# Concept

# Concept

Revista de Investigación e Innovación en Diseño

ESADA Design Press

esada

**María Vileya Espinosa**
Interior design strategies for rural spaces. New
opportunities for emptied Spain in the XXI century.

**Interior Design**

# INTERIOR DESIGN STRATEGIES FOR RURAL SPACES
NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPTIED SPAIN IN THE XXI CENTURY

**María Vileya Espinosa⁽*⁾**

*Abstract.* This work examines the housing issue in the "Empty Spain" and proposes a solution based on sustainability and the maintenance of architectural identity, aimed at facilitating rural renovation projects. Rural environments represent an opportunity for young people, who face difficulties in achieving a good quality of life, to settle with the help of contemporary tools. Focused on Spain and its homogeneous characteristics, the study also considers the social changes following the Covid-19 pandemic.

The work is based on important national studies, such as Sergio del Molino's, and international ones, such as Claudia de Luca, Simona Tondelli, and Hanna Elisabeth's, which analyse the effects of the pandemic on rural areas and rural revitalisation projects based on culture.

The methodology includes a documentary study of thematic areas relevant to young people aged 18 to 35: new technologies to combat depopulation, a comparison of the effects on mental health between urban and rural environments, strategies for reclaiming urban space as a sustainability measure, and rural housing as an alternative for housing access. These areas are analysed to provide useful information on new ways of understanding spaces.

In conclusion, space design is key for the transition from urban to rural living, and this work offers interior design recommendations to adapt homes to contemporary needs.

**Keywords:** Emptied Spain, repopulation, new generations, habitability, rural development, displacement.

*Resumen.* Este trabajo examina la cuestión habitacional en la "España Vaciada" y propone una solución basada en la sostenibilidad y el mantenimiento de la identidad arquitectónica, destinada a facilitar proyectos de reforma rural. Los entornos rurales representan una oportunidad para que los jóvenes, que enfrentan dificultades para lograr una buena calidad de vida, se establezcan con ayuda de herramientas contemporáneas. Focalizado en España y sus características homogéneas, el estudio también considera los cambios sociales tras la pandemia del Covid-19.

El trabajo se basa en importantes estudios nacionales, como el de Sergio del Molino, y internacionales, como el de Claudia de Luca, Simona Tondelli y Hanna Elisabeth, que analizan los efectos de la pandemia en las áreas rurales y proyectos de revitalización rural basados en la cultura.

La metodología incluye un estudio documental de áreas temáticas relevantes para jóvenes de 18 a 35 años: nuevas tecnologías para combatir la despoblación, comparativa de los efectos en la salud mental entre entornos urbanos y rurales, estrategias de sostenibilidad para reconquistar el espacio urbano, y la vivienda rural como alternativa de acceso a la vivienda. Estas áreas se analizan para proporcionar información útil sobre las nuevas formas de entender los espacios.

En conclusión, el diseño de espacios es clave para la transición de la vida urbana a la rural, y este trabajo ofrece recomendaciones de interiorismo para adaptar las viviendas a las necesidades contemporáneas.

*Palabras clave: España vaciada, repoblación, nuevas generaciones, habitabilidad, desarrollo rural, desplazamiento.*

**María Vileya Espinosa**
Interior design strategies for rural spaces. New
opportunities for emptied Spain in the XXI century.

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

The "Empty Spain" is defined as a territorial, political, and economic phenomenon that originated in the second half of the 20th century due to strategies that diverted political and economic investment to major cities. This dynamic has become a regular part of the territorial distribution in Spain rather than a temporary occurrence. The term "vaciada" (emptied) emphasizes the causes and responsibilities behind this process, contrasting with "vacía" (empty), which simply describes the current population status.



**Image 1:** Family photograph. Own album.

Sergio Del Molino (2022) argues that rural Spain was never densely populated, noting a slight population increase over the past century, though cities have grown much more rapidly. This imbalance underscores the need for institutional investment to maintain rural prosperity, revealing a discriminatory phenomenon rooted in the centralist economic model of the Franco era, which forced youth migration to cities.

The consequences for both rural and urban areas are significant. Rural areas face desertification, abandonment, economic decline, and cultural dislocation, while cities suffer from overpopulation, pollution, inflation, and reduced quality of life. Addressing these issues involves evaluating current circumstances and taking responsibility for societal effects to generate positive changes.

In a European context, Spain's demographic challenges are unique, with lower growth despite its large size. Other European countries with similar land areas, like Italy and Germany, have much higher population densities. The "Empty Spain" is a distinctive and stable phenomenon that warrants specific study due to its unique characteristics and circumstances.
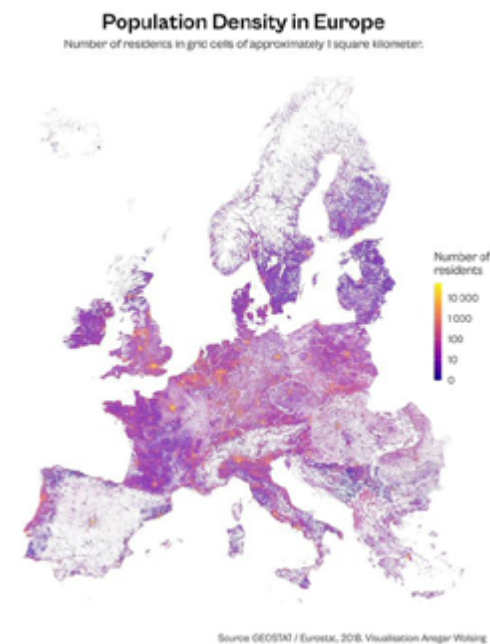


**Image 2:** Number of residents per 1 km² grid cells. (Geostat, 2021)

The 2020s, marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, brought profound social changes, particularly affecting younger generations (Gen Y and Z), who are digital natives. Understanding the impact of current events on these generations is crucial for analysing the evolution of the "Empty Spain" and how contemporary habitability changes influence younger populations. This research focuses on how these generations are affected by changes in Spain's living conditions since the pandemic began.

Thanks to studies such as those by Vayá and González (2020), as well as De Luca, C., Tondelli, S., and Aberg, H.E. (2020), we find hope in knowing that successful projects exist in parts of the world with characteristics similar to our own. The principles of these projects may serve as valuable tools for generating a positive impact within our context.

As designers working with individuals' emotions in various environments, engaging in this advocacy offers both an opportunity to serve our communities and a meaningful commitment to issues related to our places of origin, histories, and heritage. In this case, the role of interior design is to find the connections between a life brought from the city to a rural environment, to which individuals must adapt in search of fulfilling their needs and making the most of the best aspects of both worlds.

## 1.1. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Analyse the living conditions in rural and urban environments for new generations.
- Develop design strategies for spaces that align the quality of life in rural areas with that of urban ones.
- Contribute to the protection of the identity of rural spaces through design.

# 2. METHODOLOGY

This project follows a documentary and correlational research approach employing an inductive methodology and qualitative data to formulate its conclusions. The analytical methodology is divided into two phases. In the first phase, it addresses the concerns of Spanish youth, considering them as a potential driving force for the repopulation of these areas.

## 2.1. CONCERNS OF SPANISH YOUTH: A DRIVER OF CHANGE FOR "EMPTIED SPAIN"?

In this section, we address how Generation Z in Spain, born between 1994 and 2010 and comprising between 5 and 7 million individuals, shows a significant concern for economic stability and the possibility of acquiring their own home. This generation is distinguished by its ability to adapt to diversity, its climate awareness, and its critical thinking skills, characteristics that contrast with previous generations such as the Silent Generation, who lived through times of depression and global conflicts (Magallón Rosa, 2016).

According to a recent article in La Vanguardia (M. Rius, 2023) titled "What worries today's youth?", Spanish youth show greater concern than their international peers for economic stability and the security of owning a home. This trend is grounded in the precarious nature of youth employment, with an unemployment rate of 30.1% for those under 24 years old and 23.3% for those up to 29 years old, according to data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy (2023).

The Barometer of Opinion on Childhood and Adolescence, conducted by UNICEF (2023) in collaboration with the University of Seville, confirms that Spanish youth are also concerned about the effects of the pandemic, economic crises, climate change, and the environment. These factors significantly affect the aspirations and priorities of this generation, emphasizing the pursuit of economic stability and the opportunity to access their own housing as fundamental goals for their future.

This analysis underscores how the concerns of Spanish youth can act as a potential driver to address the phenomenon of "Spain Vaciada," driving initiatives for depopulated areas and revitalisation through policies and projects designed to improve living conditions and provide sustainable opportunities in these environments.

## 2.2. THE ROLE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND DIGITALISATION IN COMBATING DEPOPULATION

According to the Observatory of technology and society of Spain, Ontsi (2021), the advancement of digital technologies has been crucial in recent decades, transforming various sectors and enhancing the daily lives of people. In Spain, access to the Internet has grown significantly, with 89% of households having connections exceeding 100 Mbps and a 4% increase in the number of internet users since the onset of the pandemic. However, digital divides persist between urban and rural areas, where connectivity is lower, especially in smaller populations.

Despite these challenges, DIGITALISATION has created opportunities, particularly in technological employment, which has seen a 48% increase compared to the 28% growth in overall employment. This growth underscores the importance of technology as a tool for relocating digitally enabled jobs to rural areas, although significant differences in access persist based on age and geographic location.

María Vileya Espinosa
Interior design strategies for rural spaces. New
opportunities for emptied Spain in the XXI century.

Concept: Revista de Investigación e Innovación en Diseño, Vol. 3.
ISSN 2952 - 1572. https://doi.org/

Teleworking has become a significant aspect of DIGITALISATION during the pandemic, with 32.9% of workers engaged in online jobs (Fernández, 2021). However, the demand for technological talent, especially in artificial intelligence and cybersecurity, surpasses the available supply, challenging the growth of the digital sector in Spain and Europe. To fully leverage digital technologies for revitalizing rural areas through employment and connectivity, it is essential to address existing disparities and ensure equitable access to digital transformation for all citizens.

## 2.3. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS IN MENTAL HEALTH: A COMPARISON BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL SETTINGS

The year 2020 marked the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain, prompting severe lockdown measures and highlighting the critical importance of addressing mental health. The pandemic significantly increased anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues among the population, exacerbated by fears of infection and the strict confinement measures. Women faced heightened gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work due to school closures and increased caregiving responsibilities. These challenges underscored the need for political attention to mental health, with Spain pioneering efforts to integrate mental health strategies into national health policies.

Furthermore, urban environments have been found to impact cognitive health negatively, prompting researchers to explore ways to mitigate these effects through urban design changes. Studies like the ones from Lehrere (2009) and Anthes (2022) show that exposure to nature offers significant health benefits, including reduced stress and enhanced physical recovery. Embracing rural living and reconnecting with nature are seen as essential for improving overall well-being and counteracting the adverse effects of urban lifestyles.

In conclusion, prioritizing mental health, promoting nature-rich environments, and reconsidering urban design can collectively enhance societal well-being and individual quality of life.

## 2.4. YOUTH, RURALITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY: THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Rural depopulation in Spain has consequences not only socially and economically but also environmentally. The loss of traditional activities like agriculture and livestock is being replaced by large-scale industrial projects that cause pollution and environmental degradation. This includes mega-farms and intensive farming practices that harm the environment. Furthermore, the abandonment of practices such as pasture management increases the risk of forest fires.

To address this issue, Greenpeace proposes a comprehensive rural development policy that considers the climate crisis and biodiversity loss. This involves supporting sustainable local projects, refocusing European policies towards environmental protection, and promoting measures to attract population to rural areas, such as improving infrastructure and public services. However, is living in rural areas truly more sustainable than in cities? Some studies argue that, due to urban transport efficiencies, cities emit less $CO_2$ in transportation. However, this is one of the few areas where cities contribute less to climate change. According to Greenpeace (2021), rural municipalities contribute 34% less to climate change and help preserve biodiversity 20 times more than urban areas.

The question remains: Would young people be willing to forgo the benefits of urban life in favour of sustainability? The organisation Climate of Change states in its article "Spanish Youth and Ecological Crisis: The Second Most Serious Problem" (Climate of change, 2022). This article comes from a survey that was conducted among young Europeans aged 15 to 35 in 23 countries. Their understanding and attitude towards climate change, migration, and the current economic model were measured. According to the survey, in Spain, seven out of ten young people (71%) are very or extremely concerned about climate change, surpassing the European average (46%). Behind economic situation and unemployment, they rank the ecological crisis as the second most serious problem facing the world. Additionally, 83% believe that consumption habits are not sustainable. [...]

Spanish youth attach great importance to combating climate change when choosing political leaders. The survey reveals that three-quarters have voted or would vote for politicians who prioritize the fight against climate change."

This information suggests that indeed, youth might be willing to lead a more sustainable life in rural areas. However, it is crucial to consider that they would not make this sacrifice without gaining something in return.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food, through the National Rural Network (RRN), conducted a survey to understand the perceptions and needs of young people in rural Spain (Ministry of Agriculture, 2021). The survey results highlight the overall satisfaction of young people with life in rural areas, emphasizing contact with nature and quality of life. Among the main needs identified by young people to remain in rural areas are:
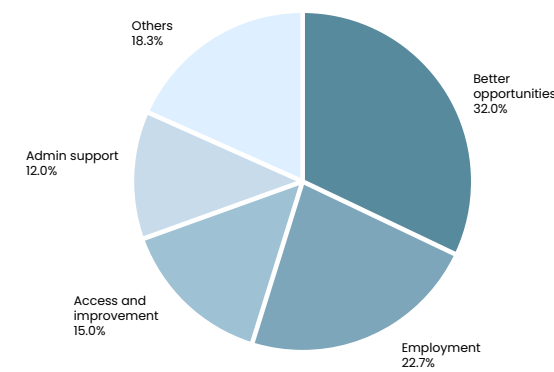


**Image 3:** Needs of young people to stay in rural areas. (Climate of change, 2022)

## 2.5. ACCESS TO URBAN HOUSING AND DEPOPULATION: IS RURAL HOUSING A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE?

In Spain, access to housing for young people aged 18 to 35 is a significant challenge. With increasing real estate prices and stagnant wages, many young individuals face a harsh reality: Housing has become increasingly unaffordable. This demographic finds themselves trapped in a cycle of expensive rentals or difficulties securing mortgages due to unstable employment or insufficient income. The shortage of affordable housing and inadequate housing policies further exacerbate the situation, leaving many young people struggling to find a place to call home in a market seemingly beyond their reach. According to the latest data from the Youth Council of Spain (Consejo de la Juventud de España, 2024):

• The youth emancipation rate in Spain stands at 16.3%, still well below pre-2008 financial crisis and COVID-19 crisis levels.
• To afford renting alone, a young person would need to allocate 93.9% of their annual net salary.
• Young women emancipate 6 percentage points more than young men but are less likely to live independently.

Spain's situation is among the most severe in the European context. Precarious employment and low wages are cited as the main reasons hindering housing access for a large segment of Spanish youth, according to the article from Fundación La Caixa's Social Observatory "Why Can't Young People Access Homeownership?" (Muñez-Fernández, 2019). There has been a notable decline in property ownership among those under 29 years old, dropping from 54% in 2008 to 26% currently. High real estate prices force many young people to spend over 60% of their monthly income on mortgage payments. However, financial standards recommend not allocating more than 30%-35% of income to mortgage payments, making homeownership very challenging for most young people. Renting has become a popular option, but prices are also rising. An emerging trend is the free transfer of property by family members who are owners, thus enabling youth emancipation.

The average price of a home in Spain far exceeds what most young people can afford, with the initial down payment posing an even greater challenge, averaging 45,366 euros, equivalent to 2.2 times the total annual income of a young household with at least two salaries.

This situation has made rural housing an attractive alternative for young people facing these difficulties. In the article "This is the alternative for young people to emancipate" from the newspaper 'La Razón' (Garrote A., 2023), it highlights that a growing number of young people are opting to move to rural areas where the cost of living is lower and housing more affordable. According to a recent analy-

**María Vileya Espinosa**
Interior design strategies for rural spaces. New
opportunities for emptied Spain in the XXI century.

**Concept: Revista de Investigación e Innovación en Diseño, Vol. 3.**
ISSN 2952 - 1572. https://doi.org/

sis by Fotocasa (López, 2023, 11 septiembre), over 50% of those looking to move to rural areas are between 18 and 34 years old, a significant increase compared to previous months.

María Matos, Director of Studies at Fotocasa, points out that these areas offer housing prices more in line with the economic situation of young people. However, many young people dismiss certain rural areas due to lack of essential services or poor connectivity with urban centres.

Provincial governments such as the Diputación de León (s.f.) have launched grant calls aimed at young individuals wishing to access housing in municipalities of Leonese provinces with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants. The goal is to promote the settlement of young populations in rural areas and facilitate their emancipation. Grants are divided into three lines: acquisition and construction of housing, rehabilitation and renovation of housing, and rental assistance. Requirements include being between 18 and 36 years old (extendable to 39 years for young farmers), being a resident of a municipality in the province of León with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants, holding Spanish or EU member state nationality, and meeting certain income limits.

Specific requirements are set for each grant line, and applications must be submitted within 20 business days from the day following the publication of the call summary in the Official Bulletin of the Province.

**2.6. POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF ESPAÑA VACIADA IN SPACE DESIGN**
The Development Model drafted by the political group "España Vaciada" (Evaciada, 2023) includes housing and architecture among its measures. In the section "Table 8. Rural Area as a Space of Opportunities," it gathers several proposals mentioning housing and renovations as necessary to activate generational turnover. Here is where we can observe that the discipline of space design is not only useful but also required.

**2.7. RURAL HOUSING: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE - NEW TRENDS IN RURAL HOUSING**
Thanks to a document from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food, we can portray general characteristics of rural homes today. It reviews all these characteristics to consider. Additionally, it analyses the decisions that some residents are already making, which we can see documented on digital platforms where they upload video content of their processes.

Below, we present a comparison of some of the most significant characteristics between rural and urban housing:

**Table 1:** Comparative of rural and urban housing.

| CATEGORY | RURAL HOUSING | URBAN HOUSING |
|---|---|---|
| Composition | Single-storey building, two max. **North:** Buildings with more than one dwelling, associated with greater modernity or with traditional structures such as farmhouses and rural houses. **South:** Predominance of single-dwelling houses, offering higher occupancy. | Vertical building |
| Antiquity | Acquire before 1950 | Acquire after 1980 |
| Use | Majority of second homes, especially in the countryside and along the coasts | Primary residence |

| CATEGORY | RURAL HOUSING | URBAN HOUSING |
|---|---|---|
| Facilities | Lower availability of: air conditioning, heating, computers. Complete equipment but of lower quality, becoming a differentiator in terms of quality of life. Greater number of freezers for storing provisions, replacing the traditional cellars, water tanks, pantries, etc. | Greater number of household appliances. Smaller space for freezers and refrigerators, as food consumption is more immediate. |
| Transport | More space for private garages and sheds. Use of motorcycles. Higher transportation costs due to poorer communication infrastructure. | Public transportation is more abundant. Private parking in shared garages and parking in public areas. |
| Furniture | It is similar. They occupy very similar percentages, and concerns regarding quality of life are closely aligned. A notable feature is the more traditional style of furniture in rural areas, with materials like wood, and pieces of furniture that have fallen into disuse (such as dressing tables, valets, etc.). | |
| Materials | Stone: Predominant in the north. Clay: Predominant in the plateau and the south. The south is often characterised by whitewashed façades. Wood: In disuse due to safety concerns. Cave: The most basic form of dwelling. | Brick constructions Concrete constructions Alternative system constructions |

Rural housing is currently portrayed in this way. However, considering that young people are reclaiming these spaces due to the economic advantages they offer, it is interesting to observe how these living spaces are evolving under the influence of residents who are already taking the initiative. To analyse this, we examined videographic content shared by repopulators on social media to showcase their lifestyle.

In terms of layout, they often opt for open spaces instead of the traditional multiple partitions. Many choose to open up the ceilings to enhance verticality, increasing natural light and creating a sense of spaciousness. As for utilities, they closely resemble those in urban homes: extraction hoods, modern appliances, washer-dryer units, hot water, heating, and digital technologies. However, they don't seem to take full advantage of rural features to meet needs like refrigeration. In new layouts, the traditional "small sitting rooms" for informal meetings have largely disappeared, replaced by more functional living rooms or workspaces. This trend was also seen in urban homes.

For aesthetics, rather than consulting professionals, they are inspired by accessible trends on social media and the Pinterest app, where many projects are available. The predominant style is clean, with neutral colours, influenced by Nordic and Mediterranean designs.
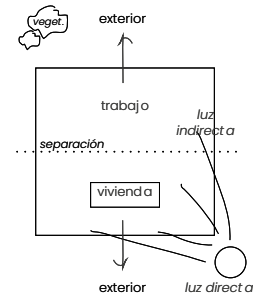
Exterior interventions are also common, as they represent a significant advantage over urban housing. Swimming pools, garden plots, and outdoor leisure spaces are frequently found.

**3. RESULTS**
As a result of this social and geopolitical research, we have concluded a series of principles that, along with the knowledge acquired in interior design, allow us to propose design strategies for rural renovation projects. These thematic areas correspond to those previously studied and include relevant information for the design sections. These design proposals aim to develop projects that not only improve the living conditions of their inhabitants but also contribute to the revitalisation and sustainability of rural communities.

**María Vileya Espinosa**
Interior design strategies for rural spaces. New
opportunities for emptied Spain in the XXI century.

**Concept: Revista de Investigación e Innovación en Diseño, Vol. 3.**
ISSN 2952 - 1572. https://doi.org/

**Table 2:** Results

| SUBJECT | ITEMS TO ANALYSE | IMPLICATIONS FO THE SPACE DESIGN |
|---|---|---|
| **Digitalisation** | Spaces to work | When designing home workspaces, we need to prioritise proper lighting (500 lux recommended by the Generalitat Valenciana) and a connection to the outdoors. To reduce mental overload, choose a workspace with views of nature and indirect light. For acoustic comfort, situate the workspace away from busy areas of the home. |
| | Personal relationships | The first section highlights the importance of separating workspaces from the busiest areas of the home to reduce noise. However, it also stresses the need to avoid creating a sense of social isolation, often associated with rural settings, which this separation might amplify. A potential solution is to ensure that, while the workspace is kept apart from the most frequented areas, it maintains a connection to the outdoors. |
| | Sedentary Lifestyle | Experts foresee the physical impacts of remote work and its sedentary lifestyle. To prevent poor posture, maintaining ergonomic furniture proportions and using tools that allow mobility are vital. Specialists suggest height-adjustable workspaces and regular breaks. |
| **Mental health** | Connection with Nature | Creating gardens, allotments, farms, animal shelters, and/or outdoor sports spaces are some proposals for connecting with nature through outdoor areas. Encouraging the presence of such spaces through design and planning is a responsible action towards promoting mental health. |
| | Natural and Artificial Lighting | Lighting plays a crucial role in mood regulation within homes. Thus, a well-considered approach to artificial lighting is essential, particularly during the colder months, alongside the installation of large windows to maximise natural light utilisation. |
| | Leisure | We referenced Social Deprivation Syndrome, which affects vulnerable adults. Choosing a lifestyle detached from societal systems can lead to isolation, impacting physical and mental health with issues like sleep disturbances, weakened immunity, cardiovascular problems, and anxiety. To combat this, homes should include spaces for leisure and social interaction, with versatile indoor or outdoor rooms offering an effective solution. |
| **Sustainability** | Bioefficient Architecture | Utilising bioenergetic or bioclimatic architectural resources to minimise the energy impact of new constructions or renovation projects as much as possible. |
| | Efficient Installations | When updating installations, selecting the most efficient options with the lowest environmental impact is a sustainable strategy to consider during space rehabilitation. |
| | Circular Economy | Maximising the use of existing materials and elements in the intervention area, or repurposing them in other locations (such as windows, doors, furniture, or stone and ceramic finishes) wherever feasible, is a key approach to reducing environmental impact. |
| | Respecting the Identity of Spaces | Preserving the unique identity of spaces is a sustainable approach that allows us to benefit from the qualities each environment offers while implementing measures to ensure comfort in our daily lives. |
| | Traditional Materials | The characteristic materials of each location reflect the resources available in the area. Their use not only helps maintain the physical identity of spaces but also positively influences the local economic system. |



| SUBJECT | ITEMS TO ANALYSE | IMPLICATIONS FO THE SPACE DESIGN |
|---|---|---|
| **Sustainability** | Restoration of Original Pieces | Restoring antique wooden furniture has grown increasingly popular, breathing new life into pieces while allowing for customisation to suit personal tastes. This practice promotes sustainability by reducing consumption's environmental impact and encouraging eco-friendly habits. Moreover, the aesthetic options are vast, often inspired by ideas from digital platforms. |
| | Job Creation | When carrying out an intervention, utilising local resources, such as hiring nearby workers whenever possible, promotes self-sufficiency and contributes to economic regeneration. Undertaking a housing rehabilitation project can thus become a first step towards broader collective initiatives that benefit the community. |
| **Housing and Urbanism** | Multipurpose Rooms | Building on the previous points, creating multipurpose spaces is an effective way to provide areas for leisure, addressing needs commonly found in cities, such as going to the cinema, gym, library, creativity spaces, or meeting areas. One efficient approach to achieve this is using versatile furniture that can divide the room into different functional zones. |
| | Urbanism of Community Spaces | Urbanism is a tool that can serve the same purpose as the previous conclusion (multipurpose rooms) on a public scale. In this way, we can foster a sense of community by making various common goals available to all citizens, such as outdoor sports spaces, areas for animals like dog parks, playgrounds, community gardens, and more. |
| | Recovering Sustainable Spaces Used When Comforts Were Limited | Research shows that rural homes tend to have more extensive refrigeration equipment, likely due to storing larger quantities of food consumed more slowly than in cities. Traditional spaces like cellars, pantries, and water tanks are increasingly replaced by modern freezers. Reviving these traditional cooling methods, which harness natural environmental properties, offers a sustainable way to preserve the authenticity of rural homes. |
| | Recovering the Kitchen as the Heart of the Home | The kitchen and traditional food preparation have long been central to gatherings, particularly in rural areas. Therefore, in a potential redesign of housing layouts, maintaining this spatial hierarchy—by leaving enough space for both communal gatherings and traditional cooking—represents an interesting choice when conceptualising these new spaces. |
| | Open spaces | In line with the previously mentioned concept of multipurpose rooms, opening up spaces to maximise light and versatility could be a wise choice. One approach could be uncovering the original ceilings and beams to enhance the verticality of the homes. |
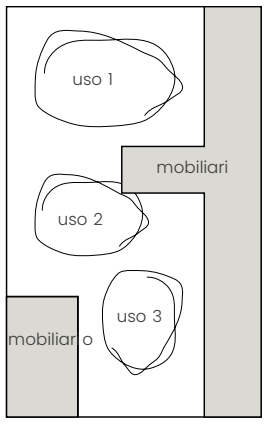


## 4. CONCLUSIONS

From this work, we can conclude that current rural homes have indeed become outdated and do not adapt to the new lifestyles of younger generations. Therefore, rehabilitation projects are necessary to give them a new use and facilitate generational replacement in these localities, as mentioned by the political group "España Vaciada" in its Development Model. Through interior design efforts, it is possible to reinterpret spaces designed more than 50 years ago to adapt them to contemporary comforts using the proposed strategies. Although the regeneration strategy is based on introducing new elements to the existing traditional ones, it is essential to include traditional materials and characteristic elements to avoid cultural and architectural whitening of historic localities.

The objectives of this work are met by analysing the living conditions in both rural and urban environments and contextualizing

**María Vileya Espinosa**
Interior design strategies for rural spaces. New
opportunities for emptied Spain in the XXI century.

**Concept: Revista de Investigación e Innovación en Diseño, Vol. 3.**
ISSN 2952 - 1572. https://doi.org/

them for new generations. Thanks to a methodology that analyses current social concerns, we obtain information on how young people understand spaces, which allows us to develop meaningful renovation projects. To fully achieve them, it would be necessary to disseminate this project.

This analysis contextualizes the situation of the "España Vaciada" in the 2020s and highlights the issues that push young people to opt for rural housing for economic reasons, facilitated by digital work. By including principles of sustainability (climatic, economic, architectural, etc.), we contribute from design to protecting the identity of rural spaces, promoting the work of local trades, traditional elements, and the recovery of objects of historical value.

This work has been developed in alignment with the discourse of political associations that defend this issue, as a show of respect for those who suffer these consequences and know them better than anyone.

The adaptation of homes can combine spatial traditions with urban trends. This can be done through very simple details like materiality or by maintaining original elements. Successful projects have been carried out from this perspective.

This paper provides information through which we can understand the difficulties young people face in living in large cities. Indeed, these hostile conditions are driving the young population toward the countryside due to its economic advantages over cities. It is easy to understand the difficulties that can arise in an overpopulated society where investment is high but demand surpasses it. In the countryside, the scenario is the opposite: low supply for the existing demand. This creates a vicious cycle that makes life unsustainable for many people both in the city and in the countryside.

We conclude that digital connectivity is directly related to the age group of the population residing in a locality. This means that both urban and rural young people are digital natives, offering them a common characteristic that can help them transition smoothly, especially in the labour sector.

## 4.1. PERSONAL APPRAISAL

This work arises from a personal motivation to explore issues within the field of interior design that concern similar population groups to mine. Undertaking the journey to find some answers and give context to ongoing events has been a rewarding experience, providing alternatives to the housing and precarity problems faced by young people today in their pursuit of a sustainable quality of life.

Analysing certain social events not only confirms my personal observations but also reveals the systemic nature of the issues. While we cannot solve everything with a single proposal, if various thematic and professional fields offer solutions in the same direction, it becomes easier to make the right steps forward.

That is the intent of this research, and I consider it fulfilled. This work opens the door to a range of possibilities regarding the design of rural spaces. More work is needed on:

• Studying the best use of materials for improved sustainability while enhancing comfort for residents.
• Expanding the geographical scope of the study and making more specific comparisons between localities in the southern and northern areas, considering their architectural morphological differences.
• Addressing strategies for the adaptation of exterior and public spaces that interact with living spaces, as both together form a comprehensive habitable environment for humans.

## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

• Anthes, E. (2022). La arquitectura interior: *Cómo su diseño influye en nuestro comportamiento, salud y bienestar.* [Interior Architecture: How Its Design Influences Our Behaviour, Health, and Well-being]. Los libros de la Catarata.
• Barómetro de Opinión de la Infancia y Adolescencia 2021-2022 [Barometer of Opinion on Childhood and Adolescence] (2023). UNICEF España. https://www.unicef.es/publicacion/barometro-infancia-adolescencia/informe-2021-2022
• Climate of Change. (2022). *Juventud española y crisis ecológica: el segundo problema*
*más grave.* [Spanish youth and the ecological crisis: The second most pressing issue.] Climate of Change Spain. https://climateofchange.info/ spain/la-juventud-espanola-situa-la-crisis-ecologica-como-el-segundo-problema-mas-grave/
• Consejo de la juventud de España (2024). *Las personas jóvenes reclaman más ambición frente a la crisis climática.* [Spanish youth and the ecological crisis: The second most serious problem]. https://www.cje.org/las-personas-jovenes-reclaman-mas-ambicion-frente-a-la-de-crisis-climatica/
• Del Molino, S. (2022). *La España vacía.* [Empty Spain]. Alfaguara.
• De Luca. C, Tondelli. S , Aberg.H.E (2020). 'The Covid-19 pandemic effect in rural areas; Turning challenges into opportunities for rural regeneration'. TeMA *Special Issue: COVID-19 vs CITY-20.* 119-132. http://dx.doi.org/10.6092/1970-9870/6844
• Diputación de León (s. f.). *La Diputación de León ayuda a 344 jóvenes a encontrar una vivienda rural y saca la cuarta convocatoria.* https://www.dipuleon.es/newsSearchAction/Diputacion/Noticias_de_Diputacion/rur24?f=lastnews
• Evaciada. (2023, 25 mayo). *FederACIon - España vaciada ¡Es el MOMENTO!* . España Vaciada. https://xn--espaavaciada-dhb.org/federacion/
• Fernández, A. M. (2021, 10 noviembre). *La brecha digital persiste en la España Vaciada, pese a crecer un 1,6% la población rural que accedió a Internet en 2020.* [The digital divide persists in Empty Spain, despite a 1.6% increase in the rural population accessing the internet in 2020]. El Español. https:// www.elespanol.com / i n v ertia / emp r esas/tecno l o gia / 20211110/d i gital -persiste-espa n a -va cia d a -po b l a cio n -accedi o -in tern et/      626187866_0. html#:~:text=As%C3%AD%2C%20el%20 91%2C1%25,%2C5%25%20dispon%C3%A-Da%20de%20conexi%C3%B3n.
• Garrote, A. (2023, 7 noviembre). *Esta es la alternativa de los jóvenes para poder emanciparse.* [This is the alternative for young people to achieve Independence] La Razón. https://www.larazon.es/economia/esta-alternativa-jovenes-poder-emanciparse_20231107654a-186432499c00010aabb0.html
• Geostat (2021). *Population distribution.* https://ec.europa.eu/assets/estat/E/E4/gisco/website/census_2021_grid_map/index.html
• Greenpeace España (2021). *El papel clave de la España rural frente a la emergencia climática y la pérdida de biodiversidad.* [The key role of rural Spain in the face of the climate emergency and biodiversity loss]. https://es.greenpeace.org/es/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/04/rural-web.pdf
• Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2018). *Diagnóstico Eje Despoblación.* [Diagnosis of the Depopulation Axis]. Comisionado del Gobierno frente al Reto Demográfico. Ministerio de Política Territorial y Función Pública.      https://www.miteco.gob.es/content/dam/miteco/es/reto-demografico/temas/analisis-cartografia/diagnostico_eje_despoblacion_tcm30-517769.pdf
• Lehrer, J. (2009). How the city hurts your brain-And what you can do about it. *Boston Globe, 2.*
• López, A. (2023, 11 septiembre). Los jóvenes, los más interesados en irse a vivir a una zona rural. [Young people are the most interested in moving to a rural area]. Fotocasa Life. Fotocasa Life. https://www.fotocasa.es/fotocasa-life/compraventa/los-jovenes-son-los-mas-interesados-en-irse-a-vivir-a-una-zona-rural/
• Magallón Rosa, R. M. (2016). El ADN de la generación Z: entre la economía colaborativa y la economía disruptiva. [The DNA of Generation Z: Between the Sharing Economy and the Disruptive Economy]. *Revista de estudios de juventud, 114,* 29-44.
• Ministry of Agriculture (2021). *Los jóvenes españoles valoran vivir en el medio rural, aunque demandan mejoras en los servicios* [Spanish youth value living in rural areas, although they call for improvements in services.]. https://www.mapa.gob.es/es/prensa/ultimas-noticias/los-j%C3%B3venes-espa%-C3%B1oles-valoran-vivir-en-el-medio-rural-aunque-demandan-mejoras-en-los-servicios/tcm:30-573329
• Muñez-Fernández, G.A (2017). Juventud y mercado de la vivienda en España: análisis de la situación. [Youth and the Housing Market in Spain: An Analysis of the Situation]. *Revista de Estudios de Juventud, 116.*

**María Vileya Espinosa**
Interior design strategies for rural spaces. New
opportunities for emptied Spain in the XXI century.

**Concept: Revista de Investigación e Innovación en Diseño, Vol. 3.**
ISSN 2952 - 1572. https://doi.org/

- Ontsi. (2021). *Tecnología + Sociedad en España 2021.* [Technology + Society in Spain 2021]. https://www.ontsi.es/es/publicaciones/Tecnologia-Sociedad-en-Espana-2021#:~:text=Empoderamiento%20digital,32%20puntos%20porcentuales%20desde%202011

- Rius, M. (2023, 20 noviembre). *¿Qué inquieta a la actual generación de jóvenes?* [What worries today's youth?]. La Vanguardia. https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20231120/9391198/que-preocupa-futuro-jovenes-espanoles.html

- Vayá, F. S., & González, E. S. M. (2020). Casos de éxito de desarrollo rural en Europa: una primera aproximación a su aplicabilidad en España. [Success Stories of Rural Development in Europe: A First Approach to Their Applicability in Spain]. *International Review of Economic Policy, 2*(2), 46. https://doi.org/10.7203/irep.2.2.19350