

The two Spanish regions, including ES112 Lugo are located in Galicia, which is analysed by scholarly literature as an area which witnesses a considerable amount of urban sprawl, much more than in the adjacent region of Asturias. Issues of institutional fragmentation contribute to these issues (Corbelle Rico *et al.*, 2017). Galicia has many small parcels in a mountainous area in which forests and natural uses are much larger than the agricultural area and the agricultural area itself is largely used as pastures. A recent mapping exercise shows a highly fragmented landscape (Corbelle-Rico and Tubío Sánchez, 2017). It also shows that mapping a landscape is a process of valuation and that an expert panel were missing specific landscape values, such heritage, in the designation of areas, which would lead to other classification. A case study in the municipality of Guitiriz in the region of Lugo illustrates these issues further (Corbelle-Rico *et al.*, 2010). The situation is described as ‘a system in transition, where traditional agricultural practices have been heavily modified by fertilizers and mechanization, and where shrublands are no longer the energetic support of the system’ (Corbelle-Rico *et al.*, 2010, 171).

Some specific emphasis will be on the relation between Polish regions and the Common Agricultural Policy (5.2.5.1).

5.2.5.1 CAP grants and Polish rural regions

In the Accession Treaty of Poland, just as the other new member states in Central and Eastern Europe, that is, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia and the Slovakia in 2003 (EC, 2008), Bulgaria and Romania in 2005 (EC, 2010) and Croatia in 2011 (EC, 2017b), there are transitional measures allowing these Member States to maintain existing restrictions on the acquisition of agricultural and forestry land by natural and legal persons of other EU/EEA countries for a limited period. For Poland during 12 years there have been restriction regarding the acquisition of agricultural real estate. These restrictions differ by member state, but do not involve a ‘complete and strict ban’ (EC, 2008, 4) of foreign access to land markets, as they, for example, may be allowed to rent land (EC, 2010), to participate in companies that own land (EC, 2008). These restrictions have been reviewed regularly (EC, 2008; 2010; 2017b). These reviews show steep price increases especially in the rental markets (EC, 2008)

In the Polish context the CAP contributions are higher than rent, which means that private owners rarely lease-out their land. The low turnover in “farmer to farmer” land leases is caused by farmers’ attitude toward direct subsidy payments, an instrument of the CAP. Disposing of land means giving up this subsidy (...)’ (Marks-Bielska, 2013, 794)

However, which does takes place, according to surveys, are informal leases between neighbours which, ‘are concluded only orally, and land owners take over the area payments for the land in question’ (Sikorska, 2014, 133). It is however difficult to assess the scale of these leases as they are not registered. In these cases, the CAP is not received by the actual farmer, but by the formal one.

Formal leasing happens primarily by the State Treasury and leasing is in principle beneficial to new entrants as they do not need much capital upfront. The CAP has perceived to have had an impact on land prices:

‘The impact of support related to the inclusion of the Polish countryside in the CAP on the increase in land prices should primarily be seen in the context of increasing the demand on the land market. A significant stream of funds that were channelled to the countryside enabled the realisation of investment plans.’ (Sikorska, 2014, 124)

As there is a linear relation between land area and CAP grants, larger farms get more grants. So only for larger farms this enables them to use the CAP for investments in machinery and equipment, supporting a dual structure of farm size.

During communist time, small landowners kept their ownership in Poland. About 80% of the current farmers got their land from parents or parents-in-law and about the same percentage expects to transfer their land to their children. This limits the size of the land market. As indicated, there is few leasing because rent is lower than CAP grants and also few transactions:

‘The limited supply of agricultural land available on the market will be also caused by a decreasing amount of land owned by the State Treasury. Land transactions in this market will primarily be among land purchased by previous leaseholders and will have minor effects on any changes in the agrarian ownership structure.’ (Marks-Bielska, 2013, 798)

Motives to acquire land found in a survey by Marks-Bielska (2013) are: ‘(1) the desire to expand owned farmland or establish a new farm; (2) an investment on the expected price increase of agricultural land; and (3) to receive benefits from EU funds (...).’ (Marks-Bielska, 2013, 791). So, part of the arguments is financial driven:

‘Another motivating factor for possessing the land was a profitable capital investment, particularly when the prices of the agricultural land were growing faster than the interest rates of the bank investments. This factor not only strengthened the demand for the land but also impeded the increase of the land supply for sale. Even if the main source of income of the agricultural property owner was a non-agricultural income, the holding was not liquidated but at the most its area was reduced. It is largely connected to the non-income functions of the land property, which secures the living of many families in case of losing the job in the non-agricultural environment.’ (Sikorska *et al.*, 2009, 68)

Typically is that land with a low fertility according to the ‘soil bonitation class’ system prices have been grown double as fast as more fertile soils, suggesting that non-agricultural factors have been of importance (Sikorska *et al.*, 2009). In situations that land prices are the highest, more people are likely to sell, accounting for more transactions (Sikorska, 2014).

‘High land prices could act as a stimulus to liquidate the land, especially for owners of poorly equipped farms, who are living mainly from non-agricultural activities.’ (Sikorska, 2014, 133)

‘In the regions of relatively the cheapest land prices, invariably, socio-economic problems of rural areas depended mainly on general economic conditions, especially the possibility of earning a living. These were areas with a scattered agrarian structure and distinguished by the economic weakness of a considerable part of agricultural holdings. Most owners of the land situated in these areas earned a living beyond agriculture or from annuities and pensions, and owned agricultural holdings were treated primarily as a place of living of a family and a source of self-supply in basic food products’ (Sikorska, 2010, 449)

Many small holdings ‘are not strictly agricultural’ (Zaleczna, 2017, 11), they are not primarily motivated by agricultural production: ‘The production value of farmland was viewed as secondary to the value of economic location, because commercially used land could yield higher income.’ (Zaleczna, 2017, 11) Rural land is so considered to be an investment asset and this motivates agents on the land market.

Just as in many other areas in CEE where this happens at an even larger scale, in Poland: ‘economically strong farms, oriented at cash crops, accumulate leases from owners of land who treat their land primarily as a place of settlement and a source of self-supply’ (Marks-Bielska and Zielińska, 2018, 88). Leases are used by larger farms ‘to strengthen their market position’ (Sikorska, 2018, 9). Although leasing is in average about 20% in Poland; more than 50% of the land area of farms over 50 hectares is leased land and about 70% of these farms have a combination of own land and leased land. In this way the patterns of accumulating land via leases that can be seen in Romania, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic happen also in Poland, but at a smaller scale.

In **Conclusion**, it can be stated that medium QoG rural regions close to the city show a wide variety of contexts. National patterns of age, land prices and distribution of landownership seem to be more important than the communalities within this type. Land conversion to economic sites and infrastructure takes much more land than urban sprawl. Political decisions and policies play a large role in land take for infrastructure. Long term structural decisions, of decades ago and of past regimes, seem also to be of importance of the current situation. This may also hold for decisions taken today; in many areas structural development regarding landholdings take place, which may have enduring effects.