TiPSE
The Territorial Dimension of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe

Applied Research 2013/1/24

Work Package 2.4
Case Study Report

Albacete, La Manchuela, Spain
Philomena de Lima (University of the Highlands and Islands)
with expert assistance from Diana E Valero López
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This report is one of the deliverables of the TiPSE project. This Applied Research Project is conducted within the framework of the ESPON 2013 Programme, partly financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

The partnership behind the ESPON Programme consists of the EU Commission and the Member States of the EU27, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Each partner is represented in the ESPON Monitoring Committee.

This report does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the members of the Monitoring Committee.

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The ESPON TiPSE Project:

The TiPSE project has been commissioned by the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) programme. It is concerned with the issue of poverty, and processes of social exclusion in Europe.

One of the key challenges for the EU, in its pursuit of social, economic and territorial cohesion, is to address regional or local concentrations of poverty and social exclusion. In terms of practical governance, this remains a national responsibility within the context of EU strategic guidance. In practice, regional or local administrations are often in ‘the front line’; implementing national policies to ameliorate deprivation and exclusion. At a higher level, the EU defines its role as identifying best practices and promoting mutual learning.

Poverty and social exclusion are essentially relative concepts, arguably only meaningful within a specified geographical context. This underlines the essential roles to be played by observation, measurement, and careful data analysis, as preparations for intervention. The TIPSE project aims to support policy, both by enhancing the evidence base and by identifying existing good practice.

A central objective of the TiPSE project is to establish macro and micro-scale patterns of poverty and social exclusion across the ESPON space. This will be achieved by compiling a regional database, and associated maps, of poverty and social exclusion indicators. Such quantitative analysis of geographical patterns is considered a fundamental part of the evidence base for policy.

In addition, in order to better understand the various social and institutional processes which are the context of these patterns, a set of ten case studies are to be carried out. These will be more qualitative in approach, in order to convey holistic portraits of different kinds of poverty and social exclusion as experienced in a wide variety of European territorial contexts. The principal goal for these investigations will be to bring forward clear illustrations of the social, economic, institutional and spatial processes which lead to poverty and social exclusion in particular geographic contexts.

The selection of case study areas has been carried out with careful regard to the wide variety of geographic, cultural and policy contexts which characterise Europe. The ten case studies are also intended to highlight a range of different ‘drivers’ of poverty and social exclusion, including labour market conditions, educational disadvantage, ethnicity, poor access to services and urban segregation processes. A second objective of the case studies will be to identify policy approaches which can effectively tackle exclusion, and thus strengthen territorial cohesion.

The TiPSE research team comprises 6 partners from 5 EU Member States:

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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>Principal Researchers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nordregio - Nordic Centre for Spatial Development</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Petri Kahila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>UHI Millennium Institute</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Philomena de Lima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Newcastle University</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Mark Shucksmith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Institute of Economics Hungarian Academy of Sciences</td>
<td>HU</td>
<td>Katalin Kovács</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ILS - Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Sabine Weck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>EKKE - National Centre for Social Research</td>
<td>EL</td>
<td>Thomas Maloutas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The James Hutton Institute</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Andrew Copus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Philomena de Lima

University of the Highlands and Islands.
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Executive summary

Introduction
This case study of La Manchuela in Albacete Province in Spain is based on a combination of desk based research and semi-structured interviews conducted with 14 stakeholders in 2013. Interviewees were professionals from across different sectors (e.g. education, social work, local government, research and so on) with experience of addressing poverty and social exclusion at different levels of governance.

Context: La Manchuela in Albacete Province
The case study explores processes and dynamics related to poverty and social exclusion in La Manchuela. It is located in the northeast of the NUTS 3 region of Albacete province and on the east of the Autonomous Community of Castilla-La Mancha (NUTS 2 region) between the borders of Cuenca Province and the Comunidad Valenciana.

La Manchuela has an area of 1,718.38 square kilometres (km$^2$) with 24 municipalities and its total population in 2012 was 30,154 with a density of 17.55 inhabitants per square km. Almost half of its population (46%) is concentrated in the three biggest municipalities: Casas Ibáñez, Madrigueras and Villamalea

La Manchuela has a rurality index of 100% based on its population density which is lower than 100 inhabitants per square km and an urbanization index of 0% based on most of its population living in municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants. It is classified as a rural area that requires revitalisation and was also classified as a ‘Less Favoured Area’ for the purposes of the European Rural Development Programme period 2007-2013.

Recent data on economic activities and sectors was difficult to access. Sectoral activities are typical of rural areas in Castilla-La Mancha, with a predominance of small businesses in the agro food sector and a growth in sectors such as manufacturing, building, services and commerce which have been adversely affected by the economic crisis since 2008.

Population growth in La Manchuela has been most evident in the largest municipalities; for example population in municipalities with more than 2000 inhabitants grew by 12% between 1999 and 2008. By contrast the smallest municipalities (less than 1000 inhabitants) suffered a loss of 6%. (INE, Official population figures, 1999 and 2008).

Models of rurality based on age distribution and gender in the Spanish context, developed by Camarero et al. (2009) suggests that the rural population in Albacete province (including La Manchuela) presents a ‘transition’ model which is characterised by a high aging population, masculinisation and declining birth rate.
In La Manchuela the percentage of the population over 65 years old was around 24% in 2009 and the dependency rate was approximately 60%. Immigration to some rural areas of La Manchuela has helped to minimise population decline to some extent though with the economic crisis this may be changing.

**Poverty and social exclusion – trends**

All stakeholders interviewed emphasised the relative and multilayered nature of poverty and social exclusion. Factors that increase the risk of some individuals and groups to poverty and social exclusion are often complex and overlapping and can be difficult to disentangle. However all those interviewed emphasised the importance of developing appropriate and relevant indicators as well as improving the evidence base for policy making at all levels of governance.

Although AROPE (‘At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion’) data reveals that the percentage of AROPE population in 2011 was higher in the southern regions of Spain, Castilla – La Mancha had the third highest rate (35.5%) of those at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2011 which had increased since the economic crisis.

Castilla-La Mancha is not described as being in a situation of extreme poverty; nevertheless it is in one of the five regions which is most affected by economic poverty. In Castilla – La Mancha, the average household income is around 30% lower in rural areas than in urban areas, and more than 50% lower if social benefits and transfers are not taken into account (Plan Estratégico de Ayuda a la Familia, 2013-2016, p. 69).

The unemployment rate in the first trimester of 2013 was approximately 34% in Albacete province, higher than the rates for Castilla-La Mancha (32%) and the average for Spain (27%). However, the rate of unemployment in La Manchuela itself was lower than in Spain as a whole as well as the region and province. It was nonetheless affected by businesses shutting down and increasing job losses as a result of the economic crisis.

**Factors and processes shaping poverty and social exclusion**

Stakeholders interviewed emphasised that some of the factors driving poverty and social exclusion are shared across urban and rural places. For example, the economic context and the financial crisis in 2008 and the austerity policies that have been implemented since, were identified by Stakeholders as having a significant impact on employment, service provision and state welfare provision generally.

The erosion of progress made on welfare reform in the last few years in the context of public sector budget cuts was of ongoing concern among Stakeholders. The high levels of unemployment and budgetary cuts were cited by all those interviewed as impacting on policies and programmes related to addressing quality of life issues and preventative measures, especially with regard to the most vulnerable.

The geography of La Manchuela and the sparse nature of the population settlements in rural areas were cited as creating specific challenges for the delivery of and access to services. Stakeholders expressed concerns that the withdrawal or reduction of public services combined with poor public transport were potentially the
first step in privatising aspects of service provision which could mean their
disappearance because of lack of sufficient demand to make them economically
viable.

The demographic trends that characterised rural areas in La Manchuela were seen
as leading to the possible 'disappearance' of small rural villages as services are
reduced, centralised in larger centres or withdrawn because of the small population,
this in turn was identified as leading to a decline in economic activities and to further
depopulation and so on.

Mobility status - holding a driving license and having a car (auto mobility)- given a
poor public transport system and the increasing centralisation of services was an
important determinant in relation to accessing services. Consequently those
dependent on others for their mobility, such as children, women, old people, people
with disabilities, those on low income and people in general without a driving license
were more likely to be vulnerable to social exclusion and isolation.

Low income was cited as an important factor in poverty and social exclusion in rural
areas of La Manchuela and was associated with five factors: limited employment
opportunities; low wages in the agricultural sector; growing numbers of old people on
low income; high numbers of unemployed people in receipt of unemployment
benefits; and rising costs of living and expenses associated with cuts in services and
increasing debt such as mortgages.

Groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion
Access to work, low income, mobility status and health in rural areas intersected with
factors such as age and life course stages, gender, household status and immigrant
status to shape people's risk to poverty and exclusion. Stakeholders identified these
complexities in relation to five groups in particular: old people; children and young
people; solo households and people without family support; immigrants; and people
with disabilities and /or ill health.

Old people: The health and care needs associated with the ageing process and
factors associated with the life course stage (for example, widowhood, death of
family and migration of children) increased the vulnerability of old people to social
exclusion. Access to services and care were affected by the centralisation of services
and lack of public transport. Their situation was made worse by their dependence on
retirement pensions which were low and were often stretched to support members of
their family who were unemployed or without income as a consequence of the crisis.

Children and young people: High unemployment and limited opportunities for well
paid work among households, the closure of primary and secondary schools and
their centralisation in larger towns and having to pay for school materials and
transport, all combine to increase the risk of children and young people to poverty
and social exclusion. Immigrant children experienced additional challenges due to
language and communication difficulties. For young people lack of appropriate post-
school education and training opportunities and employment in rural areas, as well as
other social facilities were key factors in youth outmigration and in increasing the risk
of young people to poverty and social exclusion.
Solo living and people without families: Trends in solo households in La Manchuela were associated with a growing older population. Social isolation is a growing problem in a context where strong family and informal relationships and networks are changing and have been the primary source of support for those at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Immigrants: Immigrants of foreign origin employed in seasonal and low paid work associated with the agricultural and agribusiness sectors were identified as one of the most vulnerable groups. The factors identified as significant were related to 'integration' issues including: low pay; seasonal work; an increase in unemployment since the economic crisis; cut in programmes to promote 'integration'; cultural and language differences; and experience of racism.

People with disabilities or specific illnesses: An increase in disabilities and illness was associated by stakeholders with an aging population. Those with disabilities, chronic health and mental health problems were especially vulnerable to cuts in health and social care services and to the lack of provision of specialised services in the local area.

Implications for policy

Validity of European-wide data from local perspectives: Stakeholders in Albacete emphasised the importance of having good local data (e.g. NUTS level 3 and below) on poverty and social exclusion to design appropriate policies. A very small minority of those interviewed identified the comparisons across the EU that NUTS1 level data provides as important in measuring progress at the national and EU levels, respectively.

There is a dearth of research exploring the experience and impact of poverty and social exclusion taking into account people's diverse situations and identities in rural contexts in Spain. In addition current quantitative data is difficult to come by and appears to be fragmented across different levels of governments and departments as well as sectors, making it very difficult to get a holistic overview of the trends in poverty and social exclusion at NUTS 3 level and below.

Improving both quantitative and qualitative data and developing the capacity of policy makers and practitioners to utilise the data effectively is vital for devising policies, but also importantly in developing implementation and evaluation of polices.

Overcoming fragmentation - joining up policies: Responsibilities for addressing policies and programmes related to poverty and social exclusion in Spain as elsewhere are complex and dispersed across different levels of governance (from national to the local) and across departments at each level. The research suggests at least two important prerequisites for avoiding policy conflicts and facilitating change and positive outcomes in relation to poverty and social exclusion: (i) the need for multiagency mechanisms and approaches to policy making and implementation at and across different levels of governance beyond the public sector; and (ii) strong leadership.

Poverty and social exclusion policies and 'rural development' policies: Addressing poverty and social exclusion in rural areas appeared to be absent in 'rural
development' policy discourses. There is a need for policies to be sensitive to the additional challenges of remoteness/rurality. Further discussion is also required to explore the role of 'rural development' policies in tackling poverty and social exclusion, as well as the idea of rurality as a cross cutting issue which must be taken into consideration in the design and implementation of all sectoral policies.

Service provision: In the context of public sector cuts and centralisation of services there is an opportunity for policy makers, practitioners across sectors and local residents to jointly rethink policies and measures for delivering services in small rural villages. It would seem there is further potential for involving people who use services in the conceptualisation and design of services in a way that meets the needs of those most vulnerable.

Transferability of results
The Spanish case study findings shares a number of similarities with regard to findings on poverty and social exclusion undertaken in similar contexts (rural) in the European Union and elsewhere (Bertolini and Peragine, 2009; Camarero et al., 2009; Philip et al., 2012). The similarities centre on measurement, key drivers and impacts, each of these are briefly discussed below.

Measurement: The inadequacy of spatial measures (at NUTS level 3 and below) of poverty and social exclusion and the challenges in measuring patterns and trends in dispersed and sparsely populated contexts were issues consistently cited by stakeholders in the Spanish context and in the Scottish case study. The invisibility of poverty and social exclusion in debates on regional development generally, as well as in rural development policies and initiatives is an issue that was consistently highlighted by Stakeholders.

Key drivers of poverty and social exclusion not only relevant to the Spanish rural context, but also to rural areas in Scotland and the EU can be grouped into 3 categories: rural specific factors; national context and policy drivers; and the economic crisis since 2008 and the impact of 'austerity' measures adopted.

Rural specific factors: Five factors were consistently cited: geographical location and topographical features (rural /remoteness); demographic trends (e.g. sparsity of population, ageing, low fertility rates, high rates of masculinisation and high levels of youth migration); constrained labour markets; access to services and public transport; and low income.

National context and policy drivers: the lack of sensitivity to rurality in mainstream policies related to service delivery has resulted in an emphasis on economies of scale in delivery of services including lack of investment in public transport and centralisation of services; and the impact of local cultures.

The economic crisis and the implementation of 'austerity' measures: for example the withdrawal/centralisation of services and cuts in welfare benefits, were identified as exacerbating poverty and social exclusion in rural areas as well as urban areas.

Impact: Understanding the multidimensional aspects of poverty and social exclusion and the varied impact on different individuals/ groups and households (e.g. lack of access to essential services, lack of access to auto mobility, and so on) taking into
account spatial context -i.e. rurality- and the impact of austerity measures were identified as critical. Participants emphasised the stress this was placing on different types of households- e.g. migrants and ageing parents /grandparents- in the absence of work and lack of access to/ withdrawal of state support. The reliance on family support and social networks (for example in Spain as well as in the Scottish case study) across Welfare regimes suggests, the need to acknowledge the porous nature of the boundaries between different Welfare regimes.

Taking into account the specificities of poverty and social exclusion in remote and rural areas is an important step in ensuring territorial cohesion across the EU, but also in developing and implementing appropriate policies in relation to areas facing similar challenges. Furthermore, the shared experiences provide a strong basis for not only developing cross national research and addressing policy issues but also in exploring the transferability of practices across national contexts.

Further research

Impact of rurality: Further research is required on the specific influences and impact of rurality on poverty and social exclusion for different groups and households as well as ways of addressing these challenges. Within this context the importance of foregrounding the voices of those most marginalised merits serious attention.

The impact of the economic crisis and austerity policies: Despite policy commitments to welfare reforms and strategies to address issues such as unemployment, education and training to integrate people more effectively into the labour market by the Central Government, stakeholders were overwhelmed by the impacts of cuts in public expenditure and concerned about the sustainability of small rural villages which they described as going into decline reinforcing the depopulation of these areas. This research has only been able to briefly highlight these issues in a specific rural context, further more extensive research is required to explore the impact of the economic crisis and austerity policies in more depth across rural areas of Spain.

Solo living and family support: Given the culture of care and welfare support based on family networks which is associated with Spanish culture there is a need to chart developments and understand the ways in which current demographic trends are impacting on household formation, including the growth in solo living and changing nature of family and social networks and support in relation to those who are socially vulnerable.

Immigrants: This research highlighted various problems in ‘integrating ’ immigrants into rural communities. The need for further research to understand the perspectives of immigrants and host communities, with a view to developing solutions to inter-community relations as well as to address economic and social discrimination are important steps in addressing some of the challenges highlighted in the study.

Children, young people and gender relations: Issues such as child poverty were mentioned briefly but the scale and extent of this in rural areas is difficult to assess without further research. Further research is also required to explore young people’s perspectives on their experiences of rural life and work as well as the ways in which changing gender relations are impacting on the private and public spheres in rural communities.
1 Introduction to case study

1.1 Aims of the case study

Albacete in Spain is one of 10 case studies within the TIPSE project. The aim of the case studies is to complement the European-wide data analysis by a more qualitative focus at a micro-scale level to explore in depth the multiple factors underlying processes of poverty and social exclusion.

The overall aims of the case studies were to:

- explore and understand the diverse and complex nature of and process related to poverty and social exclusion at below NUTS3/LAU 1;
- investigate the association and co-location of poverty and social exclusion;
- cross-check the validity and usefulness of applied European-wide and other data sources, and discuss alternatives how to map PSE processes with suitable indicators or alternative proxies;
- explore the diversity of response approaches and understand the links between local processes and the wider institutional environment; and
- deepen the understanding of how to map and monitor micro-spatial processes and derive recommendations for the monitoring of territorial trends at micro-scale level.

The case studies were selected to reflect the diverse European territorial, socio-economic, institutional and policy contexts and challenges. Each case study has focused on one of five specific themes. These were issues of education, unemployment, access to services in rural areas, ethnic minorities and urban segregation patterns. The main aim of this case study was to explore experiences of poverty and social exclusion in a remote rural local authority area (e.g. Albacete) with a particular focus on the consequences of an ageing population, declining fertility rates and a high rate of youth outmigration. The interviews were mainly conducted in Casas Ibáñez one of the three largest municipalities in Albacete.

1.2 Method and sample

The case study has used a combination of methods: a desk based review of key data, academic and grey literature and policy documents relevant to the case study to help set the context and make sense of its findings; and primary research to explore trends, processes and policies related to poverty and social exclusion at the micro level.

Semi-structured interviews (Annex 1) were conducted with 14 stakeholders who were identified as having local, regional and national expertise on poverty and social exclusion (Annex 2).
The purpose of the interviews were to: (i) help illuminate the trends, dimensions, processes and impact of poverty of social exclusion in their region; and (ii) to identify the factors that shaped and influenced policies in addressing various aspects of poverty and social exclusion (Annex 2 for Interview Topic Schedule). All interviews were conducted in Spanish, recorded and transcribed. Analysis of the interviews involved identifying and coding by themes related to the two purposes of the interviews. In addition specific examples of initiatives to address poverty and social exclusion cited by interviewees were also noted as appropriate.

1.3 Report structure
The first three chapters of this report set the context, followed by Chapters 4 to 6 which highlight the issues that emerged from the interviews with key stakeholders and ends with Chapter 7 which provides an overview of the findings and discusses policy implications and ideas for further research:

- Chapter 2: The Regional context
- Chapter 3 Context: Poverty and Social Exclusion in Spain
- Chapter 4: Poverty and Social Exclusion: Definition, Key Drivers and impact
- Chapter 5: Poverty and Social Exclusion :Groups at Risk
- Chapter 6: Policies and Initiatives :Tackling poverty and Social Exclusion
- Chapter 7: Summary of Key Issues and Implications for Policy and Research
2 The regional context

This case study focuses on La Manchuela on the east inland of Spain and on the south west of the EU near the Mediterranean sea. It is located on the northeast of the NUTS 3 region of Albacete province, on the east of the Autonomous Community of Castilla-La Mancha NUTS 2 region between the borders of Cuenca Province and the Comunidad Valenciana (Figure 1). It has an area of 1718.38 km² with 24 municipalities.

Figure 1: The Manchuela area in the context of the ESPON space

The landscape of La Manchuela is shaped by two rivers: the Júcar and Cabriel (Figure 2). The river Júcar divides the area in two parts with canyons a feature of the landscape on the southern part of La Manchuela (Hoz del Júcar) and a reservoir (El Molinar) on the eastern side. The Cabriel is the boundary which separates La Manchuela from Cuenca province and the Comunidad Valenciana Region on the northeast. Between the Cabriel valley in the north of La Manchuela and the Júcar Hoz in the south the landscape is mainly formed of plains. Its topography is mostly flat, except for the south-eastern end, where there are some hills (e.g. de la Caballa,
de la Solana, de Palomeras, del Boquerón y la serretilla de la Pared) and the altitude ranges between 440 and 1100 meters respectively, with slopes of 1 to 6%.

In order to build an initial impression of the character of the case study area it is important to note its classification in relation to some of the prevailing typologies, which have been developed within the ESPON programme. The most appropriate classifications in the context of the TIPSE project are the rural-urban typologies developed by Dijkstra and Poelman (2011) at DG Regio, and extended by the EDORA project (Copus et al., 2011). Based on these classifications Albacete province where La Manchuela is located is best described as 'predominantly rural close to a city' (rural-urban typology), 'agrarian' (structural typology) and 'above average' in terms of key economic performance indicators. In the Spanish context, the Law 45/2007 for Sustainable Rural Development defines rural as the geographical space formed by the aggregation of smaller municipalities or entities with a population below 30,000 and a density below 100 inhabitants per km² (see Figure 3)
Figure 3: Urban-Rural typology for NUTS-3

Rural areas are classified into three types - periurban, intermediate and revitalisation areas (see Figure 4).
Figure 4: Classification of rural areas in Castilla – La Mancha

Source: Consejería de Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo Rural, 2008

These three types are based on the criteria described in Table 1.

Table 1: Classification of rural areas according to spanish law 45/2007

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<th>Rural areas (categories)</th>
<th>Features</th>
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| Revitalization areas    | - Low population density.  
- High importance of agriculture  
- Low income levels  
- Geographic isolation |
| Intermediate            | - Low to medium density  
- Diversified employment between primary, secondary and tertiary  
- Low and middle income levels  
- Far-off direct influence areas of major urban centres |
| Periurban               | - Growing population  
- Prevalence of employment in the tertiary sector  
- Medium or high income levels.  
- Located in the surroundings of urban areas |


La Manchuela has a rurality index of 100% based on its population density which is lower than 100-inhabitants/km2 and an urbanization index of 0% based on most of its population living in municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants. According to the classification proposed by the Spanish Law cited above La Manchuela is classified as a rural area that requires revitalization and is also classified as a 'Less Favoured
Area’ for the purposes of the European Rural Development Program period 2007-2013 (CE 1257/1999).

The population of La Manchuela is 30154 inhabitants with a low population density (17.5 inhabitants per km²) according to the 2012 Municipal Register data. Just under half of its population (46%) is concentrated in the three biggest municipalities: Casas Ibáñez (4,843 inhabitants), Madrigueras (4,836 inhabitants) and Villamalea (4,164 inhabitants). The majority of the population lives in ‘little rural municipalities’, that is municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants. Forty seven percent of the La Manchuela population live in municipalities with less than 2,000 inhabitants, and 2% (almost 500 people) live in municipalities with less than 100 inhabitants (INE, Municipal Register Data, 2012).

Recent data on economic activities and sectors were difficult to come by. Sectoral activities are typical of rural areas in Castilla-La Mancha, with small businesses in the agro food sector and in manufacturing, building and commerce (Figure 4). Based on figures for 2007, although the service sector (36.5% of enterprises employed 48.4% of workers) and construction and industrial sectors were growing in importance, agrarian activities (26.1% of enterprises, employing 16.1% workers) are still an important part of the economy and community.

![Figure 5: Economic activities data of La Manchuela (2007)](image)

Agriculture, especially related to the dry land farms, is mainly based on grape farming which has led to the creation of a DOP for Manchuela wine. The agro-food industries are based on wine production and the creation of a DOP has been important in improving the sales of wine. Other farming activities focus on growing olives, cereals (barley and wheat on dry lands and corn on irrigated lands), vegetables, legumes and saffron. Also important are activities related to growing
mushrooms and other edible fungi coordinated through cooperatives. Livestock activities focus mainly on sheep husbandry.

The secondary sector includes manufacturing involving mainly family businesses in fabric and clothes manufacturing and in wood and furniture making. Traditionally the area is also renowned for its knife industry which is also an important part of the manufacturing sector. Although the service sector includes a diverse range of activities (e.g. public services and financial services) rural tourism is important due to the richness of its landscapes with high ecologic value and its historical heritage. The area has three tourist establishments certified with the “Q” level of tourist quality.
3 Context: Poverty and social exclusion in Spain

The main aim of this case study was to explore experiences of poverty and social exclusion in a remote rural local authority area - La Manchuela area in this case - with a particular focus on the consequences of an ageing population, declining fertility rates and a high rate of youth outmigration. Before discussing the key issues that emerged from the interviews with Stakeholders a brief overview of the policy landscape on poverty and social exclusion and overview of some of the key findings from literature on rural poverty and social exclusion in Spain follows to set the context.

3.1 Addressing poverty and social exclusion: Spanish and Castilla-La Mancha policy context

With regard to governance Spain has a complex territorial structure with a clear division among three different layers of government: national, regional (autonomous regions (Comunidades Autónomas) and local government (see Annex 3). Policies related to addressing poverty and social exclusion are the responsibilities of both the Spanish and the Castilla-La Mancha Governments, respectively. Policies regarding, for example, the State Welfare system and taxation are the remit of the Spanish government, whilst the Autonomus Government of Castilla-La Mancha – called 'the Junta' - has responsibility for services such as education, care and health.

At the national level, the Spanish Government has focused on adapting its policies on poverty and social exclusion in response to the framework set by the European Union and it policies are included in its National Reform Plans and reports on strategies for addressing social exclusion (Gobierno de España, 2008; Gobierno de España, 2013b; Kingdom of Spain, undated). These documents, and particularly the most recent, address a number of policies related to tackling social exclusion. These include the following for example: improvements in the overall system of providing social security including guaranteeing a benefits system which supports those most in need; tackling child poverty; enhancing employment and training opportunities for young people, women and other vulnerable groups; addressing the needs of the disabled and improvements in support for those in need of care; addressing unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis; and supporting policies that address the consequences of an ageing population and increased immigration.

At the local level the Junta is responsible for designing and implementing programs delivered through its network. Most of the programmes addressing poverty and social exclusion come under the label of 'Social Integration' programmes. These include funded projects often in partnership with Local Councils and include for example: regional networks for homelessness and immigrants, respectively; provision of social services for those at risk of poverty and social exclusion; and activities encouraging exchange of experiences and knowledge related to the development and maintenance of regional structures for addressing poverty and social exclusion between practitioners, professionals researchers.
3.2 Poverty and social exclusion in rural Spain

Obtaining accurate data on poverty and social exclusion at a local authority level and below in rural Spain is a challenge, as key social indicators are not available at municipality level. There is also a dearth of research on poverty and social exclusion on rural Spain. The “Foessa Foundation”, a NGO associated with the Catholic NGO “Caritas”, is undertaking some research in rural areas but its results were not available when this research was being undertaken. However the few studies that exist do consistently highlight the importance of the territorial dimension of poverty and social exclusion (see for example Foessa Report 2008). Tables 2 and 3 show that social exclusion does not appear to impact negatively on households in municipalities below 5,000 inhabitants -which is the threshold for identifying ‘rural municipalities’.

Table 2: Incidence of social exclusion in Spanish households depending on the size of their municipality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habitat size</th>
<th>% in each stage</th>
<th>General Exclusion Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Precarious Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 100.000 inhab</td>
<td>50,2</td>
<td>32,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.000 – 100.000 inhab</td>
<td>43,6</td>
<td>39,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.000 – 50.000 inhab</td>
<td>38,5</td>
<td>40,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.000 – 20.000 inhab</td>
<td>54,0</td>
<td>32,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5.000 inhab</td>
<td>48,0</td>
<td>36,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Spain</td>
<td>47,5</td>
<td>35,3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Foessa, 2008, p. 243

Table 3: Incidence and intensity of social exclusion: percentage of households affected and exclusion index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habitat size</th>
<th>Severe Exclusion (%)</th>
<th>Intensity: Exclusion Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Severe Exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 100.000 inhab</td>
<td>17,1</td>
<td>3,79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.000 – 100.000 inhab</td>
<td>16,9</td>
<td>4,47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.000 – 50.000 inhab</td>
<td>21,3</td>
<td>4,63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.000 – 20.000 inhab</td>
<td>13,5</td>
<td>3,63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5.000 inhab</td>
<td>15,4</td>
<td>3,70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Spain</td>
<td>17,2</td>
<td>4,05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Foessa, 2008, p. 253

From a regional perspective, although Castilla-La Mancha is not described as being in a situation of extreme poverty, it is, nevertheless, in one of the five regions which is most affected by economic poverty. According to the Family Budget Survey in 2006 income in Spanish rural areas was just below € 12,000 in contrast to urban
areas where it was over €17,000 (Gobierno de España 2010, p. 12). Income per capita is almost € 2,500 lower in rural municipalities (€ 11,729) than in urban municipalities (€ 14,537), based on 2008 data (Gobierno de España, 2010, p. 14). GDP per capita in Castilla-La Mancha was € 18,471 in 2008, this was less than 80% of the EU average, and the second lowest among the Spanish Autonomous Communities (Gobierno de España, 2010, p. 14). In Castilla-La Mancha, the average household income is around 30% lower in rural areas than in urban areas, and more than 50% lower if social benefits and transfers are not taken into account (Consejería de Sanidad y Asuntos Sociales de Castilla-La Mancha, 2013, p. 69).

More recent reports based on AROPE (groups ‘At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion’) data highlight important inequalities between the different regions in Spain. For example, a report by the European Anti Poverty Network (Llano, 2012) reveals that although the percentage of AROPE population in 2011 is generally higher in the southern regions, Castilla – La Mancha had the third highest rate (35.5%) of those at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2011 (see Figure 6). Since the economic crisis poverty and social exclusion has increased in Castilla-La Mancha has increased (see Table 4).

![AROPE 2011](image)

**Figure 6: AROPE population rate by autonomous regions 2011**

*Source: Llano Ortiz, 2012, p. 11*
Table 4: AROPE population rates by autonomous regions 2009-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total nacional</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.051.844</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>751.070</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.802.914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andalucía</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>265.215</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>246.522</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>511.739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aragón</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>23.131</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>51.032</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>74.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asturias, Princip. de</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>-17.524</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>6.009</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>-11.514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baleares, Illes</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>26.840</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>-12.640</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>14.162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canarias</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>7.232</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>64.589</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>71.921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cataluña</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>15.911</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>34.572</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>59.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castilla y León</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>60.535</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>48.351</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>108.886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castilla-La Mancha</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>19.841</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>102.546</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>122.387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cataluña</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>254.007</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>269.280</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>523.287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Com. Valenciana</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>218.456</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
<td>-111.136</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>107.320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremadura</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>35.088</td>
<td>-6.3</td>
<td>-86.999</td>
<td>-3.3</td>
<td>-33.901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galicia</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>-36.005</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>47.031</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>11.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrid, Com. de</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>64.033</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>76.997</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>141.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murcia, Región de</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>57.656</td>
<td>-5.2</td>
<td>-73.523</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>-15.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navarra, C. Foral de</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>22.327</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>22.943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pais Vasco</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>63.948</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>11.894</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>75.943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reij, La</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
<td>-5.292</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>14.067</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>9.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottu</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.165</td>
<td>-8.8</td>
<td>-6.493</td>
<td>-4.5</td>
<td>-2.308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallorca</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>-6.2</td>
<td>-3.672</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>-6.1</td>
<td>-2.756</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Llano Ortiz, 2012, p. 12

The Spanish population is an ageing population and 16% of the population were over 65 years of age in 2008 and in rural municipalities it was approximately 22% (Gobierno de España, 2010, p. 9-10). Ageing does not affect all rural areas in a region in the same way, it is more evident in municipalities with less than 1.000 inhabitants and is exacerbated by factors such as lower fertility rates, higher life expectancy and out-migration of young people (Camarero et al., 2009). A recent study of social exclusion in Castilla-La Mancha undertaken by the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) included a sample of the population which lives in municipalities with less than 10.000 inhabitants (Llano Ortiz and Martos, 2012). This report notes that in addition to the challenges arising from the consequences of the demographic characteristics of rural areas, accessing employment, the prevalence of short-term contracts and job insecurity as well as 'undeclared' ('illegal') work related to farming and seasonal agrarian activities in particular posed the most important challenges for rural areas in Spain (Llano Ortiz and Martos, 2012).

The demographic trends in rural areas have been accompanied by a process of masculinisation and an increase in immigrants. Camarero et al. (2009) have developed models of rurality based on age distribution and gender in the Spanish context. They distinguish between five types of rural populations (disconnected, in transition, local, liquid and dense) covering different degrees between 'a recessive model of extreme disequilibrium because of emigration' and an 'expansive model because of immigration' (2009, p. 39) (see Figure 7).
According to this model, the rural population in Albacete province presents a 'transition' model which is characterised by a high aging population, masculinisation and declining birth rate. However men and women born between 1958 and 1977 are greater in number than those in the 'disconnected' model, and this age group are seen as important in sustaining the vitality of rural local life and in reducing the impact of an aging population (Camarero et al. 2009, p. 44).

3.3 Poverty and social exclusion in La Manchuela

La Manchuela is recognised as facing a number of challenges given its economic structure and demographic trends, such as aging and emigration (as well as immigration) which in turn is impacting on the provision of services (given the increasing centralisation) and communication infrastructures (reduction in rural public transport).

Population trends across La Manchuela have varied. Population growth has tended to be concentrated in the largest municipalities; for example population in municipalities with more than 2,000 inhabitants grew by 12% between 1999 and 2008. By contrast the smallest municipalities (less than 1000 inhabitants) suffered a loss of 6%. (INE, Official population figures, 1999 and 2008).
Figure 8: Population pyramid of La Manchuela, 2009

Source: Ceder Manchuela, 2011, p 39

The population of La Manchuela grew in the first half of the twentieth Century, but it was affected by a rural exodus between 1950 and 1970. Since 1990 rural depopulation rates decreased, with rural areas experiencing some population increases since 2001 mainly due to the arrival of immigrants. Figure 7 shows an aging population as a consequence of a low birth rate. The predictions are not optimistic suggesting a growing elderly population accompanied by a declining young population. The percentage of the population over 65 years old was almost 24% in 2009 and the dependency rate was estimated as being approximately 60%. There are concerns about the economic impact of an older ‘dependent’ population. Although the arrival of migrants in the 1980’s was a turning point the trends may be changing since the economic crisis.

Masculinisation has increased as the size of the municipality decreases; that is, the smallest municipalities have higher rates of masculinisation. In La Manchuela, the rate of masculinisation (women per 100 men in the 30-49 years old age group) reached 83.4% in 2012 (calculated according to data of the Continuous Municipal Register Statistics, 2012) and was even higher in the smallest municipalities. In municipalities with less than 1.000 inhabitants the rate of masculinisation reached 77.73% and 78.85% in municipalities with less than 2.000 inhabitants (INE, 2012).

Unemployment rates have been rising in Spain for the past five years. The unemployment rate in the first trimester of 2013 was around 34% in Albacete province, higher than the rates for Castilla-La Mancha (32%) and the average for Spain (27%) (see Table 5).
Table 5: Unemployment rates. Spain, Castilla-La Mancha and Albacete 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unemployment rate 1Q-2013</th>
<th>Spain 27,16</th>
<th>Castilla-La Mancha 31,51</th>
<th>Albacete Province 34,46</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2013a

La Manchuela has also been affected by businesses shutting down because of the economic crisis. This has resulted in job losses and an increase in the numbers who are unemployed, albeit the unemployment rate in La Manchuela was lower than in Spain as a whole as well as the region and province (see Table 6).

Table 6: Registered unemployment. Spain, Castilla-La Mancha, Albacete and La Manchuela 2008-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registered Unemployment January 2008</th>
<th>Spain 2,261,925</th>
<th>Castilla-La Mancha Region 101,138</th>
<th>Albacete Province 24,603</th>
<th>La Manchuela 1,797</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Unemployment January 2013</td>
<td>4,980,778</td>
<td>271,610</td>
<td>55,392</td>
<td>3,768</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) These data just includes the 24 municipalities which are within the borders of Albacete Province.

Source: Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal, 2013

Another issue typically associated with rural areas in Spain is the challenge of delivering services, which according to the Development Plan of La Manchuela, is unequal across the region and insufficient in some places. Although La Manchuela does have health, educational and social services these are not equally distributed across the territory. This has resulted in a lack of services such as nurseries, residences for old people, day care centres and also specialised medical services. In the context of a dispersed and ageing population and the growing centralisation of services the importance of having a good and affordable public transportation system (which is lacking at present) has increased in importance.
4 Poverty and social exclusion: Definition, key drivers and impacts

This chapter summarises the main issues highlighted by those interviewed with regard to their definitions of poverty and social exclusion, key drivers of poverty and social exclusion in Spain more generally and in their region in particular and the impact of these drivers on particular groups and households.

4.1 Poverty and social exclusion: Views of stakeholders

Most of the views on poverty and social exclusion reflected the complex, dynamic and multidimensional nature of the concepts and are described below.

Poverty

While recognising that there can be a territorial component to poverty the importance of making a distinction between a poor region and poor people living in a region was emphasised by the experts interviewed:

“Poverty has a regional component which has to be analysed, of course. Poverty varies across places ... From my point of view you know that La Manchuela is a region that cannot be considered poor within the context of Castilla La-Mancha [...]. I spent a couple of weeks ago there, they have lots of wine. I have a friend who works in a company producing mushrooms, lots of mushrooms and there are huge trucks that are loaded with mushrooms in these areas ... it did not appear to me a poor area. However, in the region there are many poor people.” (Interview 12)¹

The existence of poverty and widespread social insecurity related to economic poverty, high illiteracy rates, low levels of educational achievement and poor housing in Castilla La-Mancha was identified by Subirats (2005, p. 92) as an issue that affected rural areas in particular. Views among Stakeholders varied. A small minority of stakeholders not directly involved in working in the field of poverty and social exclusion did not recognise the existence of poverty or social exclusion in their villages initially:

“I don't feel that there are any poverty problems in the village. We do not have a lot but we manage from day to day.” (Interview 9)

Some emphasised the relative aspects of poverty and felt that compared to other areas in Spain La Manchuela could not be classed as a poor area:

“Soria, Teruel, Andalucía, the North of Cuenca and the South of Albacete are poorer. Castilla y León possible has similar or worse features. Extremadura

¹ Stakeholders interviewed are listed in Appendix 1. To protect their identity they have been given interview numbers.
has higher rates of unemployment, poverty, marginalization or aging.” (Interview 8)

Whilst another stakeholders pointed to the importance of distinguishing between objective and subjective perceptions of poverty:

“Now for example in Spain the poverty rate has decreased although the perception is that it is much higher. I was looking at it this morning the poverty risk rate has decreased by almost a point: people at risk of poverty has decreased from 21,8 to 21,1 in 2012. Seven hundredths is a lot. However, the perception we have, not just perception, the reality, is that we are much poorer. This is a problem of defining poverty and social exclusion.” (Interview 12)

The dynamic and changing nature of poverty over time, including the impact of critical events, for example the impact of the economic crisis in particular was highlighted as significant in putting at risk those who had previously been fairly well off:

“People coming (to social services- My italics) has changed. There is always a little group of the most disadvantaged, people who always came to social services. […]. But now there are many people who have lost their jobs live day by day.” (Interview 4)

**Social exclusion**

Social exclusion was identified as a complex concept with multi-dimensional aspects but also critiqued by one of those interviewed as a concept which has led to problematising the excluded at the expense of addressing the processes and systemic factors that have led to their exclusion:

“Exclusion is a concept which focuses exclusively on the problem of the excluded, on their problems. Where are the social processes which lead to such exclusion? They do not exist, they are put aside. Why is the exclusion concept so successful? When it originated in France 25 or 30 years ago, it suddenly was extended and everyone started to talk about exclusion as a great wonder. Why? Because it is assumed that those who are excluded are on the outside and want to get in so they can have what we have, and we, those who are included, also want them to get inside because we can feel good about ourselves by wanting to ensure they are free of exclusion. But where is social change questioned? Where is the system questioned? Nowhere. The concept of exclusion is a concept which is absolutely conservative and it is used to justify a political system, to maintain the status quo. The concept is not good.” (Interview 12)

While recognising the limitations of the concept, isolation and the lack of access to social networks was identified as the essence of social exclusion by one of the interviewees:
"I believe that one of the central elements in exclusion theories is considering the people who are isolated, who have no networks, who lack support or social integration. From my point of view the person who could be considered as excluded is someone who does not count, who is invisible, who has not got any influence, who has lost any power capability, who has lost his/her socialisation mechanisms, as French say, the creation of "liaison", of nexus which link him or her to elements linked with those socialisation mechanisms."

(Interview 7)

On the issue of social networks a distinction was made on the one hand between urban areas where social relations and networks were seen as having less of a territorial aspect and described as mediated through formal relationships with services, and on the other hand rural areas where social relationships were seen to be rooted in place and informal/kinship relationships:

"...for example, in large cities... the concept of socialization at a territorial level is lost because people have lost the close contacts, that communication, relationships, but at the same time, in the metropolis there is access to certain types of services, e.g. health information, educational, or related support services that try to maintain and shape formal connections and social relations with people who may be vulnerable to exclusion. By contrast, in more rural areas, we can see that there is a structure for socialisation based on local knowledge more proximity between what may be the basic socialisation networks, family networks, neighbourhood networks linked to heritage and a rootedness in a place. But on the other hand from the point of view of access to services...there are difficulties, that is health services may only be available for a few hours, education services are being cut because they don't have the required number of pupils, lack of related support services and day centres where formal relationships [are developed to support those at risk of exclusion – my Italics]." (Interview 7)

Measurement of poverty and social exclusion - EU poverty indicators

Most of those interviewed appreciated the importance of having good data and information as a critical step in designing appropriate policies. However there were also concerns about the EU poverty indicators and associated maps (which most Stakeholders were not familiar with), including the value of macro level data where the underpinning assumptions may not be transparent or become obscured as the emphasis is on preserving the integrity of the definitions adopted and making high level generalisations and comparisons. There were other issues raised; for example related to the importance of contextual information with regard to the experiences of poverty and social exclusion and notions of 'relativity' which it was felt that EU data and maps did not convey:

"The problem is in analysing relative poverty. For example two indicators in red one somewhere in Germany and other one in Castilla y León, they seem the same, but probably the real situations of poverty in each place are
absolutely different. Then, there is the issue of relativity in measuring poverty." (Interview 12)

It was also felt that indicators focusing on income alone might not be helpful, as it does not take into account intersectional issues and identities:

"…a pension of € 400 or 500 does not produce probably a situation of exclusion or economic vulnerability if a person's health is good…” (Interview 7)

The need to improve the quality of indicators in a way that combines both quality and quantitative data at a level that is meaningful for policy making was emphasised:

"I believe that other comparative elements should be introduced, not only quantitative data and not only those linked to an economic point of view: income level, pensions levels...quantitative data are necessary, indispensable, but they have to be combined and complemented with other kind of indicators related to quality of life, the kind of services you can access, the kind of accessible resources a person has. That is, introducing comparative elements which are not just about a quantity…” (Interview 12)

4.2 Drivers and impacts

Although most stakeholders noted that social exclusion processes in rural areas such as La Manchuela are shaped by factors shared with urban areas (e.g. economic crisis and austerity policies), there was also recognition that rural areas including La Manchuela also face specific challenges associated with their rurality. These include issues such as its geography, poor communication links, ageing population, low income associated with the nature of the economy, limited work and other opportunities for young people and so on:

"The needs and characteristics [of rural areas – My italics] are in some cases more to do with ease of access to communications, especially in mountain areas.” (Interview 14)

"The case of La Manchuela is perhaps a reflection of what is happening to rural populations in general in Castilla-La Mancha and I would almost say in Spain…a tendency to aging, few alternatives for young people to stay connected to the land… the lack of incentives to finding employment which is especially difficult for the settlement of new families.” (Interview 14)

The key drivers of poverty and social exclusion identified by stakeholders can be broadly placed in two categories: those factors that are not specific to rural areas which includes : the economic context and its impact ; and those factors that were associated with rurality and remoteness and which includes :demographic changes and its impact; access to services and transport; and low income.
Economic context

The changing economic context, the financial crisis since 2008 and the austerity policies that have followed were consistently emphasised as exacerbating poverty and social exclusion across Spain. The impact of the economic crisis and associated austerity policies in particular on employment, income and public services were emphasised by all those interviewed as affecting people across Spain as well as impacting on people in Albacete in particular ways.

Employment/unemployment

Employment was seen as critical, not only because it is a source of income but also because it is an important source of social relationship and networks and lack of employment can leave people isolated (FOESSA, 2008; Subirats, 2005a). All the stakeholders interviewed expressed concerns about the impact of the economic crisis on employment and the rise in unemployment while simultaneously recognising the changing nature of work as well as stressing the importance of having meaningful work that paid people enough to avoid in-work poverty:

“So, work is very important. But work has also changed. It is just not work, because for the last 10 years I have been hearing talk of the working poor ...not just any job it has to be work that allows people get out poverty.” (Interview 12)

“Nowadays (the main issue related to social exclusion in the area- My italics) is lack of income, lack of work. It is not just about lack of qualifications, there is also lack of employment.” (Interview 4)

As highlighted in Chapter 3 unemployment rates have been rising in Spain including in Albacete province where the economic crisis has led to a number of businesses shutting down. However, the impact of unemployment on people is complex and varies depending on their circumstances. For example, if they are entitled to receive unemployment benefit, depending on their life course stage and circumstances, education and prospects of finding employment (Subirats, 2005).

Stakeholders cited a number of examples of the complex ways in which unemployment interacted with other factors with varying impacts on the households and communities in La Manchuela. In a context where it is often the norm for men to be the breadwinners and there are limited employment opportunities for women to work, the male breadwinner losing his job has a major impact on the household.

Having a job and an income that goes with being employed was consistently identified as essential for household survival especially in a context where access to social protection may be limited —e.g. unemployment benefits runs out:

“I am now seeing families who were more or less normal before and now they are almost at the edge, asking for the Council’s Employment strategy and finding that their unemployment benefit is about to finish and they have two children and they do not know what to do.” (Interview 11)
The challenges of accessing employment once made redundant (particularly in sectors such as construction which has been adversely affected by the economic crisis) and the changing conditions of work combined with age were also additional factors that put people at risk of poverty and social exclusion:

“They are unemployed, realise that they are not going to be hired again, and if they are hired it for about 10% of the time, and they realise they are 40 or 45 with two children… with their mortgage and without any employment possibility.” (Interview 11)

Loss of income also impacted on keeping up payments such as mortgage payments and was identified as leading to increasing debt. According to the Plan de Familia, the percentage of households who delayed mortgage payments or housing-related expenses was higher in rural areas (7.6%) than in urban areas (6.5%) in Castilla-La Mancha (Consejeria de Sanidad y Asuntos Sociales de Castilla-La Mancha, 2013, p. 71-72). Stakeholders noted that people who had never asked for assistance previously coming for help:

“….For example, one could be a lorry driver and he would have been earning a lot of money, but he was spending it all. Then, they lose their job and soon find themselves in the situation that they cannot pay the mortgage. So now we have people who ask us for help who have never been here before because they did not have the need.” (Interview 4)

Although unemployment was identified as affecting everyone including those with qualifications, those who lack qualifications or experience of working beyond the village were seen as being particularly at risk of poverty and social exclusion as possibilities for accessing work was limited as was their ability to move to other areas to seek work:

“There are people who may have never worked outside the village, who may not have a driving license or qualifications and who have always worked in the fields or construction which has always been there and nowadays these are the sectors where there is no employment.” (Interview 10)

The impact of unemployment among young people was cited as reinforcing the depopulation of the smaller villages in particular as they left the province to look for employment elsewhere:

“We have noticed the crisis here because young people who worked in the bigger villages in the construction or knife industries have lost their jobs. [What is needed- My Italics] is employment, that is, there is no employment and because of that young people leave.” (Interview 8)

Discussions with stakeholders also revealed a discourse which suggested that the years of economic growth had led people to abandon ‘hard work’ and working in the fields was left to immigrant labour:
“We have a little colony of Romanians here who basically work in the fields as day labourers in the vineyards and mushrooms fields. They do not have unemployment problems because they are working between the vineyards and mushroom fields...However native people are unemployed, because we have not adapted well. We made ourselves rich gentlemen these past years, whilst the immigrants came and have gone forward.” (Interview 8)

However, with the economic crisis things were beginning to change as local people were turning to these jobs:

“Many local people who did not take these jobs before are applying for them now. Before there were people coming from abroad, but not now. Now there are local people, people who live here and who are joining the campaign for having the possibility of some income.” (Interview 14)

Impact of austerity policies

The other aspect of the economic crisis was associated by Stakeholders with the implementation of austerity policies and its impact on services in general as well as on the state welfare provision and on services such as education, health and social services in particular. These changes were seen as re-shaping social exclusion processes across Spain including rural areas and leading to the increased centralisation of most services in larger municipalities and cities.

“Nowadays we have also other problems with the cuts. For example, forest guards have disappeared and all of them are concentrated in the largest municipalities; teachers, all disappeared; La Guardia Civil (Spanish police force –My italics) is practically in the largest places…” (Interview 6)

Stakeholders expressed fears that much of the gains that had been achieved in relation to social policies as well as governance issues at regional and local levels before 2008 were being eroded since the crisis and the adoption of austerity measures. In La Manchuela stakeholders were concerned about the survival of local governance mechanisms such as the Mancomunidad (see Appendix 3) which have an important role in addressing poverty and social exclusion at the local level:

“From my point of view the days of the Mancomunidad are numbered because actually 70% or 80% of the financial aid it depends on comes from the Central Administration... We do not have own resources, we are a Mancomunidad of services which has two parts; one is provided by the Regional Government which has an obligation to provide services; and the other are the Councils at a local which make a very small contribution and are closer to their population. But if the Central Administration is not contributing its 70% or 80%, little municipalities can hardly be expected to make a 100% contribution to keep the services going.” (Interview 6)

Education
Education cuts were reported as affecting schools as well as university education in La Manchuela. Stakeholders reported four kinds of cuts related to primary and secondary school education. The first relates to schools being shut down (discussed further in the next section of this chapter), the second are cuts in the budget for providing school books and the third related to cuts in transportation for children to school:

"Until now text books were free in primary school as in secondary school, and this year they are not going to be free any more. They are not free… At the moment books are not being provided to children, they [parents – My Italics] are going to have to pay for the books and that is going to be expensive." (Interview 1)

“So, as the budget has been reduced by 40%, almost more, all the materials which the school used to supply have to be provided by families… but you find families where this is not a problem but there are many others for whom this is going to be a problem because they are unemployed.” (Interview 2)

Finally, the fourth set of cuts was related to the teacher recruitment budget which has meant increased class sizes and teachers having to work longer hours. This has resulted in teachers having little or no time to focus on children and young people who may need more support or for developing activities oriented towards integrating those with specific needs. University education, which is not available in the comarca but in the city of Albacete is also affected by an increase of fees and cuts in scholarships making access to university education difficult for some:

“I know about people who are studying at the University in Albacete, many students from the villages cannot go to classes most days because their scholarships have been removed. They say “I cannot commute everyday to Albacete and I cannot live in Albacete as I cannot pay for my accommodation”, so, they select and say “I will go twice a week”. “ (Interview 2)

Health services

Cuts in recruitment of health care personnel reported included no replacements for positions when people retire or leave. In addition people who have been employed on temporary contracts sometimes for as long as 25 years but have not sat the public examinations required for permanent positions are being made redundant:

“When a doctor or a nurse or staff gets sick they are not being replaced. There are no replacements for staff that are off sick and there are no replacements for the first fortnight of sick leave, as in maternity leave or in fracture cases. When you are on vacation, you are not replaced. When you get one of your 3 free days per year, you are not replaced. That means that there are villages which don’t have a doctor for a morning, or half a morning because they have to share the doctor with other villages.” (Interview 3)
This reduction in health professionals was cited as having an adverse on the provision of emergency services and hospital provision (e.g. reduction in beds and less surgery), as well as leading to a lack of medical services in some of the villages in La Manchuela and overall less healthcare provision for villagers in general:

“Emergency teams are also disappearing. That means that each health centre, not all of them but most of them have two emergency teams (two nurses and two doctors), so if there is an emergency in a village 15 kilometres away, a doctor and a nurse go and another doctor and nurse stay to attend to whoever comes. Right now, the second team is disappearing…” (Interview 3)

“There are people who are retiring or who ask for a change of place and move to Albacete [the city- My italics], their positions are not replaced and the positions disappear. Right now we have a village […] where the doctor has retired and it is without doctor.” (Interview 3)

There have also been cuts in the subsidisation of medicines which affects those on low income:

“Also medicines which were subsidised by Social Security (Seguridad Social) have been withdrawn. All those medicines which were prescribed for what are considered non serious cases are withdrawn from the Social Security system and have to be paid for 100%. A lot of them.” (Interview 3)

In addition pensioners are now having to pay for medication when it was free previously; this was of concern to health professionals given the growing elderly population on low incomes in La Manchuela and their vulnerability to suffering from health related problems:

“All this is resulting in a problem which is really worrying us because we are afraid that mortality will increase because of the number of old people we have, and that public health becomes a charity. I mean that only people who cannot afford private healthcare will access public healthcare. And here, who is going to pay for a scan which costs between 300 and 400 Euros, if old people only have 400 Euros retirement pay a month?” (Interview 3)

There has also been a reduction / withdrawal of patient transportation, which is a crucial issue in rural areas in particular where access to public transport is nonexistent and there is an increasing withdrawal of local services accompanied by centralisation of services:

“Patient transportation is being reduced. …people had access to patient transportation by ambulance or if it was not serious for an ambulance, a contribution according to the kilometres driven was given. Nowadays there are hardly ambulances except for the very serious cases.” (Interview 3)

“Some time ago a lady from the next village came (to the Health Centre). An ambulance was not provided and the lady had to come by taxi. There was not public transportation so she had to pay for a taxi. We had to fix it so she could
come with another patient from the same village who came with her own car.” (Interview 3)

Cuts in specific treatment services combined with poor transportation can be problematic for those with long term conditions:

“For example, people who are on dialysis are affected by cuts… anybody who is on the afternoon shift for dialysis is picked up at 7am and is brought back at 6pm because a tour around all the area is made picking people up.” (Interview 3)

Given the changes in healthcare services, some stakeholders in La Manchuela expressed concerns about the potential privatisation of services such as health:

“The discrediting of public healthcare is making people believe that it does not work. They are making people believe that it doesn’t work because of the waiting lists, because there are very few staff and that they want to do many things but can’t… people despair, maybe they have an appointment for the morning then it is changed to the afternoon, their doctor is not available and so are seen by another… All these things annoy the patient. It is a way for population to believe that it is true that public healthcare is not working and it has to be privatised.” (Interview 3)

“So we are arriving at the point that instead of being 85% public and 15% private it is going to be the opposite, it is going to be the 15% public and 85% private. And here 100% of the population cannot pay that… 99.9% of the population here are suffering from austerity they have few resources.” (Interview 3)

The threat of privatisation, it was believed, would lead to the reduction of the range of services on offer due to the lack of economies of scale and access to services would become more expensive.

Social services

The provision and management of social services are also affected by cuts. Castilla-La Mancha had reduced it social services budget by around 27% between 2009 (€ 981.147.961) and 2012 (€ 718.750.950). However it is worth noting that Castilla-La Mancha is one of the Autonomous Communities which has spent more money on social services per inhabitant each year and allocates a higher percentage of its regional expenditure on social services around 11% in 2012, in contrast to the Spanish average which was approximately 8% (Indice de Desarrollo de los Servicios Sociales, p. 88). However, even in the wake of the economic crisis, the Junta of Castilla-La Mancha has tried to keep to its spending commitments in order to keep the social services going. However, stakeholders reported that this has meant that the Junta has accumulated a debt of around '800.000 or 900.000 Euros' and because of changes in central government funding rules the funding to the Junta has been cut: 'According to the administration, if you are in debt you cannot receive the corresponding aids'. The cuts in social services have resulted in reduction of staff
affecting the provision of social services and care especially to vulnerable people who need support. The loss of staff was identified by stakeholders as critical:

"On the one hand, work developed over years has being lost, social assistants who were working twenty years, who knew everything at the back of their hands, who knew anything that was going on, who detected easily any problem that a family was facing, because they had a special instinct because they had spent a lot of time and they had a special skill for dealing with people and supporting them." (Interview 13)

The cuts in domiciliary support was cited as affecting the costs of accessing care; for example those accessing telecare or remote assistance in Castilla La Mancha free previously now have to pay for the service and dependency benefits have also been cut. The quantity and quality of care for older people in particular has also been adversely affected:

"The current crisis in domiciliary support in Castilla-La Mancha, and specifically in Albacete..., the number of hours is being reduced. Before a person may have received six or eight hours a week of domiciliary support, it has been reduced to three or four based on economic criteria. That is, if the budget is reduced or it is maintained but the number of cases rises, hours have to be distributed. So, it is getting worse because people in charge of these services are doing just the basics. The basics are to fill the fridge, ensure there is some food and do some cleaning, but other aspects related to companionship and information are lost." (Interview 7)

Rurality and remoteness

Demographic trends: depopulation, ageing, masculinisation and migration

The role of particular demographic trends (ageing population, high levels of youth migration and low fertility rates) combined with scattered populations in some rural areas in exacerbating the conditions that lead to poverty and social exclusion has been recognised by previous research (see for example Bertolini et al., 2008; Camarero et al., 2009). As discussed in Chapter 3 the rural population in Albacete province and La Manchuela as with a number of other Spanish rural areas is characterised by a process of depopulation linked to patterns of ageing and out migration of the young and economically active as well as a dispersed population. This has resulted in limited economic opportunities, the masculinisation of rural areas and an increase in immigrants. The demographic trends described in this section were identified by stakeholders as leading to a viscous circle where there has been an increasing reduction of goods and services and declining economic activities leading to further depopulation and abandonment of villages. This section describes the following aspects of demographic trends and its consequences for La Manchuela and Albacete as discussed by Stakeholders: depopulation, ageing, masculinisation and migration.
Depopulation

As pointed out in the Programa de Desarrollo Rural Sostenible del Medio Rural (Gobierno de España, 2010), the Spanish population living in rural areas decreased from 19.4% to 17.7% between 1999 and 2008 in contrast to urban areas which experienced population growth during this period. This loss of population was not homogeneous across rural areas and the smallest municipalities, those with less than 2000 inhabitants, lost 30% of their population and municipalities with less than 1000 inhabitants lost almost 18% (Gobierno de España, 2010, p. 6). During this period, La Manchuela increased its population to 4.8%, from 29,445 inhabitants in 1999 to 30,857 in 2008 and its current population was estimated at around 30,931 inhabitants (INE, Official population figures 2008). The tendency for La Manchuela to maintain its population at around 30,000 was recognised by stakeholders. However most of the growth of population was concentrated in the largest municipalities; municipalities with more than 2,000 inhabitants grew by 12%. Meanwhile the smallest municipalities lost population (a loss of 6% in municipalities with less than 1,000 inhabitants) (INE, Oficial population figures, 1999 and 2008). Consequently while the overall population in La Manchuela has been maintained, the smallest villages have been suffering depopulation and the urbanisation of the population has been increasing as people who can move to larger municipalities (such as Casas Ibañez) and the city of Albacete do so, so they can access services which are increasingly concentrated in bigger towns and villages:

“Population has increased here [Casas Ibañez- My Italics] we have certain services here compared to the surrounding municipalities...they find the school here because in many municipalities schools for certain ages have been closed. Here there are schools for all ages. So they come here to live.” (Interview 5)

Almost all those interviewed raised concerns about the cuts in health and education (disused above) in particular. With regard to cuts in education the main issue for stakeholders was the impact on families and young children and the ways in which this was exacerbating the depopulation process:

“Now with all the cuts we have in health, education and social services, which are the basis of social welfare our villages are going to disappear. They are going to disappear because in education there is no transport, it is awful, in health there is no transport or anything, and the population is going to move to the biggest centres. Our little villages will disappear if they keep to these policies.” (Interview 3)

“There is no school after the third grade. They have to then come to Casas Ibañez, Villamalea or Madrigueras. This means that population have to move around. A family, logically thinks “when you move children around, what are you doing there?” So the family prefers to move rather than have the children travelling back and forth. We clearly notice than the only councils which keep their population or even have an increasing population are those three I have
named before, Villamalea, Casas Ibáñez and Madrigueras. The rest of them are decreasing.” (Interview 6)

“The school has being closed this year... I imagine the young person who lives there and has children says "Let's leave here because if the three year old kid is going to have to be travelling it is better not to live in this village".” (Interview 10)

However, Stakeholders did describe a strategy they had deployed related to governance to try and ensure smaller villages had a voice so that issues such as depopulation could be addressed:

“Since we first governed here [Casas Ibáñez -My italics [ we have been very clear, that this head of comarca 2] referring to one of the small villages – My Italics] must be kept as part of the municipal policy although it costs more, but we had to fight for the idea of keeping the head of comarca. And I think it is because of that the village has experienced an increase in population and it is not one of those villages where population is decreasing.” (Interview 5)

**Ageing and older people**

The Spanish population over 65 years of age was 16% in 2008, while it was the 22.3% in rural municipalities (Gobierno de España, 2010, p. 9), exacerbated by factors such as lower fertility rates, higher life expectancy and out-migration of young people (Camarero et al., 2009) The ageing population was emphasised as one of the most important issues affecting La Manchuela during the interviews. Causes of this phenomenon were associated with migration movements. On the one hand, young people were leaving the comarca:

“[Population is- My Italics] aging because children used to move to work outside the area...a lot emigrated to Valencia, a lot of children are in Valencia...” (Interview 10)

On the other hand, immigration (discussed further in the next section) and return immigration in particular - retired people who were originally from the area and had moved elsewhere (for example other parts of Spain and abroad) in the 1960s, had returned to their birth-places- was also associated with contributing to the ageing population. Whilst return migrants may stay healthy following their return deterioration of their health as they grow older can be a problem in rural areas especially in a context where as has been discussed above there have been cuts in service provision. In the situation it may be difficult to access health and social care

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2 The Spanish term “comarca” is applied to territorial divisions which bring together proximate municipalities which share similar physical and human geographical features. In some Autonomous Communities, as for example Catalonia, comarcas are established as administrative units and have some powers invested in the comarcal council, but this is not typical in most of Spain. For instance, in Castille- La Mancha, comarcas do not form part of the local administration. However, it is usual that municipalities which form part of a natural comarca may come together and form Mancomunidades (see Annex III). In this case study, "La Manchuela” is the name of the natural comarca (for further information about its geographical and agricultural characteristics see Fernández, 2008, p. 81-97) and also of the Mancomunidad formed by almost the same municipalities which are part of this territorial unit.
services in a context where the numbers of dependent elderly people outnumber young and economically active people:

“A comeback to rural areas of old people who emigrated to other parts of Spain or abroad is happening and once they are retired they come back to their village, because they have the family house, they feel homesick, they want to recover their roots… at the beginning of their retirement they may feel well from a physical point of view, but unfortunately over a period of time their situation deteriorates as they get older.” (Interview 7)

The ageing population was also cited as having an adverse impact on the social structures of communities, for example on sustaining associations which provide support for those in need:

“There are associations for several groups…disabled, disabled’s parents of those who have psychological problems, two of physical disabled… The physical disabled ones do little because they are old, the president, the secretaries; they have all become older, so some of them are not able to undertake many activities." (Interview 4)

Masculinisation: ‘men stay and women go to the city’

Another issue which research on rural areas in Spain has consistently highlighted is the masculinisation process which has resulted in more economically active men present in rural areas than women, and as discussed in Chapter 3 the smallest municipalities seemed to be the most affected (Camarero et al., 2009). This trend has social consequences resulting in lower birth rates as well as affecting issues such as the provision of care in a context where women are still the providers of care and there is a growing elderly population. The importance of this phenomenon has been pointed out by the two researchers who were interviewed:

“On the one hand there is depopulation and on the other hand there is masculinisation. Women go away from the countryside to cities more than men do. And that is very important because the woman’s role as a carer in the family is highly significant. And there are fewer women in the countryside than there should be.” (Interview 12)

However most stakeholders did not explicitly discuss the masculinisation process per se but rather issues related to men emerged in conversations about the prevalence of alcoholism and people who needed social services support. Issues affecting single men were identified as being more visible for various reasons:

“Maybe they are more visible because they go to the bar.” (Interview 10)

“It is that they ask for more things, or you see that they wear dirty clothes, or they need meals delivered…” (Interview 11)

“The problem is a solo man. A solo woman manages well.” (Interview 10)
Migration

Changing demographic trends and ageing processes are also both closely related to migratory movements affecting La Manchuela. Spain has traditionally been a country of emigration, however, in the last twenty years it has also become a destination for foreign immigrants (Gobierno de España, 2010, p. 10). Both emigration and immigration have affected rural municipalities in particular, and Stakeholders discussed the impact of both phenomena on their communities. Although immigration (both new immigrants and returnees) was cited as enabling the comarca to maintain its population level with the economic crisis this has been changing:

“It is true that immigration has helped us a lot in the last few years. Maintaining the population has been possible thanks to immigrants. There are 30,000 people in La Manchuela, and for example 2000 to 2500 were immigrants in 2006, or even 3000. However, immigrants have been leaving because the job situation is awful, but the population is being maintained because people from the comarca are not leaving as before to go to Valencia, Madrid, Catalonia or Germany.”

Stakeholders distinguished between three different groups of people who have been arriving in La Manchuela for the last years. The first group, briefly highlighted above, were retired returnees who were originally from the area:

“In the 50s a lot of people went to Barcelona, but mainly in the 60s many many people moved to Valencia, entire families moved: parents, children, cousins, everybody. Then, when they are retired as they have kept a house here, many of them come back again.” (Interview 5)

“…people who left in the sixties and seventies from the countryside to the city… Then Las Navas suffered terrible emigration even higher than other villages in the comarca. Now we have a third of population than were there in the forties and fifties. But in the last few years, people who emigrated are coming back to the village when they retire. And this is happening generally in the comarca the “prodigal son” coming back.” (Interview 8)

The second group of people identified by Stakeholders were families who arrived in La Manchuela seeking out more affordable housing, although they were working in urban areas:

“There were some years when there was a lot of house building and some families came to live in the villages in order to access a cheaper house, cheaper mortgages also. But they worked in Albacete and they came back to sleep. This happened in Montilleja [Montilleja is located north of the province of Albacete and is 23 km from the capital city Albacete – My italics] a lot, a lot of houses were built.” (Interview 10)

The third group of immigrants mentioned by Stakeholders were those from outside Spain mainly from what were seen as ‘developing countries’. Between 2001 and 2007 the population of foreign origin living in rural areas increased from
approximately 3% to 7% (Camarero et al., 2009, p. 129). This immigration was closely associated with a period of economic growth in Spain, attempts to attract immigrants to depopulated areas of Castilla La-Mancha and the search for better life opportunities among immigrants (Camarero et al., 2009; FOESSA, 2008). Most of the immigrants were employed in the agricultural sector (discussed further in Chapter 5) and Stakeholders identified two types of immigration within this third group: the seasonal workers and those who were there more permanently:

“In Castilla-La Mancha these flows [of workers- my italics] occurs at specific times, for the harvesting of garlic it has to be at a very specific time, for the grape harvest is another very specific time ... There are peaks when there is a need for a significant movement of people to a certain point.” (Interview 14)

However, while much of the work was undertaken by immigrants previously the situation was seen to be changing since the economic crisis:

“Before it was all people coming from outside, but not now, now it is the is the local population, people living here all the time who are joining the workforce in order to have a chance of earning some money.” (Interview 14)

The ‘sudden' arrival of immigrants in areas which were traditionally emigration areas impacted on the villages and communities in various ways. On the one hand the role of immigrants in stabilising the population of the areas was widely cited by Stakeholders:

“We have had around 600 immigrant people. I don’t know if it was in 2010 that we say the most arrivals. So those people are also young. For example, Moroccan women are very young girls who have children, three or four children, and that is good because they go to school, they stay...The country from which most immigrants have come from has been Romania, it is followed by Morocco, Bulgaria... There are also quite a few Bolivians, and very few Colombian, and maybe three or four Ukrainians.” (Interview 5)

“I think that people coming to Casas Ibáñez are mostly young people, young people who have little children.” (Interview 5)

However the immigration trends are complex and the economic crisis has resulted in diverse and at times contrasting trends in different directions according to stakeholders. It has increased the number of people who are returning to their family households because they cannot afford to live elsewhere:

“People, as they cannot afford to live by themselves, come back to the villages. Many children who worked outside are coming back now as they are unemployed.” (Interview 10)

“It is true that there are some people returning to rural areas where the access to housing is easier in principle and more affordable and where the primary sector provides some employment possibilities even if it is temporary.” (Interview 14)
At the same it was pointed out that it is not just immigrants who are leaving the area because of the economic crisis but also young people were reported as leaving their villages in order to study or find better opportunities elsewhere:

“The idea of looking for opportunities by going outside Spain amongst the young people who have finished their studies in the last two or three years has been growing. I was told yesterday about a boy and a girl who have gone to work in England. Also a few days ago about one who was going to go to China. Things are at boiling point amongst people who are finishing their studies.” (Interview 8)

“Young people are away most of them. They leave, those who are not studying away are looking for opportunities elsewhere where they can… My daughter is in Cuenca, she looked, she went to study there and she stayed there. Because here [there is nothing – my Italics] … And she is not even working in her [area of work- my italics], but it is all right. Most from here go to Valencia, most young people have stayed there.” (Interview 9)

As villages in La Manchuela continue losing their young population and immigrants with young families return this reinforces the depopulation and ageing processes that rural areas have been experiencing.

Access to services and transport

In a rural context location and geography as well as the scattered nature of the population can result in social exclusion in relation to accessing services. It is widely acknowledged that the access to public services contributes to a good quality of life and social well being and that service provision is very important in order to sustain rural areas and their communities. Conversely the absence of public services is seen as resulting in or exacerbating social exclusion for some groups and individuals (Gobierno de España, 2013; Subirats, 2005; FOESSA, 2008). Despite the recognition of the importance of ensuring good access to services and indeed service provision in some rural municipalities have improved, in practice service access and provision in a number of the very small rural municipalities in particular is acknowledged as being poor in relation to a range of services. These include, for example: transport infrastructure; energy access and supply; water supply and treatment; telephone land lines, broadband and mobile phone access; education services; healthcare; and culture and leisure services (Gobierno de España, 2010)

The difficulties of attracting businesses and commercial activities and services in the smallest municipalities in rural areas are also well recognised. For example a study by Marcos & Salonas (2007) in Asturias, Andalucia, Navarra and Galicia found that commercial activities and services are concentrated in the biggest municipalities. Access to transport is intrinsically linked to accessing services in a context where the population is dispersed and is sparse. The strategic role of having access to transport is strongly emphasised in the rural context by Camarero et al. (2009, p. 141-142):

“Automobility has become a key element in the contemporary rural world. Especially for life in certain types of habitats (dispersed settlements, mountain
areas) or those areas with special socioeconomic characteristics: with significant elderly populations, with very small populations which do not make public transportation cost effective, and dependent on extra local labour markets, etc. in addition, the centralization of services (healthcare and education among others), as well as shopping and leisure activities also give mobility a strategic role.”

Although La Manchuela is not considered a particularly difficult area to access services, issues of access differ between villages in the plain and villages in the Júcar valley and the heterogeneous nature of La Manchuela was emphasised by stakeholders:

“First, the [spread of the- My italics] rural population is not uniform across the region: there is a difference between how the rural population is organized in different provinces, and so, there are provinces with a huge number of very small municipalities mainly in Cuenca and in Guadalajara, and basically other large and populous municipalities in Ciudad Real and Toledo, but very few municipalities with lots of local entities linked to them in a very large territory as in Albacete.” (Interview 14)

Stakeholders described Albacete as an area characterised by many very small municipalities spread across a vast area with small populations. In this context public buses are seen as the main form of transportation, especially between the smallest municipalities, so its presence and regularity are fundamental in order to ensure the mobility of its inhabitants and access to services (Subirats, 2005). Stakeholders had varying views on the adequacy of services and transport, depending on where they lived (a larger or smaller village) as well as whether they had experienced cuts in services as discussed above. In comparison to the smaller villages, most of the services were concentrated in the larger villages in the comarca:

“The headquarters of the comarca is located here. And that means that many services are here in this municipality. For example, public services such as the notary, register of property, the court of the investigating magistrate…” (Interview 5)

“We have here a health centre. Villamalea has one, Casas Ibáñez has another one, Madrigueras has another, Casas de Juan Núñez has one… But not everyplace has the same services. For example, we have one here in […] physiotherapy, x-rays, and a little operating room. In other health centres they may not have all the same facilities.” (Interview 3)

Large municipalities may have access to a doctor everyday of the week in contrast to a smaller municipality or village where it might be once a week:

“There are hamlets with 25 people or 50 people… They go [ to the doctor- my italics] one day a week. The rest of the days, if they have any need, they have to go to the nearest village, which maybe 3 km, 4 km, 2 km away. But, I think
Balsa will be one of the smallest villages here and it will have 400 or 600 inhabitants and they have a doctor and nurse every day.” (Interview 3)

“There are villages that are without doctor for a morning or half a morning, and they have to share a doctor with another village which is also going to be without a doctor for half a morning.” (Interview 3)

The withdrawal and centralisation of services was also highlighted in relation to education

“…some little village schools have been shut down removed and now children have to travel from a very young age. The school in Villavaliente has been closed this year. So children who are three years old have to go elsewhere.” (Interview 10)

The provision of services for old people is also an issue in areas as La Manchuela given the ageing rate and the proportion of old people living in the area:

“There are 108 or 110 centres for older people in different towns in Castilla-La Mancha, but most are in large cities, there are some in rural areas but very few... activities such as maintaining cognitive development, disability prevention and all that stuff take place in the centre for older people... In Castilla-La Mancha's 800-odd municipalities, nearly 900 or so, maybe 85% of municipalities have no Senior Centres, and there are very small villages full of old people. And those people do not have access to the resources.” (Interview 12)

Furthermore services for young people are lacking in the area. The lack of services can be both a consequence of the ageing population but also a reason why young people leave. The real issue is when the same village suffers from the lack of several services at a time.

“School has being closed in Villavaliente this year. [...] And we also know that the Health Centre is going to reduce the number of visits... The medical team has been reduced in the area, so I think that there are going to be visits once a week or so in Villavaliente.” (Interview 10)

A small minority of Stakeholders felt that the current public transport services were adequate:

“We have a regular bus service, a line which links us with the capital and bordering municipalities at least twice a day; once in the morning and once in the afternoon with the capital and with Madrigueras which is our main village, a big village with more than 5.000 inhabitants.” (Interview 8)

However the views of the majority of the stakeholders was that public transport options were poor making it difficult for people to travel to work and access services which as was discussed above are increasingly concentrated in larger municipalities:
“Communication between villages is poor. It is not because there are no roads, but because but because of public transportation: there are no buses or the schedule is not good for easy communication.” (Interview 3)

“Transportation is also not good to the capital. Now there have been even more cuts in transport. Maybe each village has one bus a day: you can go in the morning and come back in the afternoon. So even if you have no job here and you maybe want to go to the capital to work by public transport because you cannot do so.” (Interview 10)

The Plan of the Centre for Rural Development of La Manchuela (CEDER, 2011, p. 26) does recognise the importance of having good transport services adapted to the needs of the population and one which connects the different localities in the comarca. However the views expressed by the Stakeholders above reflect the situation of rural areas across Spain, where it is recognised that the communication infrastructures are deficient especially between rural villages; and public transport services barely reach the most remote rural places because they are not profitable and the cost of maintenance is high (Gobierno de España, 2010). Given the inadequacy of public transport, access to private transport is very important in rural areas (Subirats, 2005). Consequently mobility status - holding a driving license and having a car (auto mobility)- is critical in order to be able to access services, work and travel around the area. Camarero et al. (2009) report that immobility increases in smaller municipalities and is most significant in rural municipalities in particular:

“In municipalities with less than 2,000 inhabitants one of every five persons lacks an automobile in their home and one in every four in municipalities with less than 500 inhabitants.” (p. 142).

Mobility status varies across different groups. Those most at risk of immobility include: older people -especially those between 50 and 80 years of age; women; those on low income; the unemployed; and those suffering from ill health or disability are also adversely affected (see also Camarero et al., 2009). Age was a factor that was cited frequently by stakeholders:

“There are some forms, some leaflets that one needs to make claims related to the ‘Guarantee Law’ but they are in Albacete, they are not available in all of the regional centres. So, who is going to Albacete to claim that? People who do not have even a driving license, who are old people…I am young, I have a driving license, but I may have to take a day of work so that I can go and make a claim.” (Interview 3)

Lack of mobility means relying on family or neighbours to drive them to access services:

“For the moment they manage when (the doctor) comes on Tuesdays and if they need something in the week there is always somebody who drives them. If they are old they ask their neighbours or someone they know and they are driven to the village.” (Interview 9)
However, services are changing and adapting to their rural context. For example services which are not dependent on a large infrastructure are provided in La Manchuela by itinerant professionals as in the social services sector for example:

“Our staff is always itinerant. Community workers provide their service where there is a need, that is, they have two families in Recuejá, which is a little village, for example, then they attend to them at home. Because families who are social excluded in most of cases do not have resources even for getting around. And it is logical for the practitioner to travel to them.” (Interview 6)

There is also recognition of the need to adapt the delivery of services to the characteristics of rural areas:

“Resources adapted to rural areas must be provided. For example, the idea of a mobile library (bibliobuses) can be generalized for other things. A bus for many other things which goes once a week to each place. And that is cheaper than installing a centre in each place.” (Interview 12)

Income

As highlighted in Chapter 3 low income was identified as an issue that affected rural areas in particular. In the context of the interviews this was largely associated with three factors. Despite the fact that only approximately 16% of the income in rural areas is linked to agriculture, those interviewed associated low wages with this sector. The second factor emphasised was the growing elderly population who are dependent on retirement pensions and in particular pensions associated with working in the agricultural sector which are low. The third factor was related to those on unemployment benefits. Overall 32% of the income was associated with retirement pensions and unemployment benefits. (Libro Blanco de la Agricultura y el Desarrollo Rural cited in Gobierno de España, 2010, p. 13).

Overall low income affected a wide range of households in rural areas and the economic situation that people found themselves in was emphasised as the most important factors by Stakeholders in determining who was at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

“The economic is the most basic [social problem- My italics]. It is overwhelming us right now, so we are very concerned about that and it seems that you do not notice anything else so much.” (Interview 4)

Those involved in researching also highlighted economic factors (income, employment etc) as being given a higher emphasis than other indicators when measuring social exclusion:

“In the study (“La exclusion social en Castilla-La Mancha”- My italics) the economic axis was weighted over 60%. There were 34 measures of exclusion divided between three axis: an economic axis, a social axis and a political axis... And then, almost the half of the households, 45% of households were excluded based on indicators from the economic axis.” (Interview 12)
There was a recognition that pensions and benefits could be seen as being a stable source of income:

“There are many people of a certain age who have their retirement pension and do not have “economic problems”. They do not have plenty, but they live in their village where they have been all their life, and are well and with no problems.” (Interview 8)

However, this was a minority view, most Stakeholders emphasised the low levels of pensions as increasing the vulnerability of older people to poverty.

“In rural areas […] there is a high rate of older people under the poverty threshold because they have paid contributions in the context of the agrarian regime and the agrarian pensions are very low.” (Interview 7)

“When we made that study we were asked “What can we do?” And we said “Look, almost all the poor in Castilla-La Mancha are old retired people because retirement pensions are under the poverty threshold”. The poverty threshold was around 500 Euros and a large number of retired people from Castilla-La Mancha get a lower income, so they enter into poverty. If you raise their pension they will leave poverty. Well, that can be discussed because as poverty is relative the Index will change, but we can say that the situation would improve a lot…” (Interview 12)

Another aspect to understanding the economic situation that households find themselves in is by taking into account their expenditure. Rural households in Castilla La- Mancha were identified as have more problems in facing unexpected expenditure than urban households (Plan Estratégico de Ayuda a la Familia, 2013-2016, p. 73). Furthermore, despite the lower housing costs, those interviewed pointed out the level of expenditure for households have been rising due to increase in costs of accessing services and the cuts in services discussed in the last section as well as lack of employment has increased the cost of living:

“I see people coming, mainly to Casas de Juan Núñez, people from Albacete city looking for cheaper rent with families, and then find that here there are neither any jobs nor many resources.” (Interview 11)
5 Poverty and social exclusion: groups at risk

The previous chapter touched on specific groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion as a consequence of the economic crisis, cuts in public expenditure, remoteness and so on. This chapter highlights additional factors that may intersect with, for example demographic features (e.g. age, gender and immigrant status); health and personal situation; and economic factors (discussed in the last chapter) which interviewees specifically highlighted and reflect a combination of both structural factors and personal circumstances. Some of the most important combinations which emerged in the interviews were:

- Children + Immigrants Parents + Unemployment
- Children + Immigrants Parents + Non Spanish Speaker
- Children + special needs
- Immigration + Unemployment
- Unemployment + Mortgage debts
- Unemployment + Not driving license
- Old + Health issues
- Old + No family
- Low income + extra expenditure
- Health issues + Solo living + Not driving license

Although economic factors were identified in all cases, it was the combination of economic with other factors that change over time (see Chapter 4) that were perceived as increasing the vulnerability of some groups. For example, in the case of older people, the level of income was identified as important but health was emphasised as critical with regard to whether an old person on a low pension was at risk of poverty and exclusion:

“In rural areas and in the concrete case of older people, [...], there is a high rate of old people on the poverty threshold. However, If this person or couple is in good health, does not have any dementia problem, does not have any accident, with the money they receive that person can probably still be socially active and may be well integrated and not in need of support as he or she is in their own home and does not have to pay housing, does not have to pay rent.” (Interview 7)

5.1 Groups at risk

Old people

As previously discussed in Chapter 4 given the ageing population most of those interviewed emphasised older people as being at most risk of poverty because of their low pensions. This is reflected in the data available. For example, according to data produced by the Spanish Institute of Old People and Social Services...
(IMSERSO, 2008, p. 185) in 2006, the percentage of old people (over 65 years of age) under the poverty threshold was around 31% higher than the Spanish average (approximately 20%). The annual income of a third of old aged households was below € 9000 and that of 72% of households was below € 19,999. In a rural context this was exacerbated because pensions were mainly associated with the agricultural sector which were recognised as being particularly low.

There was a recognition that that there have been policies implemented in the last few years to improve the situation of older people and in contrast to other groups they do have an assured income even if it is minimal:

“Old people are receiving a pension and so they have some guaranteed income which enables them to survive, this is not the same in families or families with children, or long term unemployed who do not have those minimum incomes when the benefits are over.” (Interview 14)

“Maybe for a while the issue of elderly was more difficult, but old people's homes and day care centres have been established in the last few years. So, luckily there is certain coverage for when older people have needs.” (Interview 4)

However most of those interviewed also recognised the diverse situation of older people and the impact of the economic crisis as jeopardising gains that had been made as well as issues such as ill health increasing the risk of old people to poverty and social exclusion. The economic crisis has had a number of impacts: prices rising; households are affected by unemployment and pensions are having to go further to support children and grandchildren as the only reliable source of income; and benefits designed to support older people with additional needs are being cut:

“In addition to cuts in pensions the price of power is rising…these cuts combine to affect old people, and their grand children who come back home to get the meals with the grandparent [As families are affected by the economic crisis they rely on the older generation to help them out- My italics] ... So, we see that the group of old people are more impoverished each time.” (Interview 10)

The cut in 'dependency benefit ' (support for those in need of additional care) are increasing the risk of poverty and social exclusion among older people, especially those who may not have made enough of contributions into the Spanish system:

“The accompanying benefits such as dependent spouse in cases where they had worked in a foreign country and they had a minimum pension from abroad are being cut. So from a minimal basic pension of about 700 € odd around 140 € of the dependent spouse supplement will be taken away.” (Interview 10)

In addition the cuts in 'dependency ' benefits has other impacts, for example limiting the option of people staying in their own homes, increasing pressure on already oversubscribed places in care homes and so on:
“The Dependency Act when it was first implemented had many benefits; some of the supports that were available have now been cut. New people who come and apply for Dependency have less access than those who did three years ago, because there are some things that they cannot apply for. For example, if my mother stays in home and she has a basic pension around 600 €. If she gets ill and has mobility difficulties and cannot leave alone, but with 600 € she cannot hire someone to live in unless she has savings. With the dependency benefits there were an economic aid of 300 € which allowed the person to hire someone to take care of them. You paid a part and that benefit helped you to pay the rest. And that was great because it led people to stay at home, in their homes which is the best for anybody and you provided employment because there is a person staying with you, and it was much cheaper for the Administration than a residence. A place in a residence cost 1,400 at least, and that was 400, for example. So it was beneficial for everybody. But this benefit is not available anymore, and many people are having to go to residences, and it is going to be more expensive for the Administration. With this cut you have removed somebody from their home, you have removed an employment and there is going to be a waiting list in the residences because there are not going to be enough places for everyone.” (Interview 4)

Old age combined with health problems were cited by Stakeholders as key factors in increasing their risk of poverty and exclusion. Thirty four percent of people over 65 years of age reported their health condition as being bad or very bad and were reported as suffering more illnesses compared to the general adult population (IMSERSO report, 2008, p. 186). This was reflected in the interviews in La Manchuela:

“You walk into a medical centre and most people there are old people because of their arthritis, their cholesterol, their diabetes, their blood pressure... They are the ones who make most demands on [medical care- my italics] … In rehabilitation 98% are very old people, people who have had a knee surgery, a fall, a shoulder broken... people who do not have stability, who fall...” (Interview 3)

As the main users of medical and health services are old people, they are also the ones most affected by cuts in these services (discussed in Chapter 4). There was a recognition that the problems of old people in rural areas such as La Manchuela are probably similar to those that old people face in cities, however, the issue of access was seen as an additional barrier affecting rural areas:

“I feel that old people in rural areas do not have higher exclusion risk than in non-rural areas, maybe just in certain rural areas where there is a big distance. But I feel that in general they face the same problems or the same social exclusion risks that any old person could have in a urban place.” (Interview 14)
“The profile [of people most affected by cuts in health services- My Italics] are old people... Now we have a very old population who are 85 years old, 90 years old. They are being very affected. For example, we have very small villages and their people used to come more to rehabilitation and now there are less people asking for it. They ask for it less because they do not have the transportation provided by health services which allows them to access the service.” (Interview 3)

Poor access to auto mobility, as discussed previously. Not only means dependence on family and neighbours for those who are lucky enough to have these sources of support but can also result in social isolation.

**Young people**

Young people in La Manchuela are identified as vulnerable groups in two different senses associated with career development choices: access to continuing education beyond compulsory studies; and accessing appropriate employment. According to a report on Spanish youth, in 2012, around 6% of young people aged 16 years had dropped out of the education system. Fifty percent of young people aged under 17 years who dropped out would have liked to continue secondary school studies and approximately 34% would have liked to study at a University. Furthermore, since 2008 the percentage of young Spaniards who have left school because of economic reasons has increased (11.7%) (Injuve, 2013, p. 106 & 107). Education services in La Manchuela beyond compulsory studies are of two types delivered in secondary schools: ‘Bachillerato’ course of studies designed for those who want to prepare themselves for University studies and by 'Formación Profesional' (professional studies) designed for those who want professional qualifications. As discussed in Chapter 4 young people in La Manchuela and rural areas in particular are constrained in their choices given the closure of schools in small villages due to the cuts in educational services and the need to travel further combined with the lack of transport and the costs of transport:

“The matter is not so much that those one who want study Bachillerato or Formación Profesional have to pay for transportation, which obviously makes it more expensive, but that there is no option of public transport [...] This does not happen in a city: you can walk to your High School. But the most damaging thing for our students or what is affecting them the most, is that there are students from villages far from Casas Ibáñez and there is only a boy or a girl in that village, so they cannot combine together to pay for or hire some transportation. So, there are students who will have to quit studying after compulsory education because they cannot organise transportation, there are others who had to quit because they cannot afford it. And we see that this is an unfairness when compared with the city.”

Given the cuts in support service, Stakeholders also expressed concerns about the lack of support for young people who left school before finishing their studies including the ni-ni” (described in the UK as 'NEET'-Not in Education, Employment and Training) group who are between 16 and 29 years of age, respectively, and who
decide not to assume a functional role with regard to work, study or family (Injuve, 2008, p. 28):

“Those who fail in school do not have a chance. So there are many, many young people who do nothing. Before they perhaps started to work with their parents in construction or similar, but as now those small businesses are not running, they are not studying or working. There are many young people who do nothing.” (Interview 10)

“When they arrive at High School there are students who are almost waiting to be 16 to leave, because they have fallen so far behind, there is a big curricular gap, if you cannot provide them with support and reinforcement measures it is very difficult to get them to catch up, so conflicts arise. "If I am in a class where I understand nothing, and then I am in another where I understand nothing and so on, and so a morning and the following, and the following, then I will try to distract myself with anything." support measures are practically nonexistent in High School and similar Schools.” (Interview 1)

The lack of facilities or activities for young people to do in the little villages of La Manchuela as well as the lack of access to employment more generally in the context of the economic crisis was identified by those interviewed as reinforcing the exclusion of young people. The unemployment rate among young people in Spain increased from 26% in 1999 to 46% in 2012, which is double that of the European rate (Injuve, 2013, p. 112). Stakeholders expressed grave concerns about these trends in relation to young people and in particular expressed concerns about the impact on the depopulation process:

“Young people are away most of them. They leave, those who are not studying away look for somewhere where they can [go- My italics]…” (Interview 9)

Children

Research in Spain on child poverty reveals that the working status of parents has an important effect on the poverty rate of children; the probability of children being in poverty increases if the person responsible for providing care and protection for the family is unemployed (IUNDIA, 2010, p. 126). The children (0-17 years of age) at risk of poverty in Castilla-La Mancha in 2010 was 27% which was slightly higher than the Spanish average which was 26% (UNICEF, 2012, p. 38). Children were also one of the most vulnerable groups in La Manchuela in so far as they were affected by the deteriorating economic circumstances of their households and families:

"In every course there is some kid whose family has certain circumstances which makes them suffer from negligence at home. From the basic, which is what is seen, for example not bringing a sandwich, not doing homework … or absences. Every year there is some teacher who says that some kid is always hugging her, and that is because of a lack of love. And the teacher notices it … So behind this there is a family which is emotionally neglecting the kid.” (Interview 4)
Furthermore, children from low-income households may not have access to the same activities and opportunities outside school as children from families with a reasonable income; for example, access to sports, language or art lessons which are equally important to their development as adults as formal educational opportunities (Gaitán, 2011, p. 180). Immigration is also a factor which can increase a child's risk to social exclusion and may need special support at school:

"Children who are immigrants have gaps, sometimes because of language skills, not because of their ability. So we need to give them specific language support. Because at home they speak their own language which is normal and logical." (Interview 2)

Solo living and people without families

The role of the family in Spain in supporting those at risk due to issues such as unemployment and social vulnerabilities arising from, for example, disability, ill health, old age and so on are recognised by research (FOESSA, 2008; Subirats, 2005a). Stakeholders identified family and informal relationships and networks as the primary source of support for the vulnerable and contrasted this with countries where the role of the state is more prominent:

"People ask why in a country which has a 26% unemployment rate a social explosion as has happened in Greece, has not happened here for example? Because of familiar support. Familiar solidarity is huge here and it replaces the solidarity of the State; which in other countries is made by the State, it is made here by families. So, if a person works that is not just for him, is for all the people in the family." (Interview 12)

"Anyway here there is family support in villages, which I imagine is different in cities. So if you cannot cope this you go to your sister's home to have a meal, and the children go there to have a snack, and the neighbour gives you a vegetable garden." (Interview 10)

The role of older people in providing financial support to other family members from their own meagre pensions was identified as important in the context of the economic crisis:

"Even today some of these people who have low pensions are supporting other family members who are in a situation where they don't have any income and this is used to provide support for their children and grandchildren who may be in a worse economic position, or sometimes they may use it for younger people, who may have started an independent life but need to pay off a deposit so they can come back to the household, to the family household, to the grandparents' home, because they know that they have guaranteed food and bed, and so they are not getting into a viscous circle which could be, for example, losing the house, having difficulties in accessing a job and ending finally in a precarious situation in the street a homeless person..." (Interview 7)
In this context the existence or absence of strong family ties or strong informal relationships shapes exclusion and vulnerability processes and stakeholders identified people living alone or those without families as being particularly at risk:

“And of course the family provided support when it was required, now it is a shelter for many people. One who has a family is saved, for those that don’t it is very bad especially when they are their limit.” (Interview 4)

The increase in people living on their own (solo living) in La Manchuela was associated by the Stakeholders with the changing demographic structure and growing numbers of old people:

“In Castilla-La Mancha, 3 of each 4 households are formed by one or two people, and they are old. Because divorced people are not in the countryside. So those households are not a divorced woman with a child, they are old people.” (Interview 12)

The outmigration of children and families has also had an impact and older people may no longer be in a position to rely on familial support:

“We often see that the family networks of old people are often not in the same area because the children have emigrated, they have gone to the cities and to other areas in Spain where they have more possibilities, where they have built their lives, they have got married, they have started relationships... And coming back to the rural area is something that happens at specific times, during holidays, at Easter time, or some occasional visit...” (Interview 7)

“Here there were a lot of emigrants who went to work to Valencia, there are a lot of children in Valencia. And there are the grandparents here alone.” (Interview 10)

One of the main impacts of solo living that was identified was the risk of social isolation

“I believe that the fundamental challenge is loneliness,... solitude leads to a deterioration in a number of factors, some of them are physical, personal deterioration, and other deterioration which is psychological.” (Interview 7)

However not all social contact can be positive especially in tight knit rural communities:

“In rural areas we are going to find a higher intensity of what we could consider primary socialization, and this can be very good when there are close relationships that are good in the sense that they facilitate contact, communication, interaction. But the opposite can happen, because if this socialization, if that contact is not positive, it can generate greater isolation.” (Interview 7)
“Those neighbours I am talking about can spend whole days speaking with no one because if they do not have to go shopping to the market, or if they go outside depending on the weather and for example when it is very cold in winter they can spend several days without going out to the market, talking with nobody and not having contact with people who surround them because they are not speaking each other.” (Interview 7)

Immigrants

Immigrants (introduced in Chapter 4) were another group which were identified by stakeholders as one of the most vulnerable in La Manchuela. According to a report by López and Muñoz (2011, p. 2, 3 & 6) there were 3,546 immigrants (11% of the total population of the area) registered in La Manchuela. Seventy eight percent of the immigrant population were concentrated in the following municipalities: Villamalea, Casas Ibáñez, Madrigueras, Fuentealbilla, Cenizate, Casas de Juan Núñez and Alborea. The majority of the immigrants were described as “young people” who were economically active and between 20 and 39 years of age. Only 4% of immigrants were over 60 years of age and 20% of immigrant population were minors and their presence was noted by those interviewed:

“I think that we have at least one immigrant student per class at school. We have around 16 groups with one or two immigrant students per class.” (Interview 2)

Although 55% of the immigrants were men, there were more women than men among some nationalities, as for example among the Colombians (López & Muñoz, 2011, p. 5). The trends in La Manchuela are similar to those identified by Camarero et al. (2009, p. 135) in rural areas of Spain generally. Immigrants from outside the EU-15 were reported as being concentrated in intermediate ages and as contributing to population growth given the presence of households of childbearing age. However, the overwhelming presence of immigrant men was cited as reinforcing the masculinisation process. The presence of more women immigrants from Central and South America Camarero et al (2009) argue is associated with:

“...the transmission of gender inequalities on a global scale. In the regions of Central and South America it is principally women that initiate migratory chains. The devaluation of work and the subordinate economic role attributed to women in these regions makes them, within family strategies, the members selected to participate in transnational labour.” (p. 136)

Camarero et al. (2009) also acknowledge that this feminised immigration has been favourable to Spain as these immigrants have plugged the gaps in, for example, caring for dependents and domestic work in a context where there have been lack of public resources and support and also a lack of women in rural areas who would traditionally be employed in these sectors.

According to research undertaken by López and Muñoz (2011, p. 7-12) La Manchuela had immigrants originating from 52 different countries. Sixty nine percent of the foreign born population registered in La Manchuela were from the EU, and
since 2005 the Court of Casas Ibáñez gave 132 applicants mostly from Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia, Spanish nationality. While over half of the immigrants were from Romania (56%) other nationalities with a high presence in La Manchuela included those from: Morocco, Ecuador, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Colombia. López and Muñoz (2011) also note that the origin of immigrants arriving in La Manchuela had changed over the years. The first immigrants being from Morocco, followed in 2001 by those from Ecuador, Bolivia and Romania since 2004. There was a tendency for particular nationalities to concentrate in specific municipalities (e.g. Moroccans, Ecuadorians and Bulgarians in Casas Ibáñez; Bolivarian and Argentineans in Fuentealbilla; and Colombians in Cenizate (see López and Muñoz, 2011, p. 11).

The diverse origins and tendency to concentrate in specific municipalities resulted in concerns regarding ‘integration’ and immigrant-host relationships. The situation exacerbated by the nature of employment where immigrants have been occupying low skilled seasonal jobs predominantly in the agricultural sector, often working as day workers (‘jornaleros’) and moving from one harvest to another in large groups. The arrival of large numbers of immigrants in groups without access to housing and basic facilities was identified as posing serious social cohesion challenges including being held responsible for thefts, resulting in immigrant –host community conflicts:

“... here in Castilla-La Mancha there is seasonal work in different areas: they [immigrants – My italics] go from the potato to grape harvest, from grape to garlic, from garlic to peach, then to oranges, then… So they are really big groups, big waves of immigrants who are moving from one place to another, and that is producing huge problems of integration.” (Interview 12)

“There have been many big troubles until a few years ago. Now there are less because a lot of them have gone as there is less work.” (Interview 12)

“In the years 2008, 2009, and before, 2007, immigrant's camps were usual. When many similar people from the same country, mostly Romanians but sometimes from Morocco or from Latin-America coincided, there is a concentration of people in a place and they do not have any where to go, they make themselves at home with fabric or whatever, they pick old mattress for sleeping, and a camp is made in two days.” (Interview 13)

The exploitation of immigrant labour by agents or 'middle men' was recognised as increasing the vulnerability of this group to poverty and exclusion:

“The situation of these workers is disastrous. I undertook a study about Gypsy Romanian people in Albacete three years ago and then I realized about the work of the "comisionarios" [broker or agent - My italics]. This is a serious and very important aspect which has not been adequately addressed…The comisionario is the middleman. He has a van, he picks up a group of immigrants at 5 am in the morning, he drives them to the fields to work and then he returns them. These guys [immigrants - My italics] know nothing, neither the language nor what they are meant to earn. Then the comisario charges the standard wages and gets 60% of the salary.” (Interview 12)
“So, those people go from one place to another and many of them work for 20€ a day in the fields. Those people are in a huge exploitation bubble (’bolsa de explotación- Spanish term) and they cannot leave there. And they starve.”
(Interview 12)

The presence of racist attitudes and potential tensions between immigrants and host communities was also identified by stakeholders as a source of concern:

“We are becoming a little racist…. For example, here there have been a lot of foreigners working in the fields, many Moroccan, Romanian and also Spaniards…. And now I have been told -I don’t know if it’s true, I want to believe that it is not true, but I have heard about this many times, that foreigners are paid less money, and of course Spaniards refuse such pay. If it was 45€ per day before and now you are told it is 30, only the Romanians, Moroccans accept this, because Spaniards think that "they are taking advantage of me". I am hearing this too much. I have not checked it, people don’t want to talk openly about these things. So, on the one hand there is this “they are taking our job”, and on the other, is the "I don’t want" [the job-My italics] For example, old people do not want foreigners in their homes. This is also normal, because a foreign woman has other habits, for example, maybe she cannot cook the meals, cannot cook an omelette, or cocido [a type of stew- My italics]” (Interview 4)

A study undertaken by the Spanish Red Cross (Cruz Roja Española) in 2007 of immigrants working in rural areas, concluded that their situation was characterised by:

“…abuse, injustice, exploitation, lack of opportunities, lack of information and a lack or resources. All of this, associated with the lack of integration due to language barriers and social rejection due to cultural differences, which affected their ability to cope or to interact with others outside their own community in rural communities that are quite small or isolated.” (Cruz Roja Española, 2007, p 28).

Unemployment was also identified as a factor amongst immigrants which has increased since the economic crisis, but is also a consequence of the seasonality of work in rural areas. While the economic crisis in particular has resulted in some returning to their countries of origin (as in the case of the Bolivians below) or engaging in circular migration (the Romanians below):

“I have seen Bolivians already returning. One woman went back last week and another one was going to go back this week. I think Bolivia is not in such bad situation as it was some years ago, which also gives you some hope.” (Interview 4)

“Romanian, for example, they were here all the year some years ago, but they starved so much in winter and they had such a bad time they have went back.. They prefer go to Romania in the winter, come back in summer, do the
season, and go back to Romania to live with the little they have earned, with
the little they have got of the exploitation they are subjected to.” (Interview 12)

Stakeholders identified groups such as the Moroccans who were reported to be
reluctant to go back to their country of origin despite the considerable hardship they
had to endure:

“The Moroccans are very reluctant to go back. I do not know if it is seen as
some kind of personal failure because they arrive from some extreme
situations, but I wonder, they have their home there in Morocco and they have
great family support because they are very family orientated and it is true that
Moroccan families help each other a lot ... But they resist going. And we are
coming across some extreme situations where they owe many months of rent
and they are about to be thrown out of the house that they share with families,
they do not have food, one month, another month, another one... But they
are very good managers and with 426€ they do wonders: they make bread
themselves...they do not have unemployment benefits ...” (Interview 4)

In addition to problems of income and unemployment, lack of knowledge of the
Spanish language and the ability to communicate and be understood were also
major barriers for immigrants, host communities and service providers. López and
Muñoz (2011, p. 15) in their research on immigrants in La Manchuela also
highlighted a number of factors which reinforced the social exclusion of immigrant
workers and which stakeholders also acknowledged:

- Increased conflicts and rejection of people from different nationalities, among
  Spanish teenagers in particular.
- Lack of social harmony in certain seasons; for example, during the wine
  harvest, when the number of immigrant workers increased around 20%, and
  the temporary immigrants arrived.
- Lack of adaptation of public resources to the new situation in relation to the need
  for translators for example.
- Lack of information and lack of awareness among doctors, teachers, advisors
  and social workers about dealing with immigrants and intercultural issues.
- Lack of access to certain rights and services (e.g. access to health services was
cited by stakeholders as increasingly dependent on their nationality and status).

**People with disabilities, specific illness including mental health and alcohol abuse**

Due to the multiple exclusion factors (health, employment, equal opportunities, etc.)
that disabled people face they are acknowledged as being a particularly vulnerable
group (FOESSA, 2008; Subirats, 2005). Literature and reports suggest that the rates
of disability are higher in rural areas in Spain (Camarero et al., 2009; Charraolde and
Fernández, 2007), which is consistent with the latest data available. According to
the results of the Survey on Disability (National Statistics Institute, 2008) the population
with disabilities are higher in municipalities with less than 10.000 inhabitants: 15%
higher in the Spanish context and 9.8% higher in Castilla-La Mancha. In the
On the issue of mental illness it is estimated that one in four people in Spain suffers from a mental disorder and around 14% are in need of psychiatric assistance (FOESSA, 2008, p. 199). According to the data from the last National Health Survey (2011-2012) adults suffering from chronic depression or chronic anxiety in Castilla-La Mancha are slightly higher than the Spanish average (INE, 2013b). Although data for rural areas is not available stakeholders interviewed expressed concerns about the impact of mental health issues:

"Mental health upsets are awful. Parents who have any kind of personality upset, or a chronic mental illness which also produces negligence, because they have ups and downs and when they are low they do not take care of the kid although they love him, because of the illness itself..." (Interview 4)

Examining the different types of disabilities than people suffer, the National Statistics Institute (2008) survey shows that disabilities with a particularly high presence in the rural municipalities of Castilla-La Mancha are disabilities related to mobility (69.79 %) and self-care and home life (54%), which are the same for the Spanish population in general. Camarero et al. (2009) while suggesting the need to be cautious based on the evidence available notes that:

"A rural environment could be better adapted to the daily needs of the disabled population perhaps because of a less dense habitat, with more adaptable buildings – lower – and an environment that, although limited in terms of services, is more accessible and adaptable for persons with problems of mobility." (p. 77)

However, the access to services and support systems continues to be a key factor in relation to vulnerability (Cermi, 2010; Foessa, 2008). This was reinforced by Stakeholders in La Manchuela especially with regard to physical and mental health issues which require long term and /or specialised care and which are not available locally or within reasonable travelling distance ( as in the case of dialysis mentioned in Chapter 4):

"I think there are other groups that paradoxically from the point of view of needing attention are the groups related to disabilities, primarily intellectual disabilities and mental illness, that is, people who are in a situation of psychological deterioration, pathologies having problems and they need certain types of care which is clearly not available in their rural areas because this kind of caring service - day centre, occupational workshop a CRIS (Centre for Rehabilitation and Social Integration)- are in large cities. So, without transport accessing these services and resources can be a problem.
So there is a lack of comarcal services which could bring different people together to find answers.” (Interview 7)

In addition Stakeholders also identified the economic crisis as increasing the need for psychological support:

“We have a psychologist colleague, and I see that there are more people coming to talk to her because of unexpected situations and you do not know how to deal with it, you do not have personal resources or anything to deal with it.” (Interview 4)

The lack of institutionalised support for those with mental health problems (mentioned above) and the stigma attached to mental health in rural areas were also issues highlighted by those interviewed but it was not always portrayed in a negative light. In rural areas it was felt that individuals with mental health problems or disability were more likely to be accepted albeit within a constrained context:

“When somebody who is born in that village and shows a certain problem, people already known him so he or she is in quotes "stigmatised" in the sense that he will be considered as a mentally ill person or a disabled person…. He has to look for his own space, his own way to coexist in this environment, and sometimes they are more accepted than in a urban context where it is more difficult to find that space for these groups.” (Interview 7)

According to data from the household survey on drugs consumed in Castilla-La Mancha (Observatorio de Drogodependencias de Castilla-La Mancha, 2008, p. 21) 61.5% of the population is a regular consumer of alcohol and 2.2% of the population could be described as an abusive regular consumer, with most living in smaller municipalities in rural areas. This was reflected in the Stakeholder interviews who identified alcohol abuse and health issues arising from such abuse as a factor that increases the risk of poverty and social exclusion particularly among men. Reasons why individuals become alcoholic included personal /household circumstances, lack of things to do in small villages and unemployment:

“The profile is: single, 45 or 50 years old, solo living because their parents have died, and drinking is the only...” (Interview 10)

“I think that in every village there is not much to do except going to the bar.” (Interview 10)

“Because he does not have many things to do. If there is not much work in the fields... Day-to-day is the bar.” (Interview 10)
6 Policies and initiatives: tackling poverty and social exclusion

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides a brief overview of the governance and responsibilities related to addressing poverty and social exclusion in the Spanish context at different levels. The second section focuses more specifically on poverty and social exclusion policies and initiatives at the regional and local levels. The final section discusses some of the key issues that emerged from interviews with stakeholders with regard to policy and implementation in relation to specific issues and groups at regional and local levels.

6.1 Governance and responsibilities

Spain has a decentralised system of government where competences are distributed between Central Government, Regional or Autonomous Governments and Local Authorities to varying degrees depending on the policy issue (See Appendix 3). For example, policies related to state welfare provision, taxation and immigration are the responsibilities of the Spanish Government and the Regional government has responsibility for delivering services related to education, health, employment and social services. The latter is delivered in collaboration with local authorities which are also involved in the delivery of domiciliary, employment and other programmes. In the case of social work services only the three biggest Councils (Casas Ibáñez; Madrigueras; and Villamalea) in La Manchuela have their own staff of social workers and directly deliver the social services programmes as designed by the Regional Government. In the rest of the comarca these programs are delivered through an agreement between the Regional Government and the Mancomunidad. Overall the responsibilities for enacting polices and implementing programmes which address poverty and social exclusion are distributed across all levels of governance to different degrees. The situation is made more complex by the fact that each of the services are not organised contiguously and often operate across different geographical and / governance boundaries:

"In social services we are 23 [municipalities- My Italics] in La Manchuela, which is not the same demarcation as exists in relation to for example the Healthcare Centres." (Interview 4)

"In the comarca we are around 30,000 inhabitants and there are two areas: an area of “planes concertados” [agreed plans- My italics] which are the biggest Councils […] and the rest of villages which are covered by 5 social workers of the Junta (Regional Government- My italics). And there are also two community workers who depend on the Mancomunidad for the Development of La Manchuela." (Interview 10)

"Between all the villages, there are three which are the biggest ones, and then those three social services depend on the Municipal Council. However, social services in the other villages depend on the Mancomunidad and on the
Junta; the Council does not hire directly any professional to work in social services.” (Interview 4)

While stakeholders recognised that the provision of social services for example was formally fragmented between different authorities and legal entities, practitioners in the area emphasised they worked in close collaboration across these boundaries:

“Here we always have worked at a comarca level. We have always had joint meetings with Casas Ibáñez, with Madrigueras, although they were staff employed by their Councils. Here there was as a sense of comarca and we have engaged in community activities at a comarca level… In fact we still continue to meet, though less each time because there are less issues each time and fewer resources to distribute and fewer activities to do, but we continue working at a comarca level.” (Interview 10)

They emphasised the good relations they had at a local level:

“We do have meetings, we are a close area. Practitioners know each other well, we have a lot of relations at every level, now by computers because we meet less, but we have a lot of relationship, even friendships…” (Interview 4)

Several stakeholders pointed out that the level of associations and the number of social activities that were organised in the area were high based on the collaboration between public services and associations in La Manchuela facilitated by community workers who were employed by the Mancommunidad. However, with the onset of the economic crisis these employees have been made redundant and there were concerns that the work that had gone into making collaboration work was being jeopardised:

“They [community workers-My italics] were in charge of all the association and networks from the comarca, they proposed the activities and even applied for funding for them to the Diputaciones, to the Junta, to the Councils…And it worked very well. The truth is that we did a lot of things at the level of the comarca. And as they [community workers –My italics] are not longer and there are no resources or money to do anything, associations have become weakened…” (Interview 11)

6.2 Addressing poverty and social exclusion

As highlighted in Chapter 2, the Spanish Government has been focusing on adapting its policies to address social exclusion and poverty within the EU framework and its policies, goals and achievements are reflected in its National Plans on Social Inclusion and National Reforms Plan (Gobierno de Espana, 2008; 2013a&b; Kingdom of Spain, undated). The priorities identified in its most recent plans include: addressing unemployment, introducing employment integration programmes and promoting the employment of the most vulnerable groups; dealing with the social
consequences of the economic crisis; tackling childhood poverty; and ensuring a benefits system which supports those that need it most (Gobierno de España 2012, p. 27-28).

At the regional level Stakeholders reported that the Junta deals with designing and implementing programmes to address poverty and social exclusion within the framework of the strategies and goals set by the Spanish Government and European institutions in this field:

“We have some very clear parameters which are set by the Spanish Government. We have certain strategic plans, including some related to the European Union, not only the Government of Spain, then we have to integrate these plans …, we are developing these plans, both the strategy for Roma, plans to combat social exclusion and poverty in the European Union …” (Interview 14)

Stakeholders described the strategies addressing poverty and social exclusion policies as being shaped by top down and bottom up processes:

“And what we do is ultimately develop and implement these national and international strategies in our territory, and to do this we have two actions, one comes from above and the other from below, with regard to the above it is about establishing compliance with the minimum necessary to establish adequate social services to citizens… and then identifying the needs which depends on the characteristics of each area and population.” (Interview 14)

Having local knowledge and professional support was emphasised as critical in identifying needs and providing appropriate solutions:

“Once we have the information following this initial screening and assistance, from there we need to establish specialised programs. We do this through agreements or calls for activities that we propose, which originate precisely from these primary care social services.” (Interview 14)

“We think that to attend to the realities properly we should start by those who know them more directly who are social workers who work in the area.” (Interview 14)

The majority of the programme targeted at poverty and social exclusion are under the label of ‘Social Integration Programmes’ known by the acronym ‘PRIS’ (Programas de Integración Social). These programs are addressed at preventing and tackling social exclusion and those marginalised in order to assist with their reintegration. The programme includes official calls for grant applications for specific projects and programmes and agreements with Local Councils.

“(PRIS) can change yearly because each year we have a call for Social Integration and Intervention Programs and then Councils and other organisations can apply for a grant for those programs…” (Interview 14)
However, as discussed in chapter 4, the cuts in budgets were identified by stakeholders as impacting on the funding available for PRIS:

“Last year there was a call for (PRIS- My italics) but it was not approved for the Mancomunidad. Some villages applied for programmes individually and it was approved for some villages. And this year nothing has been called and we do not know if there will be calls.” (Interview 10)

In those villages where the delivery of social services is through the Mancomunidad, the PRIS programme was not approved last year, which affected the delivery of programmes for older adults, young people and immigrants. In addition to PRIS funded programmes stakeholders cited other forms of aid provided by the Regional Government to alleviate serious situations of deprivation. These include social emergency aids (‘ayudas de emergencia social) and ' minimum income' (ingreso mínimo de solidaridad).

“The minimum income is a very small amount of money paid monthly for 6 months when someone does not have enough of money for food, for paying the rent, for when you have no resources. It is paid monthly and you can have it over a period of two years with interruptions. But this is very basic. It covers people who are in a very desperate situation.” (Interview 4)

“And the other is called social emergency aid and it can paid once a year for one off situations… For example: you owe rent and you are going to be evicted; you owe power bills and your power is going to be disconnected; or there is a sanitary expenditure that you cannot afford, something like that.” (Interview 4)

However, these measures have been also been affected by budget cuts which are very serious according to the stakeholders, especially as these measures are affecting those who are in the most vulnerable situations and there are more applicants than funding (possibly exacerbated by the economic crisis):

“The emergency aids which presumably are for these cases, were published late… And for all the cases that I have processed, I have not got any approval.” (Interview 10)

“In 2011, the first call for applications was published late, a lot of applications did not get a response …And in such extreme situations you cannot wait five months for an answer… And with the uncertainty - if they are going to give it to me or not, because although I meet the requirements, now there is not enough for everybody.” (Interview 4)

In addition to what is provided through public agencies, stakeholders highlighted the growing role of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), associations and other informal contacts (e.g. thought the local Councillor or Mayor) especially since the crisis and the budgetary cuts:
"I feel that Cáritas and Red Cross are gaining in importance more than ever because there are more people in need and they have more resources than they had other times. But this is a charity role." (Interview 4)

"Or even if you need something you talk to the Council: “Listen, this family needs this, furniture, etc”… (I speak- My Italics) with the Mayor, with the social services councillor: “Listen, that this family have come and they need a mattress…” (Interview 10)

The two NGOs that were highlighted as working in La Manchuela were -the Red Cross and Cáritas- although they are not present in all the villages:

"And there are villages which have a little group of Caritas which is associated with the parish church. They are volunteers who organise themselves and between what Caritas gives them and what they collect, they have some food to distribute to people of the village." (Interview 4)

"But of course, there are little villages where there is no Red Cross, or Caritas, and so it is even worse for them." (Interview 4)

This increasing reliance on the Red Cross and Cáritas has been mainly due to cut in public resources at a time when there may be more people affected by the economic crisis:

"In the past I rarely recommended that people “go to Cáritas for help” […] because there were other things…There were always resources, but now all that has disappeared." (Interview 4)

Stakeholders expressed mixed views about the role of charities. Although some valued the charitable work being undertaken, others expressed feelings of unease. For example the lack of neutrality and the assumption of the ‘deserving poor’ in relation to some forms of charitable support was viewed as problematic by some:

“Some people are moved by charity in a sense where the emphasis is that one has to earn it: “If you are very poor and you behave well, we will give you the food you want, but if you smoke a lot, I do not know…” (Interview 4)

Other Stakeholders felt that charitable support was taking the place of what the government should be providing:

"I am not very fond of NGOs … I am more in favour of citizenship rights …I feel that a country has some obligations to their citizens; it has to provide healthcare, education, aid for living for people with disabilities, and those sorts of things…” (Interview 6)
6.3 Initiatives targeted at specific issues and groups

Depopulation and transport issues

Although the central Government does have a commitment in policy documents to maintaining rural populations, Stakeholders felt that overall issues related to rural populations is not a priority for the Spanish Government and that the policies they are implementing are making depopulation worse:

“One of the things that the Central Government has been involved in not only now but also in previous periods, is that the rural world… Little municipalities do not interest anybody, so the type of measures being implemented will lead to the disappearance of these kinds of municipalities.” (Interview 6)

At the regional level, depopulation is recognised as one of the main problems in rural areas and addressing this and the issue of ageing is one of the objectives in the ‘Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo Sostenible del Medio Rural 2008-201 (Consejería de Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo Rural, 2008, p. 66). However, the main policies and measures to address depopulation are fairly broad with dispersed responsibilities across different levels of government and departments and include: improvements in road infrastructures; the development of the economy and employment opportunities; and support for women in particular and young people. Most of the emphasis in rural development policies for rural villages is on investing in the infrastructure and the road networks and public transport in particular. In the context of the regional plan, there is an initiative targeted at young people -“Tarjeta joven” (A young person’s card) to promote public transportation and there are on going discussions about the possibility of retired people and disabled people living in rural areas having access to free public transport between villages (Consejería de Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo Rural, 2008, p. 88). This of course assumes that good public transport exists which according to Stakeholders is poor (see Chapter 4 and 5).

Unemployment

Tackling unemployment is a major challenge across Spain and the Spanish Central Government has committed itself to implementing a range of strategies including: vocational and professional training; youth employment initiatives; labour reforms; and issues related to irregular employment and Social Security fraud (Gobierno de España, 2012, p 33; Gobierno de España, 2013a). In addition there are specific commitments to promoting employment in rural areas including the following: developing professional qualifications for employed workers; implement workshop-schools ('Escuelas Taller') and employment workshops ('Talleres de Empleo'); programmes for promoting agrarian employment; programmes for labour integration of disabled people in special centres of employment ('Centros Especiales de Empleo'); and sustaining job positions in traditional productive rural sectors and create job positions in emergent sectors. (Gobierno de España, 2012, p. 55-76). At the regional level the regional strategic Plan of Sustainable Rural Development also sets out some proposed actions including: increasing training opportunities to rural dwellers; to create a network of rural points for training; to promote computer literacy
and create municipal computer rooms; and to set priority criteria for unemployed people who live in rural areas in order to facilitate access to other measures that are currently not available (Consejería de Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo Rural, 2008).

Employment initiatives were being developed at municipality and provincial levels. However there was also a recognition that the situation with regard to employment had to also be addressed at the national level:

“The main priority is employment. I know that we are not going to be able to solve a lot because that must be solved by country-level policies which help to activate the economy, but our little contribution is to make a municipal employment plan, hiring eight or ten people.” (Interview 5)

Although Stakeholders mentioned the existence of employment plans and initiatives based on regional government funds to the municipalities to assist in developing local employment, their ability to deliver the plans was affected by the budget cuts at all levels:

“There was a local action plan for employment at a regional level. Councils were given a certain amount of money in order to employ workers for three months. This was shut down two years ago.” (Interview 5)

“We had two other programs […] and an employment practitioner. With the cuts the funding for the employment practitioners disappeared.” (Interview 6)

Old people
The specific challenges faced by old people in rural areas in relation to income as well as access to mobility and services was highlighted in chapters 4 and 5. There have been growing policies and initiatives targeted at addressing the needs of older people The Central Government focus has largely focused on two actions affecting old people: the reform of the pensions system and dependence support and long-term care (Gobierno de España, 2012a, pp. 30-31). In the context of rural areas the Sustainable Rural Development Programme emphasises the improvement of dependent services by developing remote care ('teleasistencia') services, domiciliary care, day-care centres and other specialised centres. (Gobierno de España, 2010).

At the regional and local levels Stakeholders pointed to initiatives being established which included: dependent care; provision of 'meals on wheels'; and social support. To some extent there was a view among some stakeholders that much had improved for old people in the region:

“Besides in Castilla-La Mancha, the Department for Old People, Disabilities and Dependency (Dirección General de Mayores, Discapacidad y Dependencia) is involved in very important innovations for guaranteeing domiciliary support for old people and also residential support when it is necessary.” (Interview 14)
“There are many programmes for old people…maybe these programmes are more developed and so the needs of older people are better addressed.” (Interview 14)

Those interviewed also highlighted the important role of local associations in initiating activities for old people:

“There are associations of retired people in all the villages, and they have their role because in some villages where there is no bar, for example, there is the ‘hogar de los jubilados’ [the headquarters of each association of retired people- My italics] and they go there to play cards, they organize some trips… They have an important role…” (Interview 4)

“There is also a day centre for old people which is a bar and the Association for Retired People is placed there and they do activities.” (Interview 5)

However, stakeholders also pointed out that dependency programmes that had been developed were now affected by cuts. This meant that older people were not going to have the option of being looked after in their home, it would increase pressure on residential care (see Chapter 4 for discussion) as well as increasing unemployment at local level:

“The Dependency Act came out which came with many benefits, some of them have been developed and cut, and there are still services for some people. But with the cuts we are making no progress.” (Interview 4)

“With this cut you have removed somebody from their home, you have also decreased employment opportunities and there is going to be a waiting list in the residences because there are not going to be enough of places for everyone.” (Interview 4)

Young people

The key policy emphasis across different levels of government are on alleviating youth unemployment (Gobierno de España, 2012a, p. 83-84; Gobierno de España 2013a, p. 81-82). The Sustainable Development Programme also proposes measures to support young entrepreneurs in rural areas (Gobierno de España, 2010). The Junta has developed a specific website called “Portal Joven” dedicated to bringing together information about all the programs and services that may be of interest to young people; for example information on education, professional qualifications, employment, leisure activities and so on. The Regional Plan of Sustainable Development (Consejeria de Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo Rural, 2008) in addition to employment has proposed the following measures for youth in rural areas: priority in accessing protected housing and providing them with other support for housing, such as special subsidies to purchase housing in rural areas; developing training for young people; promoting youth information centres; increasing opportunities for ‘alternative leisure’ (‘ocio alternative’) activities; promoting meetings of young rural dwellers and the creation of Youth Councils at a comarcal level (p. 310).
At a practical level one of the PRIS programmes that the Mancomunidad was providing was orientated specifically to young people in order to integrate them in the labour market and make them more 'employable':

"We had a programme for young people. [...] It is a programme where we had a social worker and sometimes a psychologist sometimes a employment practitioner depending on the need... So we had two practitioners working in the comarca and what we did was provide more qualifications and also gave them a grant for encouraging them to attend. They had to work in the different Councils by, for example, helping at a library or at a residency, maybe doing summer activities... The main objective was to integrate them with the young people of their own municipality..." (Interview 6)

Women

In the last few years, Spanish legislation and policies have sought to address equal opportunity issues between men and women and to tackle domestic violence, as a specific expression of inequality. In addition the 'Plan Estratégico para la Igualdad de Género en el Medio Rural 2011-2014' aims to promote equality between sexes across rural development policies and to increase the awareness of the population about the importance of equality for the social future of rural areas. The objectives of this plan are orientated to addressing discrimination suffered by rural women, to promote their incorporation into labour market and to reduce the out-migration of women from rural areas (MARM, 2011). Similar plans for addressing equality of opportunities are also reflected at the regional government level specifically focusing on rural women including for example: promoting the economic autonomy of women through qualifications and entrepreneurship; promoting the empowerment of women in rural areas through their access to resources and participation in public life; and to facilitate the access of women to Information Communication Technologies; and to incorporate a gender based perspective in the design and implementation of policies and the provision of services (see for example Instituto de la Mujer de Castilla-La Mancha, 2011, p. 73-78). As a result of these policies stakeholders felt positive about the initiatives promoted by the regional government:

"There are many programmes addressed to women in rural areas in order to provide them with skills for employment... These are about gardening, some related to hand craft workshops, dressmaking... Many of them are addressed to women." (Interview 14)

"There was also an appointment of a Directora General of Women at the regional level who pushed many associations, the Advice Centre for Women." (Interview 5)

At a local level stakeholders' views mentioned the role of local Councils in organising activities on days to highlight specific issues, such as domestic violence or celebrate specific events such as 'International Women's Day':

"On the day against violence against women (activities are organised – My italics) with the children in the square and a statement is read, associations
participate… Activities are also organised for the International Day of Women, the 8th of March.” (Interview 5)

In addition the Mancomunidad has established a Women’s Centre (Centro de la Mujer), which has two headquarters in La Manchuela. The Centre’s activities are focused on the following: employment issues (information, orientation and qualification); promotion and assistance in to entrepreneurship; information about rights and support for women in exercising these rights; and develop capacity to facilitate the establishment of association and undertake activities (for further information see: http://www.dipualba.es/mademanchuela/ciemmanchuela.htm).

Stakeholders also cited the existence of several associations of women in La Manchuela:

“Women are sensitised to many issues, mainly because of their children. I think that this happens at a general level, because parents’ associations are mostly formed by mothers than by fathers, they participate more… I think that there are more women than men on the school boards. And at some commissions of culture they are almost all women I Men do not participate…” (Interview 5)

"Here a Women’s Association was created, and Women’s Associations have been created in all the municipalities in the comarca.” (Interview 5)

However despite the growth in women's’ activities, the impact of the economic crisis and the potential impact on women and the need to be engaged was emphasised as important:

“We see the daily life of women's associations have to change a bit. And especially now. I said to a coordinator of women who was here : "Now we are in very difficult times and the role of women has to be even more of a protagonist role" Because the social services are being cut , seniors are becoming almost socially excluded, places for older people in care homes are reducing , now there are bigger problems, because they are the most vulnerable people we have right now, children and the elderly. I say "Now we have to change…and be aware or have more knowledge and information, the knowledge that there is a change in the model, the social model, economic model, the political model.”(Interview 5)

**Immigrants**

The Spanish Government has responsibility for immigration matters . Although the integration of immigrants has been an important issue the economic crisis has diverted the focus of attention away from this issue. The Central Government's policy on immigration issues is stated in the Strategic Plan of Citizenship and Integration- Plan Estratégico de Ciudadanía e Integración, 2011-2014'. (Ministerio de Trabajo e Inmigración, 2011). Among the different objectives that are in this Plan, the relation between immigrants and rural places is understood in two senses. Firstly, there is an emphasis on promoting the settlement of immigrant families in depopulated rural places (p126). Secondly it recommends that plans for intercultural coexistence
should be developed in local spaces, both urban and rural. At the Regional and local government levels, respectively, stakeholders mentioned initiatives with a focus on the integration of immigrants, however most were discontinued because of cuts in budgets:

“There were practitioners specially for immigrants for 10 years who were called SAMI – SAMI was the acronym for Service of Assistance and Mediation with Immigrants who did all the work related to immigrants, issues related to coexistence, paperwork, which is something that worried them a lot and then that position suddenly disappeared… At the beginning of 2012 this position was cut.” (Interview 4)

Integration programmes provided through the Mancomunidad have also been cut:

“…we tried to do cultural exchanges which we were developing in several municipalities across the comarca, maybe in 4 or 6 municipalities because there were not enough of people in each of the municipalities to do an activity.” (Interview 6)

NGOs, particularly the Red Cross, are also an important source of support especially in the light of decreasing support from the public sector:

"Red Cross […] has brought food, clothes… but always for Romanian people." (Interview 9)

Besides, stakeholders have pointed out in their interviews that the existence of family networks is also a very important source of support that immigrants relied upon:

“Moroccans […] they have big family support because they are very family orientated and it is true that Moroccan families help each other a lot.” (Interview 4)

**Disabled groups**

In 2012 the Spanish Government approved the Spanish Disability Strategy for 2012-2020 –‘Estrategia Española sobre Discapacidad’ which includes among its measures the development of a 'Strategy for People with Disabilities in Rural Areas' (Gobierno de España, 2012b, p. 30). The regional policies related to disabled people are summarised in an Action Plan – ‘II Plan de Acción para Personas con Discapacidad en Castilla-La Mancha 2011-2020’ (Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha, 2011). This Plan does not set specific objectives or measures for rural areas but instead establishes rurality as a cross cutting principle which must be taken into account in relation to developing actions to support disabled people and their families (p. 48). Stakeholders also highlighted the role of associations in La Manchuela which have kept activities going despite the cuts:

“So the physically disabled have less activities, and the mental ones they do have activities with the social services in the comarca.” (Interview 4)
“The associations of disabled people continue... There are four or five associations and they continue to meet. Social services coordinate with them also to organize a Comarcal meeting each year. We keep doing that although the Junta is no longer funding it.” (Interview 10)
7 Summary of key issues and implications for policy and research

The previous chapters have identified the complex issues highlighted by the literature and interviews with Stakeholders with regard to poverty and social exclusion in Spain and La Manchuela located in the province of Albacete. Overall all stakeholders emphasised the relative and multilayered nature of poverty and social exclusion. The key drivers and the factors that increase the risk of some individuals and groups to poverty and social exclusion are often complex and overlapping and can be difficult to disentangle. There was also however, a recognition among those interviewed of the importance of developing appropriate and relevant indicators as well as improving the evidence base for policy making. This final chapter draws together briefly the key issues that emerged from the interviews with Stakeholders and identifies some policy and research implications that have emerged from the case study.

7.1 Validity of European-wide data from local perspectives

Spain is one of the countries for which all three EU 2020 monitoring indicators are available at NUTS 2. Furthermore national analysis (Llano Ortiz, 2012) has provided estimates of the at risk of poverty rate at NUTS 3. Castilla – La Mancha had the third highest rate (35.5%) of those at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2011 in Spain (see Figure 6, Chapter 3).

Most of the stakeholders in Albacete emphasised the importance of having good local data (e.g. NUTS and below) on poverty and social exclusion to design appropriate policies. A very small minority of those interviewed identified the comparisons across the EU that NUTS1 level data affords as important in measuring progress at the national and EU levels, respectively. However, which NUTS unit was emphasised as important with regard to data collection and availability depended on the geographical area/s being covered by the governance mechanism or organisation stakeholders were involved in.

With a few exceptions (e.g. Camarero et al., 2009) overall there is a dearth of research exploring in depth the experience and impact of poverty and social exclusion taking into account people’s diverse situations and identities in rural contexts in Spain. Furthermore, quantitative data appeared to be fragmented across different levels of governments and departments making it very difficult to get a holistic overview of the trends in poverty and social exclusion at NUTS 3 level and below. Having data at different levels and developing the capacity of policy makers and practitioners to utilise the data effectively is vital given the involvement of different levels of governance in devising policies, but also importantly in developing implementation of policies and devising measures that have to be addressed. In addition establishing systematic and ongoing evaluation of the impact of policies and measures adopted is important to assess their effectiveness and impact.
7.2 Key issues: Shaping poverty and social exclusion

Economic context and impact of the crisis

In relation to understanding the key drivers of poverty and social exclusion, Stakeholders emphasised the importance of taking into account factors such as, for example, the economic context and austerity policies that have been implemented since the economic crisis and which have affected both urban and rural areas.

With regard to Spanish wide drivers the consistent view expressed by all those interviewed was that the economic crisis and the austerity policies implemented since have had a significant impact on employment, service provision and welfare state provision (see Chapter 4). It would appear much of the progress that had been made on welfare reform was being eroded as a result of cuts in public sector budgets and service provision. The high level of unemployment was identified by Stakeholders as the main cause of poverty and social exclusion among young people and children, households with one earner and immigrants in particular in La Manchuela. Budgetary cuts were cited as impacting on policies and programmes related to addressing quality of life issues and preventative measures, especially among the most vulnerable.

Cuts in services such as education, healthcare and social care were identified as affecting a wide range of vulnerable groups: low income and unemployed households and individuals; older people; people with disability and ill health; young people and children especially in unemployed or low income households; and immigrants. Stakeholders were concerned that the withdrawal or reduction of public services were potentially steps in privatising aspects of service provision which could mean their disappearance in rural areas such as La Manchuela because of lack of demand to make them profitable, or that they would only be accessible to people with high incomes.

Drivers of poverty and exclusion: Rural

Stakeholders also emphasised that rural areas in La Manchuela faced specific challenges which were exacerbated by rurality and increased the risk of some individuals and groups to poverty and social exclusion (see Chapters 4 and 5). These included issues related to: its geography and sparsity of population; demographic trends: depopulation, outmigration of youth and an ageing population; access to services and public transport; and low income.

Demographic trends: Depopulation, ageing, masculinisation and migration

Demographic trends affecting La Manchuela were characterised by a process of depopulation accompanied by ageing, outmigration of young people and those economically active, a process of masculinisation and an increase in immigrants. Stakeholders identified the demographic trends that characterised rural areas as potentially leading to a cycle of decline and the ‘disappearance’ of small rural villages as services are reduced, centralised in larger centres or withdrawn because of the small numbers, economic activities decline and cannot be sustained, leading to further depopulation and so on. This phenomena in some rural areas is also noted by
the European Commission (2008, p. 72). However immigration (both returnees and those of foreign origin) seemed to have helped to stabilise the population of La Manchuela to some extent, but those who were Spanish returnees were mainly older retired people, thus potentially exacerbating the ageing trends and creating additional demands on services which could not always be met locally.

**Transport and provision of public services**

Stakeholders highlighted major deficiencies in public transport in La Manchuela, especially with regard to the smaller municipalities and villages (Chapter 4). Access to public transport between villages were noted as being infrequent and the level of dependency on private transportation was high. Poor access to public transport combined with the increasing centralisation of services such as schools, health and social care provision (due to the impact of cuts in budgets) in the larger municipalities and towns was reported by Stakeholders as increasing the risk of social exclusion for particular groups. In this context mobility status - holding a driving license and having a car (auto mobility) - were critical to accessing services and employment. Those dependent on others for their mobility, such as children, women, old people, people with disabilities, those on low income and people in general without a driving license were more likely to be vulnerable to social exclusion and isolation. This reinforces the importance of having a good public transport system to ensure a good quality of life and the well-being of all those living in rural areas as well as helping to facilitate and sustain the economic development of the area.

**Low income**

As highlighted in Chapter 4 low income was cited as a contributor to poverty and social exclusion in rural areas of La Manchuela. Low income was associated with five factors: limited employment opportunities; low wages in the agricultural sector; growing numbers of old people on low income because their pensions were associated with working in the agricultural sector; the high numbers of unemployed people in receipt of unemployment benefits; and rising costs of living and expenses associated with cuts in services and increasing debt such as mortgages. Additional costs in rural areas since the economic crisis include having to travel further to access primary and secondary education and health and social care services and families having to buy educational materials such as textbooks for their children.

### 7.3 Groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion

As highlighted in Chapter 5 issues such as access to work, low income, mobility status, health and so on intersected with factors such as age, gender, household status and immigrant status to shape people's risk regarding poverty and exclusion. Stakeholder interviews highlighted the importance of avoiding treating particular groups as homogenous, instead they noted the complex nature of people's identities which cut across different boundaries. For example in the case of old people, there was a recognition that the factors that increases their vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion was not old age per se, but rather the intersection of their age with factors such as low income, ill health, lack of access to private transport, lack of
family support and so on which also affect other groups.

Old people

The ageing process in rural areas of La Manchuela and in the smaller rural villages in particular was cited by all those interviewed as a major challenge. As discussed above the health and care needs associated with the ageing process as well as factors related to their life course stage (widowhood, death of friends and neighbours, migration of children, and so on) were noted as making this group particularly vulnerable to social exclusion and more dependent at a time when their support networks may be weakening due to emigration. The situation was seen to be further exacerbated because of their dependence on retirement pensions, although secure, were low and were in some cases being stretched further as they were having to support members of their family who were unemployed or without income as a consequence of the crisis They were also adversely affected by the lack of public transport and the lack of provision of specialised care services as services in general were being increasingly centralised.

Children and young people

With high unemployment and limited opportunities for well paid work there were concerns about the impact of these factors on children. Risk of poverty and social exclusion was further increased where households lacked family networks or were immigrants and were unable to communicate in Spanish. Furthermore the closure of primary and secondary schools and their centralisation in larger municipalities has meant the need to travel further to access schooling and the costs of school materials and transport all add to increase their risk to poverty and social exclusion. In some cases families have moved to be closer to the schools thus reinforcing the process of depopulation in small villages.

Transition to continuing education and training beyond compulsory schooling as well as employment in rural areas were key factors in youth outmigration and in increasing the risk of young people to poverty and social exclusion. Youth unemployment was reported as being high by Stakeholders and they also noted the lack of facilities or activities for young people to do in the little villages. In this context Stakeholders expressed concerns about the continuing trend in youth outmigration and the impact on the depopulation process.

Solo living and people without families

Stakeholders identified family and informal relationships and networks as the primary source of support for those at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Consequently, the absence of strong family ties or informal relationships can increase the risk of social isolation and exclusion. Stakeholders associated the trend in solo households with a growing older population in particular. Those at risk in particular are people living alone for a variety of reasons; for example death of a spouse, families have migrated, divorce and so on.

Immigrants

Immigrants of foreign origin working in La Manchuela were identified as one of the
most vulnerable groups, given the seasonal and low paid nature of the sectors they are employed in, the role of agents, as well as an increase in unemployment since the economic crisis. Wider 'integration' issues were also highlighted related to cultural and language differences and the experience of racism. Immigrants have also been affected by cuts in social programmes and services which were established to assist with 'integration'. In addition more recently there have been discussions about restricting or removing their access to free healthcare.

People with disabilities or specific illnesses

An increase in disabilities and illness was associated by stakeholders with an aging population. Those with disabilities, chronic health and mental health problems were identified as being especially vulnerable to cuts in health and social care services and to the lack of provision of specialised services in the area.

7.4 Transferability of results

The Spanish case study findings share a number of similarities with regard to findings on poverty and social exclusion undertaken in similar contexts (rural) in the European Union and elsewhere (Bertolini and Peragine, 2009; Camarero et al., 2009; Philip et al., 2012). The similarities centre on measurement, key drivers and impacts, each of these are briefly discussed below.

The inadequacy of spatial measures (at NUTS level 3 and below) of poverty and social exclusion and the challenges in measuring patterns and trends in dispersed and sparsely populated contexts were issues consistently cited by stakeholders in the Spanish context and in the Scottish case study, as well as by research and literature in this field (Bertolini and Peragine, 2009; Camarero et al., 2009; Llano Ortiz and Flores Martos, 2012; Milbourne, 2004). The invisibility of poverty and social exclusion in debates on poverty and social exclusion generally, as well as in rural development policies and initiatives is an issue that was consistently highlighted by Stakeholders in both the Spanish and Scottish contexts.

Key drivers of poverty and social exclusion not only relevant to the Spanish rural context, but also to rural areas in Scotland and the EU can be grouped into 3 categories: rural specific factors; national context and policy drivers; and the economic crisis since 2008 and the impact of ‘austerity’ measures adopted. Key issues in relation to each are as follows:

- With regard to rurality in the Spanish context, five factors were consistently cited which are also reflected in the Scottish context and beyond to varying degrees (e.g. Bertolini and Peragine, 2009; Camarero et al., 2009; Subirats, 2005). These were: geographical location and topographical features (rural /remoteness); demographic trends (e.g. sparsity of population, ageing, low fertility rates, high rates of masculinisation and high levels of youth migration); constrained labour markets; access to services and public transport; and low income.
- Factors related to the national context and policy drivers cited in the Spanish context and which also have relevance to similar areas across the EU included: the lack of sensitivity to rurality in mainstream policies related to service delivery
which has resulted in an emphasis on economies of scale in delivery of services including lack of investment in public transport and centralisation of services; and the impact of local cultures (Bertolini and Peragine, 2009; Camarero et al., 2009; Farrington, 2007; Gaitán, 2011).

- Finally the economic crisis and the implementation of 'austerity' measures (e.g. withdrawal /centralisation of services; welfare benefit cuts, etc.) were identified by all those involved in the Spanish case study as exacerbating poverty and social exclusion in rural areas as well as urban areas. This was also emphasised in the Scottish case study.

Understanding the multidimensional aspects of poverty and social exclusion and the varied impact on different individuals/ groups and households (e.g. lack of access to essential services, lack of access to auto mobility, and so on) taking into account spatial context -i.e. rurality- and the impact of austerity measures were identified as critical by stakeholders in the Spanish as well as Scottish case studies, respectively. Participants emphasised the strain this was placing on different types of households- e.g. migrants and ageing parents /grandparents- in the absence of work and lack of access to/ withdrawal of state support. The reliance on family support and social networks (for example in Spain as well as in the Scottish case study) across Welfare regimes suggests the need to acknowledge the increasingly porous nature of the boundaries between different Welfare regimes.

Taking into account the specificities of poverty and social exclusion in remote and rural areas is an important step in ensuring territorial cohesion across the EU, but also in developing and implementing appropriate policies in relation to areas facing similar challenges. Furthermore the shared experiences provide a strong basis for not only developing cross national research and addressing policy issues but also in exploring the transferability of practices across national contexts.

7.5 Implications for policy

Overcoming fragmentation - joining up policies

As highlighted in Chapter 6 responsibilities for addressing policies and programmes related to poverty and social exclusion in Spain as elsewhere are complex. Responsibilities and accountabilities are distributed across different levels of governance (from national to the local) and across departments at each level. In this context policies may result in conflicting and unintended outcomes exacerbating the situation of those who are socially excluded and are in poverty. This current approach to policy making and implementation works against addressing poverty and exclusion in a way that recognises the intrinsic links and connections between different aspects of people’s lives and identities across their life course stages. The research undertaken suggests two important prerequisites for avoiding policy conflicts and facilitating change and positive outcomes for those in poverty and are socially excluded: establishing multiagency mechanisms and approaches to policy making and implementation, at and across different levels of governance beyond the public sector ; and strong leadership.
Poverty and social exclusion policies and 'rural development' policies

Based on the research undertaken addressing poverty and social exclusion in rural areas appeared to be absent in 'rural development' policy discourses. Perhaps this is not surprising given the fragmented nature of policy making discussed above. However, further discussion is required to explore the role of 'rural development' policies in tackling poverty and social exclusion, as well as if rurality should be considered as a cross cutting issue which must be taken into consideration in the design and implementation of all sectoral policies. Overall policies need to be sensitive to the additional challenges that remoteness/rurality might create in terms of additional costs and in accessing services and employment in particular.

Service provision

Concerns were expressed about the central role of public funding for service provision (e.g. schools, health care centres, and so on) in enabling small rural villages to survive, as the characteristics and size of the population in these villages were seen as not profitable enough for the private sector to take over services. Furthermore access to services was being threatened by cuts in public expenditure and poor public transport. This situation provides an opportunity for policy makers, practitioners across sectors and local residents to jointly rethink policies and measures for delivering services in different ways in small rural villages which are most under threat at the present time. It would seem there is further potential for involving people who use services in the conceptualisation and design of services in a way that meets the needs of those most vulnerable.

7.6 Further research

The case study highlighted a number of areas which require further research if poverty and social exclusion in rural areas is to be taken seriously and tackled effectively. Their needs to be more in depth research which explores the specific influences and impact of rurality on poverty and social exclusion for different groups and households. Within this context the importance of foregrounding the voices of those most marginalised merits serious consideration, and in particular groups (such as the Roma and prostitutes) who were not mentioned in the interviews but are known to be in rural areas. In addition although gender issues were very briefly mentioned by Stakeholders further in depth research on how rurality shapes gender experiences in different contexts (e.g. public and private spheres) and across different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds would help to enhance understanding of gender relations in relation to poverty and social exclusion.

The impact of the economic crisis and austerity policies

The research does highlight the need to understand in more depth and more widely across rural areas of Spain the impact of the economic crisis and welfare reforms on small rural villages and their communities. The economic crisis and the impact of the austerity measures adopted underpinned all interviews. The impact of public expenditure cuts were consistently cited as impacting on people and communities in rural areas across the board as well as increasing the vulnerability of some groups to
poverty and social exclusion. Despite policy commitments to welfare reforms and strategies to address issues such as unemployment, education and training to integrate people more effectively into the labour market by the Central Government, stakeholders seemed overwhelmed by the impacts of cuts in public expenditure. They expressed concerns about the sustainability of small rural villages which they described as going into decline and indeed ‘disappearing’, reinforcing the depopulation of areas and its impact discussed in previous chapters. From the interviews it would appear that much of the progress made on welfare reforms over the last few years are in danger of being eroded because of the austerity measures being adopted at a time when family networks and support may also be changing (see below). This research has only been able to briefly highlight these issues in a specific rural context, further more extensive research is required to explore these trends and their impact in more depth.

Solo living and family support

The changing demographic trends in small rural municipalities and villages discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 (e.g. aging population, outmigration of youth, immigration) and its impact on household formation (growth in solo living) and informal family and social networks and support especially in the context of poverty and social exclusion are not particularly well understood. The prevalence generally of negative stereotypes of solo householders as ‘the carefree self-absorbed person who is oblivious to the responsibilities of family, kin or community and the sad, lonely, neglected and excluded person’ (Jamieson and Simpson, 2013, p. 1), suggests a need for further research to develop a more balanced understanding of solo living households and issues given the culture of care and welfare support based on family networks associated with Spanish culture.

Children and young people

Stakeholders did note that the economic crisis has increased the risk of children and young people to poverty and social exclusion. Issues such as child poverty were mentioned briefly but the scale and extent of this in rural areas is difficult to say without further research. With regard to young people, despite the fact that the literature emphasises the importance of education and qualifications as factors in preventing social exclusion among young people, these were barely mentioned by the Stakeholders. In the words of one of the Stakeholders ‘having qualifications or not having qualifications' was not going to make any difference with regard to being excluded. In this context the current high youth unemployment rates and the limited employment opportunities in the area was probably uppermost in the minds of the Stakeholders. Overall there was little or no evidence that explored young people’s perspectives on their experiences of rural life which is an avenue for further research.

Immigrants

The role of foreign born immigrants in rural areas of Spain has grown in importance in the last decade or more. The Stakeholders alluded to various problems in ‘integrating ’ migrants which made them vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion: difficult conditions of employment; low pay; varied access to welfare rights and
services; and potential tensions between immigrants and host communities due to cultural and language differences. Discussion on immigrants tended to assume a somewhat assimilationist view of programmes to assist with 'integration' which were affected by public sector cuts before it would appear they had any chance of making an impact. There is a need for further research to understand the capacity of professionals to work with a culturally diverse population and to explore both immigrant and host communities' views towards each other. This is with a view to promoting more dialogue and understanding of the needs of both communities in order to identify solutions and address 'community cohesion' issues as well as enhancing the capacity of professionals to deal with increasing cultural diversity in rural communities.
8 Literature


Cruz Roja Española (2007) Annual Report on Social Vulnerability. Executive Summary. [online] Available at:


Legislation

Central Legislation:

Ley 45/2007, de 13 de diciembre, para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Medio Rural. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 14 de diciembre de 2007. [online] Available at:


Regional Legislation:


### Annex 1: List of interviewed experts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Role in dealing with poverty and/or social exclusion</th>
<th>Geographical/Political level</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Casas Ibáñez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Casas Ibáñez</td>
</tr>
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<td>Casas Ibáñez</td>
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<td>Social Worker.</td>
<td>Casas Ibáñez</td>
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<td>Council Mayor</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>Casas Ibáñez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mancomunidad La Manchuela</td>
<td>Programmes Coordinator</td>
<td>La Manchuela</td>
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<td>University</td>
<td>Professor</td>
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<td>Navas de Jonquera</td>
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<td>Las Eras</td>
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<td>La Manchuela</td>
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<td>Social Work, Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión /European Antipoverty Network (EAPN) – Castilla-La Mancha</td>
<td>EAPN Researcher</td>
<td>Albacete</td>
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<td>LAG Manager</td>
<td>La Manchuela</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welfare Department of the Regional Government</td>
<td>Directora General, family, Children and Social Promotion.</td>
<td>Toledo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2: Interview topic schedule

1. Information about the Interviewee
   - Post
   - Organisation
   - Can you describe the nature of your involvement in Poverty and Social exclusion issues – [Also probe level of involvement: local, national, regional etc.]

2. Dimensions of poverty and social exclusion
   *Focus on impact of main demographic trends – aging, declining fertility and youth migration*
   - What are the main demographic challenges?
   - What are the main challenges arising from these trends in the WI?
   - Which groups are most affected by these trends?
   - Sources of information/data used to identify trends etc.
   - Ask for: Research reports, grey literature etc.

3. Underlying processes and trends
   - What are the main factors that increase the risk of social exclusion and poverty amongst: (a) older people; (b) children and young people. (c) other

   **Prompts -** Particular challenges of living in remote rural areas/ Island communities
   - Access to health and social services, social care
   - Housing conditions/Inadequate housing
   - Early exit from labour market/employment issues
   - Access to broadband/IT
   - Transport
   - Lack of support for family carers
   - Being in a single household (old male/old female)
   - Isolation
   - Schooling/educational/training opportunities
   - Employment
   - Labour market constraints: lack of skilled work; seasonal/short term work; lack of well paid work
   - Fuel costs – heating and transport
   - Political representation
   - Changes in entitlements to welfare
   - Lack of coherent (youth) policies
   - Alcoholism/drugs

4. Policy and service delivery Issues at the Local Authority level
   4.1 What are the main challenges in addressing social exclusion in relation to: (a) older people; and (b) younger people
   4.2 What is the role of the agency/individual (in the context of their role) in addressing social exclusion and poverty?
   4.3 What are the main factors that shape the agency’s responses to addressing social exclusion and poverty in relation to the two groups?
4.4 What is the role of informal networks and campaigning groups in addressing social exclusion and poverty?

4.5 Examples of initiatives established /being developed to address social exclusion and poverty in relation to the two groups.

5. **Policy and service delivery Issues at the Spanish Govt level**

5.1 In what ways do Government (national/regional) policies impact on addressing social exclusion in relation to the two groups at a local authority level? What impacts?

5.2 Examples of nationally driven initiatives to address social exclusion and poverty issues in relation to the two groups.

6. **How appropriate or meaningful for Albacete are the EU’s official indicators of Poverty and Social Exclusion?**

   Although our case study in the Albacete is focused on issues relating to access to services, particularly among older people and with respect to young children, we would also like to ask your opinion about the official indicators which the EU uses to monitor and compare poverty and social exclusion in different Member States, and regions (and to measure progress towards EU2020 targets).

   On the following pages we have mapped the three indicators, using data for the smallest available regions in each Member States. In some countries the indicators are available at NUTS 2, in others at NUTS 1 and for some there is only a national average.

   We have also added a few notes to explain how the indicators are defined. We would like you to take a look at the three maps with the following questions in mind. We will discuss these with you for a few minutes during the interview.

1. To what extent do these indicators capture the nature of poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

2. What sort of indicator do you think would be likely to better capture the particular issues characteristic of the Western Isles?

3. What scale of geographic units would you suggest for this indicator, (bearing in mind the practicalities of collecting data across the EU Member States)?
Annex 3: Additional maps

Figure 9: At-risk-of-poverty rate (most recent data in each country)

At Risk of Poverty Rate: ilc-li41

Data availability by Country (updated 28/09/12)

| Year | BE | BG | CZ | DK | DE | EE | EL | ES | FR | IT | CY | LV | LT | HU | MT | AT | PL | PT | RO | SI | SK | FI | SE | UK | IS | NO | CH | TR |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
The at risk of poverty rate is the percentage of the population living in households which have a disposable income less than 60% of the median for the country in which they live.
Figure 10: Severe deprivation rate (most recent data in each country)

Severely deprived households are defined as those not able to afford four out of nine items which are associated with a minimum standard of living i.e.:

i) able to face unexpected expenses;
ii) one week annual holiday away from home;
iii) able to pay for arrears (mortgage or rent, utility bills or hire purchase instalments);
iv) a meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day;
v) able to keep home adequately warm, or could not afford (even if wanted to):
vi) a washing machine;
vii) a colour TV;
viii) a telephone;
ix) a personal car.
People living in households with very low work intensity are those aged 0-59 who live in households where on average the adults (aged 18-59) worked less than 20% of their total work potential during the past year.
## Annex 4: Government territorial structure in Spain

### Table 7: Government territorial structure in Spain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Level</th>
<th>Name of the Government</th>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>Examples of Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National State</td>
<td>Gobierno de España</td>
<td>Spain with a small number of offices based in Castilla-La Mancha and Albacete city</td>
<td>State welfare provision, Taxation, Immigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Autonomous Region</td>
<td>Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha</td>
<td>Castilla-La Mancha (NUTS-2)</td>
<td>Delivery services related to: education, health, social services (in collaboration with Local Authorities below) and employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authorities</td>
<td>Diputación (i) de Albacete</td>
<td>Albacete Province (NUTS-3)</td>
<td>Social services, such as social care and domiciliary services (e.g. 'Consortio de Servicios Sociales'); delivery of employment training programmes (e.g. 'Escuelas taller' and 'Talleres de Empleo')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mancomunidad (ii) de La Manchuela</td>
<td>Supra-municipal territory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamlets (Pedanías) (iv)</td>
<td>In addition to the villages which are classified as a municipality, there are also 15 little villages: Casas del Cerro, Las Eras, Gila, Marimínguez, Tolosa, Zulema, Cantoblanco, La Pared, El Viso, Carcelén, Casas de Juan Gil, Bormate, Campoalbillo, Alcozarejos and Calzada de Vergara.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(i) This level of governance is guaranteed by the Spanish Constitution and regulated by the Central Government. It exists to ensure that public services are delivered in towns and cities in an efficient and integrated manner, across the province. It is expected to provide assistance to municipalities in discharging their services, duties and activities: coordinating the provision of municipal services; working with the authorities to provide technical, economic and legal assistance; providing public services with a provincial or supra-municipal dimension; fostering and encouraging social and economic development; dealing with planning in the province; and managing and ensuring the general interests of the province are promoted.
(ii) A' Mancomunidad' is a local entity, which operates within a national legal framework. It is best described as an association of municipalities which may exist indefinitely or for a specific period of time to achieve agreed goals and deliver functions which may be delegated to it by the municipalities involved. The municipalities involved are required to set up a separate management board and provide the finances to it in order achieve the agreed goals. The municipalities in a Mancomunidad may not be coterminous, for example the Mancommunidad of La Manchuela comprises of municipalities from two provinces (24 municipalities in Albacete and one in Cuenca province). It provides a mechanism for municipalities to share and pool their resources in order to be able to provide agreed services in all the associated towns.

(iii) Municipalities are guaranteed by the Constitution and regulated by Central Government. The public services that they must provide depend on their population according to the 7/85 Act. Generally they are required to provide the following mandatory services: public lightning; a cemetery; waste collection; street cleaning; supply of drinking water; road access; law and order; sewerage system; street pavements; and control of food and drinks sold in towns. In addition they may also provide services or activities, which meet the needs or well being of the local community, especially in the domains of culture, environmental protection, education, gender equality, housing and health protection.

(iv) The Mayor may appoint an individual (usually a councillor) as his representative in small villages which are distant from the main town but are part of a specific Municipality.