

19-21 de Octubre 2022 | Granada

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON REGIONAL SCIENCE

Challenges, policies and governance of the territories in the post-covid era

Desafíos, políticas y gobernanza de los territorios en la era post-covid

XLVII REUNIÓN DE ESTUDIOS REGIONALES
XIV CONGRESO AACR



Economic planning in the context of depopulation: The case of the Sierra Norte de Sevilla (Spain)

Macarena Pérez-Suárez ^a, Isadora Sánchez-Torné ^b & Bartolomé Pérez Ramírez ^c

Subject area: seven.

Abstract

The aim of the research was to establish the state of depopulation in an area of the province of Seville based on a list of current weaknesses and to propose recommendations. Five sections are presented, ranging from a review of the findings of other research on territorial depopulation to a series of implications for depopulation in the Sierra Morena of Seville.

Depopulation is a recently emerging research topic, as the period with findings corresponds to a decade (2009-2020). The territorial scope tends to be the region of Andalusia, while research with a provincial scope is non-existent, with only one study focusing on the province of Seville. The research on Depopulation in Andalusia (2009-2020) points to several ideas: the rural world must attract public and private investments for the development of productive activities; the LEADER programme and community initiative has shown the lack of concreteness to act against depopulation and the promotion of endogenous resources (Navarro, Cejudo, and Cañete, 2018), the modernisation of small local agri-food industries, the recovery of architectural and ethnographic heritage or the development of rural microenterprises ; the actions to avoid depopulation and attract population to rural areas must be multiple: economic activities and employment, basic infrastructures and equipment, services and social welfare; cooperative societies are a tool to combat depopulation; rural entrepreneurship as a means of consolidating the population in the rural world and avoiding overcrowding in the cities (Cejudo, Cañete, Navarro and Ruiz, 2020; Del-Valle and Almoguera, 2020; Muñoz-Sánchez, Pérez, Rodríguez, Leal and Ramos, 2020; Valiente,

^a ORCID: 0000-0003-4682-3873. Departamento Economía Aplicada III de la Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales de la Universidad de Sevilla. mperez32@us.es

^b ORCID: 0000-0003-2749-2896. Departamento Economía Aplicada III de la Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales de la Universidad de Sevilla. isanchez6@us.es

^c ORCID: 0000-0003-2844-4693. Departamento Economía Aplicada III de la Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales de la Universidad de Sevilla. bartolomep@us.es

2019; De Fortescu, 2015; Sánchez, 2015; Entrena and Álvarez, 2014; Uribe, De-Pablo and Bonilla, 2013; Luque, 2012; Almoguera and Del-Valle, 2010; Loren, 2009).

The development of the empirical research on which this article is based took place during the year 2020, and required the use of various sources of information: some of a secondary nature and others of a primary nature (García and Moyano, 2019) under a qualitative analysis (Hernán-García, Lineros-González and Ruiz-Azarola, 2020).

The Office against Depopulation of Prodetur has available in open access the Statistical Analysis by municipalities 2008-2018 being the starting point to delimit the preferential areas of action against depopulation. It shows that more than thirty municipalities of the total (104 municipalities) decreased their population in the period 2018-2008, among them the municipalities of the Sierra Norte stand out. These municipalities continue to register a negative population growth rate between 2018 and 2019 (-0.2 to -3.03) , municipalities such as El Madroño , Cazalla de la Sierra, Villanueva de San Juan, Constantina or Coripe, among others. In addition, there is a decrease in the average birth rate, average growth (7.67%), low immigration (2.40%) and positive ageing. Undoubtedly, this is the area of the province most affected by depopulation and forecasts point to a persistent loss of population (IECA, 2017).

The Mancomunidad Sierra Morena de Sevilla questions territorial equity based on the identification of a series of weaknesses.

Sierra Morena de Sevilla has a lack of management of endogenous resources and a crisis of local governance. More than ten weaknesses were identified. Among them, several can be mentioned: The Sierra Norte Natural Park has no financial planning or maintenance planning. There is a negative public perception of the Sierra Norte de Sevilla Natural Park; there are deficits in its own supply, as production in the primary sector is favoured in irrigated lands in the Vega through the managed reservoirs; there is a lack of integrated exploitation of the existing public woodland in the Park that favours the creation of forestry companies, as well as a lack of care for the areas of special protection; there is a downward demographic trend: abandonment of the population and the abandonment of the natural park's natural resources; there is a lack of a sustainable use of the natural park's natural resources. Demographic downward trend: abandonment of the active population and population dispersion; Imbalance between supply and demand of employment (active population prepared without employment); Limited infrastructures of electrical energy, telephony, data, fibre optics, etc.; Limited related services. Deficient related services; Limitations of industrial and rural land for agricultural activities; A restrictive legal framework for entrepreneurship in the transformation of products from the primary sector; Greater responsibilities (criminal jurisdiction charges) are imposed on local councils without funding; Loss of local autonomy due to lack of technical resources; Increases the cost of services for the citizens of the territory. Law of Rationalisation of Local Administration; A conflict between conservation-authorisations-bureaucracy that directly affects investments and job creation; No access to EU funding.

More than ten recommendations are established, including: Strengthening the economic fabric through emerging sectors such as biomass management or the wine sector; Private investment to promote entrepreneurship in rural areas (e.g. Caser Foundation); The rural policies managed by the Rural Development Groups allow investment in modernising and creating businesses related to agri-food, crafts, tourism, catering, local services, livestock, old trades, etc.; Taking into account the specific needs of citizens in spatial planning policies and policies for the protection of historic centres; Compensating the higher cost of essential services provided by municipalities among the rest of the province (wastewater treatment, water supply, sewage, waste

management, etc.); Compensating the higher cost of essential services provided by municipalities among the rest of the province (wastewater treatment, water supply, sewage, waste management, etc.). Compensate for the higher cost of essential services provided by the municipalities compared to the rest of the province (wastewater treatment, water supply, sewerage, waste management, etc.). To undertake a fiscal adaptation, in order to favour the regime of the resident population in the municipalities of the Natural Park, with special attention to the entrepreneurs (benefits in the IRPF, corporate tax, self-employed, modules and I+D+i, etc.), and to establish communication arteries, since now the motorways are distant and the timetable of the suburban train to Seville is limited, being the largest region of the province, among others.

However, depopulation is conditioned by orographic factors that hinder the deployment of infrastructures and the provision of services. An imbalance that compromises public accounts through the increase in the cost of providing public services. There is an increase in public spending that is not equally compensated by public revenue, which leads to the loss of potential assets in the municipalities, i.e. the waste of endogenous resources. The opposite should be the case, when public policies should be based on the endogenous resources of each territory. Depopulation calls for an injection of investment (gross fixed capital formation) with the aim of greater and better social and territorial cohesion. In particular, Sierra Morena faces the challenge of managing the dispersion of the population and the difficulty of accessing services or infrastructures. However, in Andalusia, the following prevail: progressive demographic polarisation, residential concentration on the coast and in the metropolitan areas of large cities, population ageing and depopulation (Del Espino, 2017).

This depopulation is subject to territorial imbalance. It would be appropriate to specify the factors that determine depopulation in the Sierra Norte and to know the results of the first Sustainable Rural Development Programme 2010-2014 (FAMP, 2018:10) in order to specify future actions. However, the change from weaknesses to strengths requires careful long-term economic planning.

The urgent long-term economic planning of the municipality requires a thorough socio-economic diagnosis. Sierra Morena de Sevilla presents a series of acute weaknesses, local governance and the non-existent management of endogenous resources, whose change into strengths requires careful long-term strategic planning. In response, it is possible to promote a business network of SMEs in renewable energy cooperatives, the forestry economy and orange tourism. Other measures would be to invest in hydraulic technologies and companies through EU funds, generate an innovation ecosystem, address territorial planning (inter-territorial cooperation in depopulation and take advantage of the investment opportunities of demographic change), materialise an alliance for the development of natural spaces for the generation of environmental jobs and give prestige to belonging to the territory.

Future lines of research could complement the quantitative analyses of the territory by: designing an articulated measurement tool involving a specific Depopulation Assessment System (methodology); using statistical techniques such as multiple linear regression analysis to find the most significant variables in depopulation or cluster analysis with the aim of grouping municipalities by their characteristics before depopulation; carry out an analysis of the situation of all the municipalities in the Sierra Norte de Sevilla that have registered population decline based on three key factors such as ageing, emigration and proximity to populated areas in order to check the correlations between variables (Recaño, 2017). It would also be possible to determine the Good Practices of the Cooperatives of Sierra Norte, given that cooperative societies combat depopulation (Carchano, Carrasco and Soler, 2021; Valiente, 2019), with agri-food

cooperatives, community land use cooperatives and rural cooperatives being motors of local development (Fajardo and Escribano, 2020); and to prepare a Study on the Reputation of Sierra Morena de Sevilla. This improved study can also be replicated over several years in order to carry out a time series analysis and obtain some predictions, or to measure the perception of depopulation of all the public administrations of all the municipalities of Seville.

In short, it is committed to continuing to generate the technical bases that support specific policies by type of municipality and that have a particular impact on the variables that have the greatest influence on rural depopulation. In accordance with the declarations of Cristina Maestre MEP (2020): "rural development is very important, but it should not be the only orientation given to the problem of depopulation. It is important to combine it with economic growth models linked to other sectors such as the green economy, technological development, digitalisation, tourism or certain services. We have to be creative in our solutions and, above all, broaden the range of possibilities.

Keywords: *Local government; Local Development; Depopulation; Rural environment; Economic policy.*

JEL: H72, H75.

References

- Almoguera, P., and Del-Valle, C. (2010). "Aging and depressed areas in Western Andalusia (Spain)", in *AGER: Revista de Estudios sobre Despoblación y Desarrollo Rural*, 9. Available at <https://preview.tinyurl.com/ydatgb8y>.
- Carchano, M., Carrasco, I., y Soler, F. S. (2021). "The role of credit unions in sustaining a hollowed-out Spain through equity capital", in *REVESCO: Revista de Estudios Cooperativos*, 138. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5209/reve.73866>
- Cejudo, E., Cañete, J. A., Navarro, F., and Ruiz, N. (2020): "Entrepreneurs and Territorial Diversity: Success and Failure in Andalusia 2007-2015", *Land*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land9080262>
- De Fortescu, T. (2015). "Fighting depopulation in mountain areas: revitalization dynamics and strategies in the Alpujarra granadina (Andalusia)", in *Espaces-Populations-Societes*, 3. DOI: [10.4000/eps.6149](https://doi.org/10.4000/eps.6149).
- Del Espino Hidalgo, B. (2017). "The medium-sized cities of central Andalusia. An approach to a territorial and urban phenomenon", in *Revista de Estudios Regionales*, 108. Available at <https://preview.tinyurl.com/y7mkx26v>
- Del-Valle, C., and Almoguera, P. (2020). "Demographic ageing and (dis)population in Andalusia's medium-sized inland cities (2008-2018)", in *Cuadernos Geográficos de la Universidad de Granada*, 59(2). Available at <https://preview.tinyurl.com/y8vuslv3>
- Entrena, F., and Álvarez, T. (2014). "Socio-demographic dynamics, economy and potential for sustainable development in the Comarca of Guadix (Spain)", in *Ambiente y Desarrollo*, 18(35). Available at <https://preview.tinyurl.com/yysl2xk5>

- Fajardo García G., y Escribano Pizarro, J. (Coord.) (2020). Depopulation and rural development. Proposals from the Social Economy. Ed. IUDESCOOP y CIRIEC-España.
- FAMP. Andalusian Federation of Municipalities and Provinces. (2018). Report A *propósito del Despoblamiento en Andalucía*. Available at <https://preview.tinyurl.com/yaxkeqnr>
- García, E., and Moyano, E. (2019). "Governance and territorial development. Las agencias de desarrollo rural en la implementación del programa mexicano PESA", in *AGER: Revista de Estudios sobre Despoblación y Desarrollo Rural*, 28. <https://doi.org/10.4422/ager.2019.14>
- IECA (2017). *Projection of the population of Andalusia and provinces 2016-2070*. Available at <https://preview.tinyurl.com/yacygir67>
- Loren Méndez, M. (2009). "Restoring architecture, recycling the city. Social housing in pre-existing containers and strategic enclaves of the historic city", in *Arquitecturas del Sur*. Available at <https://preview.tinyurl.com/y8lj2fov>
- Luque, R. M. (2012). "The recent demographic dynamics of the Sierra Morena Cordobesa", in *Revista de Estudios Regionales*, 95. Available at <https://preview.tinyurl.com/y973tsdv>.
- Muñoz-Sánchez, V. M., Pérez, A. M., Rodríguez, M. S., Leal, J. M., and Ramos, I. J. (2020). "Context of innovation in Spanish rurality: the case of the Andalusian Rice Field", in *Agriculture, Society and Development*, 17(2). DOI: [10.22231/asyd.v17i2.1345](https://doi.org/10.22231/asyd.v17i2.1345).
- Navarro, F. A., Cejudo, E., and Cañete, J. A. (2018). "Long-term analysis of neoendogenous rural development actions. Continuity of enterprises created with the help of LEADER and PRODER in three Andalusian comarcas in the 1990s", in *AGER: Journal of Studies on Depopulation and Rural Development*, year 25. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4422/ager.2018.09>
- Recaño, J. (2017). "The demographic sustainability of empty Spain", in *Perspectives Demográficas*, 7. Disponible en <https://preview.tinyurl.com/y7lyg2nz>
- Sánchez Escolano, L. M. (2015). "The problems of territorial planning and development in the Tabernas region (Almería)", in *Journal of Depopulation and Rural Development Studies*, 19. Available in <https://preview.tinyurl.com/y89q2tsz>
- Uribe, J., De-Pablo, J., and Bonilla, J.J. (2013). "Business and local development: Training as a basic factor to guide the entrepreneur", in *Intangible Capital*, 9(3). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3926/ic.272>
- Valiente, L. (2019). "Could cooperativism be contributing to fix the population in the territory of Andalusia?", in *CIRIEC-España, Revista de Economía Pública, Social y Cooperativa*, 97. DOI: [10.7203/CIRIEC-E.97.13046](https://doi.org/10.7203/CIRIEC-E.97.13046).