How to Foster Rural Sustainability through Farming Workforce Rejuvenation? Looking into Involuntary Newcomers' Spatial (Im)mobilities

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Abstract: This conceptual paper aims to expand the notion of "farming newcomers" in Europe by also including those that we label "involuntary newcomers", who correspond to the workforce coming unwillingly to farming for reasons associated with spatial (im)mobilities. We fully develop our aim in four steps. Firstly, we present an integrative literature review which describes how the interplay between the key concepts of the sustainable farming framework (i.e., sustained development, networked rural development, and spatial (im)mobilities) tailor the newcomers' arrival to the farming sector. Secondly, we define involuntary newcomers, describe their profiles and list the barriers to their engagement with sustainable farming. Thirdly, we advance some implications and limitations of our work for mobility research agendas. Fourthly, we conclude with an overview of the main inputs provided by our paper. We contribute to the literature by showing that: (a) newcomers must be defined beyond land ownership; (b) involuntary newcomers are very diverse, due to trends in spatial (im)mobilities; and (c) there is a high risk of the sustainable farming framework failing to meet its ambitions if it continues to ignore involuntary newcomers (and the barriers they encounter) in sustainable forms of agriculture.

Keywords: newcomers; NEETs; migrants; rurality; farming; workforce; sustainability

1. Introduction

The current European agricultural policies envisage that the farming sector must ensure the long-term sustainability of rural areas [1]. This vision encompasses a need for farming workforce renewal [2]. In the literature, those entering into the farming sector are usually labelled as newcomers. Newcomers are roughly described as people with or without a family background in agriculture starting a farming business from scratch [3,4]. The efforts to profile newcomers entering into the farming sector are starting to increase, however, they remain insufficient. This means that the background, personal motives, as well as the different mechanisms that may be driving newcomers into the sector are far from being studied. This incomplete picture can be collapsed into three specific problems that need to be addressed.

Firstly, existing research confuses the definition of newcomers with land ownership. In part, this is understandable, since hired workers account for just 8% of the entire farming workforce. However, the ambitions of initiatives such as the Green Deal (e.g., reaching a share of 25% farming land in eco-agriculture mode by 2030) show that the hiring needs are increasing across Europe just as the number of family workers has been strongly decreasing [5]. In spite of this, the definition of newcomers persists as a narrow, exclusivist conceptualisation, ignoring all those newly arrived into the sector as employees.

A second problem is that an increase of farming hiring needs is paralleled by a greater involvement in the sector of mostly young people with less cultural, social and economic resources [6]. This category is driven by spatial mobility and remains invisible in the newcomers' literature. Their position towards mobility is variegated, and includes those trapped in an immobility mode in rural areas [7], including children and women from farming families, involved in unpaid, informal, and/or illegal work [5]; rural young people Not in Employment, nor in Education or Training (NEET) [6,8]; and finally, those coming from abroad who may end up as seasonal labour force [5] or as a more permanent workforce [6,7,9–13]. The existing efforts to describe different types of farming newcomers remain dispersed across different scientific fields such as sociology, e.g., [3,9,11,14] or social psychology [6,8]. As such, these efforts are missing a whole model of farming newcomers covering both owners and employees.

Thirdly, a wider and more inclusive approach regarding the concept of "newcomers" can help to assess how much the sustainable development approach to farming, translated into contemporary rural development concepts, such as networked rural development and key political ambitions collated in major policy packages such as the CAP are widespread amongst all of those coming into agriculture. Such a discussion remains absent from the literature.

In this context, we deliver a conceptual paper which aims to expand the notion of farming newcomers. A conceptual paper is a non-empirical piece which maps a phenomenon by identifying, defining, and connecting disparate concepts, based on an argument for integrating these concepts which can inspire future empirical research [15,16]. In other words, conceptual papers are legitimate efforts meant to facilitate discussion on emerging topics without the benefit of empirical evidence, opening up avenues for validation via dedicated research [16].

Our overriding conceptual goal is divided into three innovative contributions. Firstly, we expand the concept of farming newcomers by proposing the existence of involuntary newcomers, broadly corresponding to employees coming unwillingly into the farming sector. We therefore establish a fundamental distinction between *voluntary* newcomers (coming in as owners whether buying, renting or inheriting land) and *involuntary* newcomers (corresponding to an overwhelming share of all farming employees). Secondly, we describe in detail the heterogeneous involuntary newcomers' profiles as being driven by spatial (im)mobilities. Thirdly, we discuss why involuntary newcomers' routes into farming are mismatched from the sustainable development roadmap for rural areas. We do so by bringing forward the barriers shaping their involvement with the sector. We believe our contributions can have a multi-disciplinary impact traversing different fields such as agrarian economy, rural sociology, and social psychology.

Our work is divided into four main sections according to the recommended structure for conceptual papers [16]. Firstly, we present an integrative literature review proposing a sustained farming framework covering the interplay between key concepts of sustained development [17], networked rural development [18] and spatial (im)mobilities [7,19], which shape the level of willingness to be involved in farming amongst voluntary and involuntary newcomers. Secondly, we explain the definition of involuntary newcomers by contrasting them with voluntary newcomers, describing the heterogeneous profiles of both types of newcomers and listing the barriers shaping involuntary newcomers' engagement with sustainable development in a systematic way. Thirdly, we advance the implications and limitations of our conceptual proposal for multi-disciplinary research agendas focusing on mobility issues given their centrality concerning the status of involuntary newcomers. Finally, we conclude with an overview of the main contributions of our paper.

2. Integrative Literature Review

The need to increase the influx of newcomers into the European farming sector is clearly justified by the figures. The farming workforce is quickly declining and ageing. As Figure 1 shows, between 2010 and 2019, farming employment in the EU declined by 17.1%, whilst the employment in all economic activities increased by 7.5%.
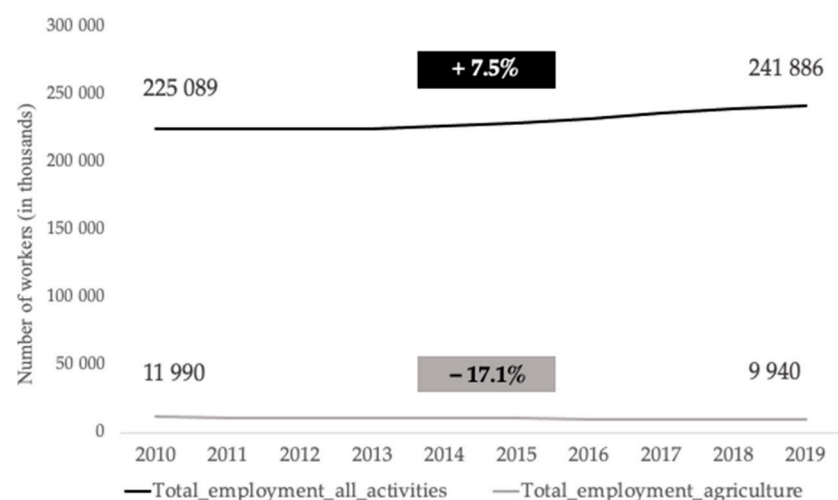
Figure 1. Evolution of employment in farming (2010–2019) compared to the evolution of total employment by all activities [20].

Figure 2 shows that between 2010 and 2019 the share of agriworkers has decreased across all age groups, including amongst those aged 15–39 (−21.2%). Furthermore, most farming newcomers are over 40 years old.
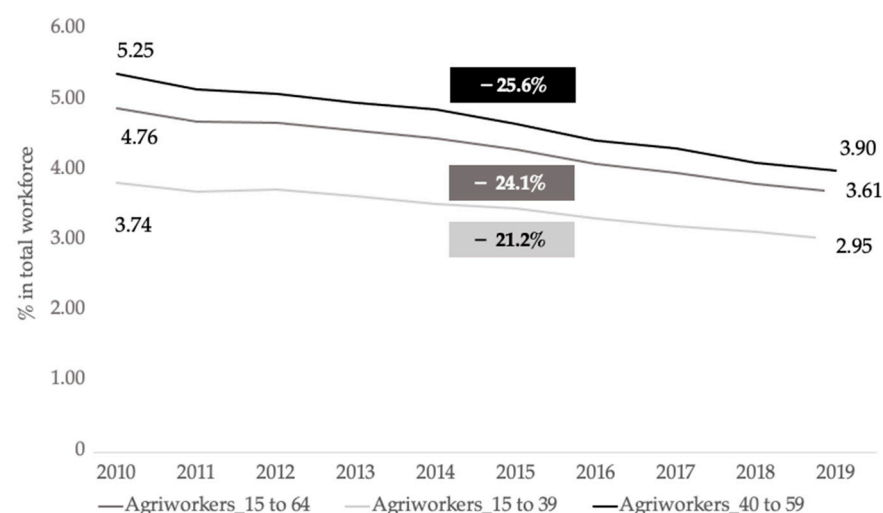
Figure 2. Evolution of agriworkers (2010–2019) by age groups (15–39, 40–59, 15–64) [20].

Newcomers' engagement in farming stems from a combination of disparate concepts and policies integrated under a sustainable farming framework. The conceptual layer of this framework relies upon the notion of sustainable development. It corresponds to the sort of development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [17]. Such a balance between present and future demands is built upon three pillars: natural, economic, and social sustainability. Natural sustainability applies to resources management in order to ensure environmental protection as well as habitat restoration and preservation. Economic sustainability requires smart growth stemming from long range planning, cost savings, thoughtful spending in

research/development, and the consideration of local costs of living. Social sustainability refers to high standards of individuals' quality of life and of whole-community development, energised by equal opportunities for everyone, to promote viable regions and employment [17,21].

Beginning in the 1990s, the sustainable development pillars began streaming into farming at an operative level according to the so-called networked rural development strategy. Networked rural development proposes that the viability of rural areas results from a dynamic interaction between local territorial resources (i.e., natural, (un)tangible, social etc.), and non-local institutional, legislative, trading, and natural conditions [18]. This perspective operates as a reaction to an opposition between the exogenous rural development standpoint (popular after World War II, and stating that rural areas' development depended upon urban areas advancement), and an endogenous rural development perspective (widespread from the early 1990s and which posits that rural development should be driven from "within", based on local resources) [18]. This view has set the tone for a new rural paradigm, which aims at: (a) supporting rural areas competitiveness, by valuing local and often unused resources; (b) opening up the economic activities spectrum, from intensive agriculture to new forms of agriculture and more complex economic activities (agrotourism); (c) moving from subsidies to investment, and (d) engaging national, regional and local actors in decisions, as opposed to a centralised paradigm of decision-making [22].

For the past two decades, this complex approach to rural development has been further operationalised across Europe and especially in the EU through policy instruments, the most noteworthy of them being the CAP. Political priorities and investment in EU countries have slowly been moving from direct subsidies to past production, or the area farmed (Pillar 1) to funding the long-term sustainability of rural areas, including agriculture and forestry activities, but also quality of life, economic diversification as well as local employment creation (Pillar 2) [18].

The networked rural development vision and policy tools (such as the CAP) have shaped newcomers' involvement in farming via social mechanisms, such as with spatial (im)mobilities. Overall, mobilities result from the combination of social, economic, or cultural aspirations with the resources to do so [7]. This blend of aspirations and resources has created a mobility impulse which has been more clearly described for voluntary newcomers. Voluntary newcomers are those motivated to come into agriculture. They decide to return to, or stay in, rural areas to farm because they very often aspire to develop eco-agriculture businesses [3,4,11]. Their aspirations are, thus, fully aligned with the ethos of the sustainable farming framework. Namely, they are more interested in improving their technical skills, show greater openness to the incorporation of sustainable forms of production, make a more intensive use of technological innovations, and create rewarding work environments for their employees [3,11]. Moreover, these voluntary newcomers often have the resources required to start a farming business, in terms of land ownership, and/or whether they buy, inherit or rent it directly or indirectly (e.g., through their spouses) [3]. Ownership is, thus, an additional socialised mechanism which generates a decisive impulse for them to stay, leave, or return to the countryside [23,24].

Figure 3 summarises the sustainable farming framework:
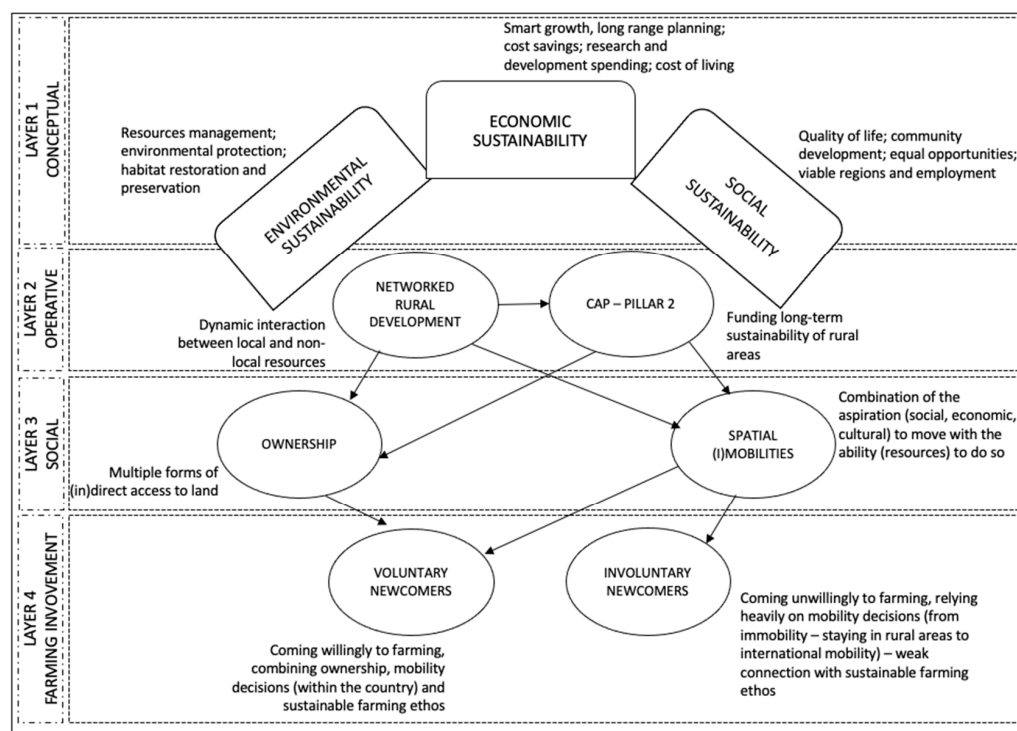
Figure 3. The sustainable farming framework.

3. Expanding the Newcomers Definition

The literature has limited the voluntary newcomers' movement to the scope of ownership status. This is a narrow, exclusivist conceptualisation of farming newcomers, thereby leading to their description in opposition to continuers. Whilst continuers correspond to younger generations of farmers' families who maintain family farms, voluntary newcomers are individuals who are coming into the sector with very distinct backgrounds. Some of them were raised on a farm, but have followed other professional options before coming back to agriculture. Others have loose ties with agriculture, because they have had access to land through spouses or extended family [3,4]. Others have no background whatsoever in agriculture [3,4]. Whatever their route into industry, newcomers are driven by positive motivations, both pragmatic and emotional, to be involved in farming [3,4].

Some evidence demonstrates that voluntary newcomers are more often women, people in their thirties or forties, and with a degree in a scientific area unrelated to agriculture [3,4]. They are also more technologically equipped, and have a vision or business plan for farming activities [11]. Newcomers show stringent differences from continuers regarding practices and attitudes towards farming, with greater contrasts found at the practice level. Their pivotal choice to stay or return to the countryside to farm is driven by positive aspirations and involves some sort of access to land. This is linked to a stringent adherence to the sustainable development ethos in which they differ from continuers. Since voluntary newcomers value the environment and the diversity of production much more, they are more inclined towards innovation and cooperation—through both formal and non-formal networks—and their commercial vision is geared to the local scale. They also envisage their activity as being based on social commitment and autonomy [3].

To fully capture the newcomers' movement, related research should also examine the hired farming workforce [14]. Such considerations can be made by adopting the notion of *involuntary newcomers* that we now propose. According to findings from disparate fields such as social psychology [6,8] or sociology [3,13,14], involuntary newcomers are people coming unwillingly into farming as employees. Their unwillingness to farm is a combination of negative reasons, including predominant representations of farming as a dirty, heavy, underpaid and uncertain activity [6]; lack of trust towards local authorities [25]; low

qualifications, and a lack of professional experience [6]. Even so, farming may come as a last resort to solve unemployment due to the lack of other alternatives, further strengthening low/negative motivational prospects and spatial (im)mobility decisions.

Involuntary newcomers are different from voluntary newcomers in many ways. Involuntary newcomers are often in their late adolescence or early twenties. They constitute a highly masculinised group, with a few exceptions such as Moroccan women working in Southern European countries [26]. Generally, involuntary newcomers also present with low qualifications. This can be attributed to fragmented school-to-work transitions, resulting in early and precarious work experiences, associated with weaker infrastructure and institutional support in the areas where they originate within and outside Europe [6,13]. Alongside this, it is unclear how much involuntary newcomers adhere to (or have the opportunity to adhere to) a sustainable farming paradigm as voluntary newcomers do. Whilst some examples have been reported of their inclusion in eco-agriculture farms [6,8], this highly desirable outcome seems to be thwarted by a long list of barriers which we will return to later.

3.1. Voluntary Newcomers' Profiles

The EIP-AGRI Focus Group [4] has proposed a noteworthy profiling of voluntary newcomers covering six different categories. *Diversified Newcomers* were raised in farms, have moved outside the sector and often outside the countryside, but are coming back to farming to change the production operation and diversify their practices. *Innovative Newcomers* demonstrate a similar pathway to Diversified Newcomers, but they are only focusing on making changes to the production operation. In turn, *Full-time Newcomers* are those who have no prior family experience (or access to land) and who begin farming from scratch as their only professional activity. *Part-time Newcomers* follow the same path as Full-time Newcomers, but combine farming with other professional activity. *Hybrid Newcomers* have had access to land through extended family or spouses, are dedicated full-time to farming, and have decided to make major changes to production. Finally, *Hobby Newcomers* are essentially those with or without a background in farming that have their own full-time professional activity and who farm only for pleasure.

Overall, the EIP-AGRI Focus Group [4] shows that voluntary newcomers' diversity stems from: multiple forms of ownership, different levels of prior connection with farming; disparate levels of commitment with farming activities, and distinct degrees of implementing sustainable farming practices. Importantly, when considered together, these factors trigger some sort of mobility. However, mobility in this case is limited to internal mobility (within the country), although with different expressions, from potential commutation between towns and rural areas (e.g., hobby newcomers) to a full return in rural areas (e.g., full-time newcomers).

3.2. Involuntary Newcomers' Profiles

We propose two major categories of involuntary newcomers, based on spatial (im)mobilities trends. *Remaining Involuntary newcomers* are farming employees living in their rural areas of origin. In general, this is a narrow group of people caught in an "immobility trap" [7]. Contrary to the large shares of European young people out-migrating to cities, including large shares of young women [19], these remainers did not aspire to a better education, did not have the financial conditions to do so, or faced both conditions [6,8]. Moreover, this group is quite invisible in the wider research and remains hard to target, as they rely mostly upon informal support to fill in their needs. This is further complicated by a relationship often marked by resentment and suspicion towards services (e.g., employment agencies) [6,23]. Consequently, it is difficult to calculate how large this group is. Moreover, remainers' involvement in sustainable farming seems to be an exception, with limited evidence of locally led initiatives to engage these people, both men and women, in eco-agriculture initiatives [6,8].

Remaining involuntary newcomers can be further divided into two subgroups. One subgroup is composed of *remainers with a background in farming*. In the EU farming business, most of the time men are registered as "principal farmers" masking the involvement of farmers' spouses and children in agriculture, especially in high peak labour seasons. These workers are predominantly under-24 and are usually mentioned in the studies as unpaid family labour who have a long-term involvement in farming [9,10]. Their qualifications are low, as they tend to drop-out of school to help in farming duties. Their motivations are negative, as they see no real alternative to being involved in the family business [9,10].

Beyond this, we can find *remainers with no background in farming*. This group is mostly composed of rural young people under-24 years old with low, or very low, qualifications and no experience in agriculture. They often correspond to NEETs [6,8]. At most, their grandparents were involved in some sort of part-time or subsistence farming, or were even underpaid farming employees [8]. Their involvement in farming can range from a temporary to more permanent role [6] since they are usually trapped in an immobility imperative, with no financial capital nor plans to leave the countryside [7]. Their motivations for involvement in farming are negative, due to a lack of resources to find jobs outside rural areas and, sometimes, out of the farming sector.

A second major category of involuntary newcomers are *migrant involuntary newcomers*. These correspond to farming employees coming from countries within or outside Europe, and who are involved in farming as seasonal or more permanent labour. Migrant involuntary newcomers are a much larger group compared to remaining involuntary newcomers, given that they currently constitute the largest influx of people into rural European regions. It is estimated that 837,000 migrant workers stepped into the farming sector between 2011 and 2017 to compensate for the steep drop of national agricultural workers. Moreover, migrant work accounts for large shares of all farming wage labour, ranging from 24% in Spain, to 90% in Greece (although the data is not totally reliable) [13]. Although this phenomenon spreads across the continent, it is mostly found in Western, Central, and Southern European countries [13]. This large influx of migrant involuntary newcomers coming into European farming relies on factors such as the increasing workforce demand to compensate for rural young people outmigration and rural depopulation [13,19,26–29]; the integration of the rural labour force within the tertiary sector [30], or workforce demands associated with production intensification [13]. With some exceptions found, (for instance, in Norway) [29], or some disparate examples of ongoing efforts in Southern countries to capitalise on their contributions to rural areas' social sustainability [31], the migrant workforce in farming is meeting, mostly, intensive agriculture labour demand.

Migrant involuntary newcomers can be divided into two subgroups. The first one is constituted by *extra-European migrants*. This subgroup includes legal and illegal immigrants coming into Europe from distinct areas such as South America, North Africa, the Middle East (e.g., Syria) and Asia (from Pakistan to Thailand) cutting across a wide age range in search for work [13]. People in this subgroup may or may not have a background in farming, and their involvement tends to be more permanent in the sector, since their qualifications are also low, thus limiting their professional choices. This subgroup's motivations to be involved in farming may be seen as moving towards negative ones: they envisage farming as a positive first step in order to come to Europe, although this may be a source of precarious or illegal jobs which are ultimately seen as unrewarding or unfair [13,26–28].

A second subgroup of migrant involuntary newcomers corresponds to *intra-European migrants*. This group is composed of seasonal farm workers who are predominantly under 24 years old. They mostly come from rural areas of Eastern (e.g., Ukraine) or South Eastern countries (e.g., Romania) to countries such as Germany, Spain, or Italy, and are driven by the differences between national and world-level production costs and prices [32]. Their background in agriculture is also uncertain. Whilst in their home countries, these young people are often outside formal work and education and demonstrate low qualifications [13,24], meaning that they are usually in and out of the NEET category, especially in the case of women [32]. For these reasons, they envisage farming as a temporary job

that justifies moving abroad for a short period. Their motivations for farming are, thus, mixed. Whilst a temporary job in farming is a source of income which is relevant according to their country's life standard, it is still an underqualified and uncertain professional alternative [13,30,32].

Table 1 summarises the main features of each of the involuntary newcomers' subgroups.

Table 1. Subgroups of involuntary newcomers coming into the farming workforce.

Categories	Subgroups	Background in Farming	Age Range	Duration of Involvement	Qualifications	Motivation for Farming
Remaining involuntary newcomers	Remainers with a background in Farming [7,11,14]	Yes	Predominantly under-24 (with the exception of spouses)	Long-term to permanent	Low	Negative: no alternative to involvement in family farming
	Remainers with no background in farming [6–8]	No	Predominantly under-24	Temporary to more permanent	Low	Negative: no alternatives to farming in rural areas; trapped in an immobility mode.
Migrant involuntary newcomers	Extra-European Migrants [13,19,26–29]	Uncertain	Unspecific	Long-term to permanent	Low	Leaning towards negative: coming to Europe from non-EU countries; unqualified, precarious, or illegal jobs as an alternative.
	Intra-European Migrants [13,24,30,32]	Uncertain	Predominantly under-24	Temporary	Low	Mixed: moving within EU-member states; finding a temporary source of income which is relevant according to the life standard in the country of origin; unqualified, precarious job as an alternative.

4. Barriers to Involuntary Newcomers' Involvement in Sustainable Farming

Involuntary newcomers can help to materialise the sustainable farming framework. Remaining involuntary newcomers are more attached to their communities and native places [6,8]. Therefore, they can find an extra drive in contributing to the local environmental balance and to being committed with a role in the development of the food system. Moreover, the creation of legal, rewarding and community-based work prospects for extra- and intra-European migrant involuntary newcomers can counteract negative demographic trends within the farming sector (e.g., an ageing workforce) and also strengthen local workforces. We have serious doubts that all of these contributions to the sustainable farming framework are being met by involuntary newcomers, due to several barriers. These barriers are different from the ones affecting voluntary newcomers, such as access to land [3], credit and markets [3,4], or knowledge [6]. We will now concentrate on the particular barriers affecting involuntary newcomers' involvement in sustainable farming. These caveats cut across different tiers of reality. We address them systematically, according to four levels: the individual level; informal support; institutional support, and cultural and political dispositions.

4.1. Barriers at the Individual Level

A first and most evident individual barrier to involuntary newcomers' involvement in sustainable farming is related to *prior professional experiences*. Involuntary newcomers are involved in the labour force from an early age, sometimes before legal adulthood [23]. In the case of the remaining involuntary newcomers, irrespective of having (or not) a background in farming, early professional experiences are often precarious and do not provide significant opportunities for learning and specialisation, including in sustainable forms of farming [6]. Migrant involuntary newcomers, in turn, are often trying to escape geographies marked by chronic unemployment and poverty [13,24,26,33–35].

Limited employment spells derive, to a great extent, from involuntary newcomers' *low qualifications*. Those remaining in rural areas are more affected by lower academic attainment [36] and a greater danger of becoming early school leavers [37]. However, those coming from abroad for temporary or more permanent stays originate in areas with poor educational conditions [13,24]. Sometimes, migrant farming workers display high

qualifications, especially in the case of those commuting within the European continent [13], but this is far from being the standard. The problem of low qualifications can, ultimately, be translated into a minor potential to be involved in sustainable farming approaches. For instance, remainers with a family background in farming may tend to drop-out of school to be part of the farm's permanent workforce, following a trail of traditional, intensive farming [11]. Beyond this, those without that experience, regardless of being remainers or migrants, are more exposed to jobs in intensive farming which seldom require specific skills [8].

Furthermore, when searching for work opportunities in the countryside, and with the exception of remainers with a background in farming, involuntary newcomers do not consider farming as an immediate option. Agriculture is not on their radar due to strong, *negative representations about agriculture*, which are especially prominent amongst those remaining in the rural areas of origin. For them, farming is linked with low wages, low skills, low technological intensity and negative behavioural features [8]. In turn, some positive motivations associated with farming may drive migrant involuntary newcomers (e.g., moving to a country to achieve a higher income). Altogether, these negative stereotypes are a major drawback for enrolment in sustainable farming, mostly due to a lack of information. Indeed, some studies show that involuntary newcomers who were involved in eco-agriculture acknowledged their surprise regarding the technical complexity of sustainable farming tasks. They also voice that more people in an identical situation would be more willing to be involved in this sort of farming if they had more knowledge about it [6].

4.2. Barriers at the Informal Support Level

Barriers to involuntary newcomers' involvement in sustainable farming can be raised by families. Their role here is, however, contradictory vis-à-vis remainers. In the case of those fulfilling unpaid work duties in family businesses, families present the *involvement in farming as mandatory*. These are mostly farms engaged in traditional means of production: thus, sustainable farming is an exception. Regarding those without a background in farming, parents show *resistance to children's involvement in sustainable agriculture*, for two main reasons. Firstly, they consider farming in general as a low-paid, unpromising professional alternative. This resistance is understandable, as many of these parents feel already overburdened by the lack of financial contribution of their children to the household income [8]. In parallel, many of these parents belong to the first generation of people who found work outside agriculture. Seeing their children going back to farming in the transition to adulthood is interpreted as a parental failure or an interruption of the social upwards process [6]. This negative stance is bigger in the case of alternative production forms which parents regard as less efficient [8]. In turn, extended families seem more lenient with this subgroup involvement in farming. Their support comes in distinct ways, *from providing information and knowledge about agricultural techniques*, to *sharing some resources* such as small pieces of land [8]. This divergent position of extended families (especially from grandparents) is understandable given that they mastered ancestral techniques before mechanisation and the introduction of intensive agriculture.

Furthermore, evidence concerning the role of informal support networks and the integration in sustainable farming of migrant involuntary newcomers in host countries is, unfortunately, scarce. There are a few reports of population's informal mobilisation to support their initiatives to improve work conditions and salaries [13,30], or some examples of the promotion of conviviality between locals and migrant workers [31]. However, these are only disparate findings covering fragments of the sustainable farming framework (e.g., the social pillar) instead of integrated efforts to untap a whole model of sustainable production.

4.3. Barriers at the Institutional Support Level

Institutional support barriers have implications for remaining involuntary newcomers. This is evident in a *generalised lack of vocational agricultural training* across developed coun-

tries, and particularly in the EU [38]. Vocational training in agriculture can be an important platform for securing a young workforce in the sector as it represents an intermediate learning level located between simple practical agricultural experience acquired through work experience, and full agricultural training, including any form of tertiary education in the area. Unfortunately, the figures show overwhelmingly that farming lacks exactly this kind of intermediate learning. The vast majority of European farmers (69.8%) learn their skills through practical experience alone, whilst 8.5% receive full agricultural training and 28.7% have some kind of agricultural training. Importantly, more than 60% of young farmers (less than 35 years old) are still learning by doing [38]. These trends are paralleled by recent findings showing that new technologies are being used in farming for self-improvement and non-formal learning opportunities which, in some ways, compete with or compensate for the lack of formal learning [37]. Overall, training barriers, coupled with an evident lack of specific training in eco-agriculture (acknowledged by young people and stakeholders) block a greater and quicker engagement in sustainable methods of farming [6]. Specifically, these youths are not being immersed in structured learning processes demonstrating that sustainable farming is technically demanding, requires innovation and technological skills, and is aligned with contemporary values [6,11].

Institutional support barriers also come in the form of *employment services limitations* to manage involuntary newcomers' transition into the labour market. This affects both remaining and migrant involuntary newcomers. Remainers quickly become invisible for employment services, as they live in remote areas and digital tools for facilitating outreach are often unavailable [39]. Sometimes, employment services manage to contact them using digital platforms, but these young people complain that the communication is unclear or too impersonal [6]. Moreover, it is often common that farmers dedicated to sustainable forms of farming find the necessary workforce through local informal networks instead of using formal channels [11]. Migrant involuntary newcomers are even harder to reach for institutionalised services. On-the-ground public employment services are unable to compete with both private recruitment agencies and with illegal networks operating transnationally. The power of these private (or even illegal) hiring sources is linked to well-documented, disturbing phenomena ranging from general labour exploitation to criminal abuse in the form of forced work, modern slavery, and human trafficking [13,40]. Whilst some governments have taken action to fight this phenomenon, such as abandoning or reformulating bilateral deals with non-European or non-EU countries, migrant involuntary newcomers continue to reach the continent in very large numbers through these parallel networks and to serve intensive farming workforce needs [13].

4.4. Barriers at the Cultural and Political Dispositions Level

Barriers to involuntary newcomers' involvement in sustainable farming may arise from cultural and political dispositions.

One cultural barrier which needs to be targeted here is *masculinisation*. Involuntary newcomers are more often dominated by negative representations of farming as dirty and heavy work for which women are seen by men as unfit, or by young women as "a man's work" [41]. This explains why more men engage in farming as involuntary newcomers, whether they are remainers or migrants [13]. Exceptions may apply amongst remaining involuntary newcomers with a background in farming, as women commonly contribute to the unpaid workforce of the farm. The same happens in the case of migrant involuntary newcomers in specific activities such as berry picking [42], or in some countries such as Spain, where Moroccan women are preferred above men [26]. This trend is, therefore, very distinct from the one observed in the case of voluntary newcomers, amongst whom the share of women is higher [3,4].

The role of policies also requires some attention in relation to how it shapes involuntary newcomers engagement in sustainable farming according to at least two points.

Firstly, we need to consider the impacts of *major broadband policy packages*. These policy instruments insist on the need to uphold greater rural sustainability, including human

capital renovation. The European Commission has set out that attracting new people into agriculture and fostering jobs in rural areas are key priorities for the upcoming years [43,44]. As we mentioned earlier, the CAP is the flagship policy package aiming at this ambition across the EU countries. Overall, the CAP has been criticised for preventing major structural changes in farming, including workforce renewal [43]. A first, but limited step in that direction was Regulation No. 2079/92, introducing early retirement schemes for elderly farmers, especially in Southern Europe [43]. Later, in the 2007–2013 period, more attention was paid to the lack of young farmers. The generational renewal was extended based on major policy tools for supporting young farmers, including the YFP and start-up aid for young farmers. There is evidence that these initiatives have contributed to increase the overall level of employment in farming. However, instruments such as coupled payments seem to prevent the involvement of newcomers in the sector [43,44]. More importantly, CAP measures to help increase employees' labour force and more importantly, to do it in an integrated way (for locals and migrants), are fairly marginal. We see this as a complete contradiction with the sustainable farming rhetoric issued in recent years.

Secondly, we must consider that, at the national level, states operate on *weak or inconsistent regulation of farming work*. Legislative caveats are aligned with intensive production labour needs, affecting mostly migrant involuntary newcomers whether they come from within or outside Europe. The collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, increasingly cheap transportation, and more recently, the conflicts in Africa and in the Middle East, coupled with the rise of the illegal migration industry, led to this outcome [13]. The states' approach to this is to put in place, replace, or extinguish guest-worker schemes as intensive agriculture workforce needs change through the course of time, and not in accordance with rural areas' needs of sustained development [43].

5. Involuntary Newcomers Profiling: Implications for Spatial Mobility Research Agendas

By definition, conceptual papers focus on research implications. Here, we specifically emphasise implications for spatial (im)mobilities research agendas, as these act as the keystone social mechanism underlying involuntary newcomers decision to come into the sector. We further organise these implications as a response to each of the barriers to involuntary newcomers' inclusion in sustainable farming.

Individual barriers to involuntary newcomers' involvement in sustainable farming require additional efforts from investigators in order to understand how employment in the sector may be acting according to a double standard: immobility as a last resort for remaining involuntary newcomers as opposed to mobility to rural areas as a last resort for migrant involuntary newcomers. Specifically, it is important to check if mobility determinants potentially interpreted as negative ones prevent a meaningful, positive professional engagement with the sector in the long-run.

It is also pertinent to better capture how informal social support networks are affecting immobility amongst remaining involuntary newcomers. For those with a background in farming, their involvement in the sector is mandatory as part of the unpaid family workforce. Not only does this deter them from moving into the sector for positive motives (such as acquiring new skills in sustainable farming approaches), this might have a negative impact on the transmission of farms as well [25]. Beyond this, much more knowledge is required regarding how a huge influx of migrants into European rural areas is leading to new demographic trends (e.g., mixed families), local social conflicts, or new forms of solidarity between host and incoming communities [13].

At the institutional support level, some research efforts have already been made to understand how employment services deficiencies affect involuntary newcomers' involvement in farming [6]. These efforts are, however, limited in terms of geographical scope. Are employment services in Northern and Western countries doing better on this matter than those in Southern European countries? Are these services competent enough to retain or attract involuntary newcomers to their regions? These and other questions remain unanswered. We need to better understand, urgently, how international recruitment networks

are competing with local, official employment services to stream migrant involuntary newcomers into farming. The urgency of this research ambition stems from the ongoing exploitive and criminal activities demanding a response from researchers also, namely to demonstrate the level of contradiction of sectoral policies.

It is also important to know whether training (if any) is being provided to all types of involuntary newcomers and how this is achieved in terms of training sources (formal/informal), duration (short- or long-term), quality, and intensity. Better equipped employees in terms of knowledge and skills for farming, whether locals or non-locals, may be more inclined to stay on farms and to contribute to rural communities [38].

At the cultural and political level, we are far from reaching a more granular description of the feminine share and the type of participation in sustainable farming across distinct involuntary newcomers' profiles and how this affects farming attitudes and practices. Moreover, we are unaware of how much the migrant involuntary newcomers' movement is leaving women behind, although there is a well-known trend showing that men do out-migrate more often than women [7].

At the political level, we do not know if and how the CAP is promoting the diversification of the workforce, especially amongst employees. The situation may be variegated across the continent and best-practices must be brought to light. Based on disparate findings we see that in general the impacts of CAP and other national policies for that matter are, however, mostly aligned with intensive farming needs. From our standpoint, this is a decisive research question which can add an inclusive angle to employment policies in agriculture.

Limitations of Our Conceptual Proposal

A conceptual paper is a thought-provocative piece which requires and welcomes criticism, not only from peers and stakeholders, but also from authors themselves. From our side, we can see four caveats in the proposed notion of involuntary newcomers. All of them are related to the breadth or coverage of our proposal.

Firstly, we focus only on the European continent. However, it is not our intention to apply this concept globally, as sustainable farming trends as well as mobilities associated to farming workforce are distinct across continents. How much in the future this idea might be useful for researchers outside Europe is something we are more than willing to work on.

Secondly, we may also be criticised by the fact that we do not include those that come into the sector as employees but who are, in fact, motivated to be participants in farming. This is possibly the result of what Rye and Scott [13] state, namely, that farming is a largely undesired form of employment. We would add that the trend is only growing. Still, we need to understand marginal trends of those workers who are motivated to be integrated into farming.

Thirdly, we do not establish the relative weight of each type of involuntary newcomer. Based on the literature, we do mention that the remaining involuntary newcomers share is much lower compared with the share of migrant involuntary newcomers. Whilst this is a question needing to be addressed, the precise estimates in this case may, however, be hard to define in the near future, specifically if we consider that many migrant workers are being brought legally (as refugees) or illegally into Europe.

Finally, our proposal focuses on space and mobility. Future developments of the newcomers conceptualisation based on time dimensions will allow us to understand involuntary newcomers' trajectories and transformations. We see this as a subsequent step of our model's empirical validation which will help to explain if and how involuntary newcomers may end up as accomplished farm workers, or even as farm owners.

6. Conclusions

The agriculture sector will continue to be pivotal for rural communities' futures. Ensuring the inclusion of newcomers in the sector is, therefore, vital. We conclude that we have contributed for that end by addressing our three goals.

Firstly, we have expanded the concept of farming newcomers by suggesting the existence of involuntary newcomers, corresponding to employees coming unwillingly into the farming sector. We established a fundamental distinction between *voluntary* newcomers (coming in as owners whether buying, renting or inheriting land) and *involuntary* newcomers (corresponding to an overwhelming share of all farming employees). We have therefore contributed to overcome the overlap of the newcomers' definition with the notion of land ownership.

Secondly, we have described the heterogeneous involuntary newcomers' profiles as being driven by spatial (im)mobilities. Indeed, whilst voluntary newcomers rely on land ownership and decision-making regarding mobility, the latter are employees coming unwillingly into the sector, driven mostly by spatial (im)mobilities mechanisms. Involuntary newcomers are, however, diverse and reflect disparate combinations of aspirations with a lack of resources (i.e., cultural, educational, and economic).

Thirdly, we have shown why involuntary newcomers' routes into farming are mismatched from the sustainable development roadmap for rural areas. Whilst proposing a way to integrate everyone, the sustainable farming framework is struggling to include involuntary newcomers. We believe our suggestion to expand the newcomers' definition and typology is needed to make sure the boldly proclaimed ambitions of policies are met for all of those coming into the sector, regardless of ownership. If that is not achieved, the sustainable farming approach may translate into deep social inequalities.

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