

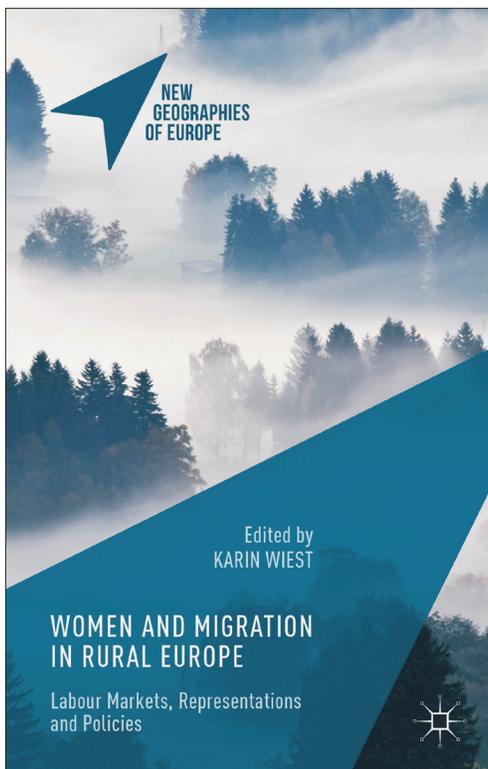
Wiest, K. (ed.): Women and Migration in Rural Europe: Labour Markets, Representations and Policies. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 257 p.

In recent years, there is a growing interest among policy-makers and academic scholars in the research on the relationship between gender and 'the rural'. On the one hand, gender relations and the potential role of women in development have gained significant attention in rural policies of the European Union over the last decades (e.g. European Commission 2000, 2012, 2016). On the other hand, due to the so-called cultural turn research on gender, sexuality and other dimensions of 'otherness' have come to the forefront of the research agenda of rural studies (see e.g. PHILO, C. 1992; CLOKE, P. 1997; CLOKE, P. and LITTLE, J. 1997; LITTLE, J. 2002; LITTLE, J. and PANELLI, R. 2003; WOODS, M. 2010). After a long time of neglect, there is an increasing fascination with the gender aspects of rural migration, well-reflected by the expansion of the relevant international literature (e.g. BOCK, B.B. 2006, 2010; BONIFACIO, G.T. 2013). Results of these studies show that despite increasing attention to gender issues, rural women still have to face serious disadvantages, compared not only to rural men, but also to urban women, what underscores

the importance of further research on this issue. The book to be introduced fits well in these trends, and it is a valuable contribution to current debates on gender and rural migration.

The 257-page-long book consists of 12 chapters. The first one introduces the collection, setting the conceptual framework and principal aims of the book. As the editor, Karin Wiest, senior lecturer and project manager at the Leibniz Institut für Länderkunde (IfL) in Leipzig, points out, "...this volume aims to shed light on the diversity of female living conditions and female migration decisions in the European countryside, with a particular focus on the question of how women deal with restrictive conditions in rural labour markets" (p. 6). In addition, throughout the book, particular attention is paid to the question what it means to be a rural woman in contemporary postmodern societies, and policy aspects of gender issues are discussed respectively. The editor also provides an overview on the topics covered by this volume, and places the main findings of the contributors into these debates. The themes include the possible explanations of women's migration, the characteristics of European rural labour markets from a gendered perspective, the gendered representations of rurality, and the relationship between gendered migration and rural development.

For Wiest, the contemporary transformation of rural areas serves as a starting point for discussing gendered rural migration. In fact, rural areas are constantly changing under globalisation and concomitant phenomena (e.g. economic restructuring, environmental changes, the expansion of information technology), what is a multi-faceted process. On the one hand, the material conditions of rural life have been undergoing a profound change due to the transition of labour market from a traditional to a post-Fordist type, resulting in various new employment opportunities for women. On the other hand, dominant social and personal representations of the rural are also shifting, coupled with the re-negotiation and re-interpretation of rural life and rural man- and womanhood, producing alternative or new femininities and masculinities. These two facets, the material and the representational ones, play a key role, since both 'real' as well as perceived economic and social structures affect women's quality of life and migration behaviour. As a consequence, European rural areas can be characterised by a gender-selective migration, since the number of women leaving rural areas exceeds the number of male out-migrants. This process results in severe demographic imbalances between and within regions, and hampers the solid economic and social development of rural areas. Therefore, adequate poli-



cy measures are needed to tackle such challenges, and authors of this volume try to make their part adopting a strong policy focus.

The rest of the book is divided into three main parts. The first part introduces four case studies from Spain, Germany, Hungary/Romania and Poland that focus on gendered representations and perceptions of the rural and pay particular attention to the interconnections between women's evaluation of rural life, their personal identities and mobility. The case studies offer an insight into the processes of rural transformation outlined above. For instance, it can be observed in women's narratives how post-Fordism, postmodernism and the altering material and social realities of the rural destabilise traditional categories, such as the urban-rural divide, rural lifestyle or gender roles. At the same time, the persistence of stereotypical beliefs about rurality and female duties is palpable in the stories and positionalities of surveyed women. Mobility has a crucial role in this respect, not only because decision of women on migration is determined by their changing living situations, but it is strongly influenced by their attitudes and identities. This is maybe the greatest contribution of this section.

In the first study of this section (Chapter 2), Mireiya BAYLINA, Maria Dolors GARCIA-RAMON, Ana María PORTO, Isabel SALAMAÑA and Montserrat VILLARINO investigate how highly-qualified women in Galicia and Catalonia perceive 'the rural' and characterise 'the rural woman'. They point out that although the respondents are rural residents, they do not identify themselves as typical rural women. Most of them classify themselves as rural professionals. Their narratives contain elements of the traditional rural idyll that are much appreciated by postmodern labour (e.g. peaceful tranquillity), while their mobility (e.g. owning a car) enables them to maintain a high living standard in the countryside.

Gesine TUITJER (Chapter 3) discusses the everyday life experiences of young mothers in three rural communities in Western Germany. She comes to the conclusion that normative assumptions about female roles (especially, being a mother) have a significant effect on the interviewed women's self-perceptions. They predominantly construct their lifestyles based on the traditional family model involving a male breadwinner and a female caregiver. Nevertheless, most of them adjust their roles according to the changing rural milieu, developing a postmodern suburban/rural lifestyle.

Using a questionnaire survey, Éva G. FEKETE (Chapter 4) examines rural inhabitants' attitudes towards traditional, modern and postmodern values in eight Hungarian and Transylvanian micro-regions. The study sheds light on significant gender differences, as women are more often devoted to postmodern values (e.g. nature, social participation) than men. This is particularly true for those with higher level of

educational attainment, and for those living in culturally more open communities (i.e. for women more influenced by external factors, like commuting or re-migration). In the near future, these areas can become more successful, since their inhabitants possess the appropriate competencies and attitudes to utilise local resources for a postmodern-type of development.

In their study, Nana ZARNEKOW and Christian HENNING (Chapter 5) see perceived quality of life as an important factor in migration decisions. Employing a standardised household survey, they examine local residents' evaluation of and satisfaction with life conditions in two rural and two suburban communities in Poland, with a special emphasis on gender differences. Their analysis reveals that employment opportunities are a key component of the quality of life for both women and men, although the natural environment and cultural and social life seem also important. The authors draw the conclusion that rural migration in Poland is dominated by regional labour market conditions, and there are no considerable gender differences in the motivations to move.

The second main part of the volume is comprised of four studies focusing on Germany and Poland, and it is devoted to rural labour markets and gender inequalities in migration. It is well illustrated by these studies that structural characteristics of regional and local rural labour markets disadvantage women, and real as well as perceived deficiencies of job markets can act as a major push-factor in migration. Nevertheless, contributors of this section also demonstrate the notable benefits of self-employment, and the role of social and creative sectors which not only enhance female job prospects but contribute to sustainable regional development.

First, Kim Philip SCHUMACHER and Alexander KUNZ (Chapter 6) introduce the possible causes of graduated pupil's out-migration in rural Northern Germany. According to their results, the majority of surveyed youngsters have a strong intention to leave their region for further education or work, but regional labour markets have unequal effects on female and male migration behaviour. While young men see better chances in attending vocational training or finding a job in the secondary sector, young women are more dissatisfied with educational and employment opportunities in their region. Authors conclude that in the decision of young people on migration, the structure of local labour markets and gendered job preferences are equally important explanatory factors.

Susanne SCHMIDT (Chapter 7) examines the spatial patterns of women working in creative occupations in Germany. One of the main results of her statistical analysis is that in the spatial distribution of creative female workers East-West differences are more pronounced than the urban-rural dualism. Rural areas in Eastern Germany show a relatively high share on creative labour. Therefore, the commonplace that

creative workers are predominantly concentrated in metropolitan areas cannot be confirmed in the case of Germany. Regarding explanatory factors, comfortable working environment in terms of public service provision (e.g. the distribution of health-care and educational institutions) or economic prosperity play a dominant role.

Ewa ROLLNIK-SADOWSKA (Chapter 8) convincingly demonstrates that the structure of labour markets in rural Poland clearly disadvantages women. The character of job markets is a significant push-factor. Nevertheless, as the author argues, self-employment and female entrepreneurship can be effective tools for enhancing women's job opportunities and fostering regional economic development. In line with the relevant international literature, ROLLNIK-SADOWSKA emphasises the usefulness of local knowledge and traditions in launching women's businesses under harsh economic circumstances. However, there is an urgent need for the support of local and central authorities, because insufficient transport and social infrastructures (e.g. lack of child-care facilities) hinder the reconciliation of job and family life for rural women.

Similarly to the previous study, Bogusław BEMBENEK, Teresa PIECUCH and Joanna SUDOL-PUSZ (Chapter 9) draw attention to the importance of female entrepreneurship and economic cooperation in rural Poland. Using a qualitative approach, they examine business clusters and social cooperatives as potential forms of collaboration between local businesses. They argue that business clusters and social cooperatives can foster entrepreneurial attitude among women and create attractive workplaces at the same time providing a framework for cooperation and meaningful competition between the members. Therefore, such organisations embody real alternatives for rural regions facing growing unemployment and the decline of agricultural incomes.

The third part of the book deals with living situation of rural women, gendered migration and the relevance of gendered aspects in rural policies. Authors in this section discover relevant gender-sensitive factors that should be taken into account by policy-makers. Using empirical data on Spanish rural areas, Luis CAMARERO and Rosario SAMPEDRO (Chapter 10) focus on gendered migration and rural employment opportunities. They make a remarkable contribution to existing literature, arguing that labour mobility is a fundamental factor in both rural masculinisation and female job prospects. Due to the structural deficiencies of local labour markets, women have to out-migrate from rural areas at a higher rate than men, and for better job prospects out-migration is essential for rural women to access higher-quality occupations. Yet, for older generations, domestic care-giver role is a significant barrier to mobility. The authors come to the conclusion that women in rural Spain experience a double disadvantage. To find an appropriate

job, they have to show a higher level of mobility, but their mobility is often limited by social expectations towards them. Therefore, the authors call for public policies that foster equality between men and women in terms of mobility opportunities.

Verena PEER (Chapter 11) investigates the factors influencing the migration behaviour of female graduates in rural Austria. Her results show that while developing their own professional and family life, highly qualified women like to combine the benefits of urban and rural lifestyles. While the former meet their job preferences (e.g. better employment opportunities), the latter satisfy their housing needs (e.g. similarities with their communities of origin). Decentralised (i.e. located in rural areas, at a noticeable distance from urban agglomerations) higher-educational institutions (HEIs) play an important role in this respect, as they foster the development of regional labour markets and contribute to the quality of life in the region. Actually, there is a complex mixture of natural, economic, social and cultural amenities that is highly valorised by the postmodern skilled labour (e.g. the surveyed women). This chapter is a magnificent contribution, because it demonstrates the potential of decentralised HEIs for attracting skilled labour, retaining youth and encouraging re-migration or circular migration.

In the last chapter of the book, Theresia OEDL-WIESER (Chapter 12) looks at the feasibility of producing gender-sensitive rural policies illustrated by the case of Austrian rural and regional development. She provides a comprehensive overview on the concepts of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, and policy recommendations for various levels of state administration. She is critical to the EU and to the insufficient implementation of gender policies, and points out that "*gender equality and gender mainstreaming are often no more than rhetorical reference rather than an integral part of programmes*" (p. 236). The conclusion of the study could be the conclusion of the whole volume. On the one hand, gender issues should be integrated into rural policies at various levels and on the other hand, there is a need to intensify research on rural governance structures and processes in the future, from a gender equality perspective.

In summary, maybe the greatest advantage of the present volume is the wide range of viewpoints. Firstly, the topics covered by the studies are manifold, but most of the themes are definitely in the centre of academic research on gender and the rural (e.g. representations of the rural, labour markets). Secondly, the volume provides different approaches. For instance, the combination of functionalist and social constructivist approaches helps us to understand the complex realities of gendered rural life. Thirdly, methodologies applied by the authors include both quantitative and qualitative methods, such as statistical analysis, standardised questionnaires, in-depth

interviews and narrative research. Fourthly, the book introduces case studies from several countries with different historical development paths, political systems and welfare regimes. The authors gathered evidence from Western European countries (Austria, Germany), from Southern Europe (Spain) and from East Central European post-socialist states (Hungary/Romania, Poland).

The book is an academic writing with solid arguments, and it is easily readable at the same time. Illustrations are also of high quality. The volume contains 16 figures, 13 maps, 14 tables, photographs and interview quotes as well, which are all detailed, accurate and informative. The book is highly recommended to all, especially to scholars and policy-makers in the field of gender, rural and migration issues.

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