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## The Impact of Out-Migration on the Rural Culture — The Case of El Parque Chaqueño Argentina

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### Abstract

This work is focused on the transformation of rural culture by means of out-migration. It comprises the analysis of the cultural transformation of the rural place as well as the different strategies of the remaining communities in trying to maintain their rural identity. The research has been undertaken in six communities found in the arid and semiarid ecoregions of the Parque Chaqueño in Argentina.

One of the most important distinctive characteristics of rural communities is their relation to nature. The complex relationship between the adaptation and development of a certain society to a given environment is the foundation stone for the origin of rural cultures. Our results show that this relationship is affected by out-migration through two main processes:

Firstly, considering that culture is based on vertical and horizontal transmission of technical traits, knowledge and traditions, out-migration represents a disruptive process of cultural evolution. By pulling out the young cultural porters, the multiplication of traditions and perception of nature, are strongly affected. Our survey shows that both in the driest areas and semi-humid ones, traditions and institutions that regulate the sustainable use of natural resources are mainly kept in the elderly generations and less in the youngest ones.

The second process relays on the impact of out-migration on the life-strategies of the remaining families in the rural communities. Peasant families are forced to adapt their life strategies to a reduced family labour supply. The observed tendency is towards a diversification of income sources that is followed by a decreasing role of agriculture in the household budget. This generates a transformation of lifestyles based on the management of natural resources towards a new lifestyle in which the rural place is becoming only a place of living.

These findings attempt to postulate that out-migration, although not as a single and independent force, has a strong influence in transforming rural culture. The role of peasants in extending the appropriate management knowledge to next generation should be considered not only as a strategy for sustainable development support but also as keeping cultural diversity.

**Keywords:** Chaco region, rural culture, rural out-migration