a new dimension in rural complexity. For in several areas, migrant labour is now well regarded because of the range of benefits it is bringing. For instance, in contemporary rural Greece immigrant workers, especially Albanians, have revitalised the countryside economy. This supply of cheap labour has reversed the decline of agricultural production there and reinvigorated otherwise moribund villages. Albanians who manage to regularise their status can escape the neo-feudalist trap by working in both the fields and the construction industry, using cash raised to buy their own holdings, revive abandoned farms, or set up their own local businesses. Most villagers recognise their positive contribution. Some local males, otherwise fated to bachelordom, have married Albanian migrants, thus leading to the reopening of village schools (Kasimis 2008; Labriandis and Sykas 2009; Verinis 2011). Among rural migrants in West Europe today, these Albanians are the leading exemplars of upward mobility.

They are not alone. The mayor of one village in the Italian region of Calabria, which suffered race riots against incomer fruit pickers, has, since the late 1990s, turned around his hometown's otherwise terminal decline by accepting, not rejecting, migrants. The village is receiving government subsidies for doing so. The palazzo is now a 'welcome centre' for immigrants, setting them up with jobs, teaching Italian to their children, and distributing food tokens. This approach makes clear economic sense: for the central government it is four times cheaper to fund their stay in the village than foot the bill for their accommodation in a holding centre for refugees. In the process the school is kept open, thanks to the influx of immigrant children; formerly abandoned houses are reoccupied; and traditional trades are kept alive by incomers learning the necessary skills in artisanal workshops. In turn, their residence generates jobs in social services for the locals (Kington 2013).

Of course, these situations are forever fluid. The economic crisis that began in the late 2000s has had multiple, ongoing effects. In some areas educated but unemployed men are returning to work the ancestral lands they had earlier rejected for the sake of urban jobs and life. In many areas where unemployment has reached levels not seen in decades, more migrants are today going home than coming in, and in a striking reversal, some of the West Europeans are following them. On top of that, the progressive reductions in CAP subsidies planned by the EC imperil the futures of farmers who have until now benefited so well from Common Market policies. Watch this space?

Conclusion

Formerly many anthropologists of rural Europe scripted their manuscripts to a tone of lament, for the passing of a long-established way of life (e.g. Brody 1973; Du Boulay 1974; Kavanagh 1994; Tayler 1998). Their works became tomes of salvage ethnography, documentaries of old traditions about to disappear. Travel writers can indulge themselves similarly. One mourns the loss of local lore, in this case ethnobotanical: 'Sometimes the mountains felt like a drugstore where all the prescriptions had been lost and the pharmacists had died or gone into hiding' (Webster 2009: 102). The awkward truth for both these classes of authors is that some of those supposed traditions were not as long standing as they thought, and some of them did not die out, but were transformed for contemporary purposes.[14]

These blinkered chronicles of decline are today being belatedly replaced by much more multi-stranded ethnographies, alive to the variety of modern realities, where villages are now plural in composition and subject to accelerated change. It is this latter-day diversity and complexity that I have wished to emphasise here. Components of this complexity may include: an expanded variety of different discourses of rurality, where it is important to discern which is held by whom, when, why, where, to what effect; the countryside as a playground for the well-to-do, site of residence for the IT-savvy, or a place of confinement for the poor, unable to leave the area; the nature and consequences of government and EU interventions; the origin, desires, behaviours, and values of the incomers; their interactions, or lack of them, with locals, and the results for all concerned; racialisation and racial violence in rural areas, where ethnic minorities may be especially transitory and mobile (e.g. Ray and Reed 2005); organic food production, eco- and agro-tourism, and other novel farming practices; the diverse effects of the new information technologies (tele-cottaging, outsourcing, and shifting offices to remote areas whose regional authorities offer supportive grants); the renovation or re-creation of public space, for revitalised or freshly invented communal occasions (e.g. McCabe 2009). This novel degree of social complexity, refracted differently in different European settings, necessitates ethnographic studies in order to elucidate, in each case, the subtleties of its multiple strands and consequences, and so provide a potential basis for informed comparative generalisations.

In previous decades, anthropologists played a key role, unwittingly or not, in the construction of regional identities. For instance, work in the 1970s and 1980s by Spanish anthropologists on the multiple bonds between rural Galicians and their farmhouses had a direct effect on Galician identity (Rodríguez 2008: 152; for Basque examples, see MacClancy 2007). But what role can anthropologists play in today's countrysides? Fernández, observing the increasing importance of local ethnographic museums in development plans at all levels from the EU to regions classed as 'deprived', argues that anthropologists can act as highly effective advisors

to the civil servants who implement and monitor these rural policies (Fernández 2006). Coca Pérez promotes the integrated deployment of anthropologists within rural development projects in order that local voices are heard and taken account of, that exclusively environmentalist criteria do not overshadow social issues, and that regional developers take note of contemporary social realities and not just folkloric dimensions of local heritage (Coca Pérez 2003). Given the sorts of changes discussed throughout this book, it is dangerously easy for regional administrators and centralised policymakers to become increasingly unaware of local actualities.

It is tempting to see today's countrysides as a land of everyday surrealities: where once-urban shamans now reside alongside ageing shepherds, former hippies fabricate new traditions, and EU policies promote postmodernist practices; while the sight of Senegalese around a bonfire signals the coming of the tomato harvest, and co-residents create mutual misunderstandings without even realising what they are doing, like an update of *Clochmerle* dubbed in Franglais. But these apparent surrealities are in fact but present day realities. If we are to understand the nature of social change within Western Europe, these are realities that cannot be ignored.

In this book, we have deliberately neglected topics of traditional interest to European anthropologists, such as kinship and property transmission, though in renovated forms they are still of importance. Also, we have not covered every topic of concern to anthropologists of contemporary rural Europe. For instance, we have not included studies of rural tourism, national parks, the social dimensions of reintroducing formerly extinct animals to wilderness areas (e.g. wolves in Scotland, large birds of prey in England, bears in the Pyrenees). Our goal was not to address every topic of rural relevance today. Rather, we wish to re-direct the attention of Europeanist colleagues towards the continuing significance of a vast geographical zone that they have learned to bypass. For the debates about, and within the West European countryside are themes too important for anthropologists to go on avoiding.

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Notes

1 E.g. the St Briavels, Gloucestershire, Parish Grasslands Project which set up 'rent-a-cow' schemes for grazing small fields (Marren 2005; also available at www.parishgrasslandsproject.org.uk/web-content/images/pdf_files/Independent_article.pdf. Accessed 11 February 2010.

2 On the power of long-term fieldwork as a research method, see MacClancy 2002; MacClancy and Fuentes 2010.

3 It is also possible that Newby was unaware how diverse these Suffolk immigrants could be. The naturalist Roger Deakin, who went to live in the county in the 1970s, listed his fellow-incomers as 'quasi-hippies, pioneer immigrants, rough carpenters, dirt farmers, musicians, ditchdiggers, and drivers' (Deakin 2007: 4).

4 www.ciberiglesia.net/discipulos/04/04testimonio.htm. Accessed 23 June 2014.

5 'Neo-Nazis take over Spanish village', http://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/nov/20/vivekchaudhary; 'Las ruinas del sueno neonazi', http://www.interviu.es/reportajes/articulos/las-ruinas-del-sueno-neonazi. Both accessed 29 August 2014. I thank Peter Foster Macleod for information about this example.

6 Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale (European Union Initiative for Rural Development).

7 www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-27034535. Accessed 17 June 2014.

8 E.g. www.aldeasabandonadas.com/venta-de-aldeas.html and www.pueblosabandonados.com/. Both accessed 11 June 2014.

9 E.g. www.verkami.com/projects/5993-llibre-pobles-valencians-abandonats-la-memoria-del-silenci/blog. Accessed 17 June 2014.

10 See e.g. the interview with Chris Stewart, www.wanderlust.co.uk/issues/issue52.html, accessed 2 February 2006; and the entry on the village of Frailes (which became the hometown of the late Michael Jacobs and discussed at length by him in Jacobs 2003), www.property-net-spain.com/provinces/jaen/sierra_sur.html. Accessed 25 September 2006.

11 See Boissevain 1996 for discussion of the strategies employed by European locals to mitigate the effects of mass tourism in their hometowns.

12 The terms 'praxis of belonging' come from Borneman 1992.

13 'Rural idyll or terrorist hub? The village that police say is a threat to the state. Nine deny anarchist plot saying they were just seeking the simple life', www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/03/france-terrorism-tarnac-anarchists. Accessed 2 February 2010.

14 E.g. on their misrepresentations of rural Ireland, see Wilson and Donnan 2006.

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