

Looking for Daisies: The Hidden Attraction and Arrival Infrastructures of Welcoming Spaces in Rural Spain

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Abstract

In recent decades, shrinking areas in rural Spain have sought the arrival of newcomers. This migration is driven mainly by economic reasons and is not related to regionalizing or redistribution migration policies. The main contribution of this article is to highlight how the articulation between social agents' (public administrations, third sector, enterprises, migrant communities, and civil society) strategies and infrastructuring practices, within the framework of political, social, and economic structural contexts, has crystalized into specific "welcoming spaces," impacting newcomers' access to resources. The main innovation lies in the identification of an analysis model applied to three different types of "welcoming spaces" of attraction, arrival, and settlement, considering their impact on other mobilities. We have named them in order to represent the connection of rural territories with nature: the waves, the oak, and the river. The analysis reveals the factors that favor but also block access to resources for newcomers. This has allowed us to design an ideal type of welcoming space, which we have called "Daisy," and which beyond its theoretical value, could facilitate the revitalization of shrinking areas. "Looking for Daisies" represents the desire of local social actors, lost in the disjointed way in which infrastructuring practices are managed, to reach this goal. Framed under the Horizon 2020-funded program Welcoming Spaces—Investing in "Welcoming Spaces" in Europe: Revitalizing Shrinking Areas by Hosting non-EU Migrants (H2020-SC6-Migration-2019-870952), the research is based on qualitative fieldwork (comprising 75 semi-structured interviews and participant observation), carried out in three localities in two regions of Spain (Galicia and Castilla León).

Keywords

arrival infrastructures; migrant infrastructures; migration; rural; welcoming spaces

1. Introduction

The European humanitarian crisis, which detonated in 2015, has sparked a growing interest in the study of the insertion of the migrant population in rural areas (McAreavey & Argent, 2018). This trend seems to converge with the proliferation of regionalizing migration policies, which seek the redistribution of migrants and refugees, among both EU countries, through the so-called dispersal policies, and within each national territory (Hanhörster & Wessendorf, 2020) to outside the metropolises. Furthermore, in recent years, migrants have shown a growing interest in moving to rural areas (Barberis & Pavolini, 2015). In Spain, more than half of the inhabitants of small municipalities have migrated from cities or other countries (Camarero Rioja & Rivera Escribano, 2024). In contrast to other European contexts, there is a lower presence of asylum seekers and refugees in the Spanish rural environment. As pointed out in previous research (Alonso-Pardo et al., 2023), in this country, newcomers to shrinking areas are mainly economic migrants, returnees, or “roots migrants” (Wessendorf, 2007) who move to the land of their ancestors. It is therefore a migration phenomenon worth exploring in greater depth, as unlike other European countries, it does not respond to policies of asylum or relocation. European academic literature addressing these migration flows has focused mainly on studying the settlement of migrants in rural environments (Galera et al., 2018). In turn, media and political interest has been based on utilitarian narratives that perceive immigration in shrinking areas as a strategy for maintaining infrastructures of various kinds (services, labor, the fight against depopulation, etc.). However, less has been done to analyze migration in rural (Wulff et al., 2008) or peripheralized environments from an arrival infrastructures approach (El-Kayed et al., 2020).

The article’s main contribution to the literature on arrival infrastructures, which to date has dealt mainly with urban environments, is its focus on shrinking areas. In addition, our work also identifies the factors favoring or blocking settlement and their impact on new mobilities. We aim to shed light on how arrival infrastructures are conditioned by the forms of governance and external factors in which they are embedded (Kreichauf et al., 2020), articulating into the analysis the role played by social actors’ strategies and structural determinants in arrival dynamics. Another originality of the contribution lies in addressing not only the process of arrival, but also the infrastructures of attraction (initiatives to boost the population in devitalized contexts). Moving beyond a theoretical and empirical contribution, the article also aims to offer strategic options for policymakers and local actors. Framed under the Horizon 2020-funded program Welcoming Spaces—Investing in “Welcoming Spaces” in Europe: Revitalizing Shrinking Areas by Hosting non-EU Migrants (H2020-SC6-Migration-2019-870952), the research is based on a qualitative methodology. Due to space limitations, the data presented here refer to just three case studies (sited in the regions of Galicia and Castilla León) drawn from fieldwork comprising 75 semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

The article begins by introducing the state of the art, framing our research within the literature debates on arrival infrastructures, and is followed by a discussion of the methodology used in the study, before presenting the analysis of the empirical data, based on three case studies or examples of “welcoming spaces.” To define them, names were chosen that represent a connection between rural territories and nature: the waves, the oak tree, and the river. The analysis reveals the factors that favor but also block the processes of attraction, arrival, and settlement for newcomers and their impact on new mobilities. This has allowed us to design an ideal type of “welcoming space,” “Daisy,” that beyond its theoretical value, could be capable of facilitating the transformation of rural areas into sustainable hosting spaces. “Looking for Daisies” represents the desire of local social agents, lost in the disjointed way in which attraction and arrival infrastructures are

managed, to achieve this goal. The conclusion highlights the article's principal contributions to the literature on arrival infrastructures.

2. State of the Art: Beyond the “Urban Focus,” Attraction and Arrival Infrastructures in Shrinking Areas

In the last decade, there has been a growing interest in the so-called “migrant infrastructures,” defined as the interplay of various “systematically interlinked technologies, institutions, and actors that facilitate and condition mobility” (e.g., state regulations, commercial intermediaries, socio-technological platforms, humanitarian organizations, migrant social networks; Cheng et al., 2024, p. 1). The “arrival infrastructures” perspective developed from this approach has been widely studied in urban settings (Meeus et al., 2019), mainly addressing research on housing (El-Kayed et al., 2020) and social integration (Hanhörster & Wessendorf, 2020).

Arrival infrastructures have been defined as “those parts of the urban fabric within which newcomers become entangled on arrival, and where their future local or translocal social mobilities are produced as much as negotiated” (Meeus et al., 2019, p. 11). The different types of arrival infrastructures are not only related to technological and spatial characteristics. Considering “people as infrastructure” (Simone, 2004), they also include “institutions, organizations, social spaces and actors which specifically facilitate migrant arrival” (Wessendorf, 2021, p. 4; see also Kreichauf et al., 2020). To deal with the complexity of social infrastructures (Kreichauf et al., 2020), literature has defined the concept of “social infrastructure ecosystems” as networks and services supported by different kinds of buildings, facilities, and organizations (Wessendorf & Gembus, 2024, p. 2827). Nils Hans, quoting Mieke Schrooten and Bruno Meeus, refers to formal infrastructures as those that “include formal support structures provided by the state, e.g., language schools or public advisory organisations as well as infrastructures established by non-governmental stakeholders, such as (migrant) advisory organisations, which often emerge in response to state policies” (Hans, 2023, p. 382). For these authors, informal infrastructures are those developed through local service providers that facilitate arrival, supplying information and resources and acting as meeting places (e.g., cafés, restaurants, ethnic shops, and hairdressers; Hans, 2023, p. 382). Indeed, informal infrastructures are relevant in facilitating newcomers’ access to resources and should therefore also be taken into consideration in planning debates (Fawaz, 2017). Arrival infrastructures can enable integration and social mobility processes for newcomers, although they can also present shortcomings and turn inhospitable (Felder et al., 2020; Wessendorf, 2021). Various studies have identified and typified “arrival spaces,” defined as “‘platforms of arrival,’ where many immigrants find their first home in their new city,” in an attempt to portray their characteristics and carry out a classification exercise on the basis of various indicators (morphology, etc.; Gerten et al., 2023, p. 2). However, most of this work, which is fundamentally of a quantitative nature, has been conducted in urban areas and, in particular, in specific neighborhoods of large cities.

This literature provides a strong theoretical starting point. However, analyses on the specificity of arrival infrastructures in rural settings are also needed. Through the recent “turn to arrival” (Wilson, 2022) at the theoretical level, several works have pointed to the need to clarify, through empirical studies, the complexity of “arrival regions and populations” in an explanatory framework specific to peripheralized rural areas, as it is understood that processes can be significantly different from urban contexts (Glorius et al., 2021).

The specificities of arrival infrastructures in shrinking areas are many. Firstly, literature on arrival infrastructures in urban contexts has highlighted the relevance of previously settled migrant communities and social and cultural networks as social infrastructures (Kreichauf et al., 2020), considering their key role in facilitating newcomers' arrival and social mobility (Wessendorf, 2021). Indeed, literature on migration has traditionally highlighted the fact that long-established migrants are key actors in the configuration of "bonding social capital" (Putnam, 2007). Some authors speak about the figure of "arrival brokers" (Hanhörster & Wessendorf, 2020; Hans, 2023; Wessendorf, 2021): migrant-origin individuals that support newcomers and facilitate their access to resources in arrival spaces. Nevertheless, in some rural contexts, there is a lower presence of previously settled migrant communities, making "bridging social capital" relevant for newcomers' arrival processes. Indeed, the resident population can be a key stakeholder in providing access to resources to newcomers in shrinking areas (Glorius et al., 2021).

Secondly, urban literature recognizes a clear function of arrival infrastructures as an "entry mechanism" for the immigrant population (Wilson, 2022). Since the 2014 refugee movement in Europe, rural areas are also emerging as immigrant gateways (El-Kayed et al., 2020; McAreavey & Argent, 2018), although in most cases, the rural environment is a non-primary type of "arrival." Indeed, migrants also move to depopulated areas after first landing in urban environments, as in the case of many of the shrinking areas studied in the Spanish context (Alonso-Pardo et al., 2023).

Another fundamental aspect that distinguishes shrinking areas is that arrival does not necessarily occur spontaneously. Literature generally assumes that migrant population "arrives" directly in cities and analyzes the processes involved. However, rural areas often require incentives and attraction initiatives to encourage arrival. This is mainly the case of shrinking areas that consider migration a strategy to deal with depopulation or territorial imbalance. Attracting and retaining new arrivals require strategies in smaller cities and rural communities (Wulff et al., 2008). This leads us to consider different phases when studying migrant infrastructures in rural environments: attraction, arrival, and setting.

This article aims to contribute to the debates on the scientific production of arrival infrastructures in four aspects. Firstly, beyond the numerous literature that analyses this issue in urban environments, this research approaches arrival infrastructures in shrinking areas. Secondly, the Spanish case allows us to go beyond the studies that analyze regionalizing or dispersal migration policies (redistribution of migrants and refugees) since immigration in Spanish rural areas is mainly carried out by economic migrants, returnees, or "roots migrants" (Alonso-Pardo et al., 2023). Moreover, the research is original in that, moving beyond a quantitative study, it attempts to typify "welcoming spaces" in shrinking environments using qualitative data. Finally, another innovation is the consideration of four different phases in the migration process, beyond the "arrival approach" in the analysis of infrastructures: attraction, arrival, and settlement, and their impact on other mobilities. As noted above, some rural areas need to introduce initiatives to attract newcomers. By infrastructures of attraction, we are referring not only to the structural elements that encourage the population to immigrate to a territory (demand of the labor market, social benefits, etc.), but also to "attraction initiatives," defined as actions undertaken by different social actors with the aim of attracting newcomers in a shrinking area and with the ultimate objective of contributing to the revitalization of the territory. They can be public, led by organized civil society or NGOs, or developed by companies looking for workers to meet the demand of some labor sectors that are not attractive to long-standing residents (primary sector, care for dependent persons, etc.). Mix-model initiatives consist of the collaboration between diverse social agents in the territory in favor of revitalization.

Arrival infrastructures differ from those for the settlement of newcomers, as this phase is intrinsically distinct from settlement (Hans, 2023). Arrival can be defined as “a phase of the migration process in which newly arrived migrants encounter a new context for the first time,” which includes “initial orientation and situational processes such as navigating bureaucratic systems, finding housing or finding a first job” (El-Kayed & Keskinilic, 2023, p. 357). Infrastructures of attraction and arrival impact differently on newcomers’ access to resources and settlement, as shown by the theoretical representation of the model in Figure 1.

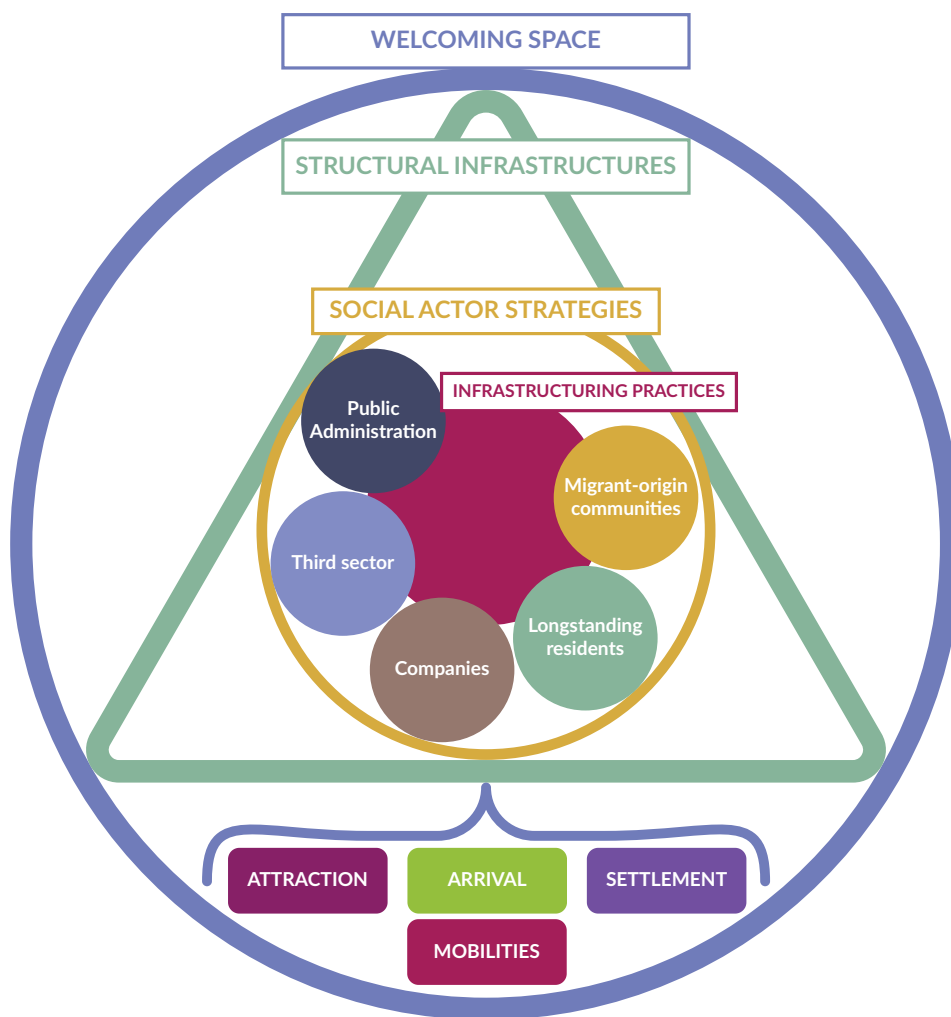


Figure 1. Theoretical model to study the impact of migrant infrastructures in welcoming spaces.

In short, the aim of this article is to consider how the strategies deployed by the various social actors (public administrations, third sector, companies, migrant origin communities, long-standing residents) are articulated with structural determinants (labor markets, etc.) in the configuration of “welcoming spaces.” Based on the analysis of three “welcoming spaces,” the objective is to identify those infrastructures that facilitate or block the development of the processes of attraction, arrival, and settlement of newcomers and their impact on new mobilities. Before presenting the empirical data, the following section summarizes a number of methodological considerations.

3. Methodology

The qualitative methodology was applied in two stages: First, the case studies were identified through an extensive documentary and bibliographic review, followed by three field trips, resulting in 19 days of inductive and ethnographic fieldwork implemented between 2020 and 2022. Despite having carried out numerous observation and participant observation sessions, most of the information was collected through semi-structured interviews using the “snowball” method to reach a total of 75 interviews involving 91 people, 80% of which were conducted in person and 20% telematically. Five versions of the questionnaire were adapted, depending on the type of agent interviewed: public administrations, migrants, non-migrants, civil society organizations, or businesses. In all, 27.5% of the people had had experiences of international migration (foreign-born population or population that had spent most of their lives abroad); 29.7% belonged to civil society organizations; 24.2% to the local administration (mayor’s office, town council, technical profile, social work, social education, employment guidance, educational centers, health personnel, etc.); 3.3% to companies; 6.6% to other non-migrant population; 2.1% to stakeholders of the provincial administration; and 6.6% to education centers.

As Figure 2 shows, the three municipalities selected for in-depth discussion in this article are located in two regions (Castilla León and Galicia). We have selected them due to their representativeness and heterogeneity in terms of their welcoming spaces dynamics, which are examined in the following section.

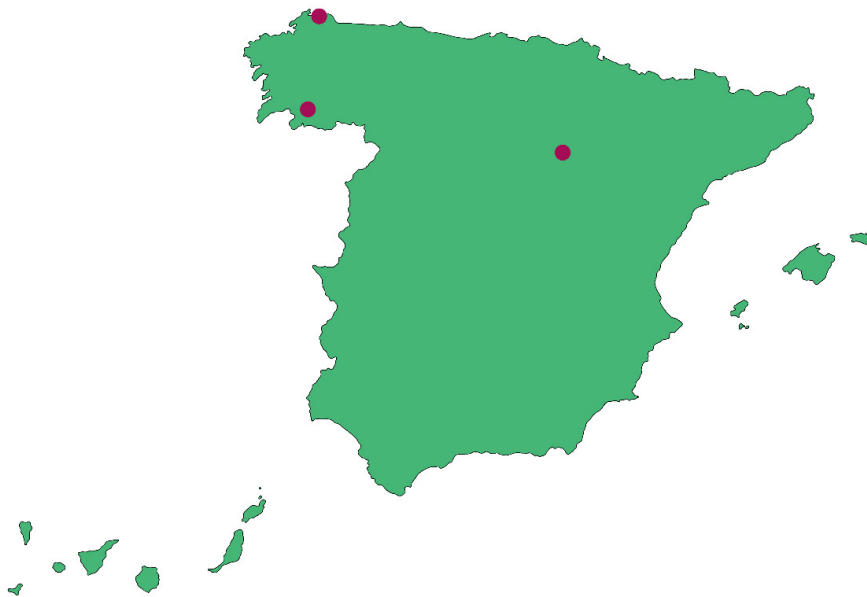


Figure 2. Map showing the three selected municipalities for this article.

4. The Underlying Welcoming Spaces of Attraction, Arrival, and Settlement of Newcomers in Shrinking Areas

The following presentation of the three case studies provides an insight into the infrastructures that either contribute to or block the processes of the attraction, arrival, and settlement of newcomers and their impact on other mobilities, revealing how the strategies of the different social actors and the structural determinants are articulated in the configuration of welcoming spaces. Burela is the first of the three cases presented.

4.1. Burela: A Welcoming Space That Comes and Goes With the “Waves”

Burela is one of the most important fishing ports on Spain’s northwest coast (located in the province of Lugo, in the Autonomous Community of Galicia), where the crisis in the sector at the end of the 20th century led to a rise in the recruitment of migrant workers. In this locality, home to 9,430 inhabitants (Spanish Statistics Agency, 2022) and with the youngest average age in the province of Lugo, attributable to the high percentage of foreign-born settled population (15.2%; Spanish Statistics Agency, 2022), labor market demand is the main structural infrastructure for attracting newcomers. Recruiting immigrants to work at sea initially took place through the intermediation of shipowners who acted as “brokers” (Lindquist et al., 2012) with companies in the countries of origin and later through the dynamization of the workers’ own community networks (community brokers). Family reunification processes also emerged, which can be considered an informal social infrastructure of attraction (Simone, 2004). This resulted in the formation of a Cape Verdean community settled in Burela, although fishermen also arrived from Peru, Senegal, Indonesia, Morocco, and Ghana.

Despite the temporary nature of work at sea, newcomers have been settling in the locality due to the existence of other dynamic labor sectors. In addition to canning factories, its status as a *comarca* (county or administrative entity made up of a number of municipalities within a province) center means that Burela also has an extensive “service infrastructure.” This concept can be defined as the “infrastructure of a country, society, or organization consisting of the basic facilities such as transport, communications, power supplies, and buildings, which enable it to function” (Infrastructure, n.d.). Service infrastructures in Burela include a hospital and transport networks (buses, rail service). As for the labor market, the dynamic service (hotel and catering, retail) and care sectors enable women of immigrant origin to find employment. This has favored the settlement of the migrant population, giving greater stability to family incomes.

In addition to the attraction exerted by structural labor market and service infrastructures, other arrival infrastructures have been created in Burela that have encouraged migrants to settle in the town. Over a decade ago, the local authority introduced an Immigration Plan that is still in place today. It provides services for the migrant population (legal advice, help with administrative procedures, etc.). In addition, other social actors working in public administrations, such as the health center’s social worker, who shows a special sensitivity towards the immigrant population, have also created informal arrival infrastructures in order to facilitate the migrant population’s access to services. Strong media infrastructures have also been put in place (see Figure 3), with merchandising and activities promoting Burela as an alleged model of social integration in the region.

In Burela there is also an intricate network of associations (cultural, feminist, sea workers,’ sports, etc.), including several of migrant origin, such as the Batuko Tabanka association of Cape Verdean origin, and ASPEBU, an association of Peruvian migrants. There are also places of worship (Virgen de Cabo Verde, a mosque and Adventist church), providing social infrastructures that facilitate cultural and religious diversity. They are key spaces of informal infrastructures that provide the migrant community with a sense of safety and trust during the arrival process and a means of accessing resources support (bonding social capital; Wessendorf, 2021). The strong association movement also contributes to the participation of newcomers in civic society. Indeed, previous local governments had a councilor for social integration of Cape Verdean origin.

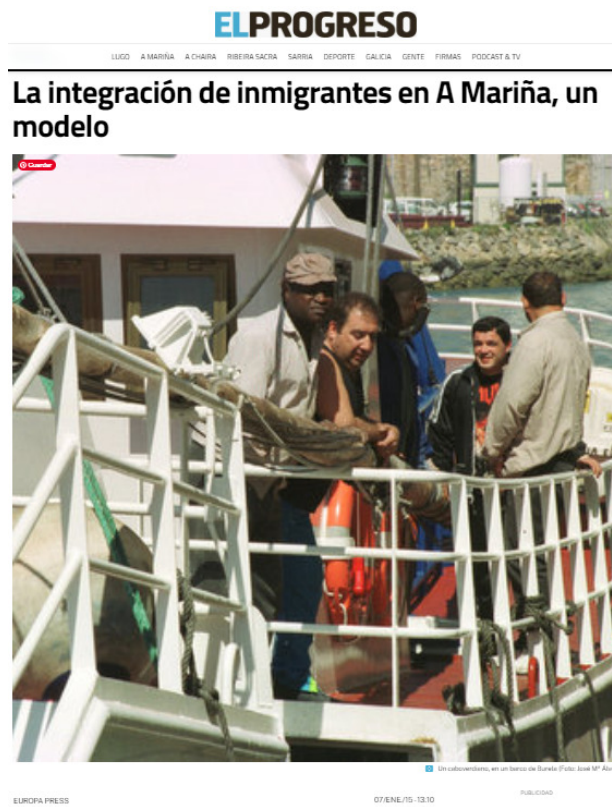


Figure 3. An example of the media coverage of immigration in Burela. Source: “La integración de inmigrantes en A Mariña” (2015).

Cape Verdean compatriots often help newcomers with translations, accompanying them through bureaucratic procedures, lending them money to obtain the diploma, which costs 5,000 euros, that allows them to work as seamen, etc. When the men arrived alone and knew no-one, they would initially sleep on mattresses in their homes. In addition to the the emotional support provided, this type of assistance could be considered a relevant form of informal infrastructure, as the following quote shows:

If you arrive in a country that is not yours, you don't have a mother or a father, you have a child, and a man who doesn't control his head, if everyone leaves you aside, doesn't give you a bit of affection, you go straight to the bottom. There are people who think that only having money is important, but support is more important for an immigrant. (woman of Cape Verdean origin, Burela)

Cape Verdean migrants generally develop migration strategies centered on sending remittances to the country of origin, as well as parcels containing clothes, medicines, and other items, and also investing in housing. The community offers informal social infrastructures for these types of transnational practices (collective shipments of containers, people who travel and carry packages, etc.; Oso & Pérez-Caramés, in press). This kind of transnational migration strategy is also reinforced by local government initiatives, including the organization of cultural activities (a Cape Verdean and Galician music festival, fundraising for Porto Mosquito, one of the principal localities of origin of the migrant population) and cooperation projects with some localities in Cape Verde.

However, Burela has experienced different periods where municipal and associative initiatives have been more or less favorable for the migrant-origin population's access to resources (Felder et al., 2020), depending on the political will of the party in power. The fieldwork revealed a community perception that, in recent years, spaces and opportunities have been lost for the population of migrant origin, some infrastructures blocking their long-term social mobility. Their labor market access is restricted to activities with fewer skills and worse working conditions, limiting their occupational mobility to other sectors. Indeed, the community of long-standing residents developed an arrival strategy, centered on a utilitarian perspective, due to the need for labor in the fishing sector, as highlighted by the following quote from a key informant:

It [Burela] became a place where everyone was welcome, we would say, as long as they came to work. (key informant, Burela)

However, this arrival infrastructure, based on a positive attitude towards the migrant population, has a glass ceiling, with a series of structural mechanisms blocking the social mobility of the immigrant population. Indeed, it has been observed that some educational infrastructures are becoming spaces of blockage and exclusion from social mobility for descendants of migrants, especially those of Cape Verdean origin, who have high school drop-out rates. Young Cape Verdeans are unable to find alternatives to work at sea or in the more precarious activities of the service sector (catering, care, etc.) and are therefore emigrating to other parts of Spain or even abroad in search of social mobility, a situation that is questioning the intergenerational sustainability of the "welcoming space" in Burela. In this sense, the community, as shown in the following quote, is critical of the settlement processes that have generated spaces of social segregation and exclusion for the population of migrant origin (Hanhörster & Wessendorf, 2020):

If we want to go into the catering sector, no problem; if we want to take care of children, no problem. But then, if we want to work in offices or in other jobs, they won't hire us. And they always say: "Cape Verdeans fail at school." There are people who have an education....You go to a supermarket and you don't see a non-Spanish person working. However, you go into 10 [catering] kitchens and the most normal thing is that 8 out of 10 are Cape Verdean. So, there is that racism, that discrimination. (young woman of Cape Verdean origin, Burela)

In short, arrivals in Burela are fundamentally drawn by the labor market infrastructures, rather than by attraction initiatives led by public administrations, the third sector, or civic society. It is a welcoming space that rises and ebbs like the waves, depending on the tides and the attractiveness of the "fish" offered by the sea and other economic sectors (see Figure 4). The parallel development of arrival initiatives to facilitate access to resources (mainly by the local authority, associations, and the migrant community) have been relevant in favoring the arrival and settlement of newcomers, although these initiatives have fluctuated in accordance with the force of the political waves that have marked the town's development and have turned out to be unsustainable in intergenerational social mobility terms, as described in the following quote:

Today, it's the ships that sustain Burela. This has always been the case. Burela is a fishing village. People come here because of the sea....What made Burela, as such, was...the workers that brought the sea and the boats. If we lose the sea...it's over, Burela dies. (key informant, Burela)

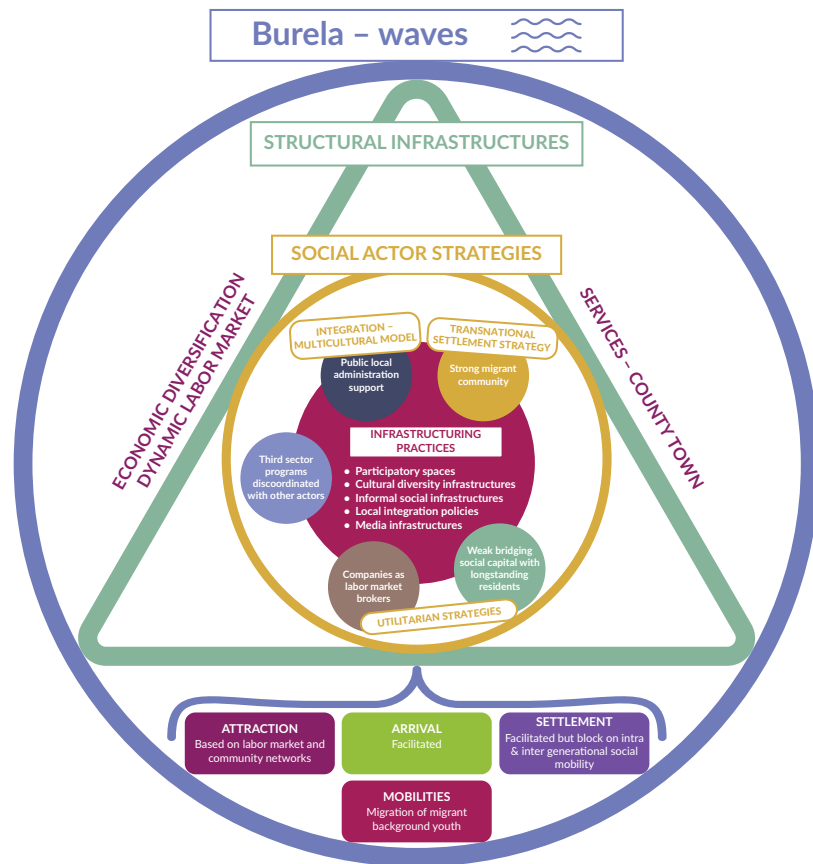


Figure 4. The “waves” welcoming space of attraction, arrival, and settlement of newcomers.

4.2. Celanova County: A Devitalized Oak, Which Connects With the Family

Less dynamic labor markets find it harder to incorporate newcomers and do not, on their own, guarantee the arrival of migratory flows. In some places, in the absence of economic dynamism, the arrival of the migrant population is related to emotional ties, as in Celanova (Galicia). This locality, home to 5,709 inhabitants (Spanish Statistics Agency, 2022) and head of the county of Celanova, lies in the inland province of Ourense, in the Autonomous Community of Galicia, bordering Portugal. The local economy is fragile, and is based on the primary sector, namely sheep and cattle farming and winegrowing, as well as the service sector, based on the care of dependent elderly people, tourism, trade, and catering. The area is also characterized by a rapidly aging population. In the past, the area’s economic activity was based on subsistence, smallholder agriculture and livestock farming, as well as smuggling activities with the neighboring country of Portugal. The region experienced major historical emigration flows (to Argentina, Cuba, Venezuela, Switzerland, Germany, France, Equatorial Guinea, and the United States), which led to a demographic devitalization, generating an economic relationship of dependence on remittances and leading to the presence of “ghost properties,” the result of investments by non-returned emigrants. The social and affective links, built up through the family and social relationships established by historical Galician emigration to America (Oso et al., 2008), channel the arrival of newcomers (“people as infrastructures” or social infrastructures; Simone, 2004; Wessendorf, 2021). The foreign-born population is mainly Venezuelan. The majority have national roots (father/mother or grandparents born in Galicia), hold Spanish citizenship, and come to Spain with a settlement strategy due to the difficult political situation in their country of origin, as described below by a

key informant. Other nationalities of both non-EU and EU origin are also present in the territory, although in much smaller proportions, such as Portuguese, Germans, Moroccans, etc.:

Eighty percent of the people who come...are people who come to build some financial capital, who come from a very bad situation....Many of them are people who...their parents or grandparents, or maybe their grandparents, were from here and have already died and they come here because there is a grandfather's house half falling down in the village and they come and live there and it's their first means of escape. (key informant, Celanova)

The lack of employment options (a high unemployment rate of 18.30%; Spanish Statistics Agency, 2022) makes it difficult for Celanova to retain the new inhabitants. Thus, this locality is often seen as a “springboard” or a kind of transition zone (Saunders, 2011), which is used for “landing” and then “taking off” again in search of greater opportunities, once the refueling process is complete, as the following key informant illustrates:

Many people who arrive, emigrate to other localities in Galicia or Spain. The municipality is like a first step....They come here to the village and see that it is a village, with a house that has been closed up for 30 years...and there are no resources, there is no work....In order to live in Spain, you have to have money and they end up leaving. This is a shuttle: I think that for 70% of people from Venezuela it is a shuttle, a shuttle to Vigo, to A Coruña, to Barcelona, to Madrid. (key informant, Celanova)

Nevertheless, despite its weak labor market dynamics, Celanova has a good “service infrastructure.” This locality is well connected (the provincial capital Ourense is just 30 km away), it has a health center, a junior and senior school, and is also a member of an association of municipalities that share social services (known in Spanish as a *mancomunidad*).

Several initiatives (attraction infrastructures) have been introduced into the area in order to attract newcomers, and combat devitalization (repopulation strategy). One of them is the Regional Program for Returned Migrants, which allows Galician emigrants or descendants living abroad to receive financial support on arrival and in the first months of settlement in the region. Returned or “roots migrants” (Wessendorf, 2007) arrive with citizenship, which entitles them to full rights in Spain: They have family relations in the receiving country (bridging social capital, social infrastructures) and share a common language and culture. As already pointed out, some also have inherited homeownership from their emigrant ancestors. All these infrastructures facilitate arrival and settlement:

For us, the issue of the family has been like a green corridor, right? At all levels of understanding why we are here, you know? It was like a piece of paper was automatically fitted in, you didn't have to question yourself like with other (migrant) people, right? Instead of saying “But why did they come here, but why here,” ours was “Ah...it's natural,” as everyone understood it. (a young woman returning to her partner's roots from Switzerland, Celanova)

Welcoming initiatives from local governments have also been introduced into the county of Celanova, although they are less institutionalized than in Burela. Examples include a coworking project (aimed at the creation of business projects), together with rural development initiatives funded by European programs (LEADER), which strengthen entrepreneurship activities. Entrepreneurship support infrastructures have favored the settlement of some newcomers with a high level of education (as is the case of many people from Venezuela with Galician

roots) and whose possibilities of finding qualified employment are extremely limited in the area. There is also support from the third sector and rural development associations. Some migrant associations, such as Cantaclaro, are very active in creating arrival infrastructures for newcomers, providing orientation on arrival, acting as “arrival brokers” (Hans, 2023), carrying out training activities that help newcomers to adapt to the Spanish labor market, organizing cultural activities that strengthen both bonding and bridging social capital, and defending the interests of newcomers before public administrations. Some of the initiatives set up by the immigrant community can be considered informal infrastructures—emotional support is one such example, as illustrated by a representative of the aforementioned association:

We realized that many people were downhearted on arrival; there were many problems, not health problems like some new arrivals might have, but we began to see it was more of a social and economic problem. People felt lost and disheartened after they arrived: They didn't know what they were going to do here. The feeling of culture shock...was very severe. (Cantaclaro association, Celanova)

In short, as Figure 5 shows below, Celanova has the appeal of an ancestral and majestic tree, possibly an oak, which connects us with the family, but which, devitalized by age, does not bear fruit. It is a territory that is often used as a springboard (for the first arrival and subsequent relocation to other more dynamic environments), although the weight of the emotional bond with the ancestors' land and the support of attraction and arrival infrastructures mean that some newcomers choose to settle in the territory, investing in and generating entrepreneurial initiatives for its development. Migrants with emotional ties to the

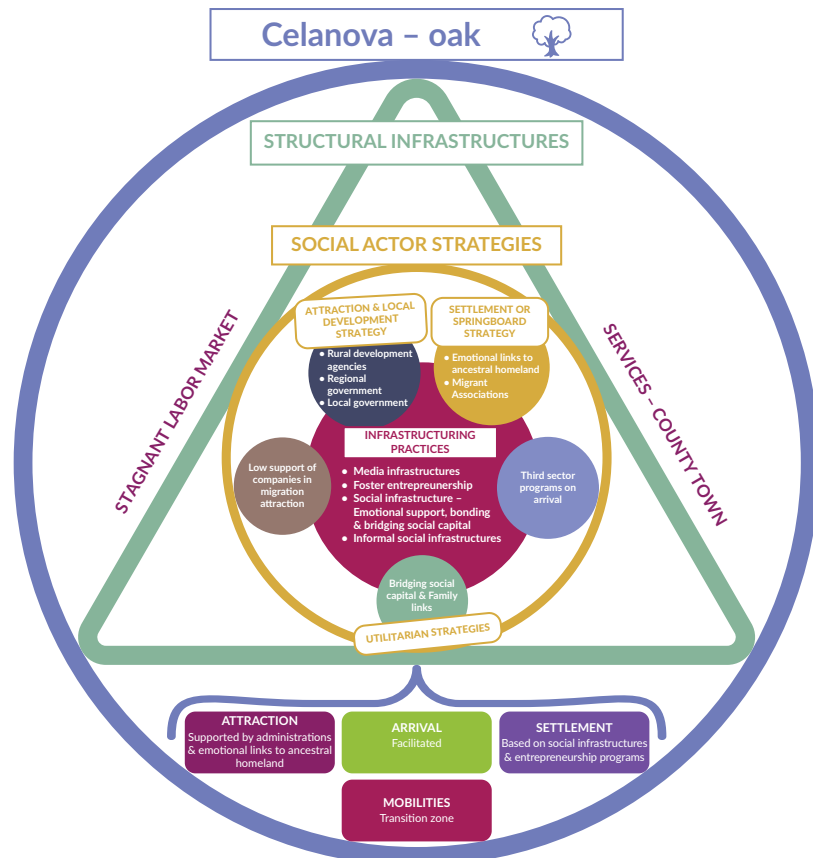


Figure 5. The “oak” welcoming space of attraction, arrival, and settlement of newcomers.

territory return full of energy and commitment, and with a debt that must be repaid to the land of their ancestors, implementing social innovation projects. Associations, regional and local administrations, development programs, and the third sector are key social actors that contribute to the attraction, arrival, and settlement of newcomers in Celanova.

4.3. Arenillas: A River That Is Maintained Thanks to a Permanent Flow

Arenillas is a small village (province of Soria, Castilla León Autonomous Community) with only 53 inhabitants (Spanish Statistics Agency, 2022). Today's new residents are both of national origin, mostly descendants of former inhabitants, and of international origin (21%; Spanish Statistics Agency, 2022), namely non-EU citizens from Morocco and Colombia and of EU origin from Romania. However, throughout the long history of local reception, there have been more than 180 people of various nationalities. The devitalization of the territory dates back to the 1960s, largely due to the internal emigration of its inhabitants, principally to urban centers in the Basque Country, Madrid, Aragón, etc. The challenges facing the village are essentially a lack of service infrastructures and a non-dynamic labor market. The main economic sectors are agriculture and livestock (sheep), and a number of family building firms. Truffle farming, mycology, catering, and care for elderly dependents are also relevant for the local economy. It should be noted that decision-making is community-based and participatory, and there is an active residents' association, a key element in understanding the success of Arenilla's attraction and arrival infrastructures, as illustrated by a key informant from the association:

The municipality and the association work together, we act in coordination. We make decisions together in open councils, anyone who lives in the village can participate. It is a community process, not a leadership process. Even the streets, the sidewalks, the curbs...everything has been done voluntarily by the people of the village, everything by the association and the local authority...there are other villages that fight over everything. (long-standing retired resident, Arenillas)

The village is proud to be one of the few localities in the area to resist depopulation. However, like Celanova, it is a place of transit; although, in this case, more than a "springboard," it is a "launching pad," insofar as migrants, mainly of Moroccan and Romanian origin, can spend between five and 10 years in the village. This need not be understood as a failure, as this type of time-limited stay can be linked to migration projects. Indeed, many migrants that arrive in this locality are not seeking to settle forever in the village: They may plan a temporary stay in order to fulfill a savings-and-return project or subsequent emigration to another territory. This type of dynamic has been highlighted in literature on urban settings, and is not considered a failed strategy (Wilson, 2022). The testimonies collected also point out in this direction:

They are "passing through" for work reasons only, "it's like a bridge"...In the cases I know of, the people who have come from here (of Spanish origin), who have wanted to come to the village, nationals, have come with a project and to live, with a life project; the people who have come from abroad (international migrants) have usually come temporarily, using it as a step to earn money, or a job, and then change their life. (key informant, Arenillas)

Major efforts are being made to attract new residents to Arenillas, with the launch of several attraction initiatives, including the provision of temporary work on arrival and coordination with employers.

The Cepaim foundation's Nuevos Senderos project is a representative example of past third-sector support for the attraction and arrival of people in the municipality. This project, which is also present in other Spanish provinces, provides accompaniment and advice for the social and labor insertion itineraries of migrant families in a situation of administrative regularity for settlement in rural areas. The work of this and other third-sector entities, in coordinated action with civil society and local governments, is essential for ensuring newcomers' access to resources.

Arenillas' socio-cultural association plays a fundamental role in carrying out community work initiatives (rehabilitation of buildings and pavement), recruiting newcomers, and promoting cultural and sporting events (including a music festival—Boina Fest), etc. It is fundamentally the promotion of these initiatives, given the lack of dynamism in the labor market, which is channeling newcomers' arrival. In comparison with Celanova, Arenillas receives little support from regional and European projects, as small localities do not have the possibility of obtaining funding. Thus, Arenilla's local authority and residents are mostly "left to their fate" regarding the challenges of depopulation. Any initiatives in this sense are driven mainly by the union of the neighbors, who work actively and jointly to attract population, developing informal attraction and arrival infrastructures, as described below:

When families came, people would give them rabbits, firewood, eggs, etc. You have to spoil them. If people feel strange in a place, they leave. We have made big efforts, but they have been rewarded [in reference to the fact that the village is still alive]. (a long-term resident, Arenillas)

They'll lend you a hand with anything. If, for example, there's something you need, or it's run out, or whatever, you go to someone's house: "Hey, give me this!" "Here you are!" Everyone helps everybody else. It's like being part of a family here and there is no difference between foreigners or Spaniards. We are all the same. (middle-aged migrant man and woman of Moroccan origin, Arenillas)

Unlike the previous localities, in this case, attracting new residents is clearly intentional. The attraction infrastructure is materialized through mechanisms to promote the municipality on social media and in the press (see Figure 6), the selection of candidate families, and the availability of public social housing, with the restoration and provision of the former teacher's, doctor's, or priest's house for selected families to live in. Arenillas' website (<https://www.arenillas.es>) promotes the receptivity of the community and announces, as a milestone achievement, that population numbers are the same as in 1980. The media have described the municipality as "the miracle of Arenillas," clearly due to the role that the community is playing in attracting newcomers, boosted by marketing strategies. The selection of candidates requires a planning and coordination capacity in the local community, showing the "ability and willingness to receive and integrate newcomers" (Glorius et al., 2021, p. 56).

Participatory action and social and media infrastructures are behind Arenillas' resistance to depopulation. In this village, they withstand it as best as they can, but always accept that the migrants may come and go, along with their migratory projects, and therefore access to resources is not subject to permanence (Meeus et al., 2020). They are aware of the opportunities and limitations of the village and have naturalized human movement, seeing it as a win-win situation and conceptualizing a kind of arrival infrastructure that celebrates the interaction of agencies of migrant and non-migrant population (Zack & Landau, 2022). It is a welcoming space that we can define as "fluvial" (see Figure 7), in which the river is maintained and thanks to it there is



Figure 6. An example of the news coverage in Arenillas. Source: Santisteban (2024).

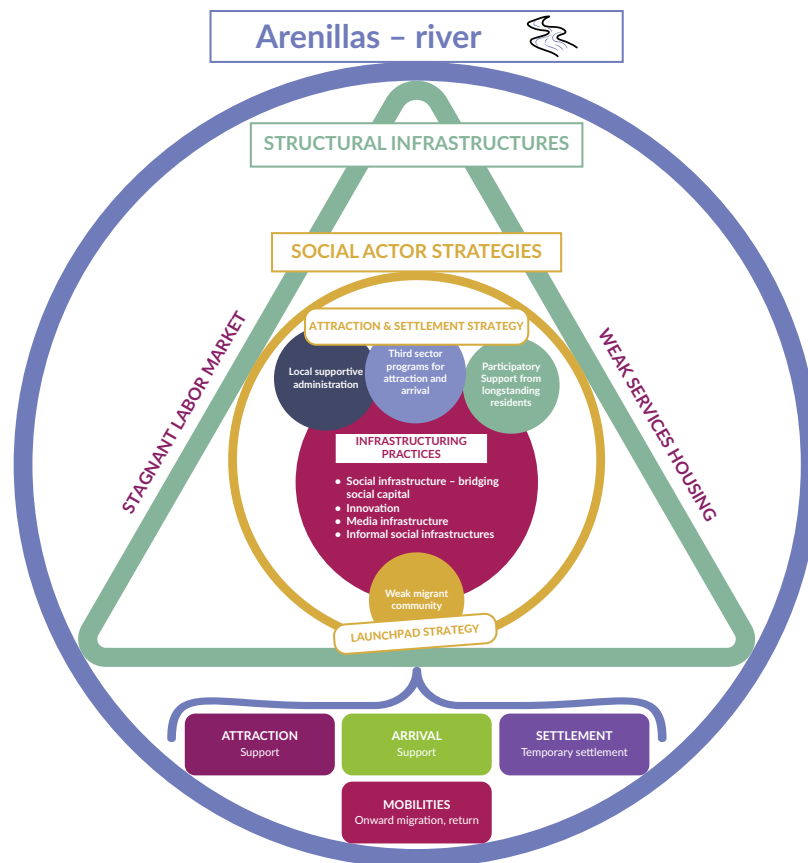


Figure 7. The “river” welcoming space of attraction, arrival, and settlement of newcomers.

life, although the waters are never the same. The people of Arenillas are proud of their river and, together, they take care of it, preventing it from drying up and ensuring the arrival of new “waters” or newcomers.

4.4. *The Daisy as an Integral Development Welcoming Space*

The analysis of the fieldwork data sheds light on the factors that favor or block the development of processes of attraction, arrival, and access to resources and settlement in shrinking areas. Firstly, the coordinated participation of the social agents present in the territory is required. It is necessary to develop active public policies at various levels of governance, with local authorities playing a key role. Political actions also require the support of the third sector, which is fundamental for channeling infrastructures, both for attracting and receiving newcomers and for their access to resources and settlement. Thirdly, community action, which may or may not be channeled through the associative movement, participation infrastructures, or civil society (people infrastructures), is another of the three fundamental pillars for guaranteeing a successful welcoming space. Unlike urban areas, where literature highlights the importance of the support of bonding social capital for the arrival of newcomers (Wessendorf, 2021), shrinking areas specifically require a combination of actions to facilitate both bonding and bridging social capital. Emotional support and social bonding infrastructures of an informal nature are clearly relevant for the success of the initiatives, both on the part of the newcomers and the entire community settled in the territory (Wulff et al., 2008). Furthermore, we must consider the essential role played by the migrant population’s strategies (which can be of a transnational nature, aiming at settlement, savings, and return or re-emigration) and understand that non-permanent settlement in a town is not synonymous with the failure of an initiative. The hosting intentionality of the long-standing community is also relevant to understanding the success of attraction and arrival infrastructures (Glorius et al., 2021), as has been shown in Arenillas.

However, attraction and arrival infrastructures are limited by the weight of the structural determinants present in the territories. The fieldwork data show that the factors that favor the attraction, arrival, and settlement of newcomers are related to economic diversification, a dynamic labor market, and opportunities for stable employment, together with the presence of housing, services, and good transport networks in the territory (services infrastructures). For this reason, attraction initiatives alone do not guarantee the success of welcoming initiatives. Comprehensive actions are required that seek to work actively not only on attraction, but also on arrival and access to resources infrastructures, and, ultimately, on the sustainable development of the territories. This involves fostering employment and housing, supporting entrepreneurship and innovation, providing access to services and improving transport networks in the towns, encouraging citizen participation, as well as facilitating bonding and bridging capital and developing marketing actions. In this sense, attraction initiatives in rural areas should not focus on instrumentalist objectives (i.e., welcoming immigrant populations as mere labor market supplies, to prevent the closure of services such as schools or to obtain aid and funding, etc.), but rather on comprehensive sustainable development programs, where all social actors are active participants in locality revitalization processes. Indeed, as demonstrated in Burela, if arrival infrastructures are not accompanied by other types of comprehensive actions, situations of exclusion and blocked social mobility may emerge, thereby failing to guarantee the intergenerational sustainability of welcoming spaces. Moreover, the analysis has shown that informal infrastructures are relevant in order to facilitate the attraction, arrival, and settlement of newcomers in shrinking settings, emotional support being crucial. Finally, the analysis of empirical data has highlighted the fact that settlement is not the end of the road: New mobilities occur in the majority

of territories, and fluidity should therefore be considered a natural event, rather than a failing of the welcoming spaces.

Taking the “welcoming spaces” extracted from the analysis as a starting point, we offer a theoretical proposal, the Daisy ideal-type, which states a compendium of infrastructures of attraction, arrival, and access to resources and settlement that would eventually favor the transformation of shrinking areas into spaces of revitalization. We are aware that this type is difficult to implement but it can be an inspiring theoretical example for both academics and policymakers. The Daisy theoretical “welcoming space” is summarized in Figure 8.

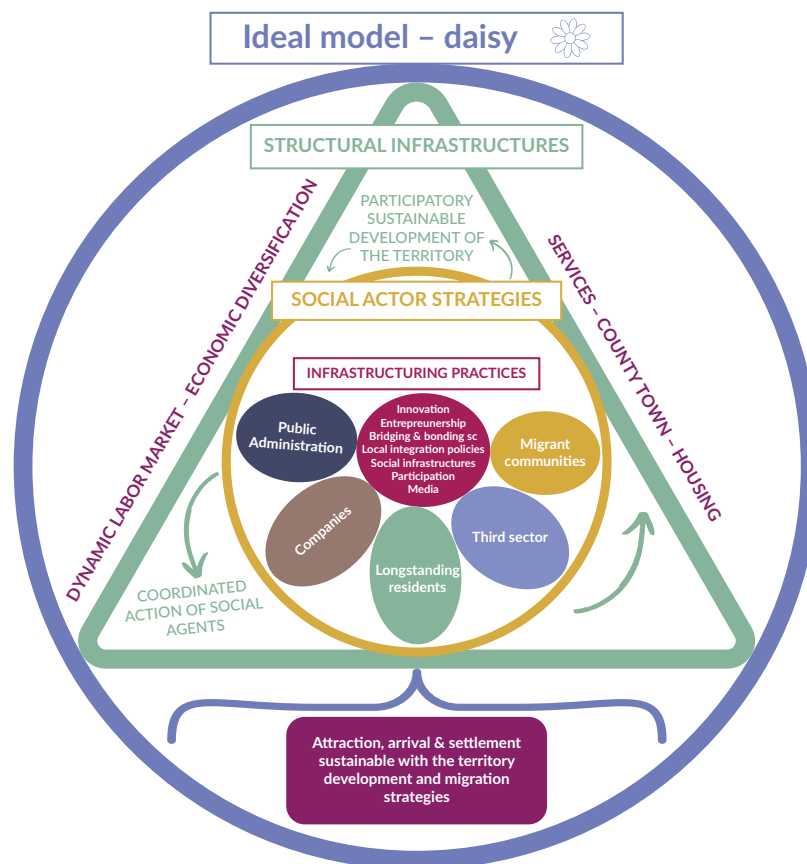


Figure 8. Daisy: The theoretical welcoming space of attraction, arrival, and settlement of newcomers. Note: sc = social capital.

Figure 9 summarizes the infrastructures that block or facilitate the attraction, arrival, and settlement of newcomers in the three localities studied.

SOCIAL ACTORS STRATEGIES

	Burela	Celanova	Arenillas
Public Administration	Multicultural integration strategy from local authorities	Utilitarian strategy (repopulation)	Local development strategy
Newcomers	Transnational and settlement strategy of newcomers	Settlement or Lauchpad strategy of newcomers	Temporary migration strategy of newcomers (save and return, onwards migration)
Longstanding residents	Utilitarian strategy (supply of labour market demand for unskilled jobs)	Utilitarian strategy (repopulation)	Local development strategy
Companies	Utilitarian strategy (supply of labour market demand for unskilled jobs)		

INFRASTRUCTURES THAT SUPPORT OR BLOCK THE ATTRACTION, ARRIVAL AND SETTLEMENT OF NEWCOMMERS

	Burela	Celanova	Arenillas
Structural factors	Dynamic labor market and diversified economy	Non dynamic labor market & Negative impact of the EU Common Agricultural Policy	Non dynamic labor market
	Wide range of services (hospital, public transport, rail service) – County town	Difficulty for the homologation of studies (overqualification)	Weak services infrastructure
	Rental housing offer in the private market	Geographical proximity to the provincial capital, with a wide range of services	Geographically distant from economically vibrant centers
	Strong segmentation of the labor market (migrants in unskilled works)	Diminished rental housing stock, (ghost property & especulation)	Housing provided by local authorities to newcomers
Companies infrastructuring	Labor market brokering	Non-active infrastructuring practices	Non-active infrastructuring practices
Administration Infrastructuring practices	Local policy to support the integration of immigrants: Social Integration Plan, Support for the associative movement	Return emigration supported by regional/state policy (facilities for the naturalization of descendants of Spanish)	Supportive local government, participatory spaces, coordination with neighbors association & third-sector
	Cooperation programs with Cape Verde	Rural development initiatives supported by European programs	Media strategies in collaboration with civil society
	Strong media activity promoting Burela as a model of social integration	Support of entrepreneurship	Non-support of EU or regional government programs
	Instability in political support depending on parties in the local power	Development of media initiatives to attract population to rural areas	
Administration Infrastructuring practices	Dense network of associations (as migrant groups) and places of worship (Virgen de Cabo Verde, mosque, Adventist Church)	Sharing a common language, shared perceived past	Strong long-standing resident association & support in collaboration with local government
	Cultural and religious diversity	Familiar relationship, "return to the roots". Feelings of "similarity"	Innovative initiatives (e.g. Boina Fest-music festival)
	Bonding social capital	Bridging social capital (Transnational Atlantic Bridge)	Strong bridging social capital
	School as a space of exclusion and blockade for descendants of migrants	Nationality, social capital (family)	Non bonding social capital
	Difficulties in establishing bridging spaces	Active rural development associations	
Third sector infrastructuring practices	Presence of third-sector programs	Presence of third-sector programs	CEPAIM Nuevos Senderos program in coordination with neighbors & local authorities infrastructuring practices
	Non strong articulation with other actors infrastructuring practices	Non strong articulation with other actors infrastructuring practices	

Figure 9. Infrastructures that facilitate or block the attraction, arrival, and settlement of newcomers.

5. Conclusion

The main contribution of this article to the literature is to highlight the specificity of shrinking areas when analyzing migrant and arrival infrastructures. Firstly, it shows how, in rural localities, it is necessary to consider the pre-arrival process, insofar as the arrival of newcomers often depends on attraction initiatives. Secondly, the study proposes a model of analysis to study the role of migrant infrastructures in the three interconnected phases of the process of newcomer attraction, arrival, and settlement in rural areas and considering their relationship with other mobilities. This model is based on the impact of structural infrastructures and the role played by the various social actors in the configuration of practices of attraction and reception of newcomers, both at the strategic level and in terms of their infrastructuring practices. Based on this model of analysis and on the three cases of welcoming spaces presented (the waves, the oak, and the river), the results of the qualitative fieldwork highlight how the arrival, reception, and settlement of newcomers in rural areas require structural infrastructures such as dynamic labor markets, diversified economies, opportunities for stable employment, housing, services (health and education centers, etc.), and good transport networks communications. On the other hand, the research reveals the main infrastructuring practices that favor the processes of attraction, arrival, and settlement and their impact on new mobilities in rural areas, such as the coordinated participation of social agents, active public policies, third-sector support, and community action, together with the positive effects of innovation, emotional ties, as well as media, entrepreneurship, and social infrastructures. Regarding this latter aspect, the study emphasizes the fundamental role played by informal social infrastructures and in particular by bridging social capital (beyond bonding) in shrinking areas.

The results also point to the need to articulate migrant population strategies (of a transnational nature, aiming at settlement, savings, and return or re-emigration) with the hosting intentionality of the long-standing community. Moreover, the study highlights how, in rural areas, attraction infrastructures alone do not guarantee the success of welcoming initiatives—they must be articulated with arrival and access to resources infrastructures and with the aim to ensure the sustainable development of the territories. Finally, the article proposes an ideal type of welcoming space (Daisy) which, although difficult to implement, is of value, not only theoretically, but also for planning the attraction, arrival, and settlement of newcomers in rural areas.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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