Re-Writing the Fate of the 'Empty Spain'

Taking the garden city as a model to revitalise rural communities in decline

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Abstract

At the beginning of the 20th Century, many industrialised nations considered the countryside as the good place on which to build a peaceful path of health and prosperity for working classes away from the, at that time, congested and unhealthy industrial cities, and thus boosting the decentralisation of population and industry in rural areas. After the examples of Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City in the United Kingdom, the garden city model prompted the building of more garden cities, garden villages, garden suburbs and new towns, both in the UK and abroad. Nowadays, the countryside is undergoing an even worse situation than before the beginning of the garden city movement, because of a slow but steady migration process of people to urbanized areas, both in developed and developing countries. In Spain, the lack of population and means of production in inland villages are causing a territorial imbalance especially across the northern half of the country. To find an alternative to bring back people to the land and revitalise the Spanish countryside, I am researching on the garden city model and its practice in the UK, through the case studies of Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City, in order to tailor such a model to a rural scheme with the capability of regenerating and expanding small rural settlements in Spanish territory towards becoming sustainable, self-reliant and prosperous once again, in terms of planning, investment and management.