

Article

Cinema as Territorial Media Discourse: A Diachronic and Sociodemographic Study of Rural Migration in the Province of Girona (Catalonia, Spain)

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Abstract

This article examines how Spanish rural cinema functions as a media *dispositif*—understood, following the Foucauldian concept as operationalised in media studies, as an apparatus of heterogeneous practices, discourses and institutional arrangements that produces and governs representations—for the construction and circulation of territorial imaginaries, thereby participating in the media ecosystem of public debates on depopulation, migration and multicultural coexistence. Through a diachronic and sociodemographic comparison of *La piel quemada* (Josep Maria Forn, 1967) and *Suro* (Mikel Gurrea, 2022)—two feature films set in the province of Girona (Catalonia, Spain) but separated by 55 years and opposing migratory pressures—the study analyses how audiovisual fiction produces, challenges and renegotiates the dominant sociodemographic imaginaries of two distinct historical conjunctures: the developmentalist boom of late Francoism and the neo-rural turn of the early twenty-first century. A qualitative chronotopic methodology is applied to 18 systematically selected sequences from both films, organised around three contextualising axes (historical, territorial, sociodemographic). The central original contribution is the concept of the *media-geographic diptych* as an instrument for diachronic comparative analysis of rural cinema as a media form. Secondary contributions include evidence that the two media texts analysed construct an imaginary of structural continuity of xenophobia in the rural territorial discourse of Girona and a theoretical proposal on cinematic multilingualism as an under-theorised territorial media practice. The discussion situates these findings within current debates on rural cosmopolitanism, overtourism and the media construction of *la España vaciada*, and offers preliminary evidence that audiovisual fiction occupies a differentiated position in the media ecology of territorial public discourse that merits systematic attention in future studies.



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Keywords: rural cinema; media discourse; territorial imaginary; media-geographic diptych; neo-ruralism; late Francoism; rural migration; cinematic multilingualism; *España vaciada*; media reception

1. Introduction: Rural Cinema as a Media–Political Instrument

Cinema is not a mere reflection of social reality; it is a constitutive medium that produces and circulates imaginaries, normalises or challenges dominant narratives, and constructs collective understanding of places, populations and historical processes [1,2]. In the specific domain of territorial politics, audiovisual fiction potentially performs a

function that is simultaneously representational and agenda-participatory: it can render visible demographic phenomena—migration, depopulation, and urban–rural dynamics—that frequently receive inadequate or stereotyped treatment in mainstream journalism, doing so for audiences that the news media do not always reach. Understood from the perspective of communication and media studies, Spanish rural cinema thus becomes a privileged site for analysing how media artefacts articulate, challenge and renegotiate collective identities and territorial imaginaries in relation to pressing contemporary issues: rural depopulation, overtourism, multicultural integration and climate change-induced agricultural precarity [3–5].

This article develops a triple contextualisation—historical, territorial and sociodemographic—applied to the comparative analysis of two Spanish rural films set in the same geographical space but separated by more than five decades: *La piel quemada* (Josep Maria Forn, 1967) and *Suro* (Mikel Gurrea, 2022). The first belongs to the neo-realist tradition of late Francoism and documents the mass rural exodus from Andalusia towards the construction and tourism sectors on the Costa Brava of Girona during the Spanish *desarrollismo*. The second is a contemporary neo-rural drama tracing the inverse flow: a couple of young architects from Barcelona who inherit a cork-oak estate in the Alt Empordà comarca and must negotiate identity, labour exploitation and ecological precarity in the rural interior of the same province.

The territorial anchoring of the province of Girona provides a stable geographical framework from which to trace discontinuities and continuities across two radically distinct historical conjunctures. Both films achieved notable critical and public impact in their respective contexts, confirming their role as media artefacts that shaped public debate: *La piel quemada*, although awarded a prize by the National Spectacle Syndicate, provoked censorship controversies and press debates on internal migration during late Francoism, while *Suro* received the FIPRESCI Prize at the 2022 San Sebastián International Film Festival (SSIFF) and generated extensive journalistic commentary framing it within debates on *la España vaciada*, overtourism and multicultural rural life. This article makes three original contributions. The principal contribution is the concept of the *media–geographic diptych* as an operational instrument for diachronic comparative analysis of rural cinema as a media form. The secondary contributions are: evidence of structural homology in the discursive position of the migrant as a target of exclusion across the rural territorial media discourse of the Girona area over five decades and a theoretical proposal on cinematic multilingualism as an under-theorised dimension of territorial media practice. The article is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the theoretical framework; Section 3 describes materials and methods; Section 4 presents the results in four blocks; Section 5 discusses the findings and limitations; and Section 6 draws the conclusions.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework mobilises several concepts for which it is useful to make explicit their distinct analytical roles before they are developed. Three levels can be distinguished. First, **structural concepts** define what kind of object the films are and what kind of claims the analysis can make about them: the dispositif and the territorial imaginary establish the epistemological frame within which both films operate as media artefacts that produce and circulate sociodemographic representations. Second, **methodological concepts** articulate the analytical procedure: the chronotope provides the three-dimensional coding instrument (temporal, spatial, subjective) applied to each selected sequence; the media–geographic diptych structures the diachronic comparison between the two films as a whole. Third, **domain-specific concepts** are activated only in particular analytical blocks: language ideology and linguistic landscape studies (Section 4.3.2) and cinematic cartography (Section 2.4, for methodological

differentiation only). This architecture is retained throughout the article: each concept is deployed only where it performs a specific analytical function.

2.1. Rural Cinema as a Mediating Dispositif

The study of rural cinema in Spain has consolidated since the early 2000s as a field of enquiry attentive to the ways in which audiovisual fiction represents and transforms collective perceptions of rural space [6–8]. From the perspective of communication and media studies, this enquiry is productively framed through two complementary concepts. First, *media discourse*: cinematographic texts are not transparent windows onto social reality, but constructions that select, frame and valorise certain representations over others [3,9]. Second, *mediatisation*: the long-range historical process through which social worlds—including rural territories—are constructed in and through the media [2]. The term *dispositif* employed here refers to its Foucauldian genealogy: the organised set of media practices, technologies and discourses through which social reality—in this case, rural territorial imaginaries—is produced, governed and naturalised [10]. Rural cinema functions as a *dispositif* not only in its representational capacity, but also in its material insertion in circuits of production, distribution, censorship and reception that determine what can be seen, heard and said about rural territories at a given historical moment.

The institutional elements of this *dispositif* can be specified for each case study. For *La piel quemada*, they include the censorship apparatus of the Dirección General de Cinematografía, the parallel exhibition circuits documented in Section 4.4.1 (the Spanish New Cinema Weeks), the cultural press, and the public colloquia that accompanied its release. For *Suro*, they include the international festival circuit (SIFFF, official selection), the national and international specialised press, and the funding policies sustaining contemporary Spanish auteur cinema. Anchoring the concept in these identifiable institutions and agents distinguishes the *dispositif* from a merely representational notion of ‘media impact’.

In the Spanish case, the discursive function of rural cinema is especially acute due to the long shadow cast by Francoist cultural policy. The neo-realist current that resisted this regime—Nieves Conde, Berlanga, and Forn—functioned as a dissident media ecology producing counter-discourses in direct confrontation with the developmentalist narrative [11,12]. To illustrate Hall’s [3] framework operationally, in *La piel quemada*, Forn reframes the figure of the Andalusian worker through the juxtaposition of the construction site and the tourist beach, producing a counter-discourse in which the migrant becomes a victim of exploitation and spatial marginalisation. In *Suro*, the signifier “neo-rural return” is re-semanticised as a space of class contradiction and structural xenophobia. Contemporary rural cinema operates in a media environment saturated by what [13] calls the competing imaginaries of *España vacía* and *España vaciada*, with the distinction being politically significant: while the former is a primarily descriptive geographical characterisation, popularised by Sergio del Molino [14], the latter is a deliberately politicised reformulation attributing rural depopulation to institutional abandonment [15]. Rural cinema occupies a vacuum in the media ecology left by the contraction of local journalism [5], contributing narrative frameworks for rural phenomena that news media increasingly cover with less depth.

The counter-discursive function attributed to both films in the following analysis is a theoretical premise grounded in the existing critical literature on Spanish rural cinema [11–13,16], not an empirical finding established by direct textual comparison with representative mainstream films of each era, which would require a different and larger corpus design.

2.2. Territorial Imaginary: Girona as a Media Geography

The concept of territorial imaginary refers to the ensemble of representations, narratives and affects through which a given geographical space is collectively known, valued

and contested [17]. From a media studies perspective, communication geographies [18,19] designate the way in which media actively produce senses of place. Applied to cinema, this approach turns films into documents of geographical imagination. Cinema occupies a specific position through its capacity to construct what Bakhtin [20] calls the chronotope: a specific articulation of time, space and subjectivity that organises narrative meaning. The province of Girona encompasses two contrasting territorial imaginaries in permanent dynamic tension: the Costa Brava coastline, emblematic of Spanish mass tourism, and the inland comarca of Alt Empordà—rural, agricultural, and culturally Catalan—which is largely invisible in the national media. These two imaginaries within the same provincial frame create the conditions for the contrapuntal territorial analysis proposed by this article. Together, *La piel quemada* and *Suro* constitute what this article proposes to call the *media-geographic diptych*: two audiovisual documents that map the transformation of the same provincial territory under opposing demographic pressures five decades apart.

The concept of territorial imaginary, while developed here in relation to rural space and audiovisual fiction, extends across diverse media contexts and geographical scales: Eren [21] illustrates its analytical purchase in the domain of urban digital platforms, confirming the transversal applicability of the framework to media constructions of place beyond the rural-cinematic contexts examined here.

2.3. Sociodemographic Imaginaries and Cinematic Multilingualism

The Spanish demographic history of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is inseparable from the sociodemographic imaginaries produced and contested through audiovisual media and the representation of migration in Spanish cinema [22]. The mass internal migration of the 1950s–1970s generated representations around the figure of the *charnego* (a pejorative Catalan term for the Castilian-speaking migrant), the construction worker and the emigrant family [23,24]. From the late 1990s onwards, the arrival of international migrants added a new layer: Retis [25] documented how the Spanish press constructed stereotyped representations of non-EU migrants. More recently, Pérez Castaño and Flores Martos [26] demonstrated that journalistic coverage of Maghrebi workers in rural inland Spain systematically frames them through the lens of social conflict, rendering invisible the structural conditions of their exploitation. This journalistic repertoire provides the reception context in which *Suro* circulates: when Gurrea represents xenophobia towards the Maghrebi day labourer Karín, he intervenes in a pre-existing and naturalised field of media representations.

A dimension of sociodemographic imaginaries that has received less systematic attention in media studies is cinematic multilingualism. As Bleichenbacher [27] demonstrates, the assignment of languages to characters is never neutral: it maps relations of power, cultural belonging and access to narrative agency. Mamula and Patti [28] have shown that multilingualism in European cinema functions as a space of untranslatability, creating zones of resistance that escape the dominant linguistic regime. This perspective is directly relevant to rural migration in Spain, where both *La piel quemada* (Catalan/Castilian) and *Suro* (Catalan/Castilian/French/Arabic) construct what Adams [19] calls an acoustic geography: a sonic and linguistic stratification of the territory that maps power relations and conditions the viewer's reading of ethnic conflict.

Within the specific context of Iberian multilingual cinema, de Higes Andino [29] provides a framework for the representation of migration and diaspora through multilingualism and language varieties on screen, directly applicable to the analysis of how Catalan, Castilian and Arabic function as markers of territorial belonging and otherness in both films examined here.

This linguistic stratification can be further theorised through language ideology [30,31], which explains why certain languages become associated with cultural authority or property (Catalan, French) in the film while others are relegated to spaces of subaltern solidarity (Arabic). Linguistic landscape studies [32] likewise offer a framework applicable to the signage and sonic spaces represented onscreen, complementing the film-studies sources [27,28] already drawn upon in this section.

2.4. The Media–Geographic Diptych: Theoretical Consolidation of a Methodological Concept

The concept of the *media–geographic diptych* is introduced in this article as a methodological instrument for the comparative analysis of rural cinema and requires explicit theoretical grounding. Unlike a simple comparison with constant location, it is defined by four simultaneous constitutive conditions, specified below, that together distinguish it from established comparative designs in media and film research. A media–geographic diptych is a structured comparative design constituted by two audiovisual texts that simultaneously satisfy four conditions: (i) **territorial anchoring**—both texts are set in, and produce imaginaries centrally about, the same identifiable geographical space; (ii) **historical differentiation**—the texts are separated by a chronological interval sufficient to produce significantly distinct demographic and media–political regimes; (iii) **oppositional demographic logic**—the migratory processes central to each text are structured as counterpoints rather than variants of the same movement; and (iv) **shared media-discursive field**—both texts operate as media artefacts within the same discursive tradition and can be analysed using a common interpretive framework. The diptych metaphor is not merely decorative: it refers to a formal structure in which two panels are autonomous and legible separately but achieve their full meaning only in relation to each other.

Standard diachronic comparison in film studies typically juxtaposes texts from different historical periods to trace the evolution of a genre, theme or style over time [33]. The diptych design differs from standard diachronic comparison in film studies in three key respects. First, the *stabilisation of the territorial variable* is constitutive rather than incidental: geographical anchoring is the analytical fulcrum, not mere setting. Second, the relationship between the panels is *contrapuntal* rather than cumulative: the 55-year interval between the two films is productive because the same geographical imaginary is constructed under structurally opposed demographic pressures, not because one film is a “response” to the other. Third, the unit of analysis is the *chronotopic sequence*, not the film as a totality. The design is transferable to other contexts involving the media construction of territory under demographic pressure, provided the four defining conditions are satisfied. Its constitutive limits must also be acknowledged: it is a dyadic design (two panels); it presupposes geographical stability over the comparison period; and it is a production-side design generating claims about inscribed imaginaries, not about audience reception.

The diptych design should also be situated relative to cinematic cartography [34,35] and spatial film analysis [36]. These traditions focus predominantly on the cartographic representation of filmic space—mapping locations and narrative trajectories over real territory—whereas the media–geographic diptych uses the stability of the territorial anchor as a structural condition for a diachronic comparative design between two texts produced at different historical moments, without claiming to offer a cartographic representation of the filmic space itself.

It is important to clarify what ‘territorial stability’ means in this design. The diptych holds constant the geographic–administrative signifier—the province of Girona as an identifiable territorial unit and shared frame of reference—not the material territory in its physical, economic or infrastructural state, which has undergone substantial transformation between 1967 and 2022 (coastal development through mass tourism, depopulation of the

interior, changes in transport infrastructure and land ownership regimes). This material transformation does not contradict the comparative design; rather, it is one of the very dimensions of change that the diptych is intended to bring into relief by holding the territorial frame of reference constant.

It must further be acknowledged that the sub-region (coastal versus inland), cinematic genre (neorealism versus contemporary neo-rural drama) and the demographic composition of the migrant group (working-class Andalusian labourers versus urban professionals and Maghrebi seasonal workers) all vary simultaneously with the historical period across the two cases. The design therefore does not strictly isolate historical contingency from these concomitant variables; rather, it provides a structured basis for identifying patterns whose attribution to historical evolution, as opposed to genre convention or sub-regional socioeconomic difference, remains an explicit interpretive limitation (see Section Limitations) rather than a resolved methodological premise.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Design: The Media–Geographic Diptych

The study employs a *media–geographic diptych* design as formally defined in Section 2.4, operationalised through three concretised contextualising axes: (a) **Historical axis**. *La piel quemada* was produced under a censorship regime during late Francoist *desarrollismo*, and *Suro* in post-2008 Spain, in a media landscape saturated by debates on socioeconomic precarity, depopulation, climate change and multiculturalism. (b) **Territorial axis**. Both films are set in the province of Girona but in contrasting sub-spaces: the Costa Brava coastline (*La piel quemada*) and the Alt Empordà interior (*Suro*). (c) **Sociodemographic axis**. *La piel quemada* centres on the rural exodus of Andalusian working-class families towards the Catalan tourist coast, and *Suro* on the selective migratory return of a Catalan professional couple, overlaid with the presence of Maghrebi seasonal agricultural workers [Figure 1].

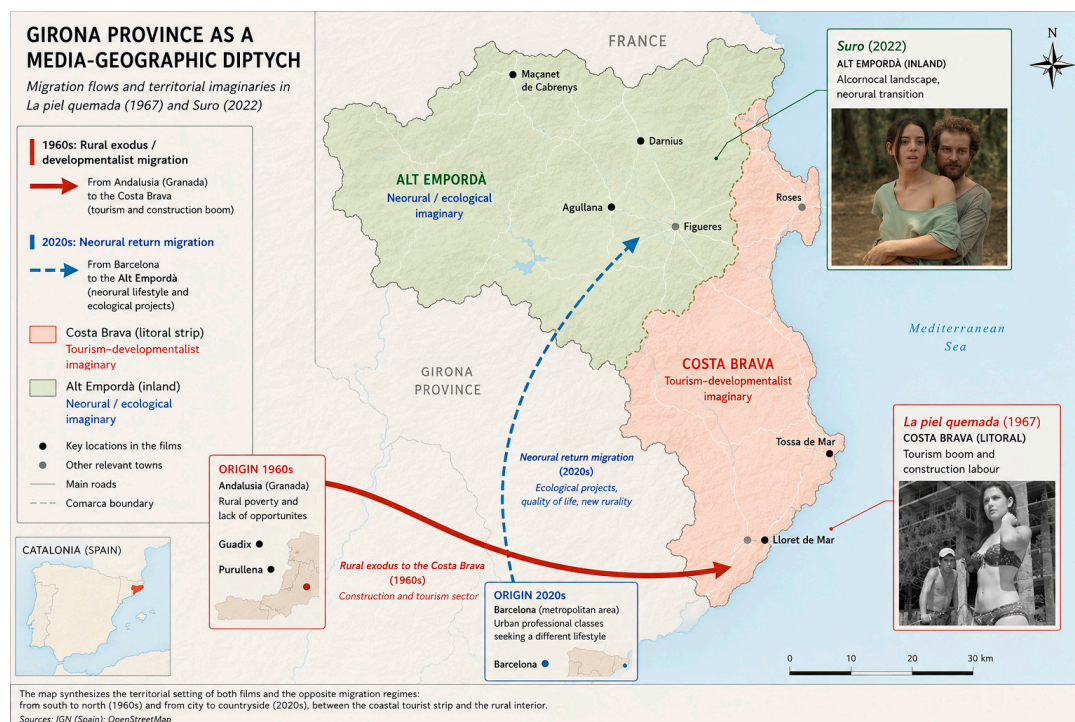


Figure 1. The province of Girona as a media–geographic diptych: migratory flows and territorial imaginaries in *La piel quemada* (1967) Costa Brava and *Suro* (2022) Alt Empordà (inland). Source: own elaboration. Cartographic base: IGN (Spain); OpenStreetMap.

3.2. Corpus, Selection Criteria and Analytical Protocol

The analytical corpus consists of both complete films (*La piel quemada*: 104 min; *Suro*: 116 min), viewed in multiple sessions with systematic annotation. From 47 initially identified candidate sequences (24/23 per film), 18 sequences were selected for intensive analysis (9 per film) applying four formal criteria: (1) *axiological relevance*: the sequence contains an evaluative statement about migration, territory, identity or labour relations; (2) *chronotopic representativeness*: the sequence articulates at least two of the three chronotopic dimensions (temporal, spatial, subjective); (3) *comparability*: the sequence allows a functional point of comparison with at least one sequence from the other film within the same thematic block; and (4) *block diversity*: the selected sequences cover the four thematic blocks, with a minimum of four sequences per block across the corpus. Selection involved an iterative negotiation between the two authors: each independently produced a preliminary list of 25 sequences; 22 common selections were automatically included; and the three unique sequences per list (six divergent cases in total) were resolved through a joint viewing session applying the chronotopic representativeness criterion. This procedure functioned as an inter-analyst reliability control: the 79% rate of spontaneous agreement (22 common sequences out of 28 distinct sequences identified across both independent lists) indicates that selection did not depend centrally on the idiosyncratic judgement of a single researcher. The analytical protocol developed in three phases: (1) description (transcription and characterisation of each sequence with time code); (2) chronotopic interpretation (application of the triple dimension to identify territorial and sociodemographic imaginaries); and (3) comparison (dialogue across the three contextualising axes). Interpretations were cross-referenced with specialist film criticism (*Fotogramas*, *Cinemanía*, *Screen Daily*) and prior academic analyses [23,37].

To illustrate this coding procedure, for three representative sequences, the specific textual element grounding each chronotopic attribution is documented in Table 1: the cited dialogue, shot or sound element, the attributed chronotopic dimension, and the corresponding selection criterion, allowing verification against the film text via the time codes in Table 2.

Table 1. Coding procedure illustrated for three representative sequences: textual grounding of chronotopic attributions and selection criteria. LPQ = *La piel quemada*; Suro = *Suro*. Sequence codes and time codes correspond to Table 2 in the main text. Chronotopic dimensions: T = temporal; S = spatial; Su = subjective. Selection criteria: (1) axiological relevance; (2) chronotopic representativeness; (3) comparability; (4) block diversity. Source: own elaboration.

Seq. Time Code	Concrete Textual Element Grounding the Attribution	Chronotopic Dimension(s) Attributed	Selection Criterion Applied
S1/LPQ 00:14:42–00:15:45	A fellow passenger addresses Juana on a train bound for Catalonia: “¿De dónde es uno? De donde pueda ganarse la vida.” Connotative lexis (ganarse la vida) codes migration as economic compulsion, not choice. The train carriage is coded as a liminal space of transit between an agrarian origin and an industrial tourist destination.	T—the sequence inscribes the 1960s rural exodus as a structurally determined historical moment (post-war agrarian crisis + desarrollismo). S—train as displacement chronotope: space is experienced as movement between two opposed territorial regimes. Su—Juana’s silent reception of the passenger’s words signals the subjective internalisation of economic necessity as natural law.	(1) Axiological relevance : the passenger’s line constitutes the film’s most explicit evaluative statement on the causal structure of rural migration. (2) Chronotopic representativeness : articulates all three dimensions simultaneously, making it the most analytically dense sequence in Section 4.1.1. (4) Block diversity : selected as the representative sequence for the Historical Axis/Causes of Migration block.)

Table 1. Cont.

Seq. Time Code	Concrete Textual Element Grounding the Attribution	Chronotopic Dimension(s) Attributed	Selection Criterion Applied
S1/LPQ 00:14:42–00:15:45	A fellow passenger addresses Juana on a train bound for Catalonia: “¿De dónde es uno? De donde pueda ganarse la vida.” Connotative lexis (ganarse la vida) codes migration as economic compulsion, not choice. The train carriage is coded as a liminal space of transit between an agrarian origin and an industrial tourist destination.	T—the sequence inscribes the 1960s rural exodus as a structurally determined historical moment (post-war agrarian crisis + desarrollismo). S—train as displacement chronotope: space is experienced as movement between two opposed territorial regimes. Su—Juana’s silent reception of the passenger’s words signals the subjective internalisation of economic necessity as natural law.	(1) Axiological relevance: the passenger’s line constitutes the film’s most explicit evaluative statement on the causal structure of rural migration. (2) Chronotopic representativeness: articulates all three dimensions simultaneously, making it the most analytically dense sequence in Section 4.1.1. (4) Block diversity: selected as the representative sequence for the Historical Axis/Causes of Migration block.)
S6/LPQ (00:49:29–00:51:33)	A group of Catalan men in a bar confront Andalusian workers with ethnic slurs: “¡Charnegos, mursianos. Volved a vuestro pueblo!” The scene includes a code-switching moment—a Catalan speaker shifts to Castilian to ensure the insult is understood—and ends with one Catalan man pointing at Andalusian workers while addressing local peers exclusively in Catalan. The acoustic geography of the scene superimposes Catalan (authority, belonging) over Castilian (subordination, otherness).	T—the Francoist linguistic regime is indexed by the public use of Catalan as an assertion of territorial belonging despite official Castilianisation. S—the bar is coded as an exclusionary social space: the insult spatially expels the migrant worker from the imagined Catalan community. Su—xenophobic interpellation: the workers are named as charnegos, constituting their subjectivity through an imposed ethnic label.	(1) Axiological relevance: the most explicit evaluative statement on xenophobia in the entire film; the slur charnego is the film’s central indexical mark of ethnic hierarchy. (2) Chronotopic representativeness: articulates all three chronotopic dimensions and serves as the primary case study for the linguistic ideology analysis in Section 4.3.2. (3) Comparability: functional parallel to S15 in Suro (xenophobic interpellation of Maghrebi worker Karin), enabling the generational relay argument.
S15–S16/Suro (01:24:34–01:28:25)/(01:37:17–01:39:09)	Following an accidental fall by Chema (a sixty-something day labourer), his colleagues immediately attribute blame to Karin (a young Maghrebi worker): “Fuera puto (sic) moro.” No evidence is provided; the attribution is instantaneous and racially motivated. Iván (the neo-rural protagonist) witnesses the scene from a distance, does not immediately intervene, and when he does, deploys property ownership as his authority: “¡Esta es mi finca. Dejadlo ahora mismo o sabréis quién no está en su sitio!” Chema’s social positioning—likely himself the son of an internal migrant—is visually marked through his worn work clothes and his posture of deference towards the Catalan estate owner.	T—the sequence is temporally overdetermined: Chema’s generation links back to the 1960s internal migration, while the accusation against Karin indexes the contemporary racialisation of agricultural labour. Su—xenophobic relay: the sequence enacts the transfer of the outsider position from the internal (Andalusian) migrant to the international (Maghrebi) migrant across generations. (Spatial dimension is subordinate in this sequence: the estate functions as backdrop, not as active constructor of meaning.)	(1) Axiological relevance: the central evaluative statement of the film on xenophobia; “Ha sido el moro” is the most charged utterance in the corpus. (2) Chronotopic representativeness: articulates the temporal and subjective dimensions explicitly; the partial activation (two of three dimensions) is itself analytically significant and was the decisive criterion in the divergence-resolution session. (3) Comparability: direct structural parallel to S6, enabling the cross-film generational relay argument that constitutes the study’s primary empirical finding.

Note: The 79% spontaneous inter-analyst agreement rate (22 of 28 sequences) was computed prior to the joint divergence–resolution session. S1 and S6 were included in both independent lists without negotiation. S15–16 was one of the six divergent cases: one author had initially coded it as S(u) only (one dimension); the second author attributed T + S(u) (two dimensions). The joint session applied chronotopic representativeness as the tie-breaking criterion—sequences articulating two or more dimensions were retained over single-dimension sequences—resulting in the inclusion of S15–16 on the basis of its T + S(u) articulation.

Table 2. Corpus of 18 analytical sequences: film, scene, time code, chronotopic dimensions and thematic block. LPQ = *La piel quemada*; Suro = *Suro*. T: Temporal, S: Spatial and Su: Subjective. Source: own elaboration.

Seq.	Film	Scene (Approx. min/Time Code)	Chronotopic Dimensions	Section
S1	LPQ	Train journey/Juana + passenger (00:14:42–00:15:45)	T (rural past)/S (displacement), Su (economic necessity)	Section 4.1.1
S2	LPQ	Landowner selects day labourers (flashback) (00:21:28–00:25:57)	T (agrarian order), Su (class submission), S (musical folklore)	Section 4.1.1
S3	LPQ	Beach/construction site juxtaposition (00:02:23–00:03:21; 00:10:32–00:13:45)	S (leisure vs. labour), T (desarrollismo), Su (inequality)	Section 4.1.2
S4	LPQ	Bar scene: gamaruso/señorito distinction (00:51:34–00:52:15)	S (Costa Brava social geography), Su (ethnic hierarchy)	Section 4.2.1
S5	LPQ	Shed by the cemetery/José's domestic project (00:19:55–00:21:13; 01:39:30–01:42:31)	S (marginalised habitat), Su (migrant resourcefulness)	Section 4.2.2
S6	LPQ	Catalan men confront Andalusian workers as charnegos (00:49:29–00:51:33)	T (Francoist linguistic regime), S (exclusion), Su (xenophobia)	Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2
S7	LPQ	José with the site foreman (00:26:40–00:28:36)	T (agrarian crisis), Su (construction hierarchy), S (labour migration)	Section 4.2.1
S8	LPQ	Bus station arrival—family reunion (01:31:52–01:33:38)	T (migratory chronotope), S (Catalonia as destination), Su (life project)	Section 4.1.1
S9	LPQ	Final scene: Manolo watches tourists dancing (01:42:33–01:43:58)	T (cyclical time), S (tourist destination), Su (trapped belonging)	Section 4.2.1
S10	Suro	Farewell party in Barcelona (00:00:44–00:03:42)	T (post-crisis urban present), Su (neo-rural motivation), S (city)	Section 4.1.1
S11	Suro	“Let the tourists keep it” (00:04:48–00:05:44)	S (Alt Empordà vs. Costa Brava), T (post-tourism), Su (tourism-phobia)	Section 4.1.2
S12	Suro	Iván asks about Social Security registration (00:30:15–00:31:41)	S (cork-oak estate), Su (class naivety/labour ethics)	Section 4.2.1
S13	Suro	Debate over the farmhouse renovation (00:37:49–00:42:07)	S (domestic space), Su (class contradiction)	Section 4.2.2
S14	Suro	Workers' lunch break: conversation in Arabic (00:43:15–00:44:59)	S (work in the forest), Su (subaltern solidarity, linguistic opacity)	Section 4.3.2

Table 2. Cont.

Seq.	Film	Scene (Approx. min/Time Code)	Chronotopic Dimensions	Section
S15	Suro	Chema's accident/blame attributed to Karín (01:24:34–01:28:25)	Su (xenophobic relay), T (generational continuity)	Section 4.3.1
S16	Suro	Night-time chase and armed intervention (01:37:17–01:39:09)	S (night-time forest), Su (solidarity + class privilege)	Section 4.3.1
S17	Suro	Forest fire sequence/defence of the estate (01:50:25–01:52:15)	S (territory as threat), T (climate change), Su (belonging)	Section 4.2.2
S18	Suro	Helena at the house party with friends (01:45:54–01:49:12)	S (bourgeoisified farmhouse), T (unresolved neo-rural project), Su (ethical ambivalence)	Section 4.1.1

3.3. The Two Films: Comparative Overview

Table 3 provides a synoptic overview of the main comparative variables organising the analysis.

Table 3. Comparative overview of *La piel quemada* (1967) and *Suro* (2022). Source: own elaboration.

Category	La Piel Quemada (1967)	Suro (2022)
Historical period	Late Francoism (desarrollismo). Mass internal migration and tourist expansion.	Post-2008 Spain. Neo-rural movement, rural depopulation crisis, climatic precarity.
Locations (Girona)	Costa Brava: Lloret de Mar. Origin: Guadix-Purullena, Granada.	Alt Empordà interior: Darnius, Agullana, Maçanet de Cabrenys.
Genre/tradition	Social neo-realist drama. Counter-discourse to desarrollismo comedy.	Neo-rural drama. Counter-discourse to lifestyle neo-ruralism.
Thematic axes	Family, labour migration, tourist development, xenophobia. Rural-urban dichotomy.	Marital crisis, neo-rural return, agricultural precarity, ecological threat. Urban–rural dichotomy.
Migrant figures	Andalusian workers (charnego). European tourists.	Urban professional couple. Maghrebi seasonal agricultural workers.
Languages	Catalan/Castilian/German/French.	Catalan/Castilian/French/Arabic.
Narrative structure	Parallel narration (coast/journey). Flashbacks to village of origin.	Linear. Couple's conflicts with workers and landscape. Elliptical open ending.
Type of media discourse	Counter-discourse against Francoist developmentalist propaganda.	Counter-discourse against neo-rural romanticism [16].

Beyond genre classification, the two films differ substantially in cinematic form: *La piel quemada* deploys a neorealist aesthetic of handheld camera work and non-professional actors, whereas *Suro* employs more controlled visual composition and a professional cast. These formal differences may condition how each film constructs its territorial discourse; the present study treats both films as comparable bearers of discursive content without systematically examining how editing, mise-en-scène or camera style mediate that construction, a limitation addressed in Section Limitations.

4. Results: Four Analytical Axes

The analysis is organised around four thematic blocks corresponding to the main sociodemographic and territorial dimensions of the migratory processes represented. Each block is examined through the three contextualising axes and with attention to how the selected sequences function as interventions in public media discourse. Time codes and sequence references (Table 2) enable precise location of the analysed scenes.

4.1. Historical Axis: Causes of Migration and Media Framing

4.1.1. From Agrarian Necessity to Post-Capitalist Disillusionment (S1–S2, S8, S10, S18)

In *La piel quemada*, the causal logic of migration is rooted in the material conditions of post-war rural Spain. S1 stages a train conversation in which a fellow passenger verbalises the structural logic of rural exodus: “Where is a man from? From wherever he can make a living.” This condenses the neo-realist media construction of internal migration not as a lifestyle choice, but as economic necessity. S2 stages agrarian class relations—the oligarchic Andalusian landowner who selects day labourers at will—that drove the exodus and implicitly challenges the triumphalism of the developmentalist modernity narrative. Late Francoism displayed, in the comedies of the same period, a paradoxically condescending ambiguity towards the cacique (local political boss) and rural backwardness as idealised representations of essential patriotic values, compatible nonetheless with the abandonment of autarky and fabricated progress [38]. In *Suro*, S10 opens with a farewell party in Barcelona at which a friend’s reference to the closure of the cooperative situates Helena and Iván’s migration as a response to the precarity of qualified professional work in a post-crisis economy and an opportunity due to inheriting a farmhouse. S18 closes this arc with Helena’s bitter frustration at the renovated farmhouse party—an ambivalent ending that resists any consoling neo-rural resolution.

4.1.2. Tourism as Contested Media Discourse (S3, S11)

Tourism occupies a central position in both films, but with contrasting evaluative valences. In *La piel quemada*, S3 deploys a visual geography of inequality through the spatial juxtaposition of European tourists sunbathing on the beach at Lloret de Mar while Andalusian workers labour on nearby construction sites—a spatial counter-argument to the official developmentalist narrative of shared prosperity. In *Suro*, S11 reconfigures tourism as a problem rather than a solution: Iván’s reply—“Let the tourists keep it”—signals a decisive inversion in the evaluation of tourism within the Catalan urban imaginary. The diachronic contrast between S3 and S11 traces a historical-media arc from tourism as *aperturismo* to tourism as displacement, echoing the public debate on overtourism and tourism-phobia prominent in Spanish media and politics since around 2015 [39]. This arc also illuminates the changing relationship between territorial cinema and journalistic coverage of tourism.

4.2. Territorial Axis: Work, Property and the Construction of Rural Space

4.2.1. The Media Geography of Labour (S4, S7, S9, S12)

In *La piel quemada*, S4 and S7 map the social geography of the Costa Brava through a tripartite hierarchy: autochthonous Catalan bourgeoisie, European tourists and Andalusian migrant workers. The distinction between *gamaruso* and *señorito andaluz* (Andalusian gentleman) articulated in S4 by barman Antonio and José contrasts the dominant figures of the Catalan businessman (*nouveaux-riche* but hardworking) and the Andalusian landowner (amiable but lacking in solidarity). S7 evidences the exclusionary suspicion of the site foreman: “Catalans have to put up with all of you. And if there is no work for our own people, too bad.”—a discourse that has since migrated, in the political arguments of the Spanish far right, to a new target: the foreigners. S9 closes the film with Manolo, José’s

brother newly arrived from the village, watching tourists dance from the hillside where the shed is located, rendering the developmentalist promise of upward mobility structurally false. In *Suro*, S12 stages Iván's attempts to introduce ethical labour practices—asking whether workers are registered with Social Security, insisting they not be called *moros*—as being met with sarcasm by the foreman Maurici. This reveals the normalisation of labour precarity in the rural interior as a structural phenomenon that persists across generations. In both films, the territorial economy of Girona depends on the exploitation of a migrant labour force to whom full social recognition is denied.

4.2.2. Housing and Habitat: The Chronotope of the Home (S5, S13, S17)

Domestic space functions in both films as a chronotopic node condensing territorial tensions. In *La piel quemada*, S5—the shed beside the cemetery that José rents for 500 pesetas a month, renovated with materials appropriated from the construction site—embodies the spatial marginalisation of the *charnego*, his creative resourcefulness and the structural indifference of the host society. In *Suro*, S13 stages the debate over the farmhouse renovation: Iván accuses Helena of proposing an aesthetic that “monologues with its surroundings” rather than dialoguing with them. The *masía* condenses the tension between the authentic rurality the couple claims to seek and the bourgeois domesticity that reproduces their urban habitus) [40]. S17—the defence during the forest fire—transforms this domestic tension into embodied territorial commitment, suggesting that belonging to a place can be forged through collective exposure to risk rather than deliberate lifestyle choice.

4.3. Sociodemographic Axis: Xenophobia and Multilingualism

4.3.1. The Generational Relay of Xenophobia (S6, S15, S16)

In *La piel quemada*, S6—the bar scene in which Catalan men confront Andalusian workers, calling them *charnegos* and *mursianos*, ordering them back to their villages—condenses the xenophobic undercurrent running beneath the apparently cosmopolitan image of Francoist tourist *aperturismo*. In *Suro*, S15 and S16 establish what is arguably the study's most significant finding: the generational relay of xenophobia. The accident suffered by Chema—a sixty-something day labourer who may himself have migrated to Catalonia as a child during the developmentalist period—is the trigger that incites his colleagues to pursue and assault the young Maghrebi worker Karín, blaming him for the incident. Chema occupies the structural position of the 1960s *charnego* but reproduces towards the contemporary migrant the same logic of exclusion that may once have been directed at him. Iván's armed intervention in S16 is simultaneously an act of solidarity and an assertion of class privilege [16]: the neo-rural professional can deploy property as a shield unavailable to the Maghrebi worker. This finding both extends and complicates the existing literature in two specific respects. First, it converges with Martínez-Puche et al. [38] and García Castaño and Lerma Parra [22] in documenting the persistence of exclusionary representations of migrant groups in Spanish cinema and journalism, while adding a dimension those works do not systematically examine: the diachronic transfer of the outsider position from one migrant group to another within the same territorial imaginary, here operationalised through the diptych design. Second, it challenges the optimistic framing of “rural cosmopolitanism” [41] in a specific and falsifiable way: not by questioning whether rural areas can be cosmopolitan in general, but by demonstrating that, in the discursive regime constructed by these two media texts, the logic of exclusion does not disappear with demographic change but is transferred intact to the next available migrant group—a structural pattern that multicultural integration policies in rural and agricultural zones facing demographic emergency must account for.

4.3.2. Cinematic Multilingualism as Territorial Media Practice (S6, S14)

Both films construct a specific acoustic geography of Girona [19] that maps social hierarchies in the sonic register. In *La piel quemada*, S6 stages the Catalan–Castilian border as the main sociolinguistic axis of the identity conflict: speaking Catalan is equivalent to claiming spatial belonging and being addressed in Catalan without being able to respond is equivalent to being reminded of one’s outsider status. The residual presence of French and German spoken by foreign tourists represents the superficially cosmopolitan character of Francoist Spain. In *Suro*, S14 presents a considerably more complex linguistic landscape. Following Bleichenbacher [27], Arabic appears exclusively in contexts of horizontal labour solidarity and everyday resistance—when Mohamed and his companions comment on their living conditions in Arabic (“That’s not a house. It’s a pigsty. It’s only for a season. You have to put up with it”)—the film grants subaltern migrant subjects a discursive space inaccessible to the neo-rural protagonists, creating what Mamula and Patti [28] describe as a “zone of untranslatability.” The quadrilingual landscape of *Suro* (Catalan, Castilian, French, Arabic) maps the power geometry of contemporary Girona: Catalan encodes local cultural authority and property; Castilian mediates inter-ethnic negotiation; French marks European cultural capital; and Arabic designates the subaltern labour that sustains the agrarian economy while remaining invisible to the territorial imaginary of the neo-rural protagonists. Read through the lens of language ideology [30], this distribution is not merely descriptive but ideologically hierarchising: Catalan and French index cultural authority and property, while Arabic is relegated to a space of subaltern solidarity.

In the terms of de Higes Andino [29], Arabic functions here as an L3 that encodes the migrant characters’ discursive space as untranslatable for the dominant group; in the terms of Corrius [42], it operates as a marker of out-group otherness, indexing the subaltern position of the Maghrebi workers within the territorial power geometry of contemporary Girona.

4.4. Indications of Reception Within the Elite Media Sphere: An Exploratory Mini-Corpus

The preceding sections have analysed the films as texts constructing territorial imaginaries. A legitimate methodological critique is that claims about the “media function” of a film remain at the level of hypothesis if not accompanied by evidence about how it was received and circulated in the real media ecosystem. This section addresses that deficit through a mini-reception analysis based on a corpus of journalistic texts (Table 4): eight records relating to *La piel quemada* (1967–1968), obtained through a systematic search in the National Digital Newspaper Library (BNE) and historical press archives and seven relating to *Suro* (2022), identified in digital newspaper databases and film criticism databases. The corpus does not claim statistical exhaustiveness; its scope is strictly exploratory. It aims to illustrate the dominant framing frameworks and to provide indicative—not conclusive—support for the claims about discursive visibilisation and media complementarity that the textual analysis suggests.

As with any qualitative close reading without predefined categories, this procedure is susceptible to confirmatory bias; the analyst’s attention may be drawn preferentially to evidence that aligns with the study’s theoretical postulates. To mitigate this risk, Section 4.4.1 below reports not only the dominant convergent frameworks but also the heterodox framing identified in the corpus, ensuring that conflicting evidence receives equal analytical attention.

Table 4. Mini-corpus of media reception: sources, authors, verified excerpts and framing (1967–2022). LPQ = *La piel quemada*; Suro = *Suro*. Source: own elaboration.

Film	Source	Date	Author	Type	Excerpt/Verified Description	Framing
LPQ	<i>Diario de León</i>	26 January 1967	E. Murillo	Interview	Festival interview highlighting the need for greater freedom of expression and permission to address systematically excluded topics.	Dissident cinema as a space for freedom of expression unavailable to the official press.
LPQ	<i>La Vanguardia española</i>	15 February 1967	A. V. Kirchner	Chronicle/review	The screening caused commotion, with applause, approving comments and expressions of displeasure.	Polarised reception: Catalan–Andalusian coexistence as an uncomfortable social issue.
LPQ	<i>Signo</i>	11 March 1967	L. Bonet-Mojica/J. M. Picó	Review/analysis	A serious and honest attempt to present a real problem from a class-based viewpoint.	Internal migration as a class issue; social realism versus escapist cinema.
LPQ	<i>El Mundo Deportivo</i>	19 November 1967	J. López Español	Review	The film will lend itself to controversy and is a decidedly important film.	Linguistic and cultural integration as an open question; public importance acknowledged.
LPQ	<i>La Vanguardia española</i>	23 November 1967	J. Pedret Muntañola	Review	The film tackles the social issue of immigrants in the manner of a vivid journalistic reportage.	Gap in official journalism on internal migration; cinema covers what the press does not.
LPQ	<i>Ya</i>	15 February 1968	P. Cebollada	Review/analysis	The film reads more as chronicle than fiction and strikes a fine tone of Spanish social realism.	The film as social chronicle: cinematic equivalent of the journalistic reportage that does not exist.
LPQ	<i>Madrid</i>	13 February 1968	Public colloquium [Forn, Berlanga, Sastre, Bonald]	Colloquium	“A testimony film about a social problem.” [Forn]/“Here a social issue is raised in all its rawness.” [Sastre]	Explicit public debate on the social function of cinema vs. dominant escapism.
LPQ	<i>Informaciones</i>	16 February 1968	A. Sánchez	Review	The drama is representative of all the charnegos and fills a gap left by the developmentalist press.	Social authenticity and denunciation; the film fills a representational vacuum.
Suro	<i>El País</i>	19 September 2022	E. Fernández-Santos	Review/SSIFF premiere	The rural as the terrain of the best contemporary Spanish cinema.	Generational convergence of directors on agricultural territory as political metaphor.
Suro	<i>Cinemanía</i>	19 September 2022	G. Bermejo	Cultural chronicle/review	End of the 15M generational idyll; post-crisis disenchantment.	The return to the rural as cultural diagnosis.

Table 4. Cont.

Film	Source	Date	Author	Type	Excerpt/Verified Description	Framing
Suro	<i>Screen Daily</i>	20 September 2022	L. Holland	International review	Films about the impact of outsiders on rural Spanish life are becoming a recognisable tendency.	International reception: Spanish rurality on the European festival circuit.
Suro	<i>Público</i>	1 December 2022	B. Piña	Director interview	The film as a mirror revealing classism, racism and sexism projected onto the countryside from the city.	The film as a mirror of urban contradictions projected onto the rural world.
Suro	<i>El Español</i>	2 December 2022	M. Yáñez	Cultural chronicle	Dismantling of the idealised vision of the rural; thorny relations between ways of life.	Counter-discourse against idealised neo-ruralism; tension between progressive ideals and classist practice.
Suro	<i>Fotogramas</i>	2 December 2022	B. Morell	Film review	A devastating chronicle of the disintegration of the supposedly happy Arcadia.	Territorial, labour and emotional conflict demythologise the idealised rural Arcadia.
Suro	<i>El Periódico de Aragón</i>	7 December 2022	A. Arilla	Director interview	"I made it in Catalan because, in my experience in those lands, people expressed themselves in Catalan."	Multilingualism as cinematographic, identity and territorial feature/language as social organisation.

It should be noted that all 15 records in this corpus derive from general-interest, cultural or specialised professional press, not from popular discussion forums, social media or local press; the corpus therefore reflects framing frameworks circulating within the elite media public sphere, not general public opinion or the social sectors directly affected by the dynamics represented in the films. The procedure applied is one of qualitative identification of dominant framing frameworks through close reading of the 15 records, not critical discourse analysis or systematic coding with predefined categories and inter-coder reliability verification.

4.4.1. La Piel Quemada (1967–1968): Press Reception and Framing Frameworks

Before examining the frameworks, it is worth clarifying the context that conditions reception. *La piel quemada* was screened at the IV Week of New Spanish Cinema (Molins de Rey, Barcelona, January–February 1967), a parallel exhibition circuit organised outside the conventional commercial system. The initial coverage in *Diario de León* [43] reports the words of Juan Francisco de Lasa, director of the festival, who articulates with clarity the function of this alternative space: "We ask, above all, for greater freedom of expression. Permission to address topics that have so far been systematically refused." This statement fixes the institutional framework: the new Spanish cinema typically lacks distribution and exhibition to reach a mass audience. It emerges at the instigation of the Salamanca Conversations (1955), coinciding with the subsequent change in the General Directorate of Cinematography and Theatre (1963) and the opening of the Official Film School (1964), and presents itself to the press as a device for rendering visible what is excluded by the dominant cultural system controlled by the successful popular comedy.

Analysis of the eight hemerographic records, published between January 1967 and February 1968 in national and regional publications, provides indicative evidence consistent

with the discursive visibilisation function postulated in the theoretical framework. In the context of late Francoism, *La piel quemada* did not simply reflect a prior journalistic debate on internal migration. In the absence of journalism capable of addressing that debate with the necessary directness, the film generated and sustained it through the cultural press, colloquia and public controversy. Three dominant frameworks emerge.

Framework 1—Polarised reception as symptom of an uncomfortable topic. Kirchner's chronicle [44] documents that the screening "caused a degree of commotion" and that the audience was divided, confirming that the film had touched a social nerve: Catalan–Andalusian coexistence, xenophobia towards the internal migrant and tourism's complicity with territorial inequality. The same text notes that Francisco Candel, author of the essay *Els altres catalans* (1964)—the sociological reference closest to the film's universe—"found the film interesting, as it focused on the problems he raised in his book, and thought it useful that the more susceptible spectators should be irritated from time to time."

Framework 2—Cinema as social chronicle substituting for absent journalism. Pedret Muntanola [45] is explicit: the film treats internal migration "in the manner of a vivid journalistic reportage full of life, sincerity and purpose"—designating precisely the journalistic-complementary function that the textual analysis postulated, in a context where the censored press and the state newsreel *No-Do* could not produce it. Cebollada [46] and Sánchez [47] converge on this framing. Even in its less complacent view of developmentalist tourism, "it honestly exhibits the difference between those with a 'sun-tanned skin' from the caress of the sun and those with a 'burnt skin' from long hours of labour under a relentless sun."

Framework 3—The debate over linguistic and cultural integration. López Español [48] turns the film's subject into a question about Catalan territorial identity: "Can Catalonia (...) truly 'guide' those who come to it as if to a new California? Will it not be Catalonia itself that dissolves in the turbulent, murky waters of the torrent?" The quotation is significant because it turns the film's subject—the integration of the Andalusian migrant—into a question about Catalan territorial identity, articulating the media debate the film provoked in its most precise terms: language and culture as the boundary of belonging. Bonet-Mojica and Picó [49] offer the most explicit class interpretation in the corpus. The film presents the migratory problem "from a class-based viewpoint, with deep love and respect for workers who have had to leave their home region to find work." The public colloquium reported in *Madrid* [50]—with the participation of Forn, Berlanga, Sastre and Bonald—provides the most compelling evidence of the film's media–public function: Berlanga himself acknowledged that "this is a subject that others of us had not dared to tackle in other periods of Spanish cinema." According to Antonio V. Kirchner, "the film could prove useful as a starting point for a cinema with a Catalan theme that addresses specific problems of our region."

It should be noted that López Español's framing in *El Mundo Deportivo* [48] stands as the heterodox exception within the corpus: rather than endorsing the migrants' cause, he encodes the Andalusian migrant as a potential threat to Catalan territorial identity. This antagonistic framing—in which the migrant is perceived as a problem for the host society rather than its victim—is evidence of heterogeneity in the reception field and confirms that the three dominant frameworks identified do not exhaust the spectrum of positions circulating in the elite media sphere at the time of the film's release.

In the context of late Francoism, *La piel quemada* did not simply "reflect" a prior journalistic debate on internal migration. In the absence of journalism capable of addressing that debate with the necessary directness, the film generated and sustained it in the public sphere through the cultural press, colloquia and cinema-hall controversy. This function is not equivalent to agenda-setting in the technical sense of McCombs and Shaw's [51] theory,

which would require quantitative evidence of salience transfer; but it does constitute, in precise conceptual terms, a case of discursive visibilisation of phenomena that the dominant informational regime left in the shadows.

4.4.2. Suro (2022): Press Reception and Migrant Labour Visibilisation

The corpus for *Suro* comprises seven records published between September and December 2022 in media of different natures and editorial orientations: the specialist magazines *Fotogramas* and *Cinemanía*; generalist criticism in *El País*; international trade press in *Screen Daily*; criticism and interview in *Público* and *El Periódico de Aragón*; and cultural reportage in *El Español*. This editorial diversity allows identification of three dominant framing frameworks that structure the film's reception in the Spanish media space.

Framework 1—Rural cinema as a generational trend and post-crisis cultural diagnosis. The most recurrent framing in the corpus is not that of the individual film, but of the collective cultural symptom. A back-to-the-land exodus, sometimes more or less original in each proposal, continues to flood the screens. This formulation is analytically relevant because it turns Suro into an exponent of a documented and named media-cinematographic tendency. The review in *El País* [52], signed by Elsa Fernández-Santos with the title “The best Spanish cinema returns to the countryside,” reinforces this framing from the reference generalist press: the rural is not exoticism or nostalgia, but the terrain where contemporary Spanish cinema situates its most urgent conflicts. For its part, the reportage in *Cinemanía* [53] establishes the explicit link between the return to the rural and the political cycle: the headline “the end of the 15M generational idyll” inscribes the film in the horizon of post-crisis disenchantment, as a cinematographic epitaph for the life project of the indignados generation.

Framework 2—Counter-discourse against idealised neo-ruralism and visibilisation of class contradictions. The second dominant framework, articulated with greater density in interview sources, is the film as a challenge to the lifestyle neo-rural imaginary. Gurrea is in this respect the principal enunciator. In the interview in *Público* [54], with Begoña Piña, the director formulates the film's central thesis with precision: “How easy it is to theorise from the city about [the classism, racism and sexism of the rural world]. . . No, we live in a city that is classist, racist and sexist. We live in a world like that.” This statement explicitly inscribes Suro in the counter-discourse against neo-ruralism that projects onto the countryside the defects of the urban world it claims to transcend. In the same interview, Gurrea adds: “The film uses that; it's a play of mirrors: the environment they move to functions as a mirror to make visible and bring to the surface conflicts that they carry within themselves.” This formulation has particular methodological value: the director articulates the film's specular function—making visible what one does not want to see—using the very terms of discursive visibilisation that the article's theoretical framework proposes. The reportage in *El Español* [55], signed by Manu Yáñez, concurs in the framing: the headline “dismantles the idealised vision of the rural in Suro” and the description that the film “seeks to dismantle an idealised vision of rurality” without fear of rendering the characters “unsympathetic” confirm the film's reception as a deliberate counter-discourse exercise against neo-rural romanticism, also signalled in the *Fotogramas* review [56]: “A devastating chronicle of the disintegration of that supposedly happy Arcadia.”

Framework 3—Invisibility of migrant agricultural labour and the cinema's visibilisation function. The third framework is the most directly relevant to the media complementarity hypothesis and is articulated most clearly in interview sources and the trade press. In the interview published in *Público* [54], Gurrea explains, “The hierarchies and pecking orders in the film also exist in the construction world and in many other urban worlds that we choose not to look at because it is easier to talk about the other.” The director

explicitly names the media invisibility of migrant seasonal agricultural labour as the problem that justifies the cinematographic gesture. In *El Periódico de Aragón* [57], the filmmaker explains that while working as a seasonal cork harvester one summer “I discovered a world that was completely unknown to me (...) I had never seen it filmed and that is where the desire was born.” This statement has direct empirical value for the article’s argument: it is the production agent himself who acknowledges that cinema occupies a visibilisation space that the informational media do not cover. The review in *Screen Daily* [58], published at the film’s world premiere in the Official Section of the SSIFF, certifies the international circulation of this framing: the English-language review for the European professional film sector constructs *Suro* as a document on the precarity of rural Spain, contributing to the construction of an imaginary of Spanish rurality for international audiences that English-language journalism on Spain rarely produces.

A transversal framing element in the corpus deserves specific attention for its relevance to the xenophobia and generational relay dimension analysed in Section 4.3.1. Begoña Piña [54] describes *Suro* as “a lucid debut feature that reveals, through the intimate conflict of a couple starting a new life in the rural world, the way in which racism, xenophobia, classism and sexism emerge in this society.” This formulation—“in this society,” not “in the rural world”—articulates the same finding that the textual analysis identifies in S15 and S16: xenophobia towards the Maghrebi worker is not a specifically rural phenomenon, but a structural form of exclusion that the conditions of rural territory cause to surface. The press, by framing the film in these terms, confirms that the cross-sectional—and not localised—reading of xenophobia circulated in the discourse of media reception, which grounds the claim that *Suro* intervened in a public debate on racism and exclusion that daily journalism treats in a fragmentary and episodic manner. Also notable is the identity and multilingual factor: the film is originally shot in Catalan, naturalising a fact that is sometimes still a source of controversy in Spain.

In summary, analysis of the reception corpus for *Suro* provides indicative evidence consistent with four exploratory propositions. First, specialist and generalist media frame the film within a collective tendency of returning to the countryside as a post-crisis cultural diagnosis: Fernández-Santos [52] titles her SSIFF review “The best Spanish cinema returns to the countryside,” while Bermejo’s [53] piece frames it as the “end of the 15M generational idyll.” Second, interviews with the director explicitly articulate the film’s counter-discursive function. Gurrea [54] states: “How easy it is to theorise from the city about [the classism, racism and sexism of the rural world]. . . No, we live in a city that is classist, racist and sexist.” Third, the international press amplifies this visibilisation to audiences for whom English-language journalism on Spain rarely offers comparable depictions of rural precarity [58]. Fourth, media reception converges with the textual analysis in identifying xenophobia towards migrant labour as the film’s central critical finding—confirming that this reading is not an academically superimposed interpretation, but the one that the media reception ecosystem itself produced spontaneously. These four propositions are strictly exploratory in character. Their confirmation or refutation would require specific research designs—systematic press content analysis and audience panel studies—that exceed the scope of the present study and constitute its most immediate future research agenda.

It should be emphasised that all four propositions concern the framing of the films within the elite media and critical press sphere specifically; they do not constitute evidence about broader public or territorial discourse.

5. Discussion

The comparative analysis has implications for communication and media studies, for the sociology of rural cinema and for public policy debates on territorial development

and multicultural coexistence. The **principal contribution** is methodological: the media–geographic diptych as an operational design for the diachronic comparative analysis of rural cinema as a media form. As elaborated in Section 2.4, the design’s distinctive move is the stabilisation of the territorial variable as a methodological lever: by holding the geographical space constant while contrasting two historically distinct and demographically opposed regimes, the analysis can isolate what is structurally continuous from what is historically contingent in the media construction of rural migration. The three-axis contextualisation translates the abstract design into a reproducible analytical procedure applicable to any corpus satisfying the four defining conditions established in Section 2.4. Future applications could include the media geography of post-industrial European landscapes, the cinematographic imaginaries of depopulating Spanish provinces beyond Girona, or comparative ecocinema studies of rural communities affected by climate change.

The **first substantive contribution** is evidence of structural homology in the discursive position of the migrant as a target of exclusion, as constructed across both media texts over five decades of rural territorial media discourse in Girona. The generational relay embodied by Chema—connecting the xenophobic construction of the *charnego* in the media landscape of the 1960s with the xenophobic construction of the Maghrebi migrant in the 2020s—demonstrates that, in both texts, rural territory is represented as a persistent space of exclusionary demarcation, regardless of which migrant group occupies the position of the outsider. This finding challenges the optimistic framing of “rural cosmopolitanism” [41] and has direct relevance for policies on multicultural integration in rural and agricultural zones facing a demographic emergency. The **second substantive contribution** is the theoretical proposal on cinematic multilingualism as a territorial media practice. The acoustic geographies of both films—the Catalan–Castilian sociolinguistic fault line in *La piel Quemada* and the quadrilingual landscape of *Suro*—are not accidental but constitutive of the territorial imaginary. The linguistic distribution in rural cinema maps power relations, defines access to narrative agency and produces zones of opacity that function as forms of subaltern resistance.

A fourth implication concerns the relationship between rural cinema and the media ecology of public debate. The mini-reception analysis in Section 4.4 provides preliminary evidence that this relationship is empirically observable. Both films achieved significant media circulation and generated framing frameworks that explicitly acknowledged their function of visibilising what journalism does not habitually cover. In both cases, the reception evidence suggests that the films contributed narrative frameworks and images that circulated in the territorial media discourse beyond the cinematographic space. Whether this function is equivalent to agenda-setting in the strict sense is a proposition that would require specific research designs—systematic press content analysis and audience panel studies—that exceed the scope of this study, but which constitute the most relevant research agenda that the present work opens.

These framing frameworks are documented here for the elite media and critical press sphere only and are not generalisable to broader public or territorial discourse.

Throughout this discussion, claims are restricted to the discursive level: what is established is how the two films construct and circulate imaginaries of xenophobia, territory and migration, not how the physical territory of Girona sociologically functions or how its residents actually behave.

These findings should also be situated within broader European scholarship on rural transformation, migration and regional cinema [41]; and comparable work on rural cosmopolitanism in other European contexts). The generational relay of xenophobia identified here may constitute a structurally transferable pattern relevant to other contexts of depopulation and neo-rural return in Europe, while other elements of the analysis—the

Francoist regime, the Catalan language question, and the specificity of Costa Brava developmentalist tourism—are specific to Catalonia’s particular historical trajectory. Comparative evidence from large-scale rural transformation contexts outside Europe, such as China’s Three Gorges region [59], further illustrates the transferability of the diptych design beyond the European cases discussed above.

Limitations

Four limitations must be acknowledged. First, the corpus is limited to two films, which restricts the transferability of the results. Claims about “the territorial imaginary of Girona” or “Spanish rural cinema” are interpretive hypotheses grounded in intensive qualitative evidence, not statistically representative generalisations. Second, the methodological triangulation in its media reception dimension is partial: the mini corpus of press material provides exploratory evidence on journalistic framing frameworks, but substitutes neither for a systematic press coverage content analysis nor for audience reception studies. Third, the multilingualism analysis remains exploratory: a fully systematic approach would require multimodal discourse analysis tools [60] rigorously applied to the sonic and linguistic dimensions of both films. Fourth, there is a structural asymmetry in the critical bibliography available for the two films: *La piel quemada* has accumulated more than five decades of academic reception, while *Suro* has generated a substantially smaller body of academic analysis, which implies that interpretations of *Suro* rest to a greater extent on the authors’ own analytical judgements.

Fifth, the analysis operates at the level of the sequence’s thematic–evaluative content and does not systematically examine the formal mechanisms (editing, point of view, soundtrack) or second-order discursive structures (binary systems, subjectification) through which meaning is cinematographically constructed—nor the formal differences between the neorealist aesthetic of *La piel quemada* and the more controlled visual composition of *Suro* (Section 3.3). This is a necessary avenue for future studies articulating formal film analysis with media discourse analysis in the stricter sense.

Sixth, the coding procedure is qualitative and interpretive by design, without a closed, predefined coding protocol in the sense of quantitative content analysis; this is consistent with the exploratory, intensive case-study nature of the research but limits exact reproducibility by third parties. Relatedly, the triple chronotopic dimension (temporal, spatial, subjective) is applied qualitatively, without a measurement instrument that allows the three dimensions to be weighed comparably across sequences or films.

Seventh, the media reception corpus (Section 4.4) is composed exclusively of elite media sources—general interest, cultural and specialised professional press—and does not capture popular discussion forums, social media or local press; the framing frameworks identified should therefore be read as characteristic of the elite media public sphere rather than of public opinion at large.

Eighth, the absence of any actual audience data—surveys, focus groups, and reception studies—means that claims about discursive visibilisation remain at the level of textual and press-framing evidence; this constitutes the most relevant avenue for future research that this article opens.

Ninth, both films are critically acclaimed works of auteur cinema rather than representative samples of mainstream Spanish cinema, selected precisely for their capacity to function as counter-discourse. This selection criterion, while theoretically justified, introduces a selection bias: the findings may reflect the perspectives of socially engaged auteur cinema rather than broader cinematic representations of rural migration and territorial identity, including commercial or popular cinema that might reproduce dominant imagi-

naries less critically. Comparing the treatment of rural migration in auteur versus popular contemporary cinema constitutes a particularly productive avenue for future research.

Tenth, the sub-region (coastal versus inland), cinematic genre (neorealism versus contemporary neo-rural drama) and the demographic composition of the migrant group vary simultaneously with the historical period across the two cases analysed; the observed patterns therefore cannot be conclusively and exclusively attributed to the territory's temporal evolution, as opposed to genre convention or sub-regional socioeconomic difference.

6. Conclusions

This article has proposed and applied a triple contextualisation—historical, territorial and sociodemographic—to the comparative analysis of *La piel quemada* (Forn, 1967) and *Suro* (Gurrea, 2022) as media artefacts that produce and circulate territorial imaginaries of the province of Girona. The analysis yields three main conclusions. First, both films function as media counter-discourses—*La piel quemada* against Francoist developmentalist imagery and *Suro* against contemporary neo-rural romanticism—and their media–geographic diptych reveals the structural continuity of the territorial contradictions that rural territory generates: the exploitation of migrant labour, the commodification of rural space and the persistence of exclusionary xenophobia. Second, the analysis demonstrates that both media texts construct an imaginary of structural continuity—more precisely, structural homology in the discursive position of the migrant as target of exclusion—over five decades of rural territorial media discourse in Girona. The generational relay from the *charnego* to the Maghrebi day labourer reveals that, in both texts, rural territory is represented as a persistent space of exclusionary demarcation, regardless of which migrant group occupies the outsider position—a finding with immediate implications for multicultural integration policies in rural areas. Third, multilingualism emerges as an undertheorised but analytically productive dimension of rural cinema as a media form. The contrast between the bilingual legibility of *La piel quemada* and the multilingual opacity of *Suro* marks a significant evolution in the media–geographic function of cinematic multilingualism over five decades.

This counter-discursive classification is grounded in the existing critical literature [11–13,16] and confirmed rather than demonstrated by the chronotopic analysis presented here, since no direct textual comparison with mainstream films of each era is included in this study.

More broadly, this study contributes preliminary evidence—both textual and from media reception—that audiovisual fiction performs a discursive visibilisation function complementary to journalism in the construction of territorial public discourse. At a time when local and rural journalism is contracting in Spain and Europe [5], rural cinema partially covers a representational vacuum by rendering visible phenomena—migrant seasonal labour, agricultural xenophobia, and neo-rural class dynamics—that news media struggle to cover with narrative depth and temporal reach. Whether this function amounts to an agenda-setting effect on audiences in the empirical sense remains an open question. What this study demonstrates is that the hypothesis merits systematic formulation and testing—an agenda that matters equally to film studies and to communication and journalism research.

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