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KARIN WIEST

# WOMEN AND MIGRATION IN RURAL EUROPE

Labour Markets, Representations  
and Policies



# Women and Migration in Rural Europe

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# Women and Migration in Rural Europe

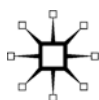
Labour Markets, Representations and  
Policies

Edited by

Karin Wiest

*Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Germany*

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# Preface

The idea of this volume was developed during an international scientific conference hosted by the Federal State of Saxony-Anhalt in Berlin on 14 March 2014. Scholars and practitioners from Germany, Spain, Sweden, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Austria participated in this event. They shared their experiences and discussed the current state of research on gender issues and recent developments in Europe's rural regions. Special focus was on interrelations between rural labour market structures and gender-related migration; changing societal values connected to living in the countryside; the significance of female commitment and entrepreneurship for local economies; and how differently young women assess rurality in a globalising Europe. With respect to regional policies there was discussion on the significance of young women as a target group in the frame of rural development strategies to counteract the negative consequences of demographic change. Contributors came from the sociological, political and agricultural sciences; there were economists, spatial planners and geographers, who all provided different perspectives on gender and rurality and revealed a differentiated picture of the living situations of young women and labour market conditions in rural Europe. This volume brings together the studies presented at the conference based on diverse, partly opposed research approaches and methods. The research issues which came to the fore were a critique of simplifying urban–rural dichotomies; an emphasis of the differentiated and individual characters of rural areas shaped within a globalising Europe; and the challenge of conceptualising gender and rurality as socially produced. The conference was held as part of the Central Europe project 'WOMEN – Realizing a transnational strategy against the brain-drain of well-educated young women'. The intention of the project was to develop concrete measures and evaluate useful strategies to counteract the brain drain of well-educated and skilled young women from rural areas in Europe ([women-project.eu](http://women-project.eu)).

# Acknowledgements

This book owes its publication to the support and commitment of several people and institutions. Therefore I would like to thank all the researchers who contributed to this volume. Special thanks go to Matthias Schaarwächter and Annika Schmidt for their great assistance and constructive comments on earlier versions of the manuscript. I am also grateful to Tim Leibert for his always competent advice and support and to Thomas Zimmermann and Birgit Hölzel for the preparation of maps and figures. Lots of thanks go to the team of the WOMEN project for constructive joint work and for enabling the conference in Berlin with Wilfried Köhler, Andreas Schweitzer and Carolin Kaufhold from the Ministry of Regional Development and Transport Saxony-Anhalt as lead partner. Warm thanks also to colleagues from the University for Adult Education Murska Sobota, the Institute for Social Development Murska Sobota, the Podlaska Regional Development Foundation, the Rzeszow Regional Development Agency, ZAM Styria GmbH – Regional Contact Office for Women, the Educational Institute of Industry and Commerce Saxony-Anhalt, the South Transdanubian Regional Development Limited Company, the South Transdanubian Regional Resource Centre, Innovation Region Styria GmbH and Core-Consult GmbH & Co for fruitful discussions and deeper insights on the topics of women, migration and regional development from particular regional and national perspectives. Finally, I am very grateful to the editing team at Palgrave Macmillan, and the publishing house in general, for their patience and readiness to accept the volume in the series *New Geographies of Europe*.

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# 1

## Introduction: Women and Migration in Rural Europe – Explanations and Implications

*Karin Wiest*

### **1 Gendered migration: an indicator for societal changes in rural Europe?**

Globalisation, the advent of communication technologies and the transfer to service economies have fundamentally modified the relations that constitute rurality in contemporary Europe (Woods 2007). In conjunction, a simple categorisation of places as urban or rural does not adequately reflect social reality. Urbanisation characterised by the growth of the metropolitan population and the spread of urban lifestyles has often been related to the blurring of the dichotomy between city and countryside (Woods 2009, Zenner 2010). On the other hand social and economic disparities between urban and rural areas are rising. While capital city regions in Europe have had the fastest population growth over the last twenty years, the population development of rural Europe reveals huge discrepancies between growing and shrinking regions (ESPON and BBSR 2014). Since the outcomes of globalisation affect rural areas in many different ways, various social realities are discernible, ranging from: prosperous areas being able to attract people and capital to the countryside, focused on the tourism industry; to remote places characterised by unfavourable accessibility, or areas with persistent infrastructure problems, unable to tackle negative demographic and economic development. In the 'globalised countryside' gender and class relations are altering and shaping the new rural realities (Pini and Leach 2011). Migratory movements which strongly affect the development of, and the living conditions in, rural places are a key process in this context. In this respect it is not only the pure number of migrants which

is worth considering, but also the question of who is migrating and for what purpose. Migration analysis reveals that mobility patterns are not only selective with regard to age and education, but also gendered, with young women leaving rural areas at higher rates than young men (Dahlström 1996, Bonifacio 2014, Corbett 2007).

### **1.1 Why women migrate – some explanations**

Gender differences in migration behaviour have been traced back primarily to changes in the working world connected to the transition from agrarian and industrial to post-industrial labour market structures. Above others, the expanding service sector in urban centres has been considered a cause for the female move to cities. In contrast, young men are supposed to be better integrated into traditional rural labour market structures (Ní Laoire 2001, Bock 2004, Leibert 2015). Beyond regional differences in a gendered demand and supply of labour an increasing female educational orientation and labour participation have been discussed as drivers for women's move from the countryside. Even though young men also take part in the European urbanisation process, studies have shown that women tend to move more willingly, and to migrate earlier in the life cycle. Related to this is the finding that young women in Europe are more inclined toward education, meaning that they tend to reach higher educational levels than young men and therefore often tackle modern ways of life better (Magnussen 1997, Ní Laoire and Fielding 2006, Bye 2009). In this context a growing cultural gap has been emphasised between modern, mobile young women and the rather more traditional young men (Dahlström 1996, Ní Laoire 2001). The functioning of rural communities and obsolete gender role models are regarded as significant push factors for young women in this context (Little and Panelli 2003, Little and Austin 1996). Usually, public life and local politics in rural societies are considered to appeal more strongly to traditional male networks and interests (Dahlström 1996, Grimsrud 2011, Walsh 2014). Societal expectations and values in rural communities, which are connected with the idea of subordinating a professional career to childcare responsibilities and which have a strong impact on female identities and lifestyles, have been stressed as important drivers for women to look for alternative lifestyles in an urban environment (Little 1997).

On the other hand, recent studies highlight that rural communities and social representations of rurality are changing. They show a shifting perception of the countryside related to the loss of productive land to increased housing and tourism development of the countryside. In

particular, the growth of the middle classes with the influx of highly qualified and economically strong sub-groups is closely related to the emergence of new rural femininities and masculinities (Goverde et al. 2004, Baylina and Berg 2010, Forsberg and Stenbacka 2013). Forsberg and Stenbacka highlight in this context ‘that the traditional hegemonic rural femininity is challenged by a new, more publicly and economically active femininity – with a corresponding new masculinity – as the countryside is becoming increasingly residential and family oriented’ (2013: 2). In conjunction with the pluralisation of gender role models, the growing female labour force participation, and the transformation of rural functions, representations of the rural are becoming more diverse (Goverde et al. 2004). A re-feminisation of the countryside has been discussed, in particular with respect to family formation and the desire to realise a slower, less hectic lifestyle, close to nature. These imaginings of rural living are linked to the revival of the rural idyll, a representation of an undisturbed healthy environment and often associated with an escape from modernity. In turn, related representations of rurality refer to certain facets of traditional female role models (see section 2.2 in this chapter, Little and Austin 1996). However, the diversity of female biographies and lifestyles clearly reveals that women living in rural Europe assess and perceive rurality in many, seemingly contradictory and partly conflicting, ways (Wright and Annes 2014). This is to some extent reflected in the multitude of patterns of (im-)mobilities with sedentary women, women who maintain close ties with their native region or return with new lifestyles, together with their family, to rural places. Others completely turn their backs on the place they grew up in and become convinced urbanites (Leibert 2014). Taking this into account the following section identifies and describes gender differences in rural–urban migration patterns in a pan-European context as background information to the case studies presented in this volume.

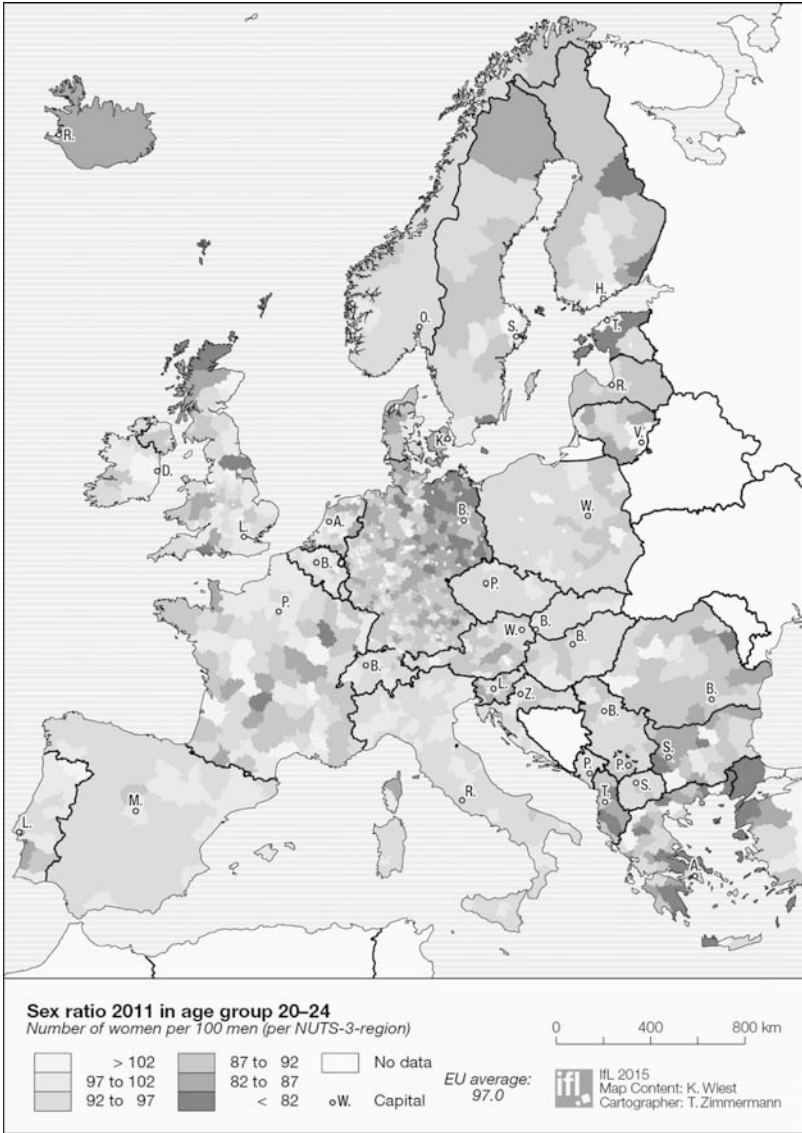
## **1.2 Imbalanced sex ratio structures in Europe**

In order to identify regional peculiarities in gendered migration behaviour, imbalances between male and female populations in a certain age group are an indirect but important indicator (Leibert 2015). Taking into account that migration directions change over the life course, the early 20s is a vital stage in life when young people tend to finish academic or vocational training and begin to enter the labour market. These key life events are often connected with migration decisions. Given that the number of women per 100 men in the 20–24 age group is determined by differences in male and female migration behaviour, the spatial pattern

of unbalanced sex ratio structures illustrated in Map 1.1 points to the consequences of sex-selective migration in early adulthood. With a sex ratio below the European mean of 97 women per 100 men, young women tend to be slightly under-represented in rural areas all over Europe. Moreover, regions with a pronounced surplus of males in early adulthood tend to be rather peripheral, sparsely populated or structurally weak (ESPON and IfL 2012).<sup>1</sup> This applies, for example, to northern and peripheral parts of the Nordic countries and for rural areas in East Germany. In these parts of Europe comparably high levels of school education and a pronounced professional orientation of women, in conjunction with modern gender roles, have fostered female migration (Wiest 2015). In contrast, women in their early 20s tend to outnumber young men in the urban core areas and their hinterland. This tendency is particularly visible in the capital regions, as in Estonia's Harju county where the capital city of Tallinn is located, in the Stockholm region or the metropolitan area of Dublin (Map 1.1). This surplus of young women reflects, to some extent, the allocation of higher education facilities in university towns, as well as attractive employment opportunities for women and female preferences for modern 'urban lifestyles' (Bock 2004).

When considering the sex ratios in higher age groups, as in the early 30s, a 're-feminisation' of the countryside has been reported, particularly in Western European rural regions (ESPON & IfL 2012). There is also evidence that the advantages and disadvantages of living in the countryside are perceived differently at different stages of the life course. Aspects like community cohesion, social control and tranquillity, which are often associated with living in rural communities, are supposed to be annoying for young adults in their early 20s but may gain attractiveness when starting a family (Leibert 2014).

Apart from those main patterns the unbalanced sex ratio structure does not really show a clear picture and pan-European explanations of this phenomenon are rather challenging. The difficulties of a general interpretation are related to many influencing factors on a national level, such as the labour market, gender policies and prevailing cultures and traditions. Gender regimes understood as 'arenas of gender-differentiated participation, representation and power in social and political life' (Morell and Bock 2008: 13) are important explanatory concepts in this context. Other explanations include the average age when young adults leave their parents' home, which shows considerable differences between EU countries and has an impact on the distribution of young men and women. Leibert, for example, states that 'the age of leaving home is



Map 1.1 Sex ratios in early adulthood in 2011: women per 100 men aged 20–24  
 Source: Leibert (2014); author's own design.

low in the social–democratic and liberal welfare states (i.e. the Nordic countries and the UK) where the welfare regime is oriented towards the individual’ (2014: 31). In contrast, in the familialistic welfare states of Southern Europe, which are characterised by a lack of social policies and weak family policies, young people tend to leave the parental home later and the gender differences in migration behaviour remain elusive.

Basically, gendered migration patterns have a stronger explanatory power at state level than from a European perspective since regional peculiarities of population development are often a result of economic disparities and urban–rural relations in a national context. Beyond that mapping unbalanced sex ratio structures as a result of selective migration clearly reveals that simple urban–rural dichotomies and the rough term ‘rural’ are much too simplistic when exploring rural living conditions and explaining the migration decisions of young people. To better understand the various coping and migration strategies of young men and women in a particular regional context it seems important to adopt a more in-depth and place-based perspective, which is also reflected in the individual case studies presented in this book. The following section presents an overview of European trends and recent debates on gender and rurality to set a frame for the diverse studies presented in this volume.

## **2 Approaching gender and rurality from different research perspectives**

The literature review reveals that the topic ‘gender and rurality’ has received considerable attention in academic debates over the last decades (see for example Bryant and Pini 2011, Buller and Hoggart 2004, Goverde et al. 2004, Morell and Bock 2008, Pini and Leach 2011). In recent years a range of edited collections has been published analysing female and male life worlds in Western rural societies with an emphasis on different facets of rural gender issues, in particular of migration (e.g. Bock and Shortall 2006, Bonifacio 2014), power relations (Goverde et al. 2004) or gender identities and gender relations (e.g. Goverde et al., Bock and Shortall 2006). Against this backdrop 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. Beyond that the gendered meanings of living in the countryside in post-modern societies and the significance of gender issues in the framework of regional development

policies are discussed. According to which, discursive cultural and gendered constructions of the rural, as well as changing labour market conditions for women, are considered as key factors when trying to understand shifting female life worlds in a globalising rural Europe. In this context, gender represents changing social constructs of the roles and expectations of both women and men which influence how individual conceptions of life are developed in the rural settings examined. These social constructs also steer the ways in which migration decisions are made within male and female biographies. Since on the one hand functional and political explanations and on the other hand studies that focus on female life worlds as socially constructed are presented in this volume, the contributions cover very different theoretical perspectives in which recent studies about gender and rurality (e.g. Cloke 2006, Woods 2009) are conceptualised.

Functionalist approaches referring more strongly to material and practiced ruralities are presented throughout the book. These approaches explain how women live with the available options in certain rural settings, such as accessibility to workplaces, apprenticeship positions or supply of infrastructure and public services. The female labour market situation mirrors the social position of women in the respective rural context and sheds light on prevailing gender regimes is an important factor in this context. Beyond the actual living and labour market situations referring to structural characteristics and the dynamics of rural localities, societal imaginings about what rural lifestyles are considered to be and which social and cultural values women associate with rurality and rural life are an important key to understanding female migration decisions in different spatial contexts. The following section 2.1 is intended to provide an overview of the female labour market situation in rural Europe to raise consciousness of the huge differences in female employment in EU member states. Section 2.2 deals with gendered representations from a social constructivist perspective to shed light on female perceptions of rurality and to tackle how relevant discourses and local gender identities might influence female living conditions in rural Europe. Section 2.3 considers the significance of female migration and living situations in rural areas from the perspective of gender equality and regional development policies.

## **2.1 Gendered labour markets in rural Europe**

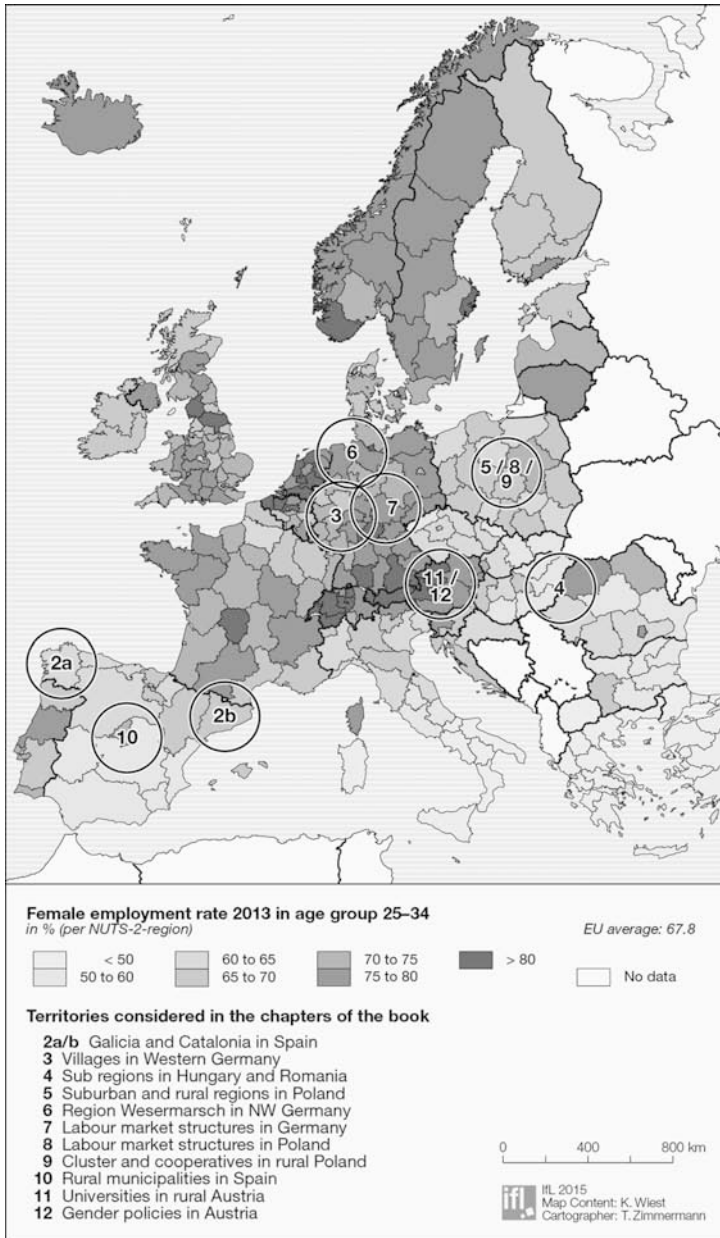
Rural labour markets are usually considered as placing women at a disadvantage relative to men, often by marginalising women as dependent producers, unpaid family workers or holders of low paid and insecure



jobs (Bock 2004, Morell and Bock 2011). Existing jobs, often primarily found in the primary and secondary sectors, for example manufacturing trade and agriculture, and are generally seen as ‘male’ fields of employment (Bye 2009). Apart from a shortage of adequate and qualified jobs, especially for highly qualified women, unfavourable conditions – like long commuting distances, poor accessibility or deficient infrastructures – often restrict female employment possibilities in rural areas, especially since the question of how to reconcile job and family is usually still considered a woman’s issue (e.g. Noack 2011, Glöckner et al. 2014). Due to these gendered obligations it has been concluded that women’s employment problems increase with an area’s remoteness (Bock 2004: 33). However, societal restrictions on women’s involvement in paid work, including the negotiation of gender roles as part of a household strategy and the local community’s social order, are supposed to constrain female employment opportunities more than structural obstacles, such as a lack of jobs or public transport (Bock 2004, Little 1997, Goverde et al. 2004). Therefore, predominant rural cultures and traditions are important features in influencing the female labour situation, career prospects and life plans. Little states, with regard to gender identities in rural contexts, that the marginalisation of women’s ‘employed identities is further cemented by the dominance of a popular rural culture which elevates the “natural” women’s role and skills within the family and community, and separates and alienates their identities in the “public” sphere of waged work’ (1997: 13). It has to be stressed that the multitude of territorial characteristics and trends in globalising ruralities has to be considered when discussing job prospects for women in rural areas. Rural labour markets are often still tight, although some new employment opportunities for women are emerging with the expansion of the service sector and the decline of agriculture. Generally, rural places are reshaped under globalisation in very different ways which apply to both labour market development and the local community’s social life. In some rural areas in Europe, traditional family and gender role models are still deeply rooted and female labour force participation lacks broad acceptance, while in other regions the dominant family models refer to dual-earner households and gender equality. The percentage of women of a given age employed, can be interpreted as an indicator of the professional integration of women in the regional labour market. It is closely related to societal changes in Europe’s rural regions – especially with regard to the position of women in the respective societal contexts and to changes in the labour market connected to the transition to a post-industrial knowledge- and service-based economy.

Map 1.2 illustrates the female employment rate for the 25 to 34 age group, which is often determined by the consequences of starting a family in this phase of life. Family formation usually impacts the division of work between men and women and uncovers prevailing gender regimes. At first glance substantial and well-known disparities are discernible between the Nordic welfare states with their high female labour force participation and many southern and eastern European countries with their rather conservative family models and comparably low levels of women's employment. Usually, a low female labour force participation is related to the dominance of societal male breadwinner and female caregiver models. Very traditional gender relations tend to hamper female integration into the labour market. Furthermore, they might strengthen the decision to withdraw from the labour market due to family obligations or prompt career-oriented women to leave the region (Glöckner et al. 2014). Apart from political traditions and gender role models the general situation in the labour market is important when trying to explain female labour market participation. A low share of working women can therefore also be a result of a weak regional economy, although, in that case, the male labour force participation rate is usually low as well. This situation applies, for example, in parts of Hungary and Italy.

Map 1.2 also shows that the regional emphasis of this volume is on southern Europe (Spain), western Europe with West Germany and Austria and on parts of central eastern Europe, with research from Hungary, Romania and Poland. The regions considered in this volume are characterised by different political systems and socio-cultural traditions which considerably influence the female labour market situation. Several studies are located in post-socialist contexts, like Poland and regions along the Hungarian–Romanian border. While the case studies in West Germany and Austria are situated in a societal and political milieu belonging to family oriented conservative welfare states the findings from rural Spain are situated in the larger framework of the familialistic welfare states of southern Europe. The impact of different political traditions on female labour force participation can briefly be exemplified by the case of Germany, where the share of employed women and of women actively looking for work is high in East Germany, which is related to the socialist legacy of a broad acceptance of egalitarian role models and employed mothers (see Map 6.1, page 115). This pattern is in contrast to a comparably modest female labour orientation in Western Germany with a stronger impact of conservative family models alongside stronger regional economies, in particular in the



Map 1.2 Female employment rate (aged 25–34 years) and location of case studies in this volume

Source: Author's own design.

southern parts of Germany (Leibert 2015). In general, different development paths in Central Eastern Europe are discernible with respect to upheavals in post-socialist countries, a characteristic feature of which has been a decline in the female labour force participation since 1989 due to massive economic restructuring and job cuts. In particular, with the de-collectivisation of the agricultural sector many women lost their jobs and remained unemployed due to a lack of alternative employment possibilities (Bock 2004). Corresponding to this economic transformation a return to conservative gender roles evolved in some countries. The dominance of the male breadwinner model is indicated by low female labour force participation rates in countries such as Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic (see Map 1.2). In particular, the finding that labour force participation rates of women and men are diverging strongly, with low female and high male employment rates, points to deeply rooted traditional gender role models (Glöckner et al. 2014). The impact of those framework conditions is an important issue in several contributions to this volume: *Ewa Rollnik-Sadowska* (Chapter 8) points out that the labour market in rural Poland disadvantages women, not least because of traditional family models and unilateral female responsibilities for childcare, in conjunction with problems in reconciling job and family. Beyond that the lack of childcare facilities and insufficient transport infrastructure in rural areas are equally important and hamper the reconciliation of job and family life. Also *Bogusław Bembenek*, *Teresa Piecuch* and *Joanna Sudol-Pusz* (Chapter 9) show that self-employment, entrepreneurship and unpaid family labour are important characteristics of rural labour markets for women in Poland, since job opportunities are rare. The potential for female entrepreneurship, business clusters and social cooperatives is considered important both for rural development and for fostering female job prospects in rural areas. Both chapters show that micro- and small enterprises, which are often established by women, frequently operate in risky economic environments, vulnerable to recession and lacking support from local and central authorities.

Male-oriented structures in labour markets limit the perceived occupational and career opportunities for women, irrespective of the regional degree of cultural acceptance of a female labour force participation rate. *Kim Phillip Schumacher* (Chapter 6) analyses corresponding effects of particular labour market structures on gendered migration in the district of Wesermarsch, in Northwestern Germany. He concludes that the out-migration of women is, for the main part, a result of real and perceived economic structures: young men tend to perceive the options for vocational training or a first job offered in the secondary sector as

an opportunity to stay in the home region; young women, in contrast, often hardly notice existing job opportunities. The structure of regional labour markets and strong evidence for the existence of male and female job preferences are therefore important explanatory factors for gendered migration behaviour in the studied region.

The increasing importance of the service sector is not restricted to urban areas. The associated tertiarisation of jobs frequently facilitates the (international) in-migration of women to rural areas in Europe for employment in local businesses, especially in the hotel and restaurant industry (for the case of rural Spain see e.g. Soronellas-Masdeu et al. 2014). Outside the service and tourism sectors the creative sector is often considered an important driver of regional development that also provides female employment opportunities. Referring to the assumption that the creative economy might stimulate innovation in rural settings, *Susanne Schmidt* considers the role of women in the creative sector based on a statistical analysis in Germany (Chapter 7). She questions whether women in creative occupations, who are often characterised as convinced urbanites, might prefer to live in rural surroundings. Her analysis refers to Richard Florida's (2004) theory which states that the 'creative class' highly values moral concepts like diversity, tolerance and individuality, which can usually be found in urban milieus. Even if her analysis does not reveal clear patterns, not least due to shortcomings in the available data, the common assumption that female creative workers are mainly concentrated in metropolitan areas cannot be confirmed by her data analysis in the case of Germany. This finding points to the limited explanatory capacity of rural-urban dualism, 'since intra-rural differences can be enormous and rural-urban similarities can be sharp' (Hoggart 1990: 245). Taking into account related difficulties in positivist and functional perspectives of rurality it becomes obvious that social constructivist approaches focusing on rurality as 'a category of thought', which is socially produced and reproduced, might also be key to a better understanding and explanation of female migration decisions (Mormont 1990: 40).

## 2.2 Gendered representations of rurality

Beyond the actual living and working situation of women in rural Europe several chapters point to the impact of societal imaginings about what rurality and rural life are considered to be. They refer to social constructionist approaches which aim to shed light on the fact that common understandings of rurality are a result of continuous collective negotiation and renegotiation (e.g. Haugen and Lysgård 2006, Halfacree 1993,

Mormont 1990, Cloke 2006). In this regard, representations produced in media, public discourse and history come to the fore, which create certain stereotypes of what the rural and, in particular, a rural woman should be and which also have an impact on women's decisions to live in a rural context or not. In this regard the 'rural idyll' is one of the most persistent and influential ideas and imaginations about the rural (Woods 2011). It usually implies a vision of a healthy and problem-free country life 'safely nestling with both a close social community and a contiguous natural environment' and which is, as a rule, imposed from outside by hegemonic middle classes (Cloke and Milbourne 1992: 359, see also Halfacree 1993).

However, it has to be emphasised that, in practice, there is no single meaning of a rural idyll, but rather various rural idylls, in both individual and collective consciousnesses, referring to diverse symbolic representations which diverge by region and nation and are often closely connected to ideas of national identity (Woods 2011: 22). At the same time those idealised images about rural life imply certain notions of family life and gender relations. Those aspects are investigated in *Gesine Tuitjer's* study about young mothers in rural West Germany (Chapter 3). She considers how women perceive rurality nowadays and how this is related to individual life projects. The narratives of young women reveal that traditional gender stereotypes are still significant in the investigated communities and translated into everyday shared practices (see also Little 1997). In her survey she identifies particular attitudes related to the representation of a traditional rural family idyll as an important point of reference for young mothers to develop an individual conception of family life. In this context she also reflects that representations of the rural idyll clearly refer to family and community as two important key elements (see also Little and Austin 1996). Beyond that she concludes that gender roles, with a male breadwinner and a female caregiver, continue to have a strong impact on female self-perceptions in the West German villages under consideration. This is in line with Little and Austin's findings for the UK showing that 'the rural idyll operate[s] in support of traditional gender relations, prioritising women's mothering role' and that notions of a rural idyll tend to support gender inequalities (1996: 110). Those findings illustrate the complex and constantly changing interrelations between constructions of gender identity and representations of rurality (Bye 2009). While persistent traditional rural femininities tend to be associated with domesticity, motherhood and dependency, studies show that those gendered identities and symbols change considerably over time and in different spatial contexts (Berg 2004, Little and Panelli

2003, Campbell and Phillips 1995). On the other hand traditional rural masculinities are also subject to change. Bye (2003, 2009) for example illustrates how masculinity and rurality are constructed in young men's narratives of living in a remote Norwegian region, referring to outdoor life and the hunting culture as an expression of traditional rural male identity. However, those traditional identities are strongly challenged by urbanisation processes and changes in the working world, which endanger the self-conception of rural masculinity (2009). Against the backdrop of socio-economic transformation and the move to post-modern society, changes in societal value systems that are intertwined with changing gender relations and gender identities come to the fore and impact rural milieus and the functioning of rural communities. In this context the contribution of *Éva G. Fekete* (Chapter 4) approaches the extent to which the attitudes of rural residents are related either to traditional, modern or post-modern value systems and how they are present in everyday life practices. She poses the question of whether the transformation of societal values related to changing social realities in rural milieus and the globalisation of the countryside might accompany new development opportunities for rural peripheries in East-Central Europe. Concerning this, her focus is on gender differences in societal value systems; women are supposed to be more prone to post-modern attitudes as reflected in environmental awareness, food sovereignty, participation, cultural diversity and non-material attitudes. Those mindsets are presumed to promote a post-modern path of economic development in rural peripheries.

Moreover, societal changes in a globalising world lead to re-interpretations and re-evaluations of rurality and rural life which are also reflected in female and male life conceptions. In this context *Mireiya Baylina*, *Maria Dolors Garcia-Ramon*, *Ana María Porto*, *Isabel Salamaña* and *Montserrat Villarino* identify a new trend among highly qualified women in Spain; the migration or remigration from city to rural community to realise a certain life project (Chapter 2). Their empirical findings shed light on the interrelations between societal changes related to the transition of gender identities, re-interpretations of rural ways of living and the diversification of representations of the rural within Europe. The results clearly reveal that the highly educated women surveyed do not perceive themselves as typical rural women. However, their class position enables them to combine their ideals of rural living with a high quality of life associated with close contact to nature and close social ties. In this respect both *Mireiya Baylina et al.*'s study and *Gesine Tuitjer's* exploration show how different rural femininities can be developed with respect to

different social milieus and regional settings, while at the same time referencing certain facets of the rural idyll.

Since research indicates that representations of the rural impact residential preferences the perceived quality of life is an important factor in better understanding female and male housing and migration decisions in rural Europe. This topic is examined by *Nana Zarnekow* and *Christian Henning* based on a standardised household survey (Chapter 5). Their analysis deals with the evaluation of quality of life in two suburban and two rural communities in Poland as a factor of and precondition for staying or leaving. However, their empirical results do not allow for the deduction of the rural/suburban home region's specific determinants of quality of life for men or women on the basis of the indicators used. Taking the significant and positive relation between job opportunities and quality of life into account they conclude that male and female rural migration is clearly dominated by regional labour market conditions. This finding points to some shortcomings in social constructivist perspectives, which are being criticised for a contempt of the material dimensions of the rural condition that have a real effect on the living situation in rural places (Cloke 2006, Woods 2009). Notwithstanding the significance of the actual living conditions we can conclude that insights into gendered social perceptions and constructions of rurality and the effects of those ideas about rural places provide important insights into life worlds in contemporary rural Europe and that they offer valuable input for regional and rural development policies.

### **2.3 Gendered migration and rural development – some implications**

With the growing interest in the causes of gendered migration, concerns over its impacts on rural development and the social sustainability of rural areas have increased. For the regions affected by selective out-migration negative effects on the regional image, a thinning out of social networks and unfavourable consequences for regional economies have been reported (e.g. Fischer and Weber 2014, Wiest and Leibert 2013, Wiest 2014). Since women are often considered as carriers of social cohesion and initiators of cultural innovation their loss has frequently been related to village decline (Fischer and Weber 2014, Little 1997). Moreover, there are concerns that a skill shortage in female-dominated segments of the labour market particularly, like the service sector, is likely to become a negative locational factor. In principle, the discussion about female out-migration is a particular facet in the overall debate on the challenges of regional shrinkage in parts of Europe. Since the migration decisions



of women reflect unequal spatial development opportunities the question of how gender-sensitive strategies can contribute to regional development and counteract depopulation processes is increasingly gaining political attention. However, related policies have been discussed and implemented in very different ways and to different extents since the awareness of gender equality in development policies varies considerably across Europe. The Scandinavian countries have the longest tradition and are often considered as a vanguard within Europe due to supporting female and family friendly policies, even in remote rural areas, as an explicit part of development strategies (Bock 2004). Since a professional career and starting a family are equally important issues for young women in rural Europe strategies that support opportunities to reconcile job and private life are, of course, the most important topics on political agendas. Supporting female business ideas, innovative and sustainable ways of living and working and making full use of the possibilities of the internet are further strategies to highlight. Those aspects are also considered by *Bogusław Bembenek*, *Teresa Piecuch* and *Joanna Sudół-Pusz* (Chapter 9) and by *Ewa Rollnik-Sadowska* (Chapter 8) in case studies from rural Poland which illustrate the need to support female commitment and entrepreneurship. In very general terms, they indicate a lack of gender-sensitive policy support to women living in rural central and eastern Europe who aim to realise their life project and to reconcile job and family. Apart from that *Luis Camarero* and *Rosario Sampedro* prove the importance of access to transport options as an important and necessary resource for women to find a job in rural Spain (Chapter 10). They demand public policies that counteract social inequalities by equalising mobility conditions for men and women. This conclusion is underlined by Bettina Bock who states that 'even when a local labour market has little to offer those with high education qualifications and considerable ambition, this can stimulate women's willingness to increase their mobility and accept long distances between work and home' (2004: 28). Beyond ensuring access to transport options in remote areas decentralising higher education is another important strategy for counteracting the outflow of young people and, in particular, young women from rural regions. Against this backdrop *Verena Peer's* contribution investigates the factors that influence the migration behaviour of female graduates who have studied at decentralised universities in rural Austria (Chapter 11). Her study results show that, apart from options in the labour market, soft locational factors, in particular, influence their migration decisions. In this context decentralised universities stimulate regional development and affect both the quality of location and the quality of life in rural

regions, which might attract young women and may lead to a higher female return-migration.

A higher proportion of women in decision-making bodies has been emphasised as an important precondition to better represent the interests of women in local policy contexts and to target a critical debate on questions of gender equality in rural contexts. This aspect is stressed by *Theresia Oedl-Wieser* in the case of Austria. She discusses why gender-equality policies often remain only a kind rhetoric of modernisation but fail to trigger real changes (Chapter 12). Not only with respect to the significant interrelations between gender equality, economic development and employment in rural areas her findings are also a plea for strengthening women's self-determination, agency and empowerment in rural governance processes, just as for the purpose of social justice. However, it needs to be emphasised that women represent a wide range of very different living situations and biographies. In the context of gender-equality policies women with limited economic, social or cultural capital should not be forgotten since gender mainstreaming tends to exclusively address the interests of the more well-educated or affluent parts of the population. In general, many rural population groups remain largely neglected in both rural policies and rural culture (Cloke and Little 1997). Taking into account that marginalisation and the absence of power are frequently tied to circumstances like unemployment, poverty, age or low education levels it should not be ignored that rural men have increasingly been considered as being affected by failure and a lack of ambition, left behind in a 'rural periphery' (Dahlström 1996, Ní Laoire 2001). Hence, the living situation of rural young men in certain rural contexts might likewise demonstrate that 'gender is situated within material and symbolic settings that result in real inequalities as well as uneven political and social implications' (Little and Panelli 2003: 283).

### **3 The structure and intention of this book**

Based on empirical research in a number of European regions this volume conveys a differentiated picture of the living and working situation of women in a contemporary rural Europe, shaped by globalisation processes and the development of post-modern societies. Societal changes and economic restructuring are reflected in female migration decisions and in the ways women evaluate the prospects of living in certain rural environments. Moreover, altering, overlapping and diverging social representations of the rural are reflected in women's narratives. Since

the contributions refer to case studies from Austria, Germany, Hungary/Romania, Poland and Spain, different female life worlds with respect to geographic, social and policy contexts come to the fore. The case studies draw attention to the differentiated economic and social structures and changes rural areas are experiencing and show various challenges to economic and demographic development from demographically shrinking regions, with a below average share of young adults, and challenged by skills shortages but also economically flourishing areas with a positive population development. The contributions also indicate that the move to a post-modern society is connected with the transformation of the gender category and to the fact that traditional dichotomies, like masculinity/femininity or rurality/urbanity, do not adequately reflect the social realities of rural Europe. Referring to this the three main parts of the book deal with gendered representations of rurality in everyday discourses, the female employment situation and gender issues in the frame of regional development policies.

Part I, on gendered representations and perceptions of the rural, focuses on how living in rural Europe is presently assessed by women, what women consider as key characteristics of rural life and how they perceive and identify themselves as rural women. The varying elements and meanings within the representations, in particular the rural idyll, demonstrate the social and material embeddedness of space-oriented conceptions and illustrate that representations of rurality are a product of social class and milieu.

Part II emphasises the restrictions on rural labour markets for women and the interrelations between labour market structures and gender-related migration in Europe. Female job prospects in rural regions and female career options are hampered through both structural deficits and prevailing gender contracts. Employment opportunities in the field of self-employed business activities and the significance of female commitment in the fields of social and creative work are highlighted as ways not only for dealing with limited options but also with regard to positive effects on local economies.

Part III focuses on interrelations between rural development, female migration and gender-sensitive policies. On the one hand it deals with the significance of young women as a key target group for regional development strategies to tackle demographic challenges in Europe's rural regions. On the other hand it raises awareness of the requirements and developments still necessary in gender-equality policies in Europe.

The topics in this volume are investigated by different and partly opposed research perspectives referring to social constructivist

understandings of rurality and to rather functional conceptions of the rural. Different research paradigms are reflected in the methodological approaches of the studies, including statistical analyses, standardised questionnaire surveys as well as qualitative and narrative data. They stress the fundamental challenges related to conceptions of the rural as a confined and definable entity, as well as to conceptions referring exclusively to imaginary space without material foundation (Woods 2009, Woods and McDonagh 2011). In this conjunction Halfacree's (2006) threefold conception of rural space, drawing on Lefebvrian theories and conceptualising the rural as a socially produced set of manifolds, in which material, practised and imagined ruralities are dynamically entangled, has often been emphasised as an approach to re-materialise the social constructivist perspective (Woods 2009). This conception should also be highlighted as an important frame of reference to encompass the different perspectives presented in this book dealing with gender policies, female behaviour and female living situations and perceptions in rural Europe.

Although the volume stresses a relational understanding of the rural and emphasises the blurring of an urban–rural distinction, many of the chapters also refer to spatial typologies based on population density, accessibility or economic indicators (e.g. Dijkstra and Poelman 2011, Copus et al. 2011). In the framework of this compilation these typologies serve as helpful background information on basic settlement and economic structures and they locate the case studies within a European or national context. Beyond that, the following chapters, dealing with female living situations, commitment and perceptions of rurality in different parts of Europe point to some key challenges of contemporary rural studies: the need to consider the relations between sense of place and individual migration decisions; the impact of national policies and traditions; the gender aspects of regional living and working conditions; and the significance of urban–rural interdependencies. Even though only a few regional examples within Europe could be picked out within this volume, they are supposed to stimulate further discussion and research with a focus on people in a changing and globalising countryside.

## Note

1. In Europe the populations of the more sparsely populated and peripheral regions are characterised by a slightly larger share of women than men for the whole population since women live longer than men, on average.

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## **Part I**

# **Gendered Representations and Perceptions of the Rural**



# 2

## Women Assess Rurality – A Tailored Rural Idyll

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### 1 Living in rural areas – a new prospect for women?

In literature on rural society in Spain there is a common understanding that the activities of women are essential to the social and economic sustainability of rural areas (Camarero et al. 1991, Sabaté 1992, Garcia Ramon et al., 1994, Garcia Ramon and Baylina 2000, Little 2001, Camarero 2009, Sampedro 2009, MARM 2011). Nevertheless, for several decades a steady process of selective rural depopulation in relation to gender and age has taken place in Spain, primarily based on the exodus of young women (Fademur 2009), just as has happened in other parts of Europe (Buller and Hoggart 2004, Goverde et al. 2004). At the end of the 20th century this trend slowly changed in Spain and a slight demographic recovery can be observed after decades of depopulation, outmigration and unequal demographic ageing among regions. Immigration, new economic initiatives and the development of infrastructure and services can explain a certain degree of vitality in areas which are more densely populated and have better social, technical and communication infrastructure (Hoggart and Paniagua 2002, Garcia and Sánchez 2005, Morén and Solana 2006, Guirado 2010, Bayona and Gil 2013). In this context, it is noticeable that some educated and professional women are deciding to stay or even to move to the countryside where they want to pursue their own life projects (Carbó et al. 2013). This is a very new phenomenon of interest that may also occur in other rural areas of Europe under similar conditions. Thus, educated women self-actualise themselves as rural women and build today's rurality. The interrelations that women establish with place and their experiences and reflections on their environment are fundamental for the construction of their own identity,

for envisioning their stay in the rural world and the values they may transmit to younger generations.

Against this backdrop, we analyse what these professional and educated rural women think about 'the rural' nowadays, how they describe 'rural woman' and whether they identify themselves with this idea. Therefore, this study refers to those women who have completed university studies or secondary education and live and work in the investigated rural areas. Women's discourses on rurality describe and explain everyday lives in the countryside from a gender standpoint whose value lies in the first-hand meaning of rural life from an informed and reflective social group that is not always acknowledged.

Section 2 introduces a theoretical framework, based on the relationship between the material and the societal representations of rural space. Section 3 presents the methodology and the study areas with a brief outline of the research methods and the profile of the women and men in our sample; it then presents the features of the two contrasting regions analysed, Catalonia on the northeast and Galicia on the northwest coasts of Spain. In Sections 4 and 5 we examine how the women and men interviewed imagine 'the rural' and how they perceive women living in the countryside.. Finally, we draw some concluding remarks.

## **2 Everyday life as a point of departure: a material and imagined rural space**

The rapid process of economic restructuring and social recomposition of rural space that has taken place all over Europe in recent decades has increased the complexity of its functions and meanings. Rural areas are gradually becoming less self-sufficient, less self-contained and more open to the wider forces of the world economy (Marsden 1999). As globalisation influences every area of life, rural areas are also reshaped by integration into global networks, albeit with different impacts and diverse responses (Woods 2011a). The changing conditions in rural life, place and political economy constitute important shifts in the material manifestation of rurality and have positioned rural space at the core of many key issues facing contemporary society (Cloke 2006, Woods 2011b).

Diverse conceptions of rurality are reproduced in the conceptions and everyday practices of the contemporary world (Cloke 2006). There are many diverse meanings attributed to the rural, which shape the social and economic structure of rural localities and the everyday lives of people who live, work or play in rural areas (Wood 2011b). Moreover, the changes occurring in these areas require new theoretical frames to

cope with such dynamics and complexities. Cloke (2006) distinguishes three significant theoretical frames that have influenced conceptualisations of rurality since the 1970s: functional, political-economic and social constructionist approaches. For some decades it has been demonstrated that the processes shaping contemporary rural space transcend its boundaries and operate at regional, national and global scales; an idea that led to 'doing away with the rural' (Hoggart 1990: 245). However, several researchers complained and called for greater value for the concept. The focus on the cultural represented by the socio-constructionist perspective has been very important in giving prominence back to the rural. Rurality is understood as a social construct, which is an imagined entity brought into being by particular discourses that are produced, reproduced and contested by academics, the media, policy makers, rural lobby groups and ordinary individuals. Therefore, the rural is a category of thought (Mormont 1990: 40).

As an imagined and represented reality, the rural has also been idealised. Rurality has become idyllic, viewed as 'spaces enabled by nature offering living and lifestyle opportunities which are socially cohesive, happy and healthy, and presenting a pace and quality of life that differ from that in the city' (Cloke 2003: 1). As soon as these studies proliferated, others emphasised the flipside by outlining the anti-idyll through other social, economic and environmental problems (Philo 1992, Bunce 1994, Bell 1997, 2006, Cloke 1997, Cloke and Little 1997, Halfacree 2007), especially from a feminist perspective (Little and Austin 1996, Hughes 1997, Bell and Valentine 1995, Panelli 2002, Haugen and Villa 2006, Baylina and Berg 2010). The attention on the cultural turn in rural studies has been both deeply deployed and criticised. Many scholars find this attention to be desocialising, dematerialising and depoliticising (Cloke 2006). As an attempt to cope with the virtues and constraints of this approach, Halfacree (2006) developed a frame that interweaves the material and the imagined rural space. In his threefold model he argues that rural space comprises an intermeshing of three facets: localities; formal representations; and everyday lives. Our research is inspired by this model and we draw specifically on rural everyday lives, which incorporate individual and social elements in daily negotiation of the rural population. Everyday lives of women (places, times, attitudes, experiences, objects, life experiences) (Brinkmann 2012) are at the core of the research to provide an in-depth understanding of women's lives and the social processes beyond them.

Within this framework, we asked professional and educated women about their perceptions (through meanings and practices) of what

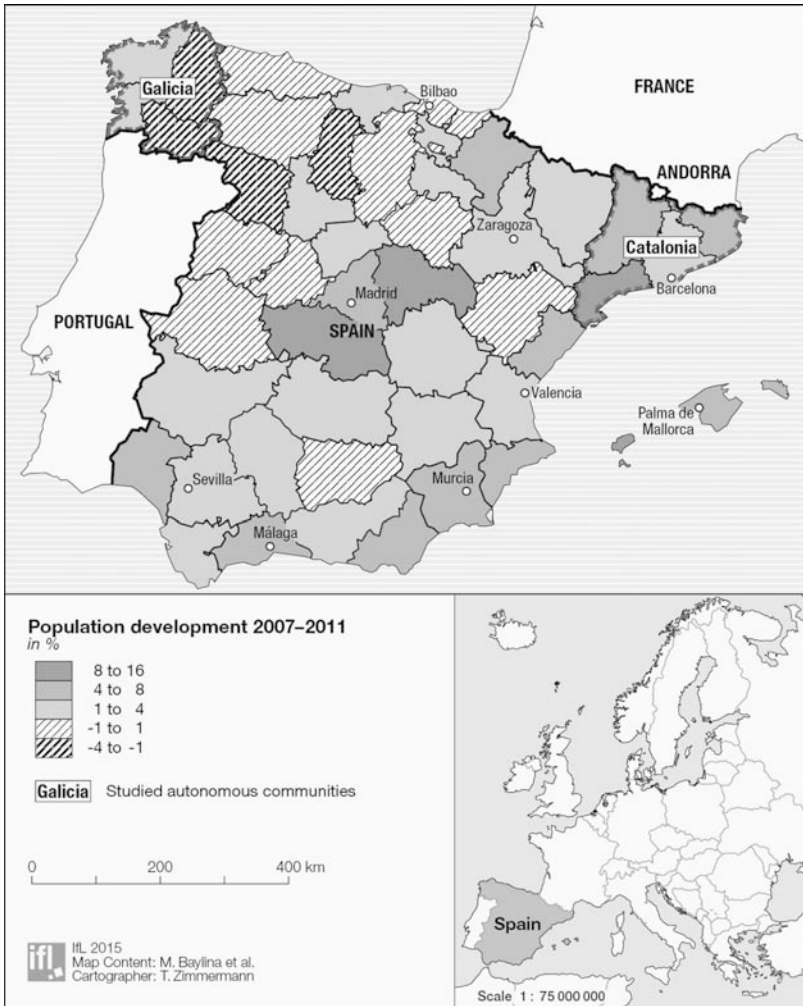
constitutes rurality nowadays and how they describe a rural woman. Their critical perceptions provided important insights and evidence, which tell us a lot about daily life, agency, knowledge and the future development of rural regions, since their thoughts may influence the attitudes and practices of females in the younger generations.

### 3 Methodology and study areas

The study was based on a qualitative and ethnographic methodology with the analysis of 47 in-depth interviews with women in Catalonia and Galicia who had decided to spend their professional and personal lives in a rural milieu. The majority were born in the same rural area where they now live, but many of them had also lived in cities for a considerable period of time. The profile included women older than 30, most of them with university degrees and married or in a relationship with heterosexual partners; two thirds of them with children. They worked as managing directors of their own companies or as freelancers in the service or agricultural sectors. Interviews with seven employed men in Catalonia and Galicia were included to compare the male perception of the rural nowadays and assess the relative position of women. The interviewees were approached through institutions such as councils and local agents, as well as professional and personal contacts. The snowball technique was used in some cases, but carefully to avoid too homogeneous a sample in terms of thinking or lifestyle. In each region, we chose women who lived in coastal, inland and mountain areas for a diversity of geographic settings.

The interviews were recorded and the narrative analysed through different key concepts. For this study, we did not choose all the key categories we covered in our larger research project (80), but only those clearly related to the way the women assessed rurality, such as *rural milieu*, *rural woman*, *special features of countrywomen*, *definition of village*, *definition of county* and *self-definition*.

The two autonomous communities studied, Catalonia and Galicia, represent two socio-economically contrasting regions in Spain (Map 2.1). Catalonia (7.5 million inhabitants) has a mean GDP of 26,516 euros, well above the mean in Spain, and acts as a driving force of the country's economy (Table 2.1) Galicia (2.7 million inhabitants) has a mean GDP of 20,442 euros and was historically a region of emigration. Now, however, it is a service region in which agriculture remains relatively important both in terms of employment and income. The structural differences between these two regions are also mirrored in the population density.



Map 2.1 Population development in Spain 2007–2011 and case study regions

Source: Own design based on EUROSTAT data.

The percentage of rural population, defined as population living in settlements smaller than 10,000 inhabitants, is significantly different with 31% in Galicia and 19% in Catalonia, where only 1% of the population actively works in agriculture. It is interesting to observe that between 1996 and 2009 there was an increase in the rural population in Catalonia (+12%) and a decrease (−7.3%) in Galicia. This increase in Catalonia was

*Table 2.1* Basic indicators in areas of study

Indicators	Galicia	Catalonia	Spain
Surface (km <sup>2</sup> )	29,574.8	32,090.5	505,962.8
Population 2011	2,795,422	7,539,618	47,190,493
Density (inhab/km <sup>2</sup> )	94.5	234.9	93.3
Rural population (% in cities <10,000)	30.6	18.7	20.9
Gross disposable income of households (per capita) (2009) <sup>(1)</sup>	14,511	17,400	15,475
GDP/inhab. (2009) (€/hab.)	20,442	26,516	22,819 <sup>(2)</sup>

Source: INE, IDESCAT, Census survey

<sup>1)</sup> INE, Regional Accounting of Spain. Provisional estimate. Gross disposable income of households (per capita)

<sup>2)</sup> INE, Regional Accounting of Spain. Provisional estimate.

due to a gradual process of re-ruralisation (by natives and immigrants), which is more closely related to improvements in infrastructure, services and equipment than to a recovery of agriculture (IDESCAT, 2012). This change in population has not occurred in Galicia, where a steady decline in the rural population continues (see Map 2.1).

#### 4 What is the rural?

Rural space is a changing and diverse reality of which everybody has an idea, but which is very difficult to define, confine or project. The in-depth interviews from our sample show that women refer to a conception of rurality but find it very difficult to define, as do social scientists (Aldomà 2009, García 2011, Woods 2011b). Sometimes they referred the question back to the interviewers: 'But what do you mean when you say rural?' Often, spatial indicators like settlement structures are mentioned first:

For us, the rural is living in a small village, the way we do. It has fewer than 4,000 inhabitants. (Meritxell, 39, fine artist/winery owner, Catalonia)<sup>1</sup>

Or, as a male interview partner stated:

*For me, the countryside has to do with two elements: economic activity and the size of the population.* (Juan José, 46, geographer/director of a tourist studies institute and university instructor, Catalonia)

#### **4.1 Rural–urban dichotomy and intra-rural differences**

Basically, the reference to an urban counter image is crucial when thinking about what the rural is. Despite the fact that many activities and forms of urban life have spread throughout the countryside the surveyed women tend to define the rural in contrast to the urban:

Maybe I would define it as excluding the urban. I am sure of what the urban is, so the rural is the opposite. (Elvira, 65, chemist and geographer/hotel owner, Catalonia)

From the perspective of the surveyed women it was clear that not all rural areas contain the same degree of rurality. They often distinguish between areas which are more rural, in the sense of isolated, mountainous areas with very traditional agricultural activity, and those that are better connected, which they often equated with a vanishing rurality.

The level of rurality depends...on proximity to larger towns and how easy it is to move about. (Núria, 48, psychologist/psychologist, Catalonia)

Do you mean that (in the rural areas) there are fields? Yes, here there are in fact farmers, but they also have phones connected to Internet and tractors with air conditioning and GPS systems that cost a lot of money! (Martina, 41, philologist/mayor, Catalonia)

One common theme in their narratives was the idea of positive change experienced in the Spanish countryside, in which their generation has been directly involved. These comments were more common in Catalonia, where the countryside had changed drastically in recent decades:

Perhaps there are two kinds of rural worlds. One that is almost disappearing where people still live in scattered isolated farmhouses... and another where you can act like you're in the city: you dress like you're in the city and you can go and see the Cirque de Soleil...but yes, you do need a car for everything. (Maria Teresa, 57, owner of a stationery shop, Catalonia)

#### **4.2 On idylls and counter-idylls**

The analysed areas were part of the overall countryside and seen as a space responding to the global interconnectivity and interdependency

of rural localities (Woods 2007: 492). Our interviewees lived within this global context. Thus, women's idea of the rural is conditioned by discursive and material changes in the global environment, as well as by their identities and daily practices. In this way, the traditional concept of rural idyll, as often sustained by patriarchal gender relations (Little and Austin 1996), can be challenged and transgressed by these women. References to lifestyle are as important as those to nature, friendship and the more material conditions of living (see, for example, Tuitjer on West Germany in Chapter 3).

### *Alternative lifestyles*

The idea of the rural linked to quality of life was omnipresent. Women referred to mental and physical well-being, to peace and quietness, to good food and a bond with nature. Although the women did not mention ideas like the Slow movement<sup>2</sup> explicitly, they reproduced some ideas from this alternative paradigm that advocates a meaningful life. Those concepts that contrast with time pressures and the daily rat-race were mentioned by several women:

The countryside is where you sit to watch the vine grow... Rural life is a life without haste. (Gema, 37, administrative assistant/entrepreneur, Galicia)

Maybe the times... It's a lifestyle where you have different priorities, you enjoy things. (Mariña, 43, economist/cottage owner, Galicia)

### *The bond with nature*

Quite a few women mentioned that the rural landscape allows them to have a close relationship with nature. Nature is conceived as a source of life which yields its fruits provided you respect and protect it. Their comments reflected a kind of experiential and spiritual relationship with nature (Mies and Shiva 1993). Their emphasis on belonging to the land, on loving and caring for it, showed that many women found the landscape (both natural and constructed) to be a source of strength and personal identity (Monk and Noorwood 1987):

This is a way of living, a sense of belonging to the land, it is an attachment...we are genetically inclined to feel this. And to be proud of being able to live off the land...to give back what we take. (Mariña, 43, economist/cottage owner, Galicia)



The beautiful landscape was clearly mentioned in some of the studied areas, such as Empordà county in Catalonia. This is where many people with high economic and political power (mainly from Barcelona) have a second home and where an intensive process of rural gentrification has been observed (Solana 2006). And this reconstructed image of Empordà as a model of a rural idyll, occupied by real estate, has been internalised by the local population. This glorification of the landscape did not occur in other rural areas considered to be comparably attractive by public opinion, where tourism is scarce and which have not been ideally constructed in terms of class, as in Empordà. Nevertheless, there is a strong awareness of the aesthetics of the landscape, as in the following interview:

I would say that La Conca [her county] is a largely unknown area with a lovely landscape. Some people say that it is like... (Italy's) Tuscany. You are close to the mountains and very well connected everywhere... Very pleasant to live in, neither cold nor hot. (Aina, 53, pharmacist and biologist/pharmacy owner, Catalonia).

#### *Keeping friends and experiencing conflicts*

Many of the women interviewed had friends in other places, beyond a daily commute distance, and they routinely kept in contact with them via the Internet. They also said that they appreciated face-to-face contact as it helped to strengthen relationships. Basically, the rural environment was generally envisioned as a place where social relations are easy to build, as highlighted in the following quotation which compares rural Catalonia with experiences in another country:

I guess I like it because it is similar to [rural] Ireland; there, there was always someone at home, going by, coming in, dropping in for a coffee... You always have the door open. (Aileen, 43, philologist/translator, Catalonia)

However, negative aspects of spatial proximity to familiar people also existed. The women disliked their experiences of the neighbourhood watch, gossip and mobbing. Also, difficulties with access to local society were mentioned:

The tricky thing is the people. You cannot trust anybody completely. It's a much more closed world and you're an outsider... and it is very easy to ignore the newcomer. (Elisabet, 51, translator and interpreter/hostel manager, Catalonia)

From the point of view of the native population the influx of people from outside led to conflict. One woman complained that people who visited the region only as tourists or with second homes tended to disrespect certain aspects of rural life:

Rural mobbing started here: [people from Barcelona] said that they did not like farms in villages with 50 inhabitants! They bothered them! (Ariadna, 52, veterinarian/manager of regional agricultural department, Catalonia)

In sum, women recognised that rural everyday life may rest upon minimum material requirements for a (good) life and some constraints such as rural gossip. Regarding the former, this was offset by other aspects of rurality, such as a slower pace of life and closeness to nature, while regarding the latter, they had mechanisms to cope successfully.

The women were always realistic, admitting the problems entailed in rural everyday life and developing strategies to minimise them:

I would define the countryside as the perfect place to live, provided that some minimum requirements are met. I mean, for example, a 50-year-old woman who cannot drive and whose children have already left home cannot even go to the doctor. (Marcela, 56, gardening teacher/manager of an information centre for women, Galicia)

## **5 What is a rural woman?**

The multiple discourses or representations of rurality are mediated by social power structures that mean some predominate over others, both in terms of class and of gender (Baylina and Berg 2010). This means that the discourses are more or less explicitly built upon a masculine idea of the rural or reflect interests that mostly serve men. This also happens when rural scholars think about the standard person who lives in the countryside. However, a substantial body of international gender studies has dealt with rural women to make those who live and work in the countryside, within and beyond agriculture, more visible (Sabaté 1986, Momsen 1989, Sachs 1996, Garcia Ramon and Baylina 2000). As a dynamic concept, the meaning of rural women has evolved over time and space. The narratives of the interviewed women reveal the changing meaning of the rural woman stereotype, which is reflected in very individual (micro) visions of this notion and of themselves as a rural woman.

### 5.1 A woman who (just) lives in the countryside

Some of the women interviewed associated the concept of a rural woman with a deeply rooted traditional model in Spanish rural society. This model implies a domestic role for women and requires them to care for the family and the farm, while keeping them outside significant decision-making processes. This is the kind of model that contributed to expelling women from rural areas in the past, when major societal and economic transitions caused major depopulation and masculinisation:

My grandma was a rural woman. She got up at 6 am, worked in the fields, ate very little, did all the housework, did the laundry by hand and worked a lot. She also suffered a lot because of the lack of money, and she saved as much as she could in case she got ill. (Rita, 45, teacher/music teacher, Catalonia)

A woman with three lives: work, home and orchard. She is discriminated against within the household economy; she works in the informal sector. She conforms to established practices... and to family attachments, and she transmits all of this to her children. They are much more constrained than men. (Raúl, 38, psychologist and teacher/gender equality agent, Galicia)

However, most of our interviewed women did not fit this model, one that today is confined to remote areas or to older women. As a matter of fact, the interviewed women did not consider themselves rural, even though they lived in rural areas. They had financial resources and education; were part of initiatives and had professional plans. Thus, they did not see themselves as either different from or inferior to their urban counterparts.

Am I a rural woman? I would never define myself as rural, but maybe I am. (Aileen, 43, philologist/translator, Catalonia)

I live in the countryside but I am not rural. (Natalia, 43, economist/manor owner, Galicia)

Let's see, I live and work off the land, but I'm not my grandma...I have Internet, I go to the movies, I have a car. If you see me in another context, I'm a common person. (Mariona, 29, agricultural engineer and enologist/farmer, Catalonia)

With a clear preference for living in the countryside but refusing to be considered as rural women these statements reveal an internal conflict

or contradiction. The main explanation is that the traditional meaning of rural woman has a pejorative connotation in Spanish society.

## **5.2 Hard-working and determined; agency and resistance**

The women interviewed saw other rural women and themselves as hard-working and as fighters. They all emphasised their agency in the public sphere as a major achievement. However, their daily lives reflected different situations. Class (in material and cultural forms) and place had a profound effect on their ability to overcome difficulties and take advantage of the benefits of rural life. This was also reflected in the perceptions of the interviewed men:

It is very difficult to generalise...because I see unusual women...I emphasise entrepreneurship, professional and personal courage, regardless of the social structures of the region. They have the capacity to create projects and to innovate, regardless of the social structure. (Juan José, 46, geographer/director of a tourist studies institute and university instructor, Catalonia)

Subjugation. To the rural, to the mother-in-law, to the husband and the family. Many times there is complacency...They give up...And those who do not give up stop being rural. (Pedro, 1946, teacher/retired teacher, Galicia)

Unequal power relations and their acceptance and tactics used to overcome them appeared very often in the narratives, and this is a sign of women's obstinacy. This situation may even be reinforced by the construction of a rural idyll that strengthens the role of women as wives and mothers and emphasises the stereotypes of femininity and domesticity.

However, based on their definitions of rural women and their own image, the interviewed women did not define themselves or rural women as wives and mothers, as expected in the rural idyll. Only in a few cases was the idea of domesticity and family mentioned:

There are many new people nowadays, there is more openness, and the rural woman has more freedom than before, but she is still a housewife. She likes to take care of her children, keep the house tidy, and have her family (Esther, 54, primary school teacher/farmer, Galicia)

I would define her as a strong woman, very family-oriented and connected with her surroundings (more than a woman from Barcelona). (Mònica, 36, social work/gender equality agent, Catalonia)

### 5.3 A woman with car and driving licence

The ability to own a car and to drive was one of the first answers we got from our sample when we asked about the characteristics of rural women essential for living in the countryside. For them, mobility was a key issue to being able to live and work in the country. In the interviews, we observed high mobility for work, leisure and the purchase of goods. Trips were usually for different purposes:

All kind of things...for example, I take the opportunity to go shopping after dropping my child off at school; or I go shopping earlier if I have to go to the greenhouses in the morning. And when there is no choice, then I make a trip just to buy what I need. (Míriam, 52, bachelor's degree/farmer, Galicia)

Women travel to major towns to make large purchases (weekly, monthly), to buy specialised items (clothing, footwear), for advanced services or for leisure activities.

*To Pira [small village] four times daily [paid work]. If we go shopping, to Reus or Tarragona [county and provincial capitals, respectively]. If I have to go to Barcelona I go to Barcelona... [Catalonia's capital] (Marga, 54, fine artist/winery owner, Catalonia)*

I go to Lugo [provincial capital] very often to make arrangements, shopping or buy supplies. Sometimes we go to Lalin [county capital]. We go to Madrid [Spain's capital] for work about once a month. Then we go to Coruña [provincial capital] and to Santiago [Galicia's capital] for fun. (Natalia, 43, economist/manor owner, Galicia)

Women usually travel by car, which is private transport. While the improvement in infrastructure (mainly roads) in Spain over the last 25 years has been spectacular due to European funds, public transport in rural areas has not improved much. And the rising levels of car ownership have also contributed to undermining rural public transport in a rather large country where a great deal of investment would be needed to improve the public transport system.

All the women interviewed considered a car essential for living in a rural area, and they had accepted the need to have a car and be able to drive to meet the needs of daily life. Nevertheless, they pointed out the shortcomings in the supply and frequency of public transport:

We have no transportation of this type [regular bus]. Everyone has a car...If not, you take a taxi. (Mar, 41, businesswoman/farmer, Galicia)

While mobility was not a problem for most women in our study, it was a real problem for other older and younger women not in the same situation. They said:

These people [old women] find it increasingly difficult to go shopping. They go on foot. They have never driven. They have always been here... There should be a weekly service that takes them shopping. (Abril, 36, tourism/tourist technician, Catalonia)

Information and communication technology was also very important to the women interviewees. In this way, women wove multiple social relations at professional and personal levels in many places, which they valued highly because it prevented them from feeling isolated.

I talk by email with my enologist friends who are scattered around the world (La Rioja, Galicia) ....I have two accounts and I use my Hotmail with my friends. (Mariona, 29, agricultural engineer and enologist/farmer, Catalonia).

This kind of virtual mobility was unthinkable in the countryside just ten years ago, and the women in our sample valued it highly, although we noticed that they used it for social relations more than for professional reasons. In sum, the capacity for movement and communication, either real or virtual, are fundamental to women's lives.

## **6 Concluding remarks**

The women interviewed found it very difficult to define the rural and what a rural woman was and tended to define rural as everything that was not urban. However, they acknowledged that many urban elements, like material comforts and education, are found in today's rural milieus. This shows how outdated the duality of urban/rural is as a

category for analysis, and it challenges the meaning of both concepts, which should be understood more as processes than as rigid entities. In their discourses, the women built up a negative social construction of the city as very closely related to stress, along with a more positive social construction of urban women, in particular because they viewed them as truly independent. Despite the persistence of traditional images of the rural and rural woman, the idea of change was always present in the women's narratives, and they emphasised the huge differences between their generation and that of their mothers and grandmothers.

Women clearly related the rural with quality of life. For them, rural life was associated with a quiet environment, closer social relationships and direct contact with nature, all characteristics that they appreciated highly. This fact clearly reflected their class position. Indeed, our sample only included professional women who had decided to spend their personal and professional lives in a rural milieu, either as natives or newcomers. This class position implies the availability of material and immaterial resources to achieve this quality of life, which help to minimise the negative effects of a rural setting, such as unemployment, a lack of incentives or social exclusion. On the one hand, their narratives frequently reflected the traditional vision of the rural idyll, on the other these women earned a living and struggled to get ahead in their professions.

These women did not see themselves as rural, i.e. as traditional rural women. The first adjectives they used when defining rural women (including themselves) were *hard-working* and *struggling*, and they believed that mobility was a key issue and a precondition for remaining in the countryside while pursuing their personal projects. Curiously enough, they emphasised their personal skills instead of their social roles. That is, they did not define rural women (including themselves) as wives and mothers, as would be expected in the social construction of the traditional rural idyll. Nevertheless, in their daily lives they valued their gender roles as mothers and carers of the family, even though they believed it did not prevent them from also having their own life plans concerning a professional career. In the narratives, we observed that work distribution within the household was not gender-balanced and, in fact, these women only slightly transgressed their socially assigned domestic role. Many of their daily life problems did not arise from the fact that they lived in rural areas but from their ability or inability to negotiate their social role with men. The ideas of submission and sacrifice, though still present, had

euphemistically turned into working capacity, referring to women's double or triple burden. Thus, we should point out that the rural idyll should be unpacked from the perspective of different rural dwellers, and that different ruralities will have their impact on the gender contract, corroborating what Little and Austin (1996) point out, that there is not a unique rural space but many overlapping rural spaces within the same geographical area.

The study revealed some differences between Catalonia and Galicia in how women assessed rurality and perceived themselves as rural women. First of all, it was more difficult to find women for our sample in Galicia than in Catalonia. Highly educated women who decide to stay in rural areas have a particular social class background and live in a milieu that has long fostered emancipation in social, economic and cultural terms. The Galician women that we interviewed were considered much more exceptional in their rural milieu than the Catalan women, and their agency was therefore more transgressive in a way. Secondly, regarding the idea of rurality, the natural environment was much more important among the Galician women, who showed a stronger bond with the land, sometimes even a spiritual connection. For the Catalan women, the reference to nature was channelled more through the landscape. Finally, the women's discourses about the meaning of rural women reflected more gender inequalities in Galicia than in Catalonia, despite the fact that they all experienced similar constraints.

The men's narratives differed slightly from the women's. The main differences were that the men did not refer to family and social relations in their definitions of the rural and that they did not associate the rural with nature but with more material aspects. Men's narratives also defined rural women as hard workers and entrepreneurs (as the women's did), but in some counties (mainly in Galicia) they considered women as still too dependent on men.

Finally, by exploring the daily lives of the interviewed women we discovered extraordinary human capital in a social environment that has expelled women for decades. Their presence in the current rural milieu has to be reinforced, not only for their own sake but also for the demonstrative effect it could have on the women of younger generations.

## Notes

1. Different names have been used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of individuals.
2. Cultural shift towards slowing down the pace of life.



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# 3

## References to a Rural Idyll in the Attitudes and Self-Perceptions of Women in Rural West Germany

*Gesine Tuitjer*

### 1 Introduction

Drawing on research from three villages in West Germany, this paper investigates women's daily lives and the significance of the conception of a rural idyll in this context. The rural idyll is considered to be the socially constructed and commonly shared idealised image, or stereotype, of life in villages, often depicted as a place where the *world is still all right* and unaffected by global changes (R. Short 1991, Bunce 2003, Bell 2006, B. Short 2006). As a construction of a simple and morally valuable lifestyle it is strongly connected to a model of heterosexual family life and motherhood. Notably, it can also be a place where the world is *again* all right, where childrearing and subsistence gardening is a lifestyle decision of the critics of consumerism. Although nature and community are important elements of the rural idyll, women's roles and concepts of childhood and motherhood are analysed in detail because of the formative power idealised social concepts can have on the behaviour of the individual, or as Bunce (2003: 25) puts it, 'even if we accept that there are many versions of the rural idyll they all converge around a normative nostalgic ideal which is embedded in social and economic structures'.

### 2 The rural idyll in German lay and academic discourse

The rural idyll is an antique concept, crafted to perfection in England. As Short (2006) thoroughly develops, the concept of a rural idyll as a metaphor for quiet, peaceful and especially morally valuable country

life can be traced back to antique writings of the 2nd century before Christ (B. Short 2006: 134). Over the course of the centuries the images and connected ideas did not transform much until they blossomed in imperial England during the turn of the 19th century, in the wake of industrialisation. Up until today rural areas in England have often been conceptualised as the preserve of identity and culture as reflected in the myth of the rural idyll.

In Germany related visions or representations are associated with the, so-called, *Jugendbewegung* (Youth Movement), which proposed the experience of unblemished nature as an alternative way of life to the apparently worse and disempowered life of overcrowded cities in the wake of industrialisation. Images of country life conveyed a wish for personal liberty and self-determination, freed from the self-destructive mechanisms of capitalism and the strict moral laws of Wilhelminan-Prussian society (Häußermann and Siebel 2004). Later on, however, the rural idyll as a metaphor for the good life lost significance in Germany.

Although the rural idyll might simply not be such a powerful and positive concept in Germany as it apparently is in the Anglophone context, it is worth giving it a second look because it may be on the brink of resurrection. Sales of rural lifestyle magazines have skyrocketed in the last few years, as has popular literature dealing with diverse experiences of country life (Strubelt 2012). Although these experiences can be very negative when rural life is connected with deprivation, neglect and ignorance, they always refer to the counter-horizon of an imagined rural idyll. Taking into account that the differences between rural and urban ways of life are smaller than ever before (Spellerberg 2014) the expansion of the urbanised lifestyle in Germany might well inspire the longing for a rural idyll. In a survey carried out in the 1960s less than 20% of those interviewed believed that life would be better in the countryside, today this number has doubled (Petersen 2014). The editor of the top-grossing magazine *Landlust*, sees the success of her magazine as based on people's need for a refuge from the stress of daily life, which they can find within nature (Rasche 2012) – or its glossy representation. Another example of the resurgence of a more conscious, slowed-down lifestyle, close to nature, can be found in the urban, or guerilla, gardening movement in large German cities (Müller 2011). These examples also indicate that neither rural nor urban lifestyles are directly connected with specific living places. Nevertheless, in public discourse and in people's opinions, perceived differences between rural and urban areas are still strong. Consequently Henderson and Hoggart (2003: 372) claim that instead of defining what rural *is*, based on physical properties, we ought

to look to common practices, values and narratives to assess what rural *means*. This understanding is also reflected in academic considerations of the rural idyll.

After the cultural turn entered geography (and the spatial turn entered sociology), the concept of a socially constructed rural idyll gained renewed attention in academic discourse in the mid-1990s, posing new questions such as poverty and exclusion in rural areas. In the same vein literature evolved around the construction of rural gender identities, transcending the older body of descriptive literature on women's situations. Focusing at first on the gendered constructions in agriculture, this post-modern approach quickly encompassed the whole of rural society (Bock 2006).

Following a constructivist approach Little and Austin ask, for example, how a commonly shared concept of a rural idyll can work to maintain traditional gender roles and relations in a commuter village in the south-west of England (Little and Austin 1996). Francine Watkins' (1997) study in Little Hatton is related, revealing how the local gender norm is strongly directed towards the housewife-and-mother norm, leaving little space for those opting for a different lifestyle, also found in Annie Hughes' (1997) results for Wales. Beyond that it has been shown how the androcentric lifestyle in small rural villages, with sporting facilities, public representation and workplaces directed towards men, reproduces the subordination of women (Alston 2005). Not so much focused on the constructions of rurality or gender but rather on their consequences, Alston sees the lack of gender equality – especially in employment opportunities – as a main reason for the exodus of young women from rural Australia. Although these studies clearly indicate how a normative perception of rural women's lifestyles can influence women's activities, we have to bear in mind that many of these women came to a village like Little Hatton to explicitly live this lifestyle and fulfil their concept of a Rural Family Idyll.

Contrary to the scientific discourse in anglophone countries German studies on women in rural areas are characterised by a focus on women in agriculture. Non-farming women, and that is the majority of all rural women, have been a rather neglected group. With the introduction of gender mainstreaming measures through EU programmes this is slowly changing (for Austria see Oedl-Wieser 2008, also Oedl-Wieser in Chapter 12). Literature on non-farming rural women contains mainly case-specific situation analyses of structural impediments, such as missing public transportation, employment or childcare opportunities (Blättel-Mink et al. 1998, Väth 2001, Magel et al. 2011). In a comprehensive analysis based on survey data Becker, Gombert and Moser (2006) explore,

among other aspects, the difficulties in reconciling work and care which arise with the growing work orientation among women in rural areas. Also, the east–west, rural–urban migration of young women has received much attention (most comprehensive is Dienel, Gerloff and Lesske 2004). The perceptions of rural women oscillate between *strong* farming women (e.g. Braun 2010), and doubly-deprived rural women, because of both their gender and their rural dwelling (Damyanovic and Wotha 2010).

Constructivist approaches focusing on the social constructions which produce inequalities are less considered in Germany (exceptions are Funk 1993, Thiem 2001) and are more of an issue in spatial sciences, such as geography or spatial planning. Although this paper can certainly not fill this gap, it aims to provide some insight into how rural non-farming women see themselves and their rural lifestyle and how this is related to individual conceptions of a rural idyll.

### 3 Research design: a qualitative survey in three rural communities

In political planning, and in the public's understanding, rural areas in Germany are usually thought of in terms of specific *regional* characteristics rather than in general images of a rural region (Laschewski, Teherani-Kröner and Bahner 2002). Basically, the common view of rural areas in Germany comprises manifold structural types, and even the rather forward question of rural settlement type can become complex due to the abundance of – partly contradictory – definitions of areas and localities. Also, different settlement structures within the same area can vary tremendously. Following the implications sketched out above, this paper does not look into the physical properties of the rural, but into its social construction. To identify elements of individual conceptions of a rural idyll, three villages were chosen from the longitudinal study 'Changing Living Conditions in Rural Areas 1952, 1972, 1993 and 2012', coordinated through the Thünen Institute of Rural Studies, Brunswick. The villages of Bockholte, Spessart and Falkenberg are situated in different, relatively remote areas across the country (Map 3.1). Remote however does not necessarily mean deprived – all the villages offer quite a large range of amenities and services in the villages themselves or nearby, including access to major motorways, grocery stores, primary schools or doctors. The overall economic conditions of the areas are sound and unemployment rates in the villages very low. Local employers are predominantly small to medium-sized industrial companies and craft businesses with some employment in large international, industrial companies.

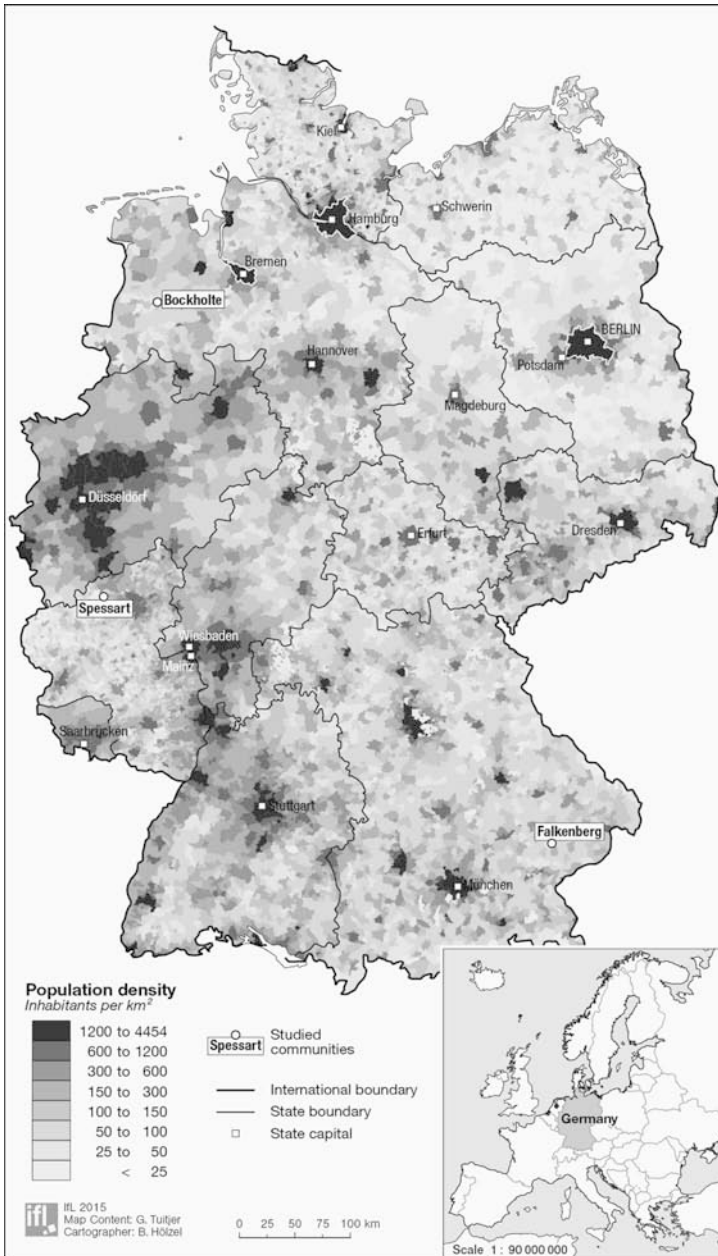
A total of 26 semi-structured interviews with women were carried out across the three villages in the winter of 2013/2014. The interviews were conducted in German. The primary goal of the study was to look into self-perception, gender relations and employment of mothers in rural areas in Germany. Women were contacted through random-walk sampling at different times of the day and 16 were married mothers (30–55 years old) with children of school-age in the household. As a comparison a smaller sample of ten women from a larger age group (16–66 years old) was also interviewed. The vast majority of the interviewees had either grown up in the village or moved there from another village in the surrounding area, some had moved there from a distant large city. About one-fourth of the women had lived in a larger city for some time, usually during their education.<sup>1</sup> None of the women interviewed had a university degree, as the study intended to look into the average employment situation in rural areas. (For an account of the experience of highly-qualified women who moved into the countryside see Baylina et al., Chapter 2). Because the villages are quite small (< 1000 inhabitants) and anonymity must be granted, further information about the interviewees' family status, occupation and so on cannot be given.

The analysis focuses on the way rurality is perceived, made sense of and dealt with in the everyday life of the rural female non-farming population. In each individual's narrative, perceptions of a rural lifestyle surface which are comparable, and allow the sketching of different idylls related to the personal situation much more than to the actual location. These interviews give an insight into the orientations and perceptions of mothers during a specific phase in their life and should not be generalised to all women, or all mothers, in every rural area in Germany. The childless women (four out of the ten), for example, put less emphasis on the rural as a good place to rear children and more on the natural surroundings or the good community life.

#### **4 Women's conceptions of rural living**

The majority of women interviewed did not refer to their domicile in terms of an idyll but weighed the advantages of a rural life against its disadvantages. They did not refer to themselves as rural women nor did they consider their role as mothers a typically rural role. However, in many interviews references were made to traditional family norms in the village – a circumstance which some mothers appreciated, if not all for the same reasons.





Map 3.1 Population density of Germany 2013 and location of studied communities

Source: German Federal Statistical office, own calculation.

Likewise, representations of the countryside as a place within nature oscillate between the very pragmatic – ‘a large fenced-in garden’, – and the rather paradigmatic – ‘freedom’ and ‘solitude’. These different concepts allow us to sketch different lifestyles next to each other, ranging from suburban family settlements to drop-outs living on the outskirts of the village. What idyllic rurality is, therefore, is much more dependent on the individual’s perspective and personal situation than on the region’s characteristics or the place itself. Hence, the rural idyll is not a monolithic concept in Germany (Bell, 2006).

#### 4.1 The rural antipode: the urban

Avowedly a little counter-intuitively, the construction of the rural antipode shall serve as the introduction here, since many interviewees developed their view of rural against the background of their perceptions of the urban.<sup>2</sup>

Many interviews feature a description of cities and city life. Although the women were not asked for this, many of them used the description of an imagined or partly experienced life in a city to explain the positive aspects of their rural life. Apparently, to open up a counter-horizon and to first define what one does *not want* or what one *is not* makes it much easier to position oneself. Obviously, certain collective images shape the perceptions of rural and urban, city and village, and they feature prominently in the formation of counter-horizons. The picture of the city varies between a possible place to live in old age, a solitary place and a cramped and narrow space.

For those women who reflected unemotionally about the material aspects of a rural life, moving into a city was, in some cases, considered as a possible option in old age. They were quite aware of their car-dependent lifestyle and saw the benefits of public transportation and more abundant consumer infrastructure. Also, they linked the benefits of a rural lifestyle, such as more security, less traffic and larger estates, to the presence of children and the childrearing phase, and therefore saw their stay in the village as being of a temporary nature.

Women who defined their rural life first of all with regard to the network of social relations also constructed the antithesis city in terms of social relations. Here, the commonly shared image was that of an anonymous and lonely lifestyle, with scarce contact with other people. When asked for her experience of rural living with children one woman referred first to an urban counter-image:

I imagine it quite lonely to raise a child in a high-rise. [BH\_F]

This quote reveals not only the material dimension of an imagined city life as taking place in high-rises, but also features a mother's village social life in the notion of having many others in the same situation to spend time with.

The women who frame their rural life through the presence and comfort of nature, however, refer to the city as a place of physical narrowness, of cramped streets and the constant and unwanted interaction with other people. Surprisingly, none of them considered the supposedly anonymous lifestyle of cities as an advantage. Also, one of them immediately referred to the city as a place for culture, such as theatres or art galleries, just to defend her rural region as a place which offers much more cultural infrastructure than one would expect. Thus, she does not construct rural as the opposite to culture, which could be the classical point of view of romanticism.

#### **4.2 Nature – a solitary place**

Six of the women interviewed placed special emphasis on the nature surrounding them. Nature was introduced as a physical place, such as a surrounding forest or fields, but could also be the garden surrounding the house. In the course of the narration, nature would quickly transcend its physical properties and develop into a place where one could find peace and solitude. For the women interviewed it was very important to be able to leave their house – and their situation – and take refuge in the surrounding nature. The women who described their life in terms of a relationship with nature had very diverse backgrounds, but did show some common characteristics. The majority of them lived in rather remote dwellings, outside the settlements. Whether the women were born there or not they all, surprisingly, started with a description of rather negative aspects of their lifestyle and dwelling, such as the loneliness or difficulties connected with insufficient infrastructure or accessibility. Nevertheless, all these descriptions concluded with very positive claims of freedom and solitude and the affirmation that this lifestyle was the best possible for them, and that any other form of living would be out of the question.

One woman described the benefits of her life in the countryside as being able to grow her own food and to watch it grow. Even though living on the outskirts did come with certain disadvantages, such as dependency on a car and its financial burden, this did not negatively influence the appreciation of the idyllic surroundings and the benefits of this lifestyle. Her references to the value of home-grown food, which perfectly fitted the consumption-criticism of a post-growth society,

masked, to a certain degree, her dependence on subsistence agriculture due to her weak attachment to the labour market.

I see this with pleasure when I see how the creatures grow and I see the salad grow and so on. And that gives me joy. And so for me there couldn't be anything nicer. I wouldn't want to go away. [FB\_D]

Regarding the formative power the rural idyll actually has on the people who experience it, the narratives of three women living on remote farms revealed how the idea of a rural idyll can also serve to overcome certain disadvantages. Although these women had to deal with some evident shortcomings in their daily life – of which they were fully aware – they concluded that they lived an ideal life within a rural idyll. Apparently, the concept of the idyll helps to overcome certain negative aspects, or at least the reference to rural nature is a valid code to 'justify' their lifestyle to the researcher.

Another example of a nature idyll was expressed in a working mother's reference to her grandmother in comparison to her own life. Here, the relation to nature as a refuge features again in the description of a stress free and 'simple' life of the romanticised past:

When I remember my grandma, they used to have a large garden and that was pretty much her purpose in life, since she was at home all day: the garden, working in the garden and cooking. Cooking played an important role. She would spend all morning with cooking; of course everything was fresh and available from the garden. She would preserve fruits, would make a lot of preserves. The rhythm of the day was simply different. And they had such incredible peace – which I sometimes wish to have for my generation. [SP\_H]

In this example, the stark contrast between a romanticised lifestyle of the past, close to nature with typical female activities, and her personal rather modern rural lifestyle is remarkable.

Within this study, most women who related a rural lifestyle to a nature idyll actually lived quite far away from other people. The narratives of freedom and solitude are often emphasised by women who experience social control or social pressure within the village. A young mother talked about the 'strict gender norms' that she experienced in her village and how taking a walk through the woods was her way of 'getting away from it all'.

So when you're fed up with it all, you just walk up a few metres over there and then you are in the woods and you have peace and that is just nice. [SP\_A]

Apparently, nature and community are at opposite poles of the rural dimension. Idylls of nature and solitude are in stark contrast to images of the village as a place of community and closeness to other people. The women who sketched a nature idyll all mentioned the absence of other people as a *benefit* of their domicile. Being freed from daily contact with other people, or being able to avoid other people if necessary, seems to be a key element of their idyll, a way of finding autonomy and refuge from other people's expectations or demands.

### 4.3 Social life and community

Many women, especially the older ones, described their daily life as focused on the social relations in the village and the benefits of their close-knit neighbourhoods.

When asked directly about their life in a rural environment, most women mentioned the rather stereotyped phrase, 'everybody knows everyone'. Usually this idea was then developed into a description of individual personal relations with neighbours and friends. Descriptions of neighbourly help and community get-togethers, such as *Schützenfest* and other community fairs, field trips and *Kaffeekränzchen* (coffee or tea parties), are mentioned in many of these interviews.

A current element of these descriptions is *Nachbarschaftshilfe*, receiving and giving help on a regular basis within the neighbourhood. The descriptions of the social fabric of the village quickly transform into a description of connected feelings of belonging and constructions of identity, based on the experience of community life. The phrase 'everybody knows everyone' was usually further specified as knowing where people live and to which social networks they belong. This bears the connotation of safety, knowing everybody else, and of the stable identity of belonging. One woman said that for her it meant 'not feeling like a stranger'.

Another idyllic element in the interviews was the description of the village as 'a place where the world is still all right'. Their impression of the village is of a place where traditional values, such as helping each other, are still important. However, some women also emphasised social control, which is developed in the following section on rural motherhood.

#### 4.4 Family life – a key element of the rural idyll

The most widespread approach to a life in the countryside by the women interviewed was seemingly pragmatic, they weighed the positive and negative aspects of village life against each other. One key element in these descriptions was the low property prices which allowed for a ‘comfortable’ family life. A house or a plot of land can be bought, and a family can be sustained with greater financial ease than in a city. Although at first glance the decision seemed to be based on resources, the interviews showed how strongly owning a home is connected to the idea of family life. In Germany, where about 50% of all households rent flats, a house with a garden for the children is nevertheless a wish for large parts of the population (Hinrichs 2010).

The women interviewed were aware of certain shortcomings, such as car dependency and scarce entertainment or cultural infrastructure. However, all the women either owned a car or were able to use a car whenever they needed to. In many studies mobility deprivation is considered an important topic for women in rural areas (see, for example, Camarero and Sampedro on rural Spain in Chapter 10), but, at least for middle-aged women in economically sound regions, it is apparently no longer an issue (compare Noack, 2011, for similar results for women in Scotland). Also the renunciation of culture and entertainment does not necessarily play a large role, as the women interviewed saw themselves in the family phase, where the amenities sought after are childcare and playgrounds close by and, most importantly, a safe and peaceful neighbourhood.

Obviously, a traditional family arrangement comprises the ‘house of one’s own’ which is the standard type of living in rural areas. Among the descriptions of a rural lifestyle, this element was vital to the narrative of many women. However, there were more elements of a traditional family arrangement, as will be explored later.

##### *Rural families – structural implications and personal choices*

The question of whether there is a particular rural concept of motherhood is complex. It firstly implies a hegemonic, commonly shared concept of motherhood. Secondly, what is *rural* about it? It turns out that, depending on the level of analysis, we can either sketch a monochrome picture of traditional families or a multi-nuanced picture of rural mothers.

From a wide perspective, the majority of mothers interviewed did indeed build their lifestyles on the pillars of a traditional family

arrangement, with a male breadwinner and a mother responsible for childrearing. For the surveyed women having children was an important and anticipated part of their biography and the decision to stay at home with them – at least for a couple of years – was quite normal and self-evident. What they described were the elements of a traditional middle class family model, which is still valid for a majority of people in Germany according to recent research (Scheuer and Dittmann 2007, Schneider, Panova and Waibel 2013, Schneider, Diabaté and Lück 2014). Now, what is *rural* about it?

First of all, it is a resource-based answer, in the sense that the cost of living and amenities of rural communities give the appropriate context for a lifestyle based on (just) one income, which explains the influx of those families which already anticipate the non-employment of the female partner, as highlighted in the following quotation:

Because the land was cheap. So much cheaper than in a big city or any normal city. It is simply just a village. And my husband was able to take the bus to work.... And I think that was one reason to move out here, really. [FB\_B]

After her children were born she gave up her job because the commuting time and the lack of childcare made her shift work impossible. Asked about her employment situation she refers to her husband's employment instead:

My husband has a good salary, a very good one, it is not an issue. But we did think about this ahead of time, like if we would have children would we then be able to finance the house, and the mortgage. But by now we don't have any mortgage to pay anymore.... planning, planning and more planning ahead – and it worked out. [Ibid.]

From her description we can also make a link between life in a village as a decision connected to childrearing, and villages as a place for families.

In the beginning we didn't care [about other people in the village, GT] because everyone of us was doing his own thing [work, GT]. But when you have children then there is this solidarity via the kindergarten, school, and clubs and so on. Before that nobody cared. You are young and away all the time. You're not around in the village anyway – but then with a family village life is so, so much better. [Ibid.]

The following section looks into the different experiences of mothers in rural areas, especially with regard to employment. Some women were crestfallen to find that being 'only' a mother wasn't fulfilling and they started work again quite quickly. Others had to start work again for financial reasons. In sum, the majority of mothers interviewed worked, at least on a marginal or part-time basis. The women's narratives indicated that, in particular with regard to their work arrangements, they had the feeling that their lifestyles were at the limits of a (local) norm. In this context it became apparent that the rural idyll can easily turn into a rural 'dull' of social control and peer pressure.

### *Stay-at-home mothers*

Motherhood and the well-being of children played a very large part in the self-perception *and* self-conception of this group of women. We did find strong elements of a life oriented towards children, motherhood and family life. These women saw their job as mothers as their primary profession, even as their vocation. Although they had a rural background and stayed in their village or a village close by, living in a village was a pragmatic and resource-based decision for them. Indeed, most women interviewed explained how they decided on a traditional lifestyle and that this decision was more easily fulfilled in a village, simply because of the lower living costs.

Motherhood was described as a job or profession, which is demanding, very important for society and usually not valued highly enough in society. Also, along with the process of 'inner modernisation' of gender arrangements, even in rural areas (Spellerberg 2011) there are no allusions to concepts of a natural or biological sharing of roles, or impediments through structures and institutions. Instead the women described their staying at home as an individual and personal decision made between partners. This reflects the dominant perspective of women's situation in society today, rural and urban areas alike, although indeed women in (some) rural areas simply might have fewer opportunities to pursue a different lifestyle – or would face higher costs, such as moving elsewhere, negotiating with family and peers, or the cost of adequate childcare. This aspect is very important as it reveals how issues of gender equality are viewed and where actions to foster equality can start.

Although the women described their lifestyle within a framework of partnered decision-making, they also refer to this model and process as the norm of what people usually and should do, as in, those who want children should base their living expenses on one income.



It was always out of the question to give up being a mother for my job because I decided for myself: I want to be a mum. And I was never one who would do both [caring and paid employment, GT]. [FB\_E]

Interestingly, in the course of the interview it turned out that this mother indeed 'does both', as she works at least twenty hours a week. Nevertheless, she referred to the ideal of a stay-at-home mother, and explained her employment as only marginal and as happenstance, for example being asked to help out in the shop by a friend or family member. Despite her income being a significant share of the family income, she defines herself exclusively via her role as a mother and downplays her earning potential. Watkins (1997: 390) describes the same phenomena as a process of making one's biography fit into the dominant female role within the community to avoid exclusion. Here, the rural family idyll is actually an obstacle to change – instead of making working mothers the new norm, it helps to marginalise women's employment, despite their financial contribution to the household.

Interestingly, even the women's narratives referred strongly to the 'stay-at-home mother' norm in those villages where the majority of mothers interviewed, in fact, behave differently. In this context the resource-based approach loses its explanatory power and is replaced by the social fabric. Apparently, the concept of a traditional family model is closely related to images of living in a village, even though people actually behave differently.

#### *Combining-and-coping mothers*

We find many women who frame their role as mothers and the idea of children's well-being within the difficult reconciliation of work and family life. Although these women obviously contradict the stay-at-home role model, most of them refer to it as being the norm and that they had difficulties breaking it. Most of them were born in the village or in a village of the region. None of them had questioned this concept of family life beforehand, they were all looking forward to being a mother, however, quite a few were unhappy with the related change in lifestyle and had to face some hurdles returning to employment. The women interviewed did not, contrary to their own anticipation, feel fulfilled by 'only' being a mother and quickly started working again.

Here in the village – I don't know maybe it is envy – people say 'you shouldn't do that, you cannot do that, you have to stay home and your kids are alone all day'; that is what some people say to me 'your

kids are so often alone', which is not true, their grandmother watches them. Or things like 'you are around so much, I have already seen you driving through the village five times today'. This is what I sometimes have to listen to, and that is not pleasant. [BH\_H]

Another woman described how she and her partner had to defend themselves when she started working full-time immediately after maternity leave because they had to pay the mortgage on a house.

At that time it was very uncommon that a mum goes right back to work. Friends, relatives and friends... I really had to defend myself... many said, 'Rabenmutter,<sup>3</sup> you don't need a child if you don't have the time to care for it.' For my husband, it was even worse because at that time he didn't have full-time employment, and friends commented on that. But they had to accept it. [FB\_C]

These women pursued their labour market integration, against social control or reprobation from peers, with the support of their partners. They saw motherhood in the light of their own personal well-being, and the benefits of a fulfilling employment for family life and for their children. Concomitantly, they viewed their role as working mothers as fostering independence, self-reliance and responsibility in their children.

#### **4.5 Views on rural childhood**

Concomitantly with the role of stay-at-home mother, childhood was framed in a complementary way. Children were seen as dependent and in need of care and nurture, so that, for example, driving children to afternoon activities was necessary for a child's well-being. Having one caregiver was important for the child and being able to be that person was essential for a mother's well-being. Interestingly, when asked about the benefits of a rural lifestyle for children, many women said that children in villages have more freedom to play outside and to roam around unattended. At the same time some women emphasised the fact that their children did not 'hang out on the streets' but (had to) come home to a waiting mother. These contradictions are abundant. Thus there is the sheltered and controlled life of children juxtaposed with the freedom and self-sufficiency of a childhood in the rural idyll. Even 'coping' mothers, who sometimes personally experience the negative effects of the alleged backwardness of the village, see this as advantageous for bringing children up. When it comes to child rearing, 'backwardness'

translates to ‘without negative influences’, such as violence, drug abuse, vandalism and so on:

Here in the village the development is certainly lagging by, let’s say seven or eight years, in comparison to the city. And this I also recognise in our children and that is why I like to live here for the children’s sake because they can grow up so sheltered here. [BH\_H]

One element which, surprisingly, did not play a big role in the mothers’ accounts of daily rural life was the element of nature within children’s upbringing. In most mothers’ accounts nature only featured in the shape of a fenced-in garden, which gave them the opportunity to let their children play outside without surveillance, allowing them some spare time. Very few respondents mentioned nature as a particular benefit of a rural life for children. Nature was seen as a place where children could be and play freely, as in, they are not confined to the inside of a house but can wander around and learn for themselves. Also, playing within nature was believed to keep children from getting drawn into bad things resulting from boredom, which is supposed to happen to city kids, as emphasised in the following example:

Well, I think children grow up with much more freedom here than compared to a city. And they don’t get bored as easily as in a city. So, in the city I dare say they get put up to all sorts of rubbish, simply because they have nothing to do. And in the countryside, there you always find something to do. If the little one gets bored, he takes one of the cats and plays with it or... he goes out and looks at leaves and investigates them or...well, there is pretty much always something to do. [FB\_D]

However, the thinness of the description reveals how difficult it apparently is to grasp what their children actually *do* outside – maybe because indeed the children play without direction:

Well, collecting leaves and sticks, typically rural things of course. [FB\_E]

## 5 Conclusions

In considering the narratives of 26 women from rural villages in Western Germany three different motives could be identified, each related to a

specific meaning and understanding of rurality. Most common, and partly due to the sample construction, was the association of rural life with family life. To some extent the image of the rural family was merged with another key element connected with rural life, namely the community, based on references to good social relations to neighbours and an overall sense of belonging and identity based on the idea of 'knowing everyone' and 'being like everyone else'. Very much in contrast, the few women (childless women and mothers alike) who constructed their lifestyle, values and perceptions around the key motif of nature referred to the absence of other people and of the negative influences of society in general as the benefits of their partly secluded rural lifestyle. This is important to consider, given that the elements of community and nature are often merged in (academic) conceptions of the rural idyll, whereas in everyday life they are often related to very distinct attitudes and individual conceptions of life.

A traditional family arrangement – comprising a heterosexual couple, children and a house – can be sustained with fewer means in rural areas, which explains the influx of people wanting to set up a traditional family (and the out-migration of young people who do not want to do so). Among the descriptions of a rural lifestyle, this element is vital to most mothers' narratives. This makes a suburban lifestyle, based on homeownership and a (modified) male-breadwinner family, a key element of the rural idyll, often even replacing or overlaying other elements, such as references to nature or to good social relations. The interviews allowed the reconstruction of the connections between an idealised rural living and the normative assumptions about traditional family life. Although the stay-at-home-mum was a rare case – most women were at least marginally employed – it was mostly considered to be the right thing to do in the village, according to the women interviewed. Although we might conclude that the normative concept of the rural idyll therefore has little significance for the daily life of the surveyed women, we have to bear in mind that some had to overcome peer pressure and public reprobation in order to be (full-time) employed. The interviews, therefore, were highly revealing of the power of a norm-setting narrative, which makes mothers reshape their lifestyle by emphasising certain aspects, like being a full-time mother, only 'helping out' in a shop to fit into the local norms and expectations. With regard to the rural idyll Halfacree highlights the selectivity of this representation which 'is exclusive in its class, race and status connotations, is profoundly conservative and demands conformity' (1996: 52). Summarising the above, the interviews showed that gender norms – especially in the investigated

rural villages, where they are apparently still more traditional and change more slowly – continue to have a strong influence on female self-perceptions, although not on all women to the same extent. Against the background of commonly shared imaginings of a traditional rural family idyll, women (and men) develop their own, individual, models of family life as an answer to changing social realities in the context of (post-)modernisation processes in rural West Germany.

## Notes

1. Obviously, this is a specific group out of all inhabitants of a village. For a comprehensive overview on changing rural populations and growing heterogeneity within rural communities see Becker (1997) and Hauptmeyer and Henkel (2005).
2. Which may have resulted simply through the presence of a researcher from the city.
3. German expression for an uncaring mother.

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# 4

## Rural Milieus in East-Central Europe – Gendered Attitudes to Post-modern Values

*Éva G. Fekete*

### 1 Introduction

Post-modern societies are often considered to be connected with a strong appreciation of nature, culture and safety (Soule and Lease 1995, Sellamna 1999). The environmental and social aspects of economies are gaining in importance and the adoption of information technology is reducing the importance of physical distance. These processes are part of post-modernisation and may lead to a change in the assessment of under-development, especially in rural peripheries. While new societal framework conditions have the potential to create a new developmental path, rural peripheries often find themselves in a dual cultural trap. On the one hand, rural policies in remote or structurally weak regions often adhere to the paradigm of modernisation, while rural economies find it difficult to compete since they are frequently far from the market, below the threshold of economy of scale and lack skilled labour and financial and social capital. With regard to assets like unspoilt nature or cultural heritage the regions might have more potential for following a post-modern path of development, however local actors are often not ready. Against this backdrop it is a key hypothesis of this chapter that the transformation of societal values in a globalised world also offers favourable opportunities, in particular for the less developed areas in East-Central Europe. In this respect it is supposed that people living in rural peripheries in East-Central Europe hold on to both traditional and modern values while post-modern values are transferred to rural milieus mainly by immigrants and tourists from urban regions.

The main questions addressed by this chapter are: are there differences in women's and men's attitudes towards some basic categories within a



post-modern value system (such as nature, sustainability, cultural heritage and social participation)? How might these attitudes contribute to economic change in rural areas?

This chapter presents the context and the results of a survey conducted in eight rural micro-regions in Hungary and Transylvania in Romania in 2010 on the representation of post-modern values in post-socialist rural milieus. After discussing the theoretical background in Section 2, the objectives and methods of the research are presented in Section 3. Although fundamentally based on a standardised questionnaire survey, the empirical results also refer to interview findings and an analysis of local resources. The focus of the analysis is on gender differences in the attitudes of rural inhabitants, including the presence of post-modernity and the preferred kind of new – in a way post-modern – economic activities. The concluding section poses some questions related to rural development based on post-modern values.

## 2 Theoretical background: the production of post-modern ruralities

With regard to the key questions, the basic terms *post-modernity*, *values*, *rural space* and *rural development* need clarification. In academic discourses of social science the concept of post-modernity is seen as a new age of society and its meaning and philosophical sense are widely discussed (Habermas 1987, Lyotard 1988, Vattimo 1988, Aylesworth 2005). The term is used pragmatically in this chapter to differentiate the modern era from the following period which shows different characteristics. The argument follows the assumption that a new value system replaces the modern period (Baudrillard 1981, Lyotard 1984, Cook 1990, Jameson 1991, Bauman 1992).

Values are seen as fundamental cultural principles that reflect what a clear majority of society finds desirable and important and that enable societal orientation (Santrock 2007).

The term rural is a vague and ambiguous concept referring to both descriptive definitions and cultural constructions. Rural space is usually defined by its comparison with urban space, with reference to the following four characteristics: a low concentration of population, businesses, institutions, buildings and financial capital; proximity to and stronger links with the natural environment; peripherality (located a long way from centres in a geographical, economic and political sense); and slow cultural changes and the preserved values of former eras (G. Fekete 2009, Woods 2011).

In a political planning context the term rural development usually describes the ability of a rural region to satisfy the needs of an increased proportion of residents in a manner that provides improved quality of life or offers a wider selection of goods and services, without harming the existing living conditions of other people (including the next generation). The cornerstones of this definition are the satisfaction of human needs (Burton 1990) and sustainability. However, if we continue with this logic, post-modern development may seem to contradict itself because reservations against technological progress and criticism of globalisation – as a meta-narrative of modernism – are often considered part of the post-modern idea (see in Harvey 1989, Sachs 1992, Gare 1995). Since this study partly refutes this argument, I am convinced that post-modern attitudes in fact support rural development in the regions under consideration.

A key assumption of this study is that there is a close relationship between spatial development and the societal values that characterise a cultural period. In considering the difference between materialistic and non-materialistic attitudes it becomes clear that values affect certain needs and that there is an interaction between certain values and the use of regional resources. Values affect the utilisation of resources through both institutions and relationships considered desirable (e.g. embracing the idea of cooperation). This, in turn, determines the range and social scope of the needs that can be satisfied. Overall, values play an important role in regional development. When a cultural period changes and certain societal values become more dominant, the demands for regional resources and the required competences should also change. The main thesis in this context is that regional milieus that are able to internalise the values to meet new external and internal needs have more development potential than those which are not (for example: both Hungarian and Romanian cases illustrate that the business success of organic farmers depends on how they can convert their consumers' attitudes to nature). By dividing the history of human civilisation into, more or less arbitrary, periods it is easier to understand and analyse social processes. The timings and lengths of these periods depend on places and cultural milieus and their divisions may be blurred as long phases of transformation lead from one era to another. Western-type social changes and their driving forces are usually divided into three classical periods called traditional, modern and post-modern (Macionis and Gerber 2011). Each era has its own cultural narratives and they have different perceptions of space and spatial development, of the meaning of gender-related economic roles, and they can be linked with different

types of rurality. In the following paragraphs some key characteristics of the respective societies are outlined to illustrate their possible impacts on rural milieus and gender relations in Western culture, as mentioned by Perkins (1996) or Inglehart (1997) for example. Although the progression from traditional to modern to post-modern is one that has only been described in the history of Western societies, Inglehart and Baker (2000) present evidence to suggest that the progression is also apparent in some non-Western societies, even though cultural distinctiveness persists.<sup>1</sup>

The World Values Survey (WVS) provides one of the most global perspectives on values and attitudes available to date.<sup>2</sup> These data were used to empirically confirm the existence of three manifestations of societal values, namely, the traditional, the modern and the post-modern. Inglehart described the differences between these three economic and political systems by referring to three dimensions: authority; economy; and values (1997). It could be highlighted that no societies could be identified as explicitly dominated by post-modern values, although Scandinavian societies came closest (Inglehart 2000). In this context it has to be emphasised that even though a society might be dominated by one set of values, other value orientations co-exist within it. The following summary only constitutes a simplified outline of the main characteristics of the considered societal value systems:

Before the modern transformation traditional societies were heavily framed by biological and spiritual needs and dominated by religious and communal values (Inglehart and Baker 2000). Daily life was perceived as a struggle for survival strongly influenced by a dependence on nature and social vulnerability. In this fight, people relied on the knowledge passed down from their predecessors and on faith as a shared belief system. Tolerance and accommodation were successful strategies for survival. In that world the basis of the economy was land, and villages were the dominant form of settlement. Rural areas were experienced as natural spaces of existence. The role of women was clearly subordinated and assigned to biological reproduction (Sultana 2011). Rural societies living in symbiosis with agriculture maintained their traditional character and were characterised by male dominance (Little and Jones 2000, van Hoven 2001).

Modern society is a long-standing field of study (Giddens 1991, Harrison 1988). Since the time of Marx, Durkheim and Weber theorists have speculated about the values that produce, and are produced by, the macro-societal process of modernisation. The increasing significance of materialistic needs and quantitative growth has been described

as a characteristic feature of modern societies. According to a survey by Inglehart and Abramson (1999), values highlight the motivation to achieve and the disciplined drive for material success. Although technological progress and the dynamic development of the physical sciences increase financial security, they also precipitate a process of detachment (and ultimately alienation) from nature. As to world view, unconditional faith has been replaced by rationalism and the pursuit of natural scientific explanations. Successful strategies that serve the realisation of objectives include defeating others and increasing competitiveness (Hicks 2004). Modern society is usually seen as organised around industrial production. Due to their low population density, rural areas are deemed unsuitable for accommodating industry, the engine of development (Schumacher 1991). In the process of modern urbanisation, the commencement of which is marked by an urban big bang, the village comes to be perceived as an obsolete form of settlement. Gender role models change, the participation of women in the labour market and gender equality gain in importance. An increasing number of women go out to paid work, which enables them to become financially independent. It should be noted that in the early days of women demanding equal opportunities, the equality of men and women was asserted with a simultaneous rejection of differences.

Post-modern perspectives emerged with globalisation and the increasing internationalisation of trade and are characterised by a pluralisation of lifestyles, perspectives and values (Eisenstadt 2000). It has been stated, that in post-modern/post-industrial societies the impact of spiritual and emotional values experiences a revival (Goubman 1998). One topic of societal discourse is the creation of a harmonious relationship between environment and society, such as trying to achieve sustainability in any activity that uses resources and where immediate and intergenerational replication is demanded (Boutilier 2005). People are returning to nature. The rationalist emphasis is replaced by a more emotional emphasis. Mere functionality is overruled by aesthetic considerations. Societies with a high proportion of people subscribing to post-modern values combine the post-industrial economics of information- and service-based work with the authority of participatory democracy, global governance networks and autonomous ethical decision making. These societies value tolerance, self-expression, trust and individual rights. Access to information and its management, communication with others and the ability to create social co-existence are key to social adaptation. Small comes to have a positive meaning in society and the economy once again. Competitive growth in the modern age produces new constraints that give rise to a demand for, hitherto

mostly, untapped rural resources (Woods 2011). New or revived rural functions appear which offer new livelihood opportunities. Demand for safe and healthy food contributes to an increased demand for organically produced goods and a strong need for establishing a direct relationship with producers. Due to limited reserves of drinking water, energy, raw materials and healthy living spaces, rural resources grow in importance and their careful use creates new rural activities. Tailor-made solutions and uniqueness are new requirements that the social and cultural services sector has to meet. Responding to the challenges of the 21st century, especially those posed by information societies and environmental sustainability, new services are established and provided in rural areas by means of a network. Rural spaces gain in importance for small-scale activities in the cultural and social sector. Urbanites, who are increasingly occupying rural spaces, see the preservation of rural characteristics as an important requirement. Villages are not considered as miniature towns, but as spatial formations allowing for the possibility of an alternative (quieter, slower, more natural, networked, self-sufficient) lifestyle. Likewise, in terms of the male–female relationship, there is a tendency for women to no longer imitate patterns of male behaviour if they wish to have a career (Acker 1990) but to emphasise, accept and recognise the advantages of femininity. Gender equality applies to both men and women and is integrated into different areas of public policy. With the above-mentioned economic activities gaining ground, rural areas become increasingly ‘feminine’ (Fekete 2010). On the other hand, the emergence of a post-modern rural idyll – as it recalls traditional elements – also implies a retreat into the private sphere and therefore places limitations on women (Little and Panelli 2003).

So, the supposed transition from the modern to the post-modern age has resulted in a significant change in values. Post-modern values can be interpreted partly as a turning away from modernity and as a result of disappointment with modernism (Lyotard 1984). Some rural resources (for example wild life, biodiversity, community and traditions) which might be valued positively in a post-modern perspective are less available in strongly modernised regions, other assets valued in post-modern economies, like networks and creativity, are quite location independent. In contrast, less modernised rural regions are considered as peripheries because they have resources to which hardly any societal value was attached (Wallerstein 1983).

New values related to the emergence of a post-modern society, such as non-materialistic behaviour, awareness of the environment and self-expression, are often related to the emergence of new needs in the field of

healthy food, housing, recreational services and so on. The newly emergent demand can be satisfied by utilising the resources of rural areas and is supposed to refer to certain skills such as handicrafts, hosting, child and elderly care, small-scale food processing or communication (Meenai 2003, Prügl 2011). These skills are often considered as feminine (Baracs 1997, Korf and Oughton 2006). Preserved resources whose utilisation assumes the above-mentioned feminine skills in rural areas are becoming increasingly important because of their recent scarcity. This creates new framework conditions for developing rural peripheries and the way rural women are perceived. However, the utilisation of these resources requires new methods and techniques. New or revived economic activities and new sectors have emerged, for example, organic farming, green energy, production of natural raw materials, eco-tourism, handicrafts, cultural industry, ecological housing, personalised social services and IT services (Woods 2011). The conditions of use are also changing and competitiveness is taking on a new meaning. Moreover, a new arena is opening up for regional competition within which a rural region that recognises and utilises these renewed values is supposed to benefit, not at least in economic terms. Since post-modern values, like emotional behaviour, family and community relationships and networking, are often considered rather 'female', studying the attitudes and activities of rural women is important if we want to understand the possible future of rural peripheries.

### 3 Research design and methodology

The empirical research presented in this chapter was driven by the intention to answer the key question of whether rural peripheries in East-Central Europe have a realistic chance of accelerating their development in the context of post-modern trends. Similarly to some western countries (Murdoch and Pratt 1993, Cloke and Little 1997) current rural policies in Central Eastern Europe are in favour of modernist value systems. In spite of this some rural areas are not able to 'swim with the tide' of modernisation and can be characterised by prevailing traditional attitudes which partly overlap with emerging post-modern values. Against this backdrop, the aim of the study was to deal with the basic questions that emerged from the cultural economy concept (Ray 1994):

- Do rural peripheries have the *resources* that suit post-modern demand and that could be transferred into local *commodities*?
- In what way are the *values* that shape the *needs and behaviour* of local residents related to post-modern values?

- Are *women* ready for their ascendant economic and *social role* in rural development?
- Are new economic activities incorporated in *individual and community strategies*?

To investigate the significance of different societal values within rural milieus in Hungarian and Romanian villages, with a particular focus on gender differences, the following surveys were carried out:

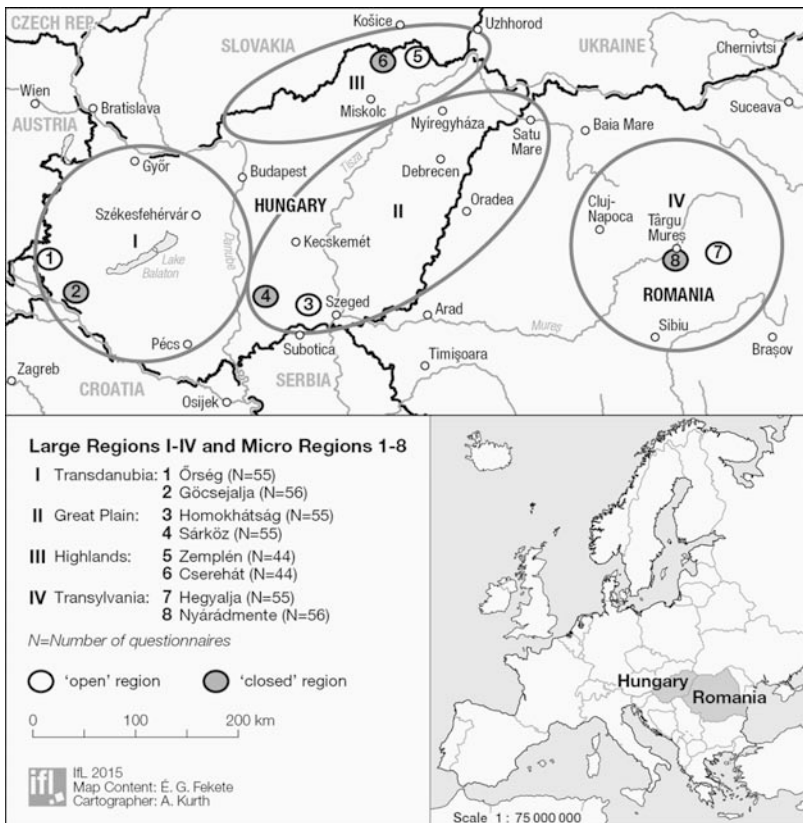
1. *An analysis of the social and economic environment* was conducted in 48 villages. The analysis provided a typology by settlement groups with respect to: the manifestations of culture (see above) and their characteristics in rural areas; the factors affecting components of culture and institutions in rural areas; and social participation.
2. To investigate the extent to which post-modern values are reflected in the everyday life of village residents a *questionnaire survey* was carried out. It included questions intended to explore the presence of post-modern attitudes, the social inclusion of newcomers and business potential related to post-modern values. Photos were used to help identify certain attitudes towards life, which tend to be related to certain societal value systems in the field of housing, working, supply and recreation.

### 3.1 Case study regions in East-Central Europe

The research was carried out in the following four large regions characterised by different natural landscapes and settlement structures in Hungary and Romania (Map 4.1). The Great Hungarian Plain is a lowland area with a farming profile, large villages, a lack of services and more traditional communities. Transdanubia is a region of mixed lowlands and hills dominated by densely populated small towns and villages characterised by medieval roots, advanced services and a civic spirit. Northern Hungary is a region of uplands and Szeklerland (part of Transylvania in Romania) is a mountainous region. Both are populated by small villages, small towns and a few larger cities. All four regions are located in a post-socialist country and inhabited mainly by ethnic Hungarians. Their culture originated from the same roots but they have been run in different ways for nearly a hundred years. Transdanubia is, relatively, the richest and most modernised region, while the Great Hungarian Plain and Northern Hungary belong to the most underdeveloped regions of Hungary. Szeklerland is the least modernised region, but the standard of living has significantly developed during the last two decades. Within the

large regions different types of micro-regions were identified according to the varying impact of supra-regional to global interrelations.

Two different types of small region from each of the four large regions became survey areas. One type was more affected by external influences due to immigration or because the tourism industry had already taken off, which we labelled open. The other type was more culturally closed as not on the tourism radar and with weak external urban influences via immigration, these we labelled closed. In each small region 5 to 10 villages were selected. The population size was nearly the same in each small region. A total of 420 questionnaires were conducted in 48 settlements with an attempt to reach a balance with regard to gender, age and economic activity.



Map 4.1 Location and type of study regions

Source: Author's own design.



### **3.2 Measured values and methods of evaluation**

To learn more about the attitudes of the local population in the different villages the questionnaire included an operationalisation of societal values based on statements and pictures. The measured societal values impact everyday life in different fields and can be grouped into seven categories referring to social geographical key functions, for example work, home, education and consumption (see Table 4.1, Partzsch quoted by Berényi 1997).

Written statements and pictures of places and objects thought to be representations of traditional, modern or post-modern societies were made for each function shown in Table 4.1. To inquire about values, we categorised the 67 written statements and 44 pictures as traditional, modern or post-modern. In order to give an impression of the research concept statements referring to particular values are highlighted in Table 4.1. Some of the statements or pictures could be included in more than one value category. Of the 67 opinions, a few can be seen in Table 4.1. Respondents were asked to rate opinions on a scale from 0 to 3, where 0 meant that they disagreed and 3 meant that they fully agreed. The scores of preferences were averaged by groups.







The answers were evaluated on the basis of special indicators to explore how closed or open the respondents' communities were, as well as the respondents' gender, age, education, job and type of region. Further categories were: local roots, referring to the number of the years lived in the village, friends living locally and adult children with at least a secondary education who did not move away from the home village; and world experience, referring to the number of the years worked abroad, the years spent in cities and towns, and friends living in a place other than the respondent's home village. In both cases we used the categories of weak, medium and strong. A detailed analysis was prepared on the basis of the above-mentioned methodology.<sup>3</sup> This chapter includes only that subset of the analysed data which focuses on gender-related issues.

## **4 Results related to gender or gendered attitudes towards living in the countryside**

### **4.1 Demographic characteristics of the sample**

Across the whole sample men and women are nearly equally distributed (51.4% women), with slightly more men than women represented

Table 4.1 Conceptual framework for measuring societal values in a questionnaire-based survey with examples

	Traditional	Modern	Post-modern
Home	<p>Work equals home, several generations live together, opportunities for self-sufficiency, traditional buildings, lack of utilities</p> 	<p>Separation between work and private life, nuclear family, large uniform building with utilities, public transport</p> 	<p>Blurring boundaries of work and home, pluralisation of family arrangements, eclectic living environments, personalised buildings with info communication utilities</p> 
Work	<p>Manual work, small industry, few services, women in domestic work <i>'The man should be the breadwinner'</i> <i>'Child-rearing is a female job'</i></p> 	<p>Paid work, mechanisation, mass production, more services, women in paid work <i>'I want a well-paid job.'</i></p> 	<p>Flexibility of work, creative products, diversified and ICT jobs <i>'I need a job that guarantees self-realisation.'</i></p> 

Consumption	Self-sufficiency with little exchange, local and regional markets <i>'If I cannot afford new things, I strive to produce them myself.'</i>	Long supply chain, global market, supermarkets, primacy of price <i>'I prefer supermarkets to local shops.'</i>	Food safety, sovereignty, more local products, trading in products or services using computer networks <i>'I do not mind paying more for healthy food'</i>
Education	Preparation for copying proven techniques, practical school for everyday life, short-term, local school <i>'I can get along in life without qualifications.'</i>	Preparation for adopting the latest innovations, competitive job market, long but fixed term <i>'The children must learn in schools which are equipped with all modern devices.'</i>	Preparation for permanent renewal and pro-activity, creative school for self-realisation, lifelong learning, distance learning <i>'Local kids should study in small-sized classes where they get more attention.'</i>
Nature	Adaptation to the natural environment, local environmental impact	Overcome the natural environment to make more profit, global environmental impact	Restore the natural environment, reduce ecological footprint
Social networks	Ties to neighbours, closed and cohesive community, reciprocity, exclusion of strangers <i>'I prefer living close to parents.'</i> <i>'I would rather not have neighbours moving from urban areas.'</i>	Estrangement, community disintegration, institutionalisation of several groups of interests, ties outside the community <i>'Local public issues are the responsibility of mainly mayors and local councillors.'</i>	Relationship among neighbours, direct participation in the local community, volunteering, solidarity, inclusive society, virtual communities <i>'I am ready to do voluntary work for my community.'</i>
Tradition/progress	Fear of anything new <i>'Traditions must be preserved.'</i>	Need to move beyond tradition, old things are replaced with new ones <i>'Old traditions are outdated and must be replaced.'</i>	New functions for old things, updating of traditions <i>'I like being surrounded by objects that have been used by my grandparents.'</i>

Source: Author's own compilation, photos: Éva G. Fekete.

in the younger (56%) age groups. Within the sample women are more skilled, 55% have secondary or higher-level education compared to 41% of the surveyed men. The proportion of women who are employees or old-age pensioners is also higher than for men. However, for all women the proportion of female entrepreneurs and women with a university degree is lower than in the case of the men. These facts conform to general experience and statistical data regarding rural areas.

Simple statistical indicators cannot be used to describe the roots and world experiences in the sample. The study indicates that the men are slightly more attached to their respective villages than the women and tend to have more local relatives and friends. Both sexes have been living in their current home for a long time (women 31 years and men 32 years on average). However, the surveyed men often have more world experience due to their former working and living experiences in other towns (women 6.0 years, men 7.8 years on average) and their larger number of relatives and friends living in urban areas (women 23 and men 29 on average). Women's urban experience is less extensive but they are more mobile in rural space and have spent more years in another village or in another home within the same village than men (women 6.8 years and men 4.2 years on average). One of the causes of this higher mobility among women is that they usually go to live at their husband's place once they get married. However, neither the indicator roots ( $r=0.0555$ ) nor the indicator world experiences ( $r=0.1224$ ) show a significant correlation with gender.

#### **4.2 Preferences and attitudes**

Table 4.2 highlights particular statements where higher preferences are expressed by one gender than the other (differences between average scores are higher than 0.1). Some are obvious or only indirectly linked to rural development issues. According to the relevant statements (written in italics), women show more solidarity, stand by their family, are more frugal and more environmentally conscious. Men's attitudes reveal very conservative gender stereotypes with a preference for male breadwinners and women to be housewives. Beyond that, male respondents seem to have stronger reservations concerning strangers than women. The biggest disagreement (difference higher than 0.4) between men and women is experienced in the gendered division of labour within the family.

Table 4.2 Gender imbalances in attitudes and preferences for selected statements

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Average scores</i>	
	<b>female</b>	<b>male</b>
Statements where <b>female</b> preferences are higher		
<i>I do not mind paying more for energy-efficient household appliances.</i>	3.00	2.81
<i>I need a job which allows me to help other people.</i>	2.59	2.33
<i>I would rather stay here because my relatives and friends also live here.</i>	2.40	2.26
<i>I prefer reasonably priced goods.</i>	2.39	2.20
<i>Local kids should study in small-sized classes where they get more attention.</i>	2.31	2.15
<i>I prefer a local hairdresser.</i>	2.20	1.96
<i>I prefer hypermarkets to local shops.</i>	2.14	2.02
Statements where <b>male</b> preferences are higher		
<i>The man should be the breadwinner.</i>	1.89	2.34
<i>Child-rearing is a female job.</i>	2.13	2.27
<i>I stay here because of the beautiful natural environment.</i>	2.08	2.24
<i>If the man earns enough money, the woman should stay at home.</i>	1.68	2.12
<i>I would rather not have Chinese neighbours.</i>	1.42	1.63
<i>I do not like it when a stranger moves into my village.</i>	1.27	1.39
<i>I would rather not have neighbours who have moved from urban areas.</i>	1.19	1.29

Source: Author's own compilation (Data: OTKA/2011).

### 4.3 Composition of the value system

Statements related to post-modern values received a much higher preference than expected. Post-modern values received an average score of 2.4 compared with a score of 2.2 for traditional and a score of 2.1 for modern values in the total population. Post-modern dominance is typical in all age groups and in all micro-regions. There are some slight differences by regional openness and education: respondents living in open regions who are more educated show more post-modern (score  $\geq 2.5$ ) and fewer traditional (score  $\leq 2.1$ ) attitudes compared to the average score of respondents living in closed regions and with less education (score  $\leq 2.4$  on post-modern and  $\geq 2.2$  on traditional values).

The analysis reveals that the composition of the women's value system is more strongly related to post-modern characteristics, while men's attitudes are rather traditional regarding the field of the environment and

modern regarding the field of work. Post-modernity, which is indicated by environmental awareness, food sovereignty, participation, cultural diversity and non-material attitudes, is more widespread in the group of women. Regarding the field of education a preference more related to modern value systems is also shown by women; women care more about children's education, and both groups prefer modern, well-equipped schools to the small schools revived after political changes in some of these communities. In Table 4.3 female preferences are shown by a positive gender imbalance (above 0.05) and dark shading, while male preferences are shown by negative numbers (below -0.05) and in light boxes.

Table 4.3 Average scores for preferences by gender

Value	Function	Score of preferences			Gender imbalance
		female	male	both	
Post-modern	community	2.69	2.65	2.67	0.04
	consumption	2.45	2.39	2.42	0.06
	education	2.60	2.64	2.62	-0.04
	environment	2.51	2.44	2.48	0.07
	home	2.43	2.46	2.44	-0.03
	tradition/ progress	2.49	2.42	2.45	0.07
	work	2.41	2.29	2.36	0.12
All post-modern		2.49	2.43	2.46	0.05
Modern	community	2.05	2.14	2.09	-0.10
	consumption	1.91	1.87	1.89	0.04
	education	2.83	2.76	2.80	0.07
	environment	2.15	2.12	2.14	0.03
	home	2.07	2.14	2.11	-0.07
	tradition/ progress	1.87	1.87	1.87	0.00
	work	2.34	2.43	2.38	-0.08
All modern		2.07	2.10	2.08	-0.03
Traditional	community	2.20	2.21	2.20	-0.01
	education	2.37	2.34	2.35	0.03
	environment	2.06	2.19	2.12	-0.13
	home	2.10	2.05	2.07	0.04
	tradition/ progress	2.23	2.24	2.24	-0.01
	work	2.22	2.39	2.30	-0.18
	All traditional		2.18	2.19	2.18
All values		2.22	2.22	2.22	0.00

Source: Author's own compilation (Data: OTKA/2011).

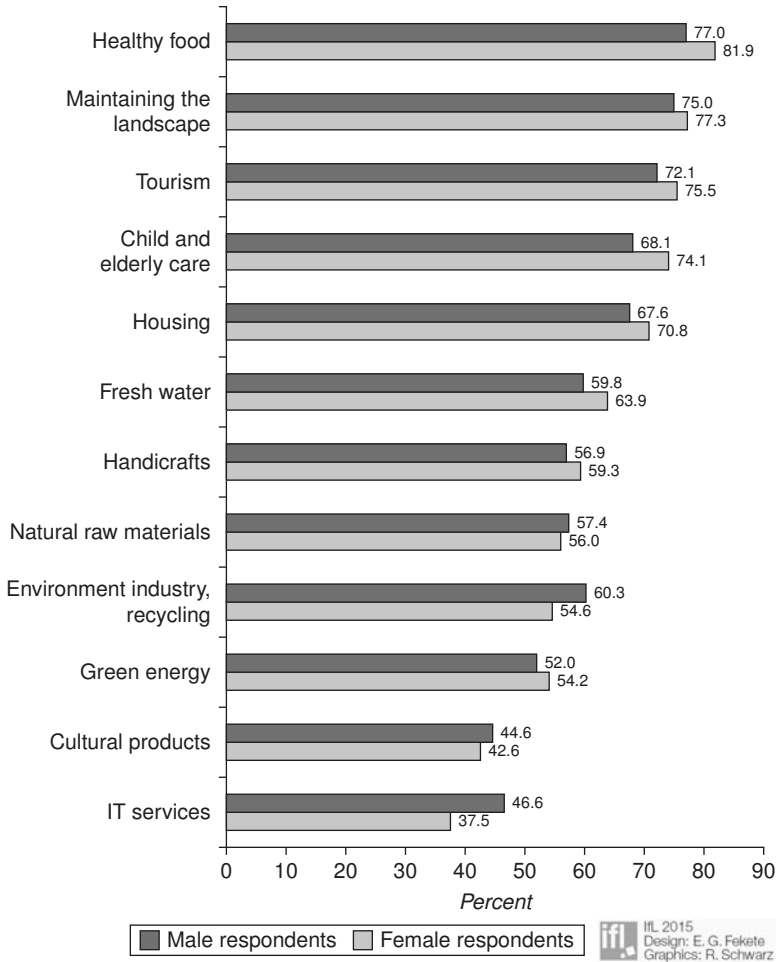


Figure 4.1 Post-modern economic activities seen as individual job opportunity by gender

Source: Author's own compilation (Data: OTKA/2011).

#### 4.4 Accepted post-modern economic activities by gender

Economic activities that meet the challenges of post-modern rural development were also evaluated by the respondents. The acceptance of economic activities related to post-modern demand is general (more than 2.4 score in total), but differs by activity, age, gender, region and other characteristics. There are differences between what the interviewees see

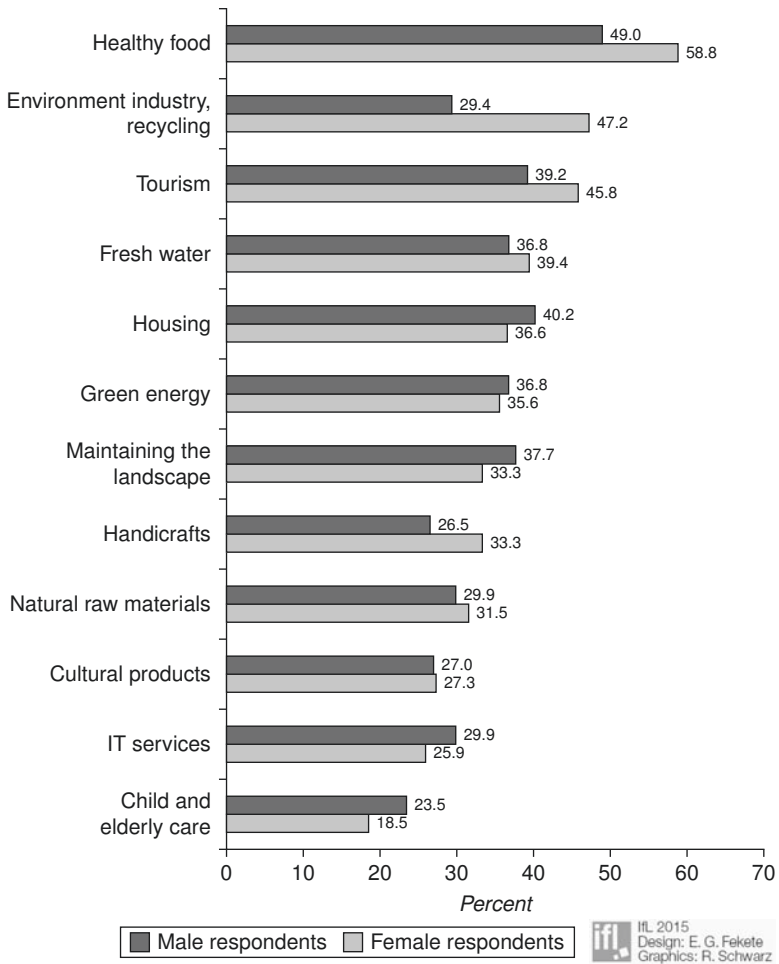


Figure 4.2 Post-modern economic activities seen as future of village by gender  
 Source: Author's own compilation (Data: OTKA/2011).

as possible in their villages and the fields they would like to participate in (Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

Producing healthy food is seen as an activity with the largest potential for the village from the perspective of the women in particular. It is followed by maintaining the landscape, housing, social care services and tourism. These activities are considered as post-modern activities in our research. However, the high preference for these activities can



also derive from the acceptance of traditional values (e.g. attitudes to agriculture and family orientation). Men see more potential for rural development in activities such as producing natural raw materials, creating cultural products, providing IT services and activities in the environmental industry. In contrast, women expect more development from activities in the environmental industry and social jobs for the future of the village. *Personal job preferences* do not fit a common view of the future. Slightly more women are ready to participate in the new activities. Tourism and the production of healthy food show high preferences, but neither maintaining the landscape, nor social care are as popular. In some cases we can identify a stronger contrast between potential community and individual strategies. For example, social care and producing natural raw materials for the industrial sector as a community strategy show a strong female preference, but women find it less attractive as a job for themselves. The environmental industry is less preferred as a community strategy. However, more women adopt it as their personal strategy than men.

As a conclusion, with regard to rural development perspectives against the backdrop of societal transformation processes and to encourage engagement in the economic activities studied, the following individual prerequisites are required (to an extent that varies by gender, age, roots, global perspective and type of region): (1) the intention to do something; (2) a healthy mix of traditional and new knowledge; (3) the readiness to cooperate; (4) the intention to learn new things. According to the revealed attitudes of our respondents the above-mentioned four assumptions are very weak in the studied rural regions.

## 5 Summary

The study has shown that there are both encouraging and discouraging factors regarding upcoming opportunities for rural regions. The empirical results indicate that in the rural peripheries attitudes among the rural population are more closely related to post-modern values than to modern ones. Open regions with higher immigration rates and tourism, persons with a higher level of education and those who have experience outside their community (i.e. have been exposed to modernisation) take the lead. The surveyed women, in particular, tend to refer more strongly to the post-modern value system, which is mirrored in environmental awareness, food sovereignty, participation, cultural diversity and non-material attitudes.

The competitiveness of the studied rural peripheries is low compared to more urbanised small regions, even in the economic sectors based on post-modern demand, such as recreation, alternative energy and organic food. The acceptance of economic activities adjusted to post-modern demand is common, with that of agricultural activities being the highest. But the intention to become engaged in the economic activities studied is weak. People living in the studied rural peripheries do not want or are not able to launch new businesses or to make an effort to enable themselves to change.

Overall, it is safe to say that open regional milieus – which are characterised by developed tourism and a higher number of permanent or temporary residents who have moved from urban regions (even from abroad), a population with a higher level of formal education and some experience with living or travelling outside the region – are more likely to develop and strengthen economic activities linked to post-modern demand for healthy food, green energy, simple living and recreational places as well as personalised (social, cultural, communication) services, particularly the women. The attitudes of the surveyed women are less related to the features of modernisation but do show rather post-modern attitudes. In other words, women in general and those who have more experience of the modernised world are more responsive to post-modern values.

These findings point to three things:

- (1) It is highly likely that actors who have been exposed to modernisation processes, for example by achieving higher education or having direct experience of urbanised spaces (living or having friends), will utilise resources to their own benefit in the post-modern competition of rural peripheries.
- (2) Closed regions where local residents do not have the necessary skills to transform traditional assets for post-modern potential and need will find it difficult to retain their peripheral existence, despite an external cultural changeover that seemingly favours them.
- (3) Female local leaders (who are more common than male mayors in smaller villages in Hungary, Timár 2004) with pronounced post-modern attitudes are supposed to be able to start post-modern development initiatives, including competency improvement, as a dominant part of this kind of development.

The questions arise of whether competences needed for post-modern development can be acquired without going through modernisation

and of how post-modern demand may be extended in variety and rural space. Rural policies should identify and support these possibilities that favour rural peripheries with a special focus on the role and position of women. At a European Union level there have been attempts to incorporate a gender focus into rural policy (Quintanilla Barba 2010, Shortall and Bock 2014). However, they do not necessarily follow any post-modern path and do not generate those positive local reactions which would help rural peripheries to break out of their current position.

## Notes

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1. For example, modern values have consistently different profiles in Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Confucian or communist societies. Likewise, each set of post-modern values has a different emphasis in a Protestant compared to a Catholic post-modern society.
2. The WVS is a multi-national project being conducted by researchers around the world. The data that Inglehart reported on in 1997 came from the 1981–1984 and 1990–1991 waves of WVS data collection. It sampled over 55,000 respondents in 43 countries representing 70% of the world's population.
3. For the results of the detailed evaluation including an analysis of the picture section, please see G. Fekete 2011.

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# 5

## Determinants of Individual Quality of Life Ratings in Rural Versus Suburban Regions – A Gender Perspective

*Nana Zarnekow and Christian H.C.A. Henning*

### 1 Introduction: rural development and quality of life

It is a common observation in all EU member states that the population of many rural areas is in a continuous and sharp decline, mainly caused by net migration flows from rural to urban areas (European Commission 2008). This results in regional disparities, or rather their intensification, particularly in the case of unequal income opportunities, social environment issues, environmental quality, the availability of infrastructural and social services and recreational and cultural activities. In short, the overall regional quality of life. Against this backdrop it is a key aim of European regional and rural development policy to reduce regional disparities and improve the quality of life in rural regions. Rural development programmes from the most recent period (2007–2013) had the central objective of developing a ‘living countryside’ and helping to maintain and improve the social and economic fabric, particularly in remote rural areas, to counteract depopulation (European Commission 2006).

Migration offers a range of mechanisms through which economic development of rural areas can be affected in both industrialised and developing regions. For example, migration may offer a route out of poverty for the migrants themselves or migrant departures may serve, directly or indirectly, to enhance or possibly worsen the consumption, incomes and well-being of those remaining in the rural areas (Lucas 2007). So, rural development is strongly affected by different

mechanisms of migratory movements. Therefore a continuous observation and comprehensive understanding of the effects of migration in rural regions (i.e. rural to urban, rural to rural and urban to rural migration) is an important precondition for improving rural development strategies.

For many rural areas in Europe and Asia, it has been reported that women tend to migrate at higher rates than men (e.g. Gaetano and Jacka 2004). There are even considerable regional differences, the movement of young women from rural to urban areas is a particular general pattern in the western world, and is often related to structural problems in the labour market or educational offers. Selective migration processes are leading to changes in the demographic structures of rural areas which are reflected in ageing and masculinisation tendencies (e.g. Dahlström 1996, Little and Jones 2000, Froehlich et al. 2011). These demographic structures have been linked with social impacts like dissatisfaction and isolation and partly with the emergence of aggression and/or depression (Pedraza 1991). Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the gender impacts in the context of households' migration choices is needed to design rural development policies that effectively adjust regional migrations.

The general importance of regional quality of life in determining peoples' migration decisions has long been recognised at both academic and political levels. One of the most popular rationales for migration is Tiebout's observation that people vote with their feet by migrating to places where the expected quality of life is highest (Tiebout 1956). But the quality of life within a region not only leads to migration but is also affected by migration in- and out-flows, for example, in- or out-migration of well-educated and wealthy households corresponds to a resource gain or drain, respectively. Furthermore, noted contributions by the New Economic Geography suggest that micro-migration choices have strong externalities at the macro-level, for example, from a welfare economic perspective rural out-migration might be both too high and too low. This also means, under certain circumstances, that it might be considered positive for a local economy if the low-skilled or unemployed population leaves the region.

To date, a considerable amount of research has been conducted on the topic of migration, focusing on national population moves and on individual migration behaviour. Therefore, explanatory factors like job and educational opportunities, expected income, relative deprivation and better provision of social benefits and public goods have been widely explored in the literature (De Jong et al. 1983, Stark and Bloom

1985, Stark and Taylor 1991, Berger and Blomquist 1992, Greenwood 1997, Borjas 1999, Stark and Wang 2000, Dustmann 2003, Gibson and McKenzie 2011, Kennan and Walker 2011). In contrast, the well-recognised influences of quality of life and social networks on migration decisions have rarely been analysed on the regional level (see e.g. Henning et al. 2013). Moreover, most studies disregard the heterogeneity of individual living situations and related preferences in individual migration decisions.

Individuals and households attach utility to the consumption of purchased goods, leisure time and local amenities. Local amenities are defined as local public goods and services. Amenities can be natural (e.g. open space, natural landscapes) or man-made (e.g. the cultural or recreational value of a region). Moreover, man-made disamenities, like environmental pollution or crime, are included in household utilities where disamenities generate disutility. There is a broad agreement in the literature that these local amenities, the local public good endowment and thus the local quality of life has an impact on individual migration decisions. Households choose between staying in their current location or migrating to a new location based on the expected utility and benefits derived from the perceived attributes of the different locations.

Since local public goods are under the control of local governments and political decisions have a direct impact on the quality of life and therefore migration, the relative importance and evaluation of several public goods is important information for politicians. Furthermore, it is widely accepted that the migration vote is determined by both man-made and natural amenities. Amenities are not measures of the overall residential desirability of places, but rather place-specific attributes that people value differently, in other words, dependent on different life stages, a good provision of care facilities might be much more valued by older inhabitants, while the provision of good public education is valued more highly by middle-aged family households. Moreover, the preferences of women and men might differ. For example, it is conceivable that women have different preferences regarding leisure facilities than men. Thus, empirical estimations of micro-econometric models of individual migration choices must explicitly consider potential preference heterogeneity (Henning et al. 2013).

Beyond preference heterogeneity, other non-pecuniary aspects, hidden reasons and motives, such as the feelings of deserving a better life or of fairness, can affect the decision to migrate, but are often neglected in investigations due to measurement problems and data availability. Life



satisfaction measures used as a proxy for both pecuniary and non-pecuniary factors offer a solution to the measurement problem. Therefore, many studies include questions about life satisfaction in their questionnaires, where individuals evaluate their overall quality of life and their satisfaction with different amenities and local circumstances. This information can be linked to the willingness to migrate (Otrachshenko and Popova 2014).

Against this backdrop this paper focuses on the pre-stage of regional migration decisions: the subjective evaluation of the home region's quality of life and the impact of individual satisfaction. The following factors/indicators are assumed to have an important influence on an individual's evaluation of their quality of life: local job opportunities, the local health system, cultural/social life, accessibility (here: road system), the local telephone system (without broadband Internet), the safety of the local neighbourhood and the quality of the natural environment. These are considered to be key indicators for the evaluation of quality of life and are the focus of this study. Gender-specific quality of life determinants are examined due to increased rural depopulation caused by women's migration choices. The aim is to analyse whether men and women differ in their preferences and, if so, to identify gender-specific needs and preferences. Furthermore, rural and suburban regions are investigated separately to determine quality of life ratings that are caused by the local supply of suburban or rural amenities.

As there is a multitude of approaches dealing with migration and the evaluation of quality of life, the first section of this chapter presents the approach taken by this study and the relevant literature. Section 3 derives possible determining factors and highlights the influences gender might have on individual quality of life rankings. Section 4 introduces multinomial logistic regression, which is the methodological approach used in this study. The database is described before the estimation results are included and discussed. The final section draws some conclusions about potential policy advice related to the empirical findings.

## **2 Migration choices and measuring quality of life**

### **2.1 Measuring the quality of life**

Evaluating quality of life has been gaining prominence in social research studies since the 1970s. It is a broad and multidisciplinary concept concerned with society's overall well-being. Assuming that quality of life includes people's ability, as far as possible, to achieve their goals

and choose their ideal lifestyle, the quality of life concept goes beyond the living conditions approach, which tends to focus on the material resources available to individuals (Fahey et al. 2004, Shucksmith et al. 2006). Three major characteristics are associated with the quality of life concept (Fahey et al. 2003):

1. Individuality: the conditions and perceptions of individuals play a key role. The economic and social framework conditions of a certain society are only important determinants for placing the findings at an individual level into their proper context.
2. Multi-dimensionality: this not only requires the description of several life domains, but emphasises the interplay between domains as this contributes to quality of life.
3. Dualism of both objective and subjective indicators: subjective perceptions are of particular relevance in identifying individual goals and orientations. Individual perceptions and evaluations are most significant when these subjective evaluations are linked to objective living conditions.

Economic, social and subjective indicators refer to three philosophical approaches to well-being that are based on normative ideals, subjective experiences and the ability to select goods and services that one desires. In considering the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches, Diener and Suh (1997) point out that social indicators and subjective well-being measures are necessary to evaluate a society and add substantially to the dominant economic indicators. They reflect social indicators, such as health and levels of crime, subjective well-being measures (i.e. people's evaluation of their lives and societies) and economic indices. Basically, economic indicators, such as GDP, average income or the employment rate, give an incomplete description of the quality of life. From a political advice perspective the advantages of economic measures, such as the availability of data, should be modified and not unduly favoured by policy makers. Each approach to measuring quality of life contains information that is not contained in others (Diener and Suh 1997). Figure 5.1 illustrates the quality of life measurement followed in this study. The subjective evaluation of objective indicators, such as living conditions and economic circumstances, is linked to individual characteristics, such as age or gender, and also includes relational aspects, since the evaluation of regional quality of life depends on the comparison with other regions. Figure 5.1 also includes the variables we used in our estimations (see Section 4).

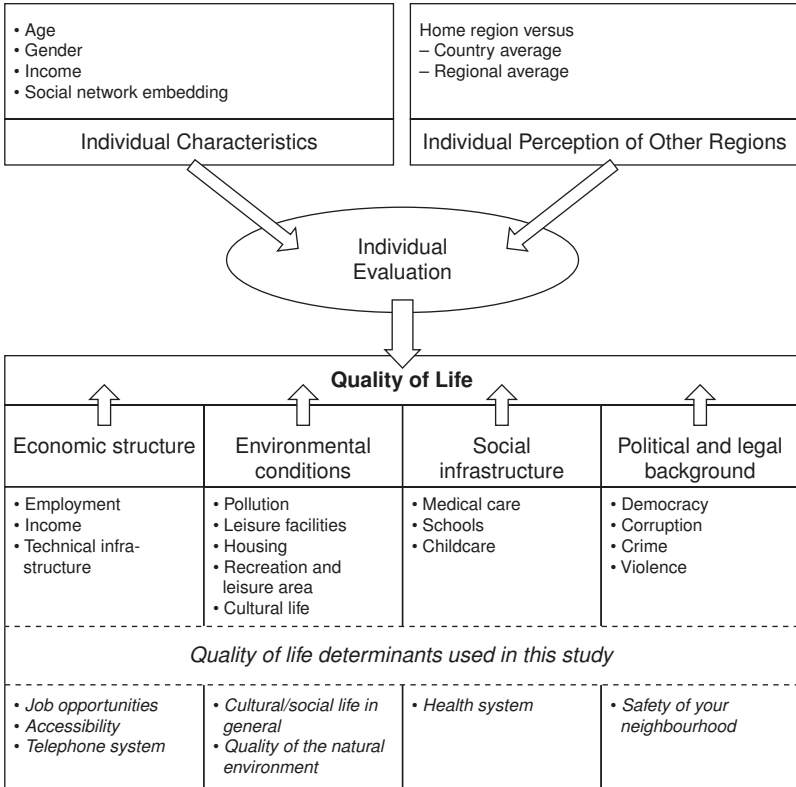


Figure 5.1 Quality of life: determinants, individual evaluation and indicators used in the survey

Source: Authors' own design.

## 2.2 Models of migration

Studies dealing with the interrelations between quality of life and migration decisions are widespread (Cebula and Vedder 1973, Berger and Blomquist 1992, Douglas and Wall 2000, De Jong 2002). Generally, macro- and micro-economic approaches can be distinguished. While macro-economic approaches require a consideration of the spatial context and aggregated variables, micro-approaches focus on individual migration units (household or individual) and shed light on the process of making migration decisions (Etzo 2008). Although these two approaches are embedded in two separate literature strands, these distinctions are often less clear cut when looking at empirical applications. Stillwell and

Congdon (1991: 2) conclude that conceptually, 'neither level provides a complete picture of the migration process'. Micro-level models do not provide a comprehensive treatment of origin or destination area influences on migration or of the interdependence between migration and other socio-economic processes, while macro-level models can only make relatively crude allowances for the influence of life cycle characteristics or individual job skills. In this sense, migration models are always *partial models*. Consequently, it is desirable to integrate both perspectives where possible.

However, migration studies on the micro-level often focus on household satisfaction with its present location and the difference expected from a destination location utility (Tiebout 1956). The influence of dissatisfaction on the probability of migration can be found in the work of Otrachshenko and Popova (2014). Using the Eurobarometer Survey for 27 Central and Eastern European (CEE) and Western European (non-CEE) countries, the authors show that people have a greater intention to migrate when they are dissatisfied with life. Otrachshenko and Popova (2014) conclude that individual life satisfaction is not only a strong predictor of the individual migration intention, but also a mediator between individual socio-economic variables and macro-economic conditions and this intention. Otherwise, literature focusing on gender-specific determinants of migration choices and quality of life rankings is rare. For example, Geißler et al. (2013) show that employment and income opportunities are the main determinants when explaining young women's migration choices. When it comes to gender differences in the evaluation of quality of life, the results (Schneider and Kubis 2010) reveal that young women have a higher probability of migration, whereas the push and pull factors of migration do not differ between women and men.

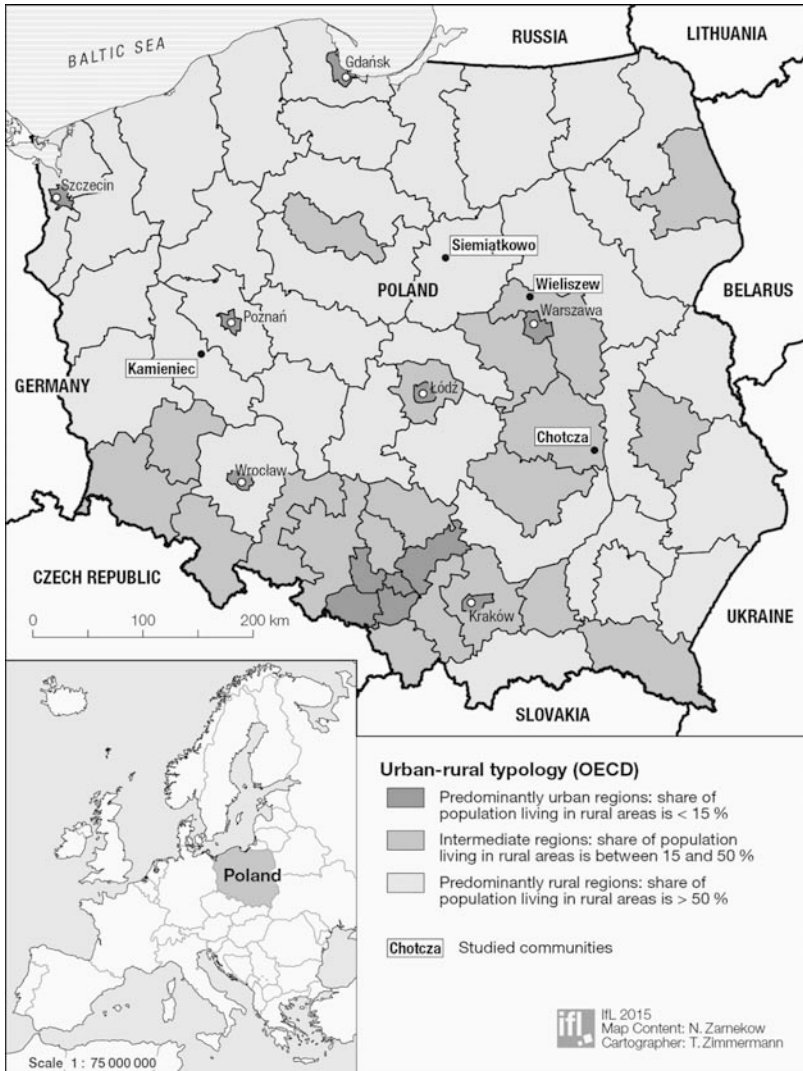
### **3 Rural development and selection of case study communities in Poland**

Rural development generally refers to the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas (Moseley 2003). The classification of an area as rural or not is non-trivial. There are several possibilities for defining rural areas. One of the most popular definitions is the classification developed by the OECD. Its methodology classifies LAU2s (Local Administrative Units) with a population density below 150 inhabitants per square kilometre as rural. Moreover, the approach classifies regions

as predominantly urban, intermediate or predominantly rural based on the percentage of the population living in local rural units (see Map 5.1). It has to be emphasised that the OECD classification is a simplifying tool for distinguishing urban and rural regions in Europe, due to the wide variety of spatial configurations. Nevertheless, this typology is currently considered one of the best tools for identifying the rural parts of Europe (Copus 2015: 14).

Like the diversity of rural structures, there are manifold dimensions of rural development, such as economic, social and environmental. Among policy makers there is a huge interest in learning about the importance and interrelations between different factors fostering the overall growth and convergence of individual regions (Michalek and Zarnekow 2012). Within the ADVANCED-EVAL project,<sup>1</sup> data was collected to evaluate the effect of European rural development aid in Poland and Slovakia. More precisely, within the project methodologies were developed to evaluate the effectiveness of rural development programmes in improving labour market performance and social well-being, focusing on rural development in Poland. Studies show that in larger countries, such as Poland, Romania, Portugal and Hungary, the urban–rural divide seems especially distinct (Böhnke 2005). In these countries, urban dwellers appear to experience greater levels of life satisfaction than small town or rural dwellers, possibly because of the greater opportunities available in cities. The estimation of a rural development index (RDI)<sup>2</sup> for Poland shows the highest values in the suburban areas of the big cities of Warsaw, Poznan and Gdansk during the years 2002–2005 (Michalek and Zarnekow 2012). Thus the result confirms the thesis that highly developed urban regions (cities) exert a strong positive economic and social influence on the development of neighbouring rural areas. On the other hand, the lowest RDIs were found in remote regions of southeastern Poland, as in Hrubieszowski (on the border with Ukraine), Bierunsko-Ledzinski (a post heavy industrial complex in southern Poland), Chelmski (on the border with Ukraine) and Bieszczadzki (a remote region bordering Ukraine and Slovakia). The results confirm a clear typological division based on the performance of individual regions, into a high-performing western and central part and badly performing areas in eastern, north-eastern and southeastern Poland. Against this backdrop four communities were selected and compared, all rural regions under the OECD classification (population density below 150 inhabitants per square kilometre). The communities were selected such that two performed well economically while two had economic difficulties. Moreover, within each pair one community is close to a major city, so that the share of

population living in rural LAU2 declines at the NUTS3 level (called suburban in the following), while the other is more distant (called rural in the following).



Map 5.1 Urban-rural typology of Poland and location of case study communities  
Source: OECD classification, own design.

The data used for the analysis were collected in a household survey in 2007, covering 600 households in four Gminas (communities) in Poland (Map 5.1 shows their location). These communities were: Wieliszew and Kamieniec (both in high-performing regions) and Chotcza and Siemiatkowo (both in low performing regions). Under the OECD classification, Siemiatkowo and Kamieniec are rural locations, whereas Chotcza and Wieliszew are suburban. Within each Gmina, a representative household sample was selected for interview.

## **4 Empirical results**

In the framework of our study, socio-economic characteristics, such as gender, age and family status, were collected along with preferences and social network characteristics to analyse different aspects of rural development. Furthermore, the interviewees were asked to evaluate the quality of life in their home region compared to the average quality of life in Poland (much lower, lower, the same, higher or much higher). To evaluate satisfaction with local public goods and the local economy, interviewees had to specify their satisfaction with different aspects of their local living conditions (very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied). Accessibility (roads), the telephone system, the quality of the natural environment, job opportunities, the health system, cultural/social life in general and the safety of the neighbourhood all had to be considered. How these different aspects of quality of life are included in the general scheme of quality of life measurement is illustrated in Figure 5.1. An overview of the respondents' ratings of local living conditions and overall evaluation of local quality of life is given in Table 5.1.

Due to missing values, data for 583 households are used in this study. The heads of households were interviewed. Overall, 65% of these heads of households were men. The mean average age is 46 years old with a standard deviation of 10. At first glance satisfaction with the quality of the natural environment and safety run contrary to satisfaction with job opportunities and cultural life, which are rated more negatively. This applies for both rural and suburban communities, whereas for the surveyed rural communities the job opportunities outweigh cultural life.

### **4.1 Gender-specific quality of life ratings**

The aim of this study is to investigate the significance of gender- and rural/suburban-specific determinants in the evaluation of local quality of life. Since the results would be biased if men or women generally

Table 5.1 Quality of life determinants by settlement type and overall

Variable	Total (N=583)				Rural (N=291)		Suburban (N=292)	
	Mean	Std. Dev.*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.*	Mean	Std. Dev.*
Living conditions								
Job opportunities	2.2	0.77	1	4	2.217	0.733	2.188	0.810
Cultural/social life in general	2.33	0.78	1	4	2.203	0.759	2.462	0.789
Accessibility	2.6	0.85	1	4	2.266	0.808	2.945	0.743
Health system	2.76	0.57	1	4	2.617	0.601	2.897	0.494
Telephone system	2.9	0.66	1	4	2.814	0.588	2.983	0.719
Safety of your neighbourhood	3.05	0.44	1	4	2.997	0.376	3.110	0.494
Quality of the natural environment	3.14	0.56	1	4	3.082	0.505	3.190	0.607
Overall evaluation of the regional quality of life								
Quality of life	2.45	0.87	1	5	2.357	0.836	2.548	0.894

\* Std. Dev.: Standard Deviation.



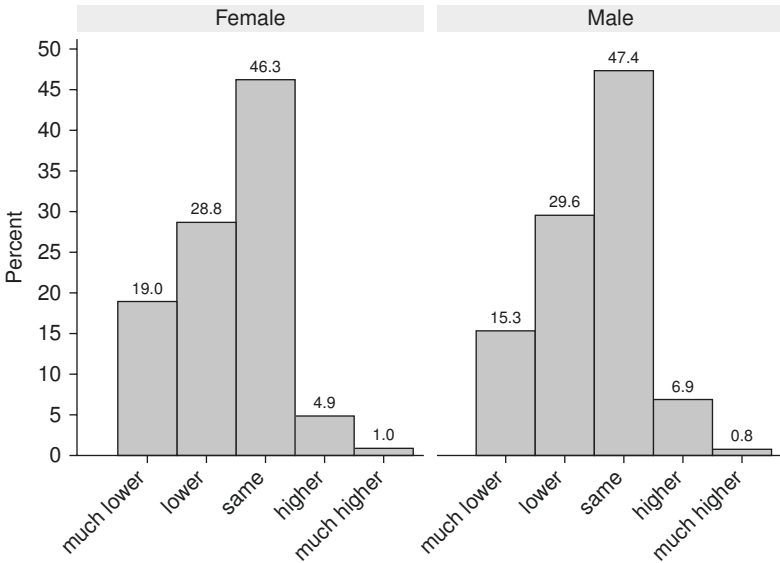


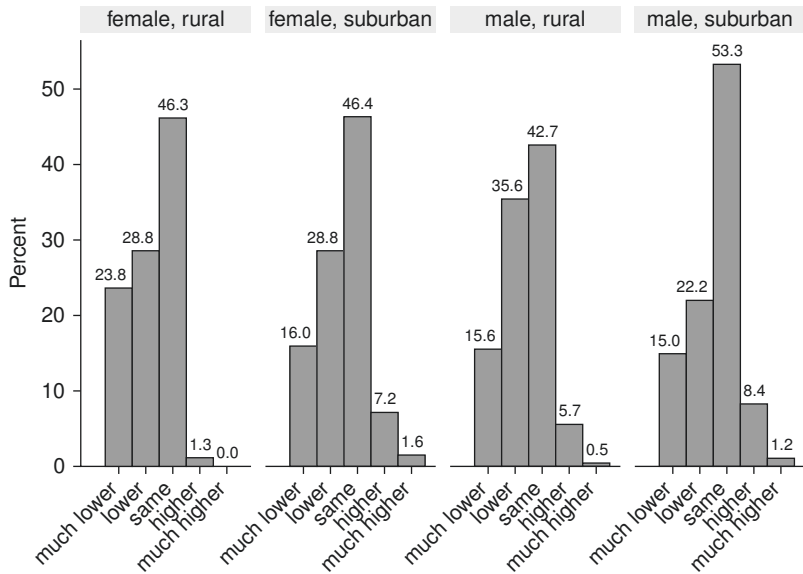
Figure 5.2 Gender-specific evaluation of the home community's quality of life compared to the national average

Source: Authors' own design.

evaluated the local quality of life as lower/higher, we have to test first for gender differences in the local quality of life ratings. Figure 5.2 shows quantitative results for the evaluation of local quality of life compared to the average quality of life in Poland for women and men separately.

On average 47% evaluate local quality of life as being as high as the national average quality of life in their country. In addition, many more of the interviewees evaluate their local quality of life as lower (29%) or much lower (17%) than higher (6%) or much higher (1%) than the national average.

Figure 5.3 shows slight differences between evaluations by men and women. Using a mean comparison test it becomes obvious that these differences are not statistically significant. Therefore, our results are in line with findings by Kubis and Schneider (2007), derived from a study in Germany at district level, in which men and women in the sample as a whole did not perceive the quality of life in their home region at all differently. The following section analyses the determinants of the quality of life evaluation with respect to a possible heterogeneity between women and men.



*Figure 5.3* Gender-specific evaluation of the home community’s quality of life, subdivided into suburban and rural regions, compared to the national average  
*Source:* Authors’ own design.

The individual quality of life rankings might also be influenced by the location of the home region, whether it is in a suburban or rural context. One might suppose there are different quality of life perceptions in rural versus suburban regions due to a differing endowment of local public goods and amenities (see Table 5.1). Figure 5.3 extends the gender-specific quality of life evaluation with a subdivision between rural and suburban home regions. Even though the pattern remains almost unchanged, the negative quality of life ranking by women and men living in rural regions is significant. In the following we investigate the origins of these evaluations. In order to analyse the reasons for those gender differences in the evaluation of the home region, the regional specific determinants of the quality of life rankings for suburban and rural villages for women and men are tested separately in the following section.

#### 4.2 Gender-specific determinants of quality of life

We used a multinomial logit approach to investigate the determinants of the categorical quality of life rankings.<sup>3</sup> Explanatory variables are

the satisfaction ratings regarding local living conditions. Applying a Likelihood Ratio (LR) test, we tested for combining dependent categories, so that if two outcomes are indistinguishable with respect to the variables model the estimates would be more efficient by combining them. Results show that the outcomes much higher and higher should be combined, along with much lower and lower. Therefore, in the following the analysed quality of life measure comprises three categories instead of five.

One stringent assumption of a multinomial logit model is that outcome categories for the model have the property of independence from irrelevant alternatives, or IIA (Long and Freese 2006).<sup>4</sup>

An important feature of the multinomial logit model is that it estimates  $k-1$  models, where  $k$  is the number of levels of the dependent variable. In this study we analyse three different ranks of quality of life, as in  $k = 3$ . We chose the quality of life rating *same* as the base model, where the coefficients listed below are related to the base outcome. In other words we estimate a model for much lower or lower quality of life relative to the same quality of life as the average, and a model for higher or much higher quality of life relative to the same quality of life as the average for Poland. Therefore, since the parameter estimates are relative to the reference group, the standard interpretation of the multinomial logit is that for a unit change in the predictor variable, the logit of the outcome relative to the referent group is expected to change by its respective parameter estimate, given that the variables in the model are held constant (Bruin 2006).

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 show the estimation results of the multinomial logit for women and men separately. Table 5.2 presents the results for the much lower or lower quality of life rankings relative to the same quality of life in the home region compared to the average for Poland, while Table 5.3 shows the estimation results for higher or much higher regional quality of life relative to the same national quality of life as average regions. Explanatory variables are seven amenities and disamenities standing for possible determinants of quality of life. In the case of Table 5.2 (gender-specific determinants of perceiving a *lower* quality of life in the home region than national average) a negative coefficient indicates an amenity and a positive coefficient indicates a disamenity. The interpretation of the estimation results of Table 5.3 (gender-specific determinants of perceiving a *higher* quality of life in the home region than national average) is reversed, so that a positive coefficient indicates an amenity and a negative coefficient indicates a disamenity.

Table 5.2 Gender-specific determinants in perception of a lower than national average quality of life

Base outcome: same quality of life	Female			Male		
	much lower, lower			much lower, lower		
	Coefficient	Std. Err.	P> z	Coefficient	Std. Err.	P> z
Accessibility	-0.24	0.22	0.28	-0.33**	0.15	0.03
Telephone system	0.78**	0.28	0.01	0.50**	0.19	0.01
Quality of the natural environment	-0.94**	0.39	0.02	-0.16	0.22	0.49
Job opportunities	-0.91***	0.26	0.00	-0.07	0.17	0.66
Health system	0.53*	0.31	0.09	0.65**	0.24	0.01
Cultural/social life in general	-0.78***	0.25	0.00	-0.53***	0.18	0.00
Safety of your neighbourhood	0.87**	0.41	0.04	0.18	0.27	0.51
Constant	0.83	1.61	0.61	-1.08	1.11	0.33

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.10$

Table 5.2 shows that gender differences only occur with respect to the significances and relative impacts. The results for the degree of satisfaction with accessibility, quality of the natural environment, job opportunities and neighbourhood safety are particularly conspicuous because we only find significant results for men and women. More definite gender-specific influences do not indicate that women's quality of life does not increase whereas men's quality of life decreases.

One interpretation of the results in Table 5.2 is that if the home region improves its telephone system such that the satisfaction increases by one unit, the multinomial logit odds for a lower quality of life in the home region relative to the average would be expected to increase by 0.78 units for females and 0.50 units for males, keeping all other variables constant. The same direction of impact is seen for the health system and neighbourhood safety. For these variables an increase in the endowment of the home region causes the multinomial logit odds for a lower quality of life in the home region relative to the average to increase, (i.e. a decrease in the home region's quality of life). Therefore, three significant disamenities and three significant amenities stand out for females. The estimation results for the males show two significant coefficients in each case. The common disamenity effect of the telephone and the health system is astonishing. One possible explanation might be that people link a

better local health system with an increase in elderly and sick persons in their home region, in other words, a better health system acts as a proxy for an ageing population, which is perceived as a disamenity. In case of the telephone system the effect might be interfered with a possible gain in information. Interviewees yield an information update regarding the relative quality of life of their home region from social network contacts who live outside their home region. From a political advice perspective, the women's significant negative results for the quality of natural environment, job opportunities and cultural and social life are particularly important. Politicians should focus on the environmental quality and cultural life amenities, public goods and economic circumstances if they aim to increase women's perception of local quality of life and thereby decrease the probability of women migrating.

The estimation coefficients listed in Table 5.3 are in line with these findings; in particular, the positive significant coefficient of the cultural and social life satisfaction measure supports our political advice. If the home region improves cultural and social life such that satisfaction increases by one unit, the multinomial logit odds for higher quality of life in the home region relative to the average would be expected to increase for females by 1.55 units, keeping all other variables constant. Cultural and social life is an important factor in the perception/evaluation of local quality of life for women rather than for men.

It is conceivable that the determinants of quality of life are changing with regard to the general endowment of rural or urban amenities in the home region. Therefore, we classified the home regions of the interviewees into villages that are located in suburban or rural regions (NUTS3 level). Surprisingly, the empirical results remain stable. The subdivision of the sample into rural and suburban locations causes no obvious change in the determinants of individual quality of life rankings. We receive similar significances for the different influencing factors, whereas their relative importance changes marginally. Therefore, our estimation results do not allow for the deduction of rural/suburban home region's specific determinants of quality of life for men or women. However, this finding can be seen as a robustness check for the determinants of quality of life determined previously. Since the results remain stable for women and men in both rural and suburban regions, the deduced preferences and policy advice are reinforced. In this regard it should be noted that the use of further explanatory variables and a more comprehensive recognition of individual heterogeneity (i.e. beyond gender-specific evaluations, personal income, level of education, age, marital status and embeddedness into social networks) might be important determinants when considering

*Table 5.3* Gender-specific determinants in perception of a higher than national average quality of life in the home region

Base outcome: same quality of life	Female			Male		
	higher, much higher			higher, much higher		
	Coefficient	Std. Err.	P> z	Coefficient	Std. Err.	P> z
Accessibility	2.02***	0.69	0.00	0.35	0.34	0.30
Telephone system	-0.87	0.59	0.14	0.75*	0.42	0.08
Quality of the natural environment	-0.11	0.70	0.87	-0.16	0.44	0.72
Job opportunities	0.07	0.56	0.90	0.50	0.33	0.13
Health system	-0.17	0.79	0.83	-0.20	0.48	0.68
Cultural/social life in general	1.55**	0.76	0.04	0.18	0.37	0.63
Safety of your neighbourhood	-0.82	1.02	0.42	0.35	0.50	0.48
Constant	-7.17***	3.58	0.05	-6.66***	2.14	0.00

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.10$

individual quality of life rankings. Insignificant correlations of age and marital status in contrast to significant correlations of education and personal income with the perceived local quality of life contain some information on which trends might occur. However, this chapter focuses the impact of amenities on quality of life regarding potential policy advice since local governments control local public goods and therefore determine the local quality of life. Thus, detailed analyses of interaction effects of the socio-economic variables named before and the perceived quality of life go beyond the scope of this paper and are left for future research.

## 5 Conclusions

Depopulation processes and selective migration are well-known challenges for the development of many rural areas in Europe. In this context the significance of individual perceptions of quality of life in determining an individual's migration decisions have been recognised for a long time (e.g. Tiebout 1956, Berger and Blomquist 1992, Borjas 1999, De Jong et al. 1983, Dustmann 2003, Gibson and McKenzie 2011, Greenwood 1997). Therefore, individual life satisfaction as a mediator between individual socio-economic variables and regional living conditions is a strong predictor of individual migration intentions.

The aim of this chapter is to gain a better understanding of migration decisions. Therefore, the pre-stage of regional migration decisions, the subjective evaluation of the home region's quality of life and the impact on individual satisfaction of local quality of life components, like job opportunities and the local health system, were considered.

Due to the fact that in many parts of Europe women tend to migrate from rural areas at higher rates than men (see, for example, the contributions of Camarero and Sampedro in Chapter 10 or Wiest in Chapter 1), gender-specific quality of life determinants were examined. We also investigated suburban and rural regions separately. The aim was to identify rural or suburban specific relationships of perceived quality of life and the individual degree of satisfaction with the local economy.

In line with recent studies, we found no gender differences in evaluating the quality of life. Using a multinomial logit approach, the quality of life ratings were linked to the individual degree of satisfaction with local living conditions and economic circumstances. When treating women and men separately, results show that the quality of the natural environment, job opportunities, and cultural and social life are decisive determinants of a higher quality of life rating. The results indicate neither rural nor suburban region-specific quality of life determinants, meaning that the determinants of quality of life do not differ with respect to the interviewees' home region. Moreover, general preferences can be deduced and allow for some political advice.

The empirical results of this chapter shed some light on how to design rural development and migration policies. Here the significant positive relation between job opportunities and quality of life shows that rural migration is clearly dominated by regional labour market conditions, and these are probably not specific to Poland. Beyond job opportunities, the results indicate that quality of life ratings and resultant migration decisions are significantly driven by preferences for certain qualities, like the quality of the natural environment or the cultural and social life amenities. Thus, an interesting question for local governments in rural areas might be to what extent migration patterns could be influenced by investing in a mixture of natural, social and cultural local amenities? Further investigations are necessary to answer this question. Indeed, the approach used in this chapter focuses on a pre-stage of migration decisions, satisfaction with local quality of life, but neglects the link between real migration decisions and the impacts of migration on the regional quality of life and rural development. For example, a net in- or out-migration of highly educated individuals impacts directly on local labour markets, according to the brain drain or brain gain hypothesis. Moreover, in a general equilibrium framework,

in- and out-migration of labour has spillover effects on the local economy via multiplier effects (Taylor et al. 2001). Thus, understanding the complex interactions of migration and economic development in rural regions is crucial to designing effective and efficient rural development policies. In particular, understanding the role of local amenities as a driver of rural in- and out-migration appears to be a promising avenue for enabling the promotion of rural development via innovative rural migration policies.

## Notes

1. The ADVANCED-EVAL project was coordinated by the Institute of Agricultural Economics at the University of Kiel in the Sixth Framework Programme, financed by the European Union (Contract No. 022708). The project ran from March 2006 to February 2009.
2. The RDI is a multi-dimensional (composite) index measuring the overall level of rural development and quality of life in individual rural regions within a given EU country. In the RDI the rural development domains are represented by hundreds of partial socio-economic, environmental, infrastructural and administrative indicators/variables at the NUTS4 level (e.g. 991 variables/indicators describing various aspects of rural development in Poland). The weights of economic, social and environmental domains entering the RDI index are derived empirically from the econometrically estimated intra- and inter-regional migration function. The RDI is empirically applied to the analysis of the main determinants of rural/regional development in individual rural areas during the years 2002–2005 in Poland and Slovakia at the NUTS4 level.
3. Multinomial logistic regression is a classification method that generalises logistic regression to multiclass problems, those with more than two possible discrete outcomes (Greene 2008).
4. The results of a Hausman test show that the IIA was not violated in our estimations.

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## **Part II**

# **Rural Labour Markets for Women – Restrictions and Opportunities**

# 6

## Gendered Rural Labour Markets and Intent to Migrate – A Case Study in Northwestern Germany

*Kim Philip Schumacher and Alexander Kunz*

### 1 Introduction

Internal migration is the most important factor for regional population development, especially in Germany. Besides east–(south)west migration, rural–urban migration plays a significant role and is discussed in media, politics and science. Due to the magnitude of east–west migration, population development in rural regions of western Germany is somewhat neglected in geographical research. It applies in particular to studies of the out-migration of young people and especially that of young women. This chapter calls for a greater attention towards internal migration, particularly of highly skilled people, and its relevance for the regional development of rural areas in eastern and western Germany. It includes a broader understanding of gendered migration patterns and the underlying economic and societal factors. Statistical analysis and the research presented in this chapter clearly demonstrate that non-prosperous rural areas in western Germany are also affected by selective migration. The population statistics of rural regions in the federal state of Lower Saxony in northwestern Germany provide interesting insights into this development; they show a population decline due to out-migration even though they are close to prosperous rural regions with growing economies, vital labour markets and with a growing population due to high birth rates and in-migration. Taking the age and gender peculiarities of this out-migration into account, this chapter presents findings from a case study conducted in the district of Wesermarsch in northern Lower Saxony (see Maps 6.1 and 6.2).

The aim of the study was to reveal factors in the decision-making process and the intentions of male and female pupils who left their home district after graduating. The structure of the respective rural labour markets is highly relevant as an explanatory factor of their intention to migrate. The labour markets in this and other rural regions in northwestern Germany are characterised by apparent gender differences. Manufacturing, machine building and a maritime economy are still of great importance, as are agribusiness and food production. Both are industries that are not that much sought after by female employees, but if so, are often characterised by female part-time employment or, so-called, mini-jobs, which re-inscribe gender imbalances in employment and labour markets, despite an overall economic success in some districts.

Against this backdrop and following a discussion of gendered internal migration and its effects on regional development in Germany, this chapter addresses the peculiarities of labour market structures and interrelated issues of work-related in- and out-migration in the region Weser-Ems in northwestern Germany. Special attention is given to gender differences. The findings from a case study survey show, besides other aspects, that a majority of the interviewees is expecting to leave the region in the future, regardless of the type of school they attend. It becomes clear that young women are more likely to leave because of a mismatch in the regional labour market and the availability of apprenticeship training positions or the tertiary education they are looking for. The deficits of the Wesermarsch in the eyes of the teenage respondents may give indications for policy makers and regional planning. A critical discussion of the gender specific out-migration into rural regions is necessary to raise awareness about gender equality and uneven regional development opportunities (Wiest and Leibert 2013).

## **2 Internal migration in Germany**

Currently Germany is witnessing a political debate about its status as an immigration country and the ways of how to integrate foreign migrants into society. There have been two major waves of immigration into Germany within the last 50 years: first the foreign workers recruited from southern Europe and Turkey in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a consequence of the *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic boom); and, in the second wave, emigrants from the former Soviet Union with German ancestors. Although less widely discussed in society, internal migration is statistically of much greater importance for local and regional population

development. In fact, internal migration is currently the main cause for regional differences in population development (Klüsener and Zagheni 2014: 169). The most prominent type of internal migration has been the enormous movement of people following German reunification from the federal states in East Germany to the west especially to the southern federal states. This period of intensive internal migration has received considerable attention in the literature (e.g. Fuchs-Schündeln and Schündeln 2009, Schultz 2009), not least due to its gendered structure (Stedtfeld and Kühntopf 2012, Wiest and Leibert 2013). It has overlaid the migration from northern Germany to the south and the general and continuous trend of rural–urban migration. The north–south migration pattern emerged in West Germany around 1970 due to the prosperous economic development of the southern federal states. It benefited from their orientation to high-tech manufacturing and a knowledge-based economy in contrast to the western and northern parts of the country that experienced a decline in heavy industry and shipbuilding (Decressin 1994). However, prior to the Second World War the eastern and, to a lesser extent, the northern parts of Germany were already losing population due to migration. At first the main destinations were heavy industrialised areas and then the quickly developing areas along the Rhine valley and Bavaria, far away from the German–German border (Klüsener and Zagheni 2014).

Nevertheless, the magnitude of migration is much lower than the differences in job opportunities and the level of provision of (tertiary) educational institutions would suggest from a purely economic standpoint. The social embeddedness into family and other networks in the current place of residence or at the potential destination play an important role (Klüsener and Zagheni 2014).

### **3 The relevance of gender in migration**

Traditionally migration studies paid little attention to gender specific aspects of migration (King 2012:146) as women were considered to be trailing migrants, or tied movers, and a focus on economic factors as explanatory variables prevailed (Bock 2006: 156). Most of the current research literature on gendered migration within geography and neighbouring disciplines deals with international migration, especially migration from the global south to the global north (Massey et al. 1993, Pessar and Mahler 2003, Bock 2006, Bailey 2010). A particular focus was on international migration flows within Europe, for example female workers from eastern European countries providing care services in

western European households (Hillmann and Wastl-Walter 2011). In Germany gender differences in migration patterns have been recognised for around two decades as they became a clearly visible feature of the large-scale east–west migration after the reunification. A new emphasis was now put on the study of internal migration.

In the national context the reasons for this gender specific migration have been particularly studied. This was followed by an interest in a resulting imbalance in the sex ratio in several regions and its influence on regional development and labour markets (Stedtfeld and Kühntopf 2012, Wiest and Leibert 2013). A particular focus is placed on the actual or possible re-migration (of women) (Matuschewski 2010). Migration of younger age groups is connected with gender specific education, job and family careers, all of these aspects are part of individual mobility biographies (Wiest and Leibert 2013, also James 2014). For example, there are more young women starting higher education at university level than young men. For the rural regions of origin this means an out-migration of young skilled women, which is reinforced by the out-migration due to job seeking and vocational training in occupations that are not adequately present in the home region. This leads to a significant disparity in the proportion of women and men in the younger age group (Wiest and Leibert 2013). In many regions the out-migration is compensated for by a return of the migrant population later in the life cycle when preferences for a rural lifestyle, single-family home and a networks of friends and family, especially for young parents, become more relevant. Nevertheless, many rural regions never make up their loss because the labour markets do not offer the more highly qualified jobs that are relevant to a decision to return, moreover, social integration in the destination region may be well developed by then. In addition, the development of a culture of out-migration, as observed by Wiest and Leibert (2013), may play a crucial role in the migration decision *per se* and create a lower possibility of return later on. Their study also showed that young men seem to be more attached or integrated into their home regions and tend to stay or migrate at later stages in their careers. This can be explained either by a greater compatibility with regional opportunities for education and vocational training or a higher flexibility in the choice of jobs or education/vocation in order to avoid migration (Wiest and Leibert 2013). Beside the economically driven explanations of rural out-migration of young people there is also evidence of underlying gender specific perceptions and a gendered nature of rural spaces, which strongly influence the migration decision (Donkersloot 2012, more generally Little and Panelli 2003). Bock (2006), for example,

highlights that rural areas may be regarded as good places for raising children, but girls do not consider rural areas as good places for (female) teenagers and young adults. Young women and girls leave rural areas more often compared to young men because of strong social control, lack of employment and boredom (Bock 2006). A move to a city represents a move towards a more exciting and independent life. In contrast, young rural men are supposed to have similar desires but in general face better opportunities for an adventurous life in rural areas as they are not as tightly controlled (Bock 2006). Another thesis in this context is that the out-migration of ambitious rural women might reinforce patriarchal gender orders as more traditional women and men stay (Phillips 1999 cited in Bock 2006:160).

#### **4 The significance of in-migration for the development of rural regions**

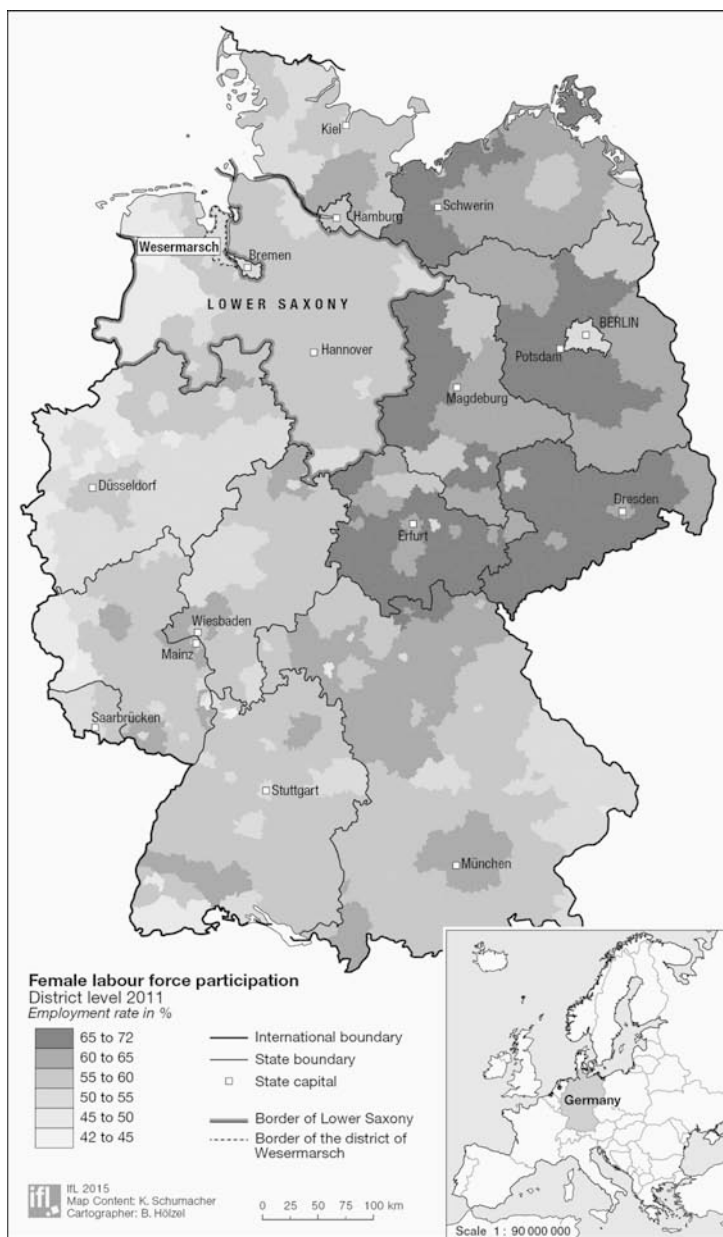
Migration is considered to be one of the most important factors for regional economic development (Matuschewski 2010). In a knowledge-based economy interest is focused on the migration of higher qualified persons, illustrated by the keywords brain drain, brain gain and brain circulation (Matuschewski 2010, Stockhorst 2012). Due to the currently relatively small amount of external migration from and into Germany, internal migration becomes more important for regional development, particularly, but not limited to, rural and peripheral regions (Rohr-Zänker 2001). Retaining or attracting human capital is essential for regional economic development. Therefore regions in eastern Germany that have lost population need to attract return migrants as a means of human capital based regional development (Matuschewski 2010). However, the classic economic theory can result in underestimation of the complexity of the migration decisions which often overestimates the economic factors (Matuschewski 2010: 82). In fact, as already pointed out, social relations in the region of origin and destination (Schneider et al. 2011), individual motives, the preparation and perception of the frame conditions (Matuschewski 2010) are all of central importance. On the other hand (frequent) migration seems to be more common for highly qualified people due to the necessary orientation on a supra-regional labour market and the (frequently) realised migration for tertiary education (Rohr-Zänker 2001). Arntz (2010) points out that job moves by highly skilled individuals are mainly driven by regional income differences, whereas for less skilled people the unemployment differences between regions are of greater significance. Given the importance of a qualified workforce and



tacit knowledge for regional development in a knowledge-based economy it is obvious that this means competition not only between firms but also between regions (de Hoyos and Green 2011). Following Florida's (2002) findings on the creative class and geographies of talent, highly qualified labour prefers urban areas with certain social settings, such as openness and diversity (see also Schmidt in Chapter 7). If this holds true, rural areas face multiple disadvantages in this competition. Since adequate job offers for highly qualified people are restricted, changes between workplace and opportunities for dual earners are limited, or related to very long commuting distances. Beyond that, rural areas commonly lack most of the leisure attractions and cultural offerings highly qualified people might be accustomed to from their previous living conditions in urban areas. Furthermore wages are often lower in rural areas (Rohr-Zänker 2001, Chilla et al. 2008, Arntz 2010, Stockhorst 2012, Gärtner 2014).

## **5 Gendered rural labour markets in northwestern Germany**

In the 1990s Sackmann and Häusermann (1994) claimed that the pattern of female employment in West Germany had been stable for the previous 100 years. Economic and labour market related factors cannot fully explain this phenomenon and the observed north-south differences. The authors demonstrated that the main factors for rising female employment are rooted in societal changes like the 'modernization of life-styles' (Sackmann and Häusermann 1994: 1377). Another determining factor is the overall political and economic system. The differences in female labour force participation between East and West Germany as a result of 40 years of different development are clearly visible, even 25 years after reunification (see Map 6.1). In the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) more egalitarian structures in terms of full-time female employment and a dense provision of childcare facilities, as well as lower segregation in male- and female-dominated jobs, especially in manufacturing, were characteristic features. In contrast, in West Germany a clear differentiation between typically male and female occupations prevailed, even today. In addition, a high share of female part-time employment is predominant, fostered by complex income tax regulations for married/non-married couples, deficits in public childcare facilities and, to a large extent, the persistence of traditional family and role models and ideas of motherhood. Those framework conditions are one of many clearly visible ones in the employment structure in rural areas of northwestern Germany.



Map 6.1 Female labour force participation in Germany 2011, case study location

Source: Federal Employment Agency, author's own design.

In the period 2005–2011 the west of Lower Saxony experienced a solid growth in employment and an increase in the number of firms (NIW 2012). The unemployment rate in some rural districts of western Lower Saxony was below average, sometimes as low as 3% to 4%. This was, to some extent, the result of an economic structure based on many small and medium-sized firms, many family owned and managed. The diversity of businesses secured a certain resilience against crises. The boom of the agribusiness during that time also had positive effects on employment and the formation of firms. The agribusiness and food industry is the second largest sector in Lower Saxony (behind automobile production) and benefited significantly from rising prices of food products, opening up of new markets in eastern Europe and economic globalisation, as well as the restructuring of production as a result of new laws and regulations.

In general, a higher labour force participation of men (78%) compared to women (69%) is a characteristic feature (NIW 2012: 63) in Lower Saxony. The main regional difference in male employment can be seen in the regional unemployment rate. In contrast, the labour force participation of women shows high regional differences with low participation especially in the coastal regions and the west. A higher female proportion in the work force is not even observable in the tourist regions along the coast with the exception of the Frisian Islands. A close correlation between the dominance of manufacturing and lower rates of female employment is evident, as is a high rate of male full-time employment. Part-time work (18%) and marginal employment (17%) are characteristics of the female labour force participation in Lower Saxony and is more pronounced in the west and the coastal regions (NIW 2012: 71). Only 29% of women work full-time (NIW 2012: 71). This indicates a future risk for female poverty in retirement age. Therefore, rural labour markets in the prosperous regions face some very specific problems, as the stated lack of a qualified workforce can only be compensated for by in-migration. On the other hand, the potential of un- or underemployed women is neglected and no attention is paid to measures intended to raise girls' and young women's interest in jobs and vocational training in manufacturing, especially machine building. Due to rather low activity in research and development, the number of highly qualified jobs is limited (Rohr-Zänker 2001:99). This regional mismatch of qualifications and opportunities in the labour market makes it difficult for dual career couples and two earner households to find appropriate employment. A circumstance, sometimes reinforced by a regional culture, that, according to Bock (2006), tolerates or welcomes the role

of housewives and poses severe difficulties in organising childcare, especially for in-migrated families without the benefits of a social and family network (James 2014). Several districts have inaugurated programmes to attract in-migration of young families or a return migration of those young people who had left for higher education, stressing the new possibilities in childcare and the positive effects of a rural lifestyle, security and amenities. However, the degree of free choice to migrate because of soft regional location factors has to be judged carefully and may vary considerably between occupations (Chilla et al. 2008: 264). In the less prosperous regions young people, especially women, have to leave their home regions for further education and jobs or have to accept seasonal employment in agriculture and tourism. The employment of workers from southeastern European countries as fruit and vegetable pickers (mostly women) and in the food industry (often men, especially in slaughterhouses) often has a seasonal or temporary character. Lower Saxony has recently witnessed a critical political and media debate about salaries, the form of related employment contracts (e.g. official but not actual self-employment) and the run down and crowded housing situation for some workers from eastern and southeastern Europe (e.g. DER SPIEGEL 8/2005, NWZonline 28.06.2013).

## **6 Case study: intentions to migrate in the Wesermarsch**

As pointed out, gender is an important analytical category for explaining the out-migration of young people from rural areas. In Germany east-west migration and its gendered structure has been extensively researched. Nevertheless, the literature is lacking evidence about migration between similarly well-developed regions within one country (Matuschewski 2010), or research with a focus on gender in the context of internal migration within West Germany. In order to close this gap, this case study addresses out-migration from a more peripheral region in north-western Germany, with special attention to the gender imbalance and the social relations that keep people from migrating. The study is based on an analysis of the migration motives of teenagers. Beyond the impact of regional labour market structures a particular focus was placed on other, non-economic, push and pull factors relevant to young people's migration decisions. Hence, the study has to deal with three different layers of analysis: the region, with a discussion of economic sectors, labour markets, regional development and a debate about brain drain and brain gain; the family, or household, and individual layer, which is most important for an understanding of the motivation to migrate; and

finally the role of the social environment that keeps young people from migrating.

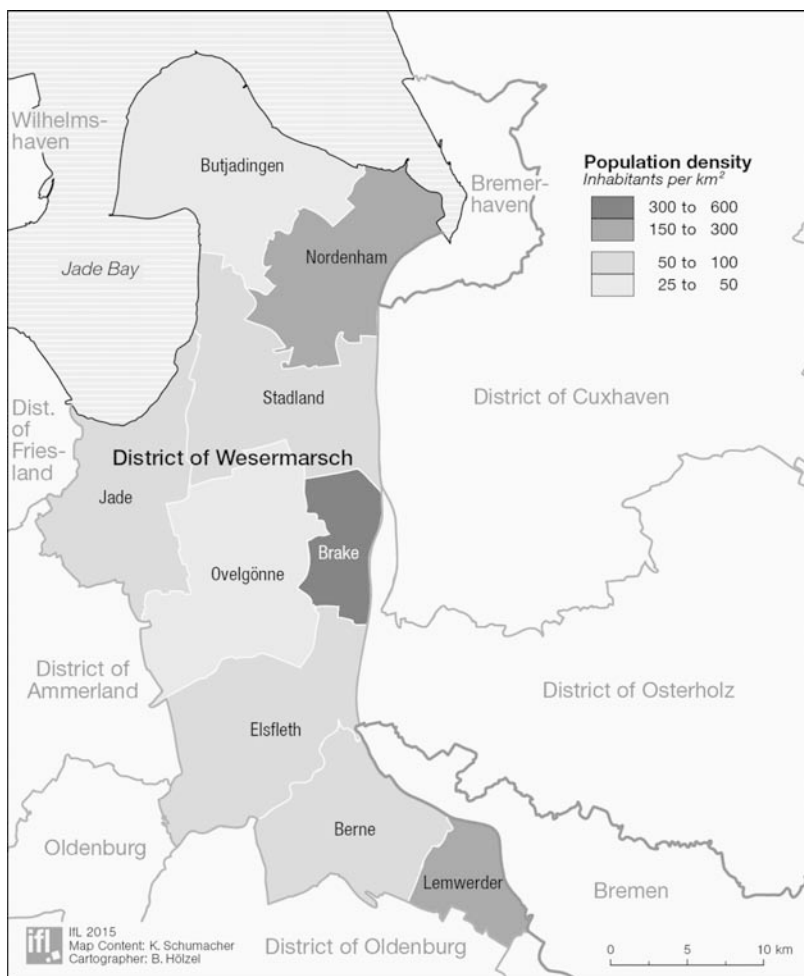
The survey was conducted in the district of Wesermarsch in the coastal part of Lower Saxony. A standardised questionnaire survey among pupils in their 10th grade was carried out dealing with the evaluation of the home region and intentions to migrate after graduation.

### **6.1 Economic structure and population dynamics of the Wesermarsch**

The Wesermarsch district in the north of the federal state of Lower Saxony has a size of 822 km<sup>2</sup> and stretches from south to north along the lower course and estuary of the river Weser. To the north it occupies a peninsula between the Weser estuary, the North Sea and the Jade Bay. In the south the district borders the city and federal state of Bremen (548,000 inhabitants) and the city of Oldenburg (162,000 inhabitants). The population size by the end of 2012 was 89,338 inhabitants in nine communities (these are, from north to south, Butjadingen, Nordenham, Stadland, Jade, Ovelgönne, Brake, Elsfleth, Berne and Lemwerder) with the town of Brake (ca. 15,000 inhabitants) as the district capital (see Map 6.2). The rural and peripheral character of the district is reflected in the low population density of 108 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> compared to 164 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> in Lower Saxony and 229 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> for the whole of Germany.

Rural districts in Lower Saxony are dominated by small and medium-sized family owned enterprises. The Wesermarsch is an exception with a company structure that is characterised by large enterprises (NIW 2012: 51). The biggest single employer is an aerospace supplier that produces parts for Airbus aircraft and is integrated into the supply chain for the larger aircraft parts production in Bremen and Hamburg. Until recently, the nuclear power plant of Unterweser in the community of Stadtland was another major employer with about 380 employees. Other important businesses are sea cable manufacturing in Nordenham and the seaports in Brake and Nordenham (Ramms 2011: 13).

The demographic structure in the district of Wesermarsch is characterised by variability over time. Migration is the relevant factor in explaining this dynamic. As in most other West German regions there was a large influx of migrants and refugees who had to leave the former German territories in the east after the Second World War. In combination with the, so-called, baby boom in the early 1960s this resulted in rising population numbers. Shifting to a more natural population development from the 1960s onwards the population in the Wesermarsch



Map 6.2 Population density in Wesermarsch, case study region

Source: Author's own design.

remained fairly stable. In the 1980s the ongoing process of population decline began. This was, in a minor part, due to a negative population balance resulting from lower numbers of children and an ageing population. More important was the growing out-migration to other areas, especially larger cities, leading to a negative migration and population balance, a rather common process in German rural areas. This

development was significantly interrupted between 1988 and 1998 when Germany received large in-migration from, so-called, 'resettlers' (Koller 1997) from the countries of the former Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> However, by 2004 the migration balance and the natural population development were negative again. From 2000 to 2011 the Wesermarsch lost 4.4% of its population. Even though almost all rural districts in the coastal areas of Lower Saxony show a significant decline in population, the development in the Wesermarsch is distinct. Based on population projections, the population will decrease faster compared to the other coastal districts (NIW 2012: 43).

Looking at the sub-levels of the communities only the community of Elsfleth is not shrinking. It is close to the prosperous university city of Oldenburg and has an institution of tertiary education. The other communities, in particular those with an economy largely dependent on the secondary sector and marine services, are losing population, especially those located towards the more peripheral north of the district.

Migration to and from the Wesermarsch is not only spatially selective but also in terms of age structure and gender. According to the official statistics the migrant population consists to a great extent of young people belonging to the 18–24 age group, who move away to obtain tertiary education or vocational training (LSKN 2013). In this age group out-migration outnumbers in-migration, with the latter often being re-migration after three or four years of education. Within this age group we can observe a much higher mobility of young women compared to men. Besides this, their share of return migrants is lower, resulting in a small but visible net loss of women within the district. Additionally, the out-migration of young women happens quite soon after finishing secondary school (*Mittlere Reife, Abitur, Fachabitur*). In the German education system the basic level of secondary school is the *Hauptschule*, which ends after nine years of school. The next level is *Realschule*, which finishes after ten years and is the common basis for vocational training in skilled crafts and trades and the service economy. In Lower Saxony these schools are now more often combined into, so-called, *Oberschulen*. The *Gymnasium* is the highest level of school education with 12 or 13 years of school attendance and the entry qualification for tertiary university education.

Young men out-migrate over a longer period of time, stretching over several years. This less concentrated migration results from being (officially) registered as 'at home' during military or civilian service or when completing two- or three-year vocational training in the home district

and who only migrate afterwards for a higher education at an university or a job elsewhere.

This migration behaviour is a result of the economic and sectoral structure in the district of Wesermarsch. The secondary sector provides mostly typical 'male' jobs, giving young men options for vocational training or a first job in their home region, while restricting the opportunities for young women looking for typically 'female' jobs or vocational training. In addition, in the rural parts of Lower Saxony we can observe a higher share of females finishing secondary education with *Abitur* and a somewhat higher motivation to study at an institution of higher education, such as a university or a university of applied sciences. Moreover, the general trend stated above, that mobility increases with higher levels of education, could be affirmed by the statistics for the study area, which show that also in higher age groups fewer women than men migrate or re-migrate into the district of Wesermarsch, which again seems to be related to the structure of the economy and the respective employment options. During the period 2008 to 2012, 31.5% more men moved into the district (LSKN 2013). From a spatial point of view, losses of female inhabitants are higher in the more peripheral coastal communities. In contrast, Elsfleth, with its special characteristic as a community with an institution of higher education, records an in-migration of young women. The population statistics portray a clear preference for the larger cities surrounding the Wesermarsch, like Bremen, Oldenburg, Wilhelmshaven and Delmenhorst.

## 6.2 Empirical approach: a survey with students

The empirical study was conducted in April and May 2013 (see Kunz 2013). In Germany, it is not possible to obtain address data of interregional migrants to perform a survey on the motivation to migrate after the migration process. Therefore, it was decided to do an ex-ante survey by asking about intentions to migrate. Even though a subjective intention to migrate is still not the causal variable, however the intention is the essential precondition for action (Schneider et al. 2011: 122). Because of the significant share of out-migrants in the younger age group of 18 to 24 the focus was on pupils in their final year of school. Those young people between the ages of 15 and 19 will soon have to decide whether to leave the district for their future education and/or jobs or to stay in their home area and search locally for the desired employment and education opportunity.

A quantitative approach, including the development and distribution of a questionnaire, was chosen for the survey. As a first step the different



secondary schools within the Wesermarsch district were contacted by post to get permission to conduct the questionnaires with the senior years. Out of 16 schools four agreed to allow and support the survey. Their teachers passed the questionnaires to the pupils, who filled them in during class. In total, out of 400 distributed questionnaires 273 were filled out, resulting in a good return rate of 68%. The majority of respondents (93%) were aged between 15 and 17. The sample was well distributed across the different school types (42 *Gymnasium*, 80 *Realschule*, 41 *Hauptschule* and 110 *Oberschule*) and had an almost perfect gender balance, with 50.9% female and 49.1% male respondents, which represents the slightly higher proportion of girls at the *Gymnasium*. These shares are in line with the statistics on a district level and in the federal state in general. Unfortunately, the spatial distribution across the district was limited to the communities of Berne, Brake and Lemwerder. Therefore, no conclusions could be drawn about differences between more central and more peripheral communities.

The questionnaire covered questions regarding attachment to the home region and what the pupils liked and disliked about the Wesermarsch. They were asked for their judgement regarding their future possibilities, the environment and infrastructure, and their plans for future education, job or training after school. The main focus was on their intention to leave and return at a later stage and the respective factors influencing this decision.

### 6.3 Empirical findings: a high willingness to leave the Wesermarsch

Many students who took part in the survey stated a definite intention to leave the district after finishing school (39% of respondents). For another third of the students out-migration was a possible option (see Figure 6.1). Only a very limited number of 19 teenagers (7%) stated a clear preference for staying at home. There is only a small gender bias in the stated intentions with more girls definitely intending to migrate and being less undecided. This is in contrast to the statistical evidence of significantly more young women leaving the Wesermarsch compared to men. The realisation of out-migration seems to be significantly determined by the actual opportunities for getting a job or an apprenticeship position. In the group of respondents attending a *Gymnasium*, which qualifies for higher education, and thus makes migration necessary, almost 95% expressed the intention to migrate or at least to think about this option. A very interesting result of the study is the fact that the majority of pupils from *Realschule* (75%), *Oberschule* (69%) and even

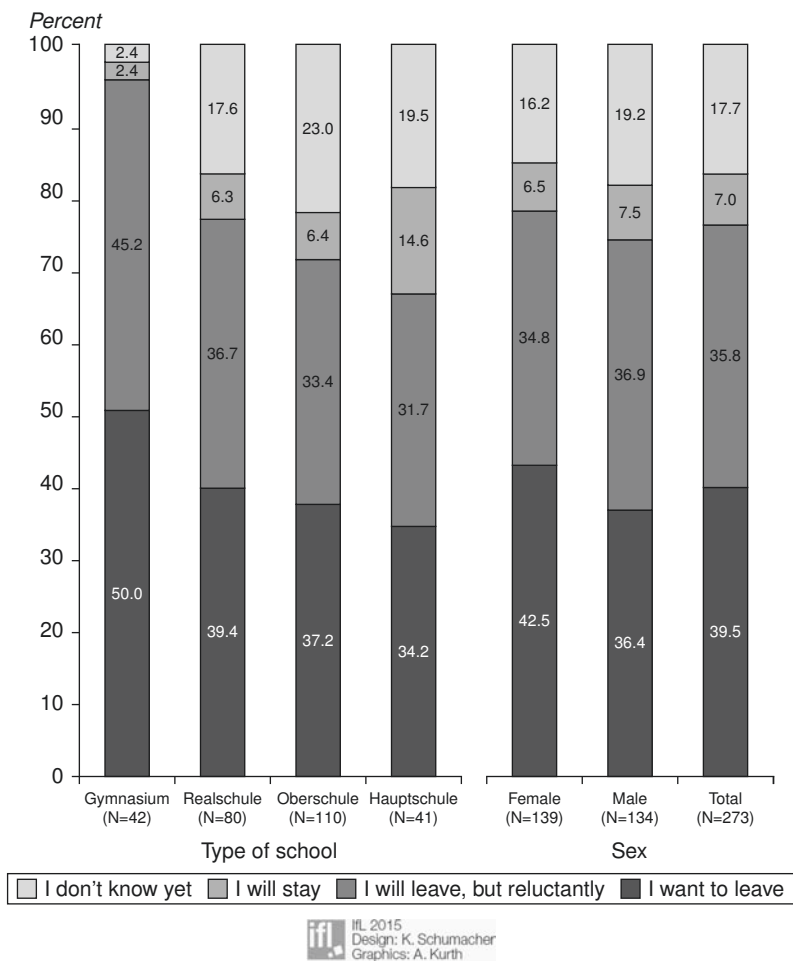


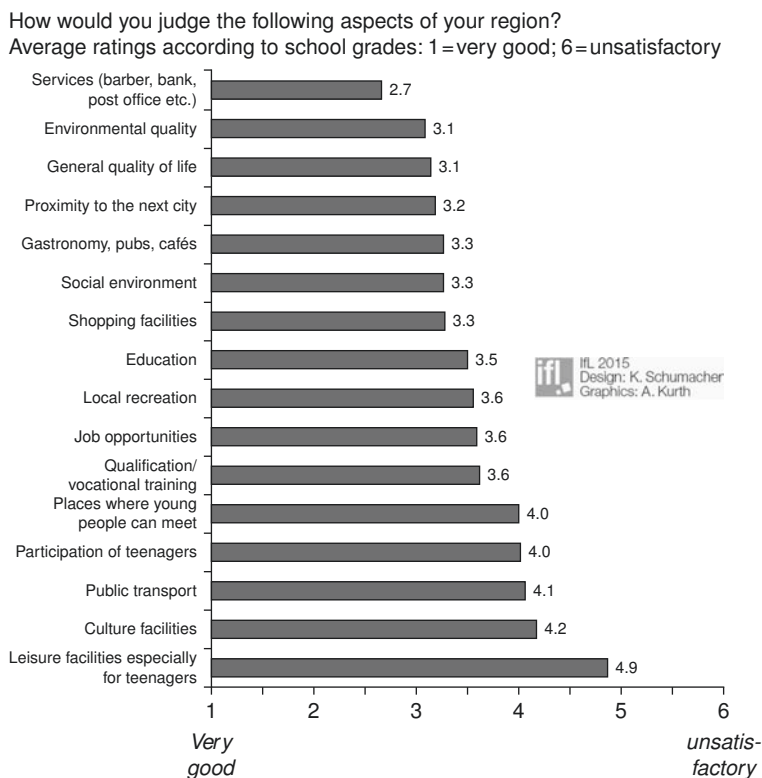
Figure 6.1 Intention to migrate by type of sex and school

Source: Author's own survey.

*Hauptschule* (66%) also articulated a high willingness to migrate sooner or later (Figure 6.1).

This is striking because out-migration is more often associated with higher qualified persons (e.g. Schubarth and Speck 2009). When asked about the desired destination the respondents (63 of 273) named the larger cities in the vicinity, like Bremen and Oldenburg (both university cities), Delmenhorst and Hamburg and Berlin. This is in line with official migration statistics showing high shares of migration to surrounding

cities and their suburban fringe. Nevertheless, the majority of out-migration is directed to other destinations within Lower Saxony or the rest of Germany (LSKN 2013). Referring to social embeddedness and satisfaction with the home region as major factors influencing the decision to migrate, the respondents were asked about things they disliked or would miss in the Wesermarsch (Figure 6.2). The students appreciated the landscape and the quietness of the rural regions (57%), the tight social networks (19%) and close social relationships (18%). These factors are often associated with home by rural populations and are also the main reason for people to move to rural areas (e.g. Bijker et al. 2012). The teenagers disliked the lack of possibilities or facilities for leisure activities (39%), insufficient public transport (29%) and missing shopping opportunities (19%) in their district. Pupils were asked to judge and rank



*Figure 6.2* Student evaluation of the home region

*Source:* Author's own survey.

different location factors of their home region by giving marks, with one being excellent and six being very bad. It is striking that the region was assessed overall as rather unfavourable, no mark better than three was awarded by the students. In declining order, factors like quality of life, natural environment, social environment and pubs were marked with a three on average, followed by education and job options with 3.5. The most negative mark was assigned to leisure possibilities for teenagers (five). A lack of options for cultural activities, public transport and the existence of facilities where teenagers can meet were expressed. In general, no preference for a rural lifestyle among the young respondents was discernible, with 13% expressing a clear preference for an urban cultural environment. A small number of students (5%) made it clear that their current lifestyle was the main reason for their intention to migrate. Nevertheless, a certain negative attitude among teenagers, and especially rural teenagers, has to be kept in mind as a kind of expression that the adult world does not provide enough space for young people in this age group (e.g. Philo 1992).

The most important factors for a migration decision are, nevertheless, economic arguments and, in the case of the interviewed teenagers, their future education. After finishing their current school, 48% wanted to start vocational training, 30% wanted to continue school education and 14% planned to start tertiary education at a university or university of applied sciences. The majority of students stated that they were working for a future occupation in the tertiary sector (51%), mostly commercial vocations, care industry and social services. More than a third of the students wanted to work in the secondary sector and in trade and crafts. However, hidden in these aggregated figures was a strong gender division among occupation preferences; only 10% of the girls showed an interest in jobs and vocational training in the manufacturing sector and trade and crafts compared to 55% of the boys. Regarding commercial jobs and vocational training in the tertiary sector it was the other way around, with 22% of male respondents and 65% of female respondents looking for an occupation in this sector. This shows that the clear gender segregation of the labour market with 'typical' female or male jobs was mirrored in the interviewed group of pupils. If related to the regional labour markets this is highly indicative for the out-migration of young people, especially for women, since the economic structure is dominated by the manufacturing sector and offers fewer options for jobs and vocational training in the tertiary sector. Out of 203 teenagers 22% stated that their intention to migrate was the reason for better possibilities for further education elsewhere.

As documented in other studies (e.g. Bock 2006, Donkersloot 2012), the less favoured rural lifestyle and the embeddedness into networks are relevant determinants of migration decisions. This also applied to the students in our study. About one-fifth mentioned family and friends as an important factor for staying at home while others mentioned an already existing network of friends in a larger city they intended to move to. The process of making a decision to migrate thus is clearly influenced by social and economic factors, while the latter is more dominant with regard to future education. This leaves the interesting phenomenon of re-migration, or circular migration, as an open question with specific relevance for rural development. Almost 60% of those respondents who were willing to leave the Wesermarsch also stated an intention to return at a later stage and 12% made it clear that they wanted to return after future education. Only 15% stated that they did not want to return later, while 13% said they did not know yet. A return migration depends on a certain set of preconditions, with the labour market as the most important factor. From the teenagers' perspectives, job opportunities, as well as the range of leisure, cultural and shopping possibilities, need to be improved to raise the probability of re-migration. On the other hand it is not clear how a different demand of lifestyle, housing situation, child care or care for the elderly provided or needed by the family later on in the life cycle might change this judgement. Nonetheless, it is an indication of a continued brain drain from the rural region of the Wesermarsch as the selective loss of population, especially women, will continue.

The results from the survey fit into the depiction of the migration situation of the Wesermarsch district given by an analysis of the statistical data. However, we have based our arguments on a limited number of questionnaires and are aware of the difficulties of interviewing teenagers with questionnaires in class, because it cannot be fully guaranteed that all students fully understood the meaning of the questions, even though a pre-test had been conducted. In addition, it is clear that for some the decision to migrate was already on their agenda, while for others, who will continue school for more years it was still a theoretical one.

Our results are in line with findings by Wiest and Leibert (2013) who analysed the migration patterns of young women in rural areas of Saxony-Anhalt in eastern Germany and the study by Chilla et al. (2008) in the low mountain region of Hassberge in northern Bavaria – a remote region without institutions of tertiary education. They emphasise the great importance of the perception of job opportunities and higher wages in urban areas or other regions among future migrants

as a major pull factor (Berck et al. 2014, for Swedish evidence). Still, it remains unclear to what degree those estimations are based on actual or supposed wage differences and to what extent the often higher costs of living are considered. This resulted in a more negative judgement of the situation at home and a higher willingness to migrate among the interviewed persons, especially the young women. The study in the Hassberge assumes that people coming from a rural region will prefer a more rural setting later in life, but rather often a suburban one. The results of the study in the Wesermarsch presented in this chapter indicate that the university cities in the wider region profit from the migration process.

## **7 Conclusions and outlook**

The case study dealing with the intentions and reasons of pupils to migrate, clearly revealed that a majority of interviewees were quite certain to leave their rural home region. The pupils were very aware of their situation in terms of jobs and future training opportunities, but the actual decision is based on a variety of factors – with all the limitations of generalising the results from a limited survey. The structure of the regional labour markets and the strong evidence of the existence of male and female job preferences are explanatory factors for migration behaviour, previous considerations and reflections. Therefore, more attention has to be paid to the individual motivation of the migrants in terms of economic factors, social embeddedness and the pull and push factors of the region of origin and destination. For rural regions like the Wesermarsch, it is very difficult to actively keep young people from moving away if there is a perceived mismatch regarding job opportunities. The active promotion of local opportunities for vocational training and jobs are one possibility. Besides this, it seems to be fruitful to raise girls' and young women's interest in jobs that are typically male ones and mostly better paid, to counteract out-migration tendencies and a future lack of qualified staff. In order to turn the brain drain into a brain circulation the availability of appropriate infrastructures and a climate of welcome seem to be important preconditions to attract return migrants later in their lives. As a conclusion our study and previous research points to the significance of the individual perception of regional opportunities and of the impact of socio-spatial discourses alongside important economic factors guiding individual migration decisions. However, the perception of these push and pull factors reveals a gender specific component.

## Note

1. This population group consists of the descendants of German people and their families who migrated to Russia in the 18th century and were, due to German law (nationality by descent), able to claim citizenship and resettle in Germany.

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# 7

## Women in Creative Jobs and Living in Rural Areas – A Contradiction?

*Susanne Schmidt*

### 1 Introduction

In academic and political discourses, gender preferences for certain occupations are often considered with regard to the challenges of demographic change. With the predicted shortage of skilled labour in Germany politics, the media and business are promoting campaigns to increase the share of women in technical fields, the, so-called, MINT<sup>1</sup> occupations, traditionally the domain of male employees (Quaiser-Pohl 2012). In the context of this chapter, however, the investigation of women and their relationship to specific occupational groups focuses on an occupational area where a high share of women is a characteristic feature, the creative sector. Since Florida (2004) found a positive relationship between economic growth and the accumulation of a creative workforce in US cities, the creative sector has received particular attention in discussions on regional development in post-modern societies on an international level. According to his findings, creative clusters strengthen economic growth by stimulating a dynamic, open and innovative urban environment and are pull factors for business, capital and innovation. Even though Florida's analysis focused on urban development, the relationship between economic growth and the development of creative sectors in rural areas caught the interest of researchers (e.g. Mossig 2011, Ermann 2011). Given the greater willingness of young women to leave rural-peripheral regions due to a lack of occupational choice and related negative impacts on rural development due to a female brain drain (Wiest et al. 2013), the significance of the creative sector as an occupational field that potentially attracts women is worth considering.

In Germany 5% of all employees are in the creative sector (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2010). Beyond the relevance of this branch

for the local economy, as demonstrated by Florida, the decision to focus on this part of the labour market, despite its rather small percentage of employees, is based on the above average proportion of women working in this field. Since the share of women working in the creative sector accounts for 67% (compared to 46% across all occupations), it can be regarded as a female dominated branch. However, certain aspects of this occupational field are comparably under researched in Germany, such as the significance of rural–urban differences in the distribution of the creative work force and gender issues.

It is a common assumption that creative workers predominantly live in metropolitan areas due to the prevailing atmosphere, social climate and available infrastructure, so this chapter investigates whether the share of female employees in creative occupations is significantly higher in urban compared to rural regions or whether this assumption can be disproved. The chapter aims to answer the questions, are there urban–rural differences with regard to the distribution of women in creative jobs in Germany and is it possible to identify the determinants?

Section 2 is a literature review that deals with the allocation of creative employment and the distribution of female labour force participation in Germany. Section 3 presents the research approach and a description of the database. The research design was based on descriptive statistics to show the distribution of women in creative occupations in Germany according to a rural–urban typology. Section 4 focuses on possible determinants for allocating women in creative sectors in Germany thereby deriving hypotheses for the subsequent analysis. Before the hypotheses are tested the spatial distribution of women in creative occupations is described.

## **2 Female labour participation and the creative labour market in Germany: a literature review**

Because there is hardly any research that focuses on female labour force participation in creative occupations, the following brief literature review targets both the distribution of female labour force participation in Germany and recent studies dealing with the distribution of the creative sector, its impact on economic development and working conditions for women in the creative field.

### **2.1 Regional differences in female labour force participation in Germany**

Most of the literature on female labour force participation in Germany refers to the reunification of East and West Germany in 1989 and 1990

since there are considerable cultural differences related to different societal role models. In West Germany the male breadwinner model, with a working father and a wife who stayed at home to take care of the children, was traditionally favoured, while female labour force participation was always supported and encouraged in the GDR, resulting in higher female employment rates. The reasons for the greater acceptance of working women in the former GDR might be explained on the one hand by economic necessity and on the other hand by an ideological perspective on women's social and economic role. These different cultural imprints are still mirrored in the higher share of working women in former GDR regions compared to the situation in West Germany (Erler 2009). Birg et al. (2007) and Erler (2009) underline this observation in their analysis of female labour force participation in all districts of Germany, stating that living in either East or West Germany is the only decisive factor in determining the degree of female labour force participation. The highest labour force participation rates of women within Germany can be found in regions with an accumulated population density above 300,000 inhabitants. However, the urban–rural differences are rather small in comparison to the East–West differences on national level.

## **2.2 Distribution and impact of the creative branch**

Most of the literature on the impact of the creative class on socio-economic development refers to Florida (2004), who highlighted a positive relation between the significance of the creative class and economic growth in the US cities of Austin, Boston, San Francisco and Washington DC. According to Florida the creative workforce generally clusters in metropolitan cities due to employment opportunities and – equally important – prevailing lifestyles. Determinants such as ethnical influences or the range of cultural events facilitate the integration of foreigners in a city. Furthermore, the mixture of different people, in terms of nationality, occupation and personal characteristics, is supposed to stimulate creative processes, which in turn triggers innovation and economic growth. On the other hand, Fleming (2009) focused on rural areas when examining regional development and the accumulation of creative branches in the USA. According to her findings, the impact of cultural industries on rural development is less straightforward because of scarce resources in terms of infrastructure in the countryside, social isolation and fragmentation. These barriers are supposed to hamper spillover effects. In this respect the study of rural areas in Sweden by Skoglund and Jonsson (2013) showed that the expansion of the creative

economies lags behind mainly due to inefficient and selective subsidy by public funds compared to other fields.

With regard to Germany, there are some studies that investigate the distribution of creative labour and the influencing factors. Mossig (2011), for example, showed that urban development profited from the economic rise of the creative sector in the period between 2003 to 2008. In contrast, several rural and peripheral regions even experienced a decline with regard to employment rates within the creative sector during the same time span.

Fritsch and Stützer (2009) concluded in their study of all German districts and district-free cities that the main determinants for the distribution of creative people in Germany are ethnicity, cultural diversity and access to public services such as health care and education. However, employment opportunities in general do not seem to determine the share of creative persons in a region. Furthermore, they observed a relationship between economic growth in a region and creative individuals, but the direction of this relationship is not clear. Fritsch and Stützer (2009) found that the share of creative workers was above average in cities compared to rural regions. They showed that the percentage of the creative workforce is significantly higher in medium-sized towns or cities which show the following characteristics: they are either famous for their quality of life (e.g. Freiburg or cities near Lake Constance); or they have large manufacturing sectors or company headquarters (e.g. Darmstadt). Gottschalk and Hamm (2011) also highlight, for example, the rural districts of Munich, which are characterised by high economic prosperity, as an important accumulation point for creative people. Additionally, Ermann (2011) states that particularly in the largest cities, highlighting Berlin, Hamburg, München and Köln, the share of creative workers compared to the total population is the highest. Beyond that he points out some agglomerations of creative work in parts of rural Germany. In some cases those creative clusters indicate the existence of artists' villages (*Künstlerdorf*) and fairs that sell local artists' products. However, he states that, generally, these initiatives do not quantifiably impact the local economy, but their existence may positively influence the image of the region. An important reason for the different results and conclusions with regard to the spatial distribution and impact of the creative sector in the studies presented above is the database. For example, Gottschalk and Hamm (2011) excluded creative freelancers while Fritsch and Stützer (2009) and Ermann (2011) did include them by estimating their influence on the allocation of creative people, based on a statistic provided by an insurance established explicitly for creative people (*Künstlersozialkasse*).

### 2.3 Working conditions for women in the creative sector

When considering women in creative occupations the focus is frequently on flexible working arrangements (e.g. Eichhorst, Marx and Tobsch 2013). In addition, Haak (2006) found the wage gap between women and men for the median income to be smaller in the creative sector than across all occupations. Often, the creative sector is considered attractive in terms of its flexible working hours compared to full-time employment and more or less regular contractual relationships (e.g. freelancer) as a way to reconcile family and private life. Also Lehner (2009) regards flexible working arrangements in the creative field as positive for mothers since they can schedule their days accordingly and spend more time with their families. Burn and Kirkpatrick (2008), for example, discovered in the UK that there were a substantial number of mothers in rural areas who started handicraft businesses – which belong to the creative field – and sold their products online once their children were old enough to allow mothers to focus their attention on their business. The mothers argued that they enjoyed the flexible working environment, but also mentioned that this situation became problematic once they wanted to expand their business. Potential problems concerned, *inter alia*, insufficient childcare facilities, fewer recruitment possibilities and a lack of local demand. One concern raised by the author was that the differentiation between working life and private life becomes blurred, which may have long-term consequences for the private life. Beyond that, difficulties in making long-term plans for supporting a family are emphasised since most work contracts in creative occupations are short-term (Eichhorst et al. 2013).

Based on the literature review, the analysis refers to the following hypotheses to explore determinants on the distribution of women in creative jobs in Germany:

- 1) In scientific literature the hypothesis that creative people strive to work in an environment determined by ‘tolerance’ and ‘openness’ has been emphasised by Florida (2004, see also Fritsch and Stützer 2009). An attribute that has partly been related to openness is cultural diversity. Therefore, in the frame of the analysis, the share of foreigners in a region will be used as a kind of simplifying indicator for cultural diversity. In the context of this study foreigners are defined as people living in Germany without having a German passport.
- 2) Another thesis is that regions with a higher quality of life attract women in creative occupations. Fritsch and Stützer (2009), for

example, found a significant positive impact for this hypothesis. In the frame of their study, the share of employees in the health and education sectors serves as an indicator for the availability of public infrastructure. Since it targets one single aspect of the quality of living in a region this indicator is also used in the following analysis.

- 3) The third thesis of the analysis is that prosperous regions support the expansion of creative jobs. This hypothesis will be measured by the GDP per capita in a region.
- 4) Beyond that, the difference between the overall share of the female workforce and the percentage of female workforce in creative jobs will be considered. The analysis addresses the hypothesis that a high share of women working in creative jobs is related to a high share of women among all employees in general. This hypothesis is therefore measured by the share of female employees among all employees.

### **3 Research approach: an analysis of national employment statistics**

This section provides an overview of the research approach, including the classification of creative employment, the data set methodology and some shortcomings of the analysis.

The database for the analysis is the German Social Insurance Statistics, which include all employed persons according to their place of employment (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2010). The categories for the creative occupations in the analysis come from the 2008 International Standard Classification of Occupations by the International Labour Organization (ILO).<sup>2</sup> Based on a proposal by the OECD (2014), creative occupations are classified as ‘occupations involved in creative and artistic production, heritage collection and preservation’. For the purpose of this analysis, the following three main groups of creative occupations are included in the database:

- a) Legal, social and cultural professions (academics)
- b) Artistic and cultural associate professions (non-academics)
- c) Handicraft and printing professions.

Since this ILO classification allows for the separate consideration of women and men in the small-scale administrative districts (the German *Landkreise*, which equals the EU NUTS3 level), it is used in the following analysis. Therefore, the classification of cultural groupings may deviate from definitions used in other studies dealing with creative occupations

(e.g. Florida 2004). To answer the research question regarding urban–rural and gender differences within the distribution of creative jobs in Germany, the empirical analysis is divided into two steps.

The first step identifies rural–urban differences with regard to the share of women in creative occupations. The three main groups of creative occupations are aggregated and mapped for each administrative district. The classification of regions into urban or rural areas follows the ILO definition, where a population density above 100 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> is regarded as an urban area, while one below 100 inhabitants is regarded as a rural area. This numeric classification does not include other possible features for the distinction of rural and urban areas, such as remoteness, accessibility or the availability of public infrastructure.

The second step in the analysis explores the factors influencing the share of women in creative occupations as described in the hypotheses derived from the literature review. To test the hypotheses, ordinary least square regressions identify a linear estimator which fits the estimations by best minimising the sum of residual squares (Stock and Watson 2003). The dependent variable is defined as the share of women working in creative occupations from the amount of women working in all occupations.

$$y_{1,2} = \beta_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3$$

Thereby,  $y$  refers to the dependent variable, estimated for two different specifications:

- $y_1$ : Share of women in creative jobs in rural regions
- $y_2$ : Share of women in creative jobs in urban regions

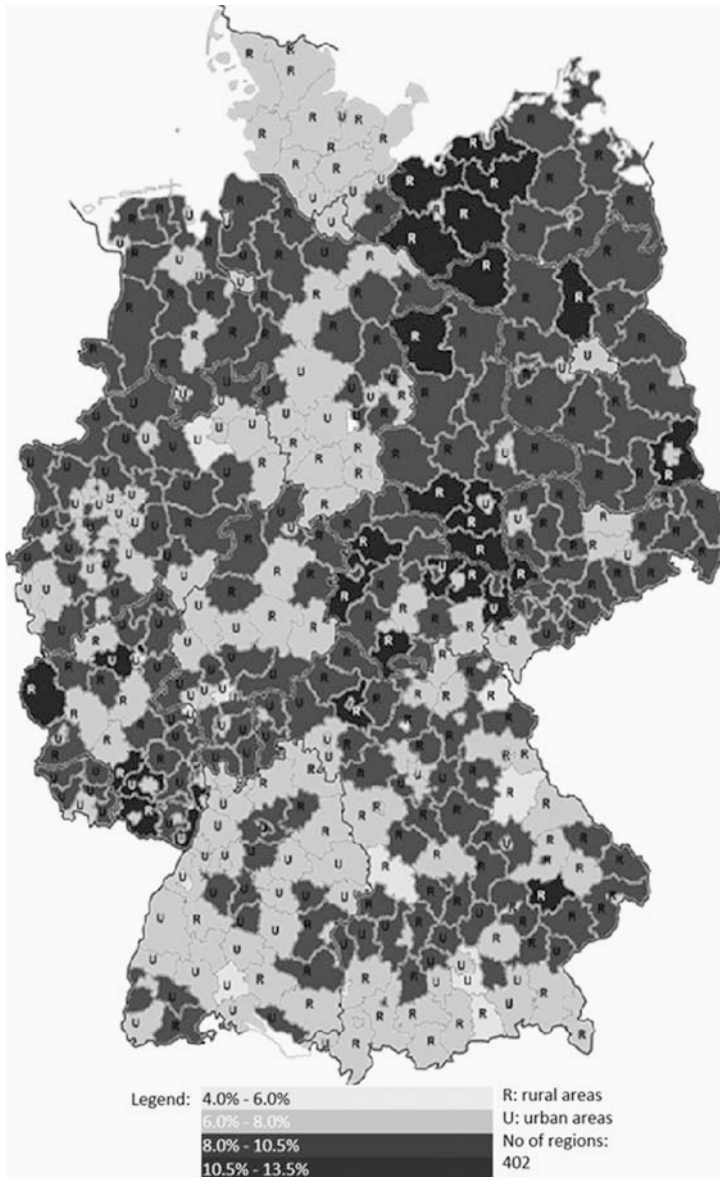
$\beta_2 x_2$  illustrates an explanatory variable, while  $\beta_3 x_3$  exemplifies various control variables which are included to control omitted factors that could determine the dependent variable.

## 4 Empirical analysis

### 4.1 Distribution of women in the creative sector in Germany

The following section describes the distribution of women in creative occupations within the districts of Germany with a particular focus on rural–urban differences with maps to visualise the distribution of women in creative occupations, including all districts. Map 7.1 illustrates the percentage of women among all employees in creative occupations; the creative occupations are aggregated based on the three groups





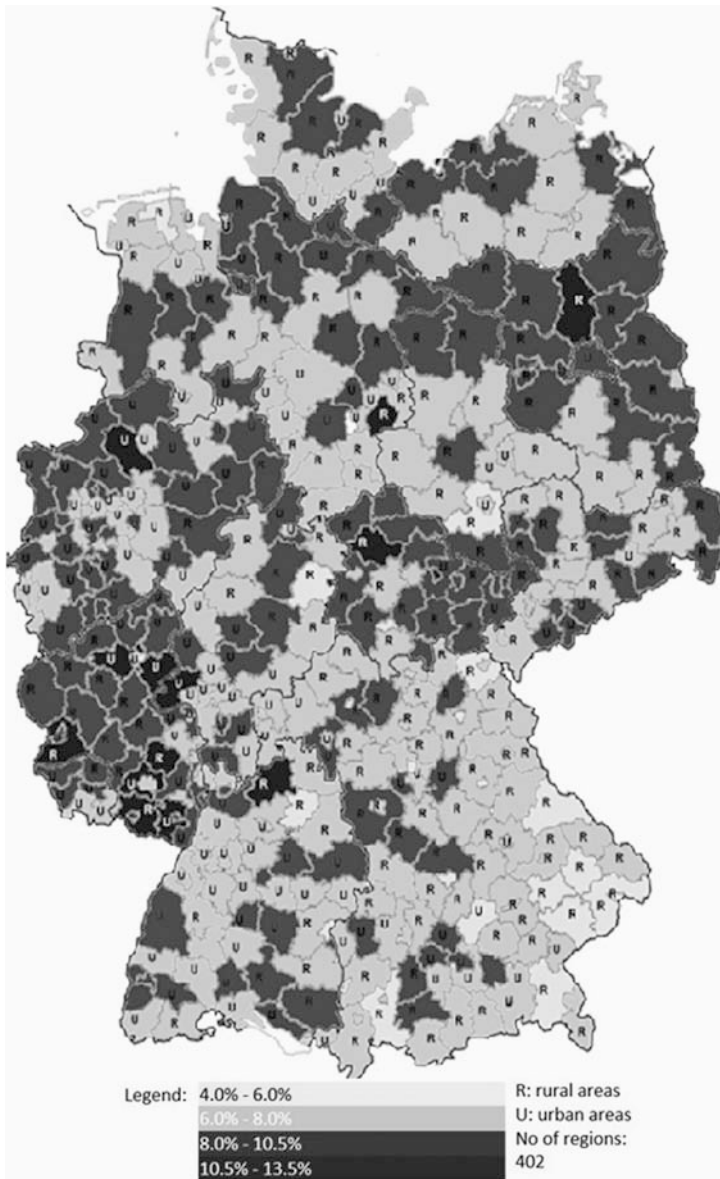
*Map 7.1* Percentage of women among all employees in creative occupations, German districts (2013)

*Source:* Federal Employment Agency, author's own design.

described in Section 3. To put these statistics in context Map 7.2 shows the percentage of women in creative occupations out of all employed women. In both maps, a darker colour represents a higher share. Selected statistics on the distribution within the three creative groups are then provided.

According to the data, the share of female employees of all employees across all occupations in Germany is 46%, while the share of women in creative occupations among all employees in creative occupations is 68%. Hence, this occupational field seems to contain a strong female representation, as is illustrated in Map 7.1. Even if no clear pattern can be identified between rural or urban districts, the creative occupations in East Germany seem to be more strongly occupied by women than in West German districts. The district with the lowest share of women in creative occupations is the urban district of Tuttlingen with 51%, whereas the highest share of women in creative occupations (85%) can be found in the urban district of Rhein-Pfalz. Both the highest and lowest shares are located in West Germany. Comparing this distribution to the share of women in creative occupations of all working women (see Map 7.2), the correlation between both distributions is around 0.32, implying a positive, medium degree of correlation. There are some regions with high values in both dispersions. For instance, the share of women in creative jobs among all employed women in the Rhein-Pfalz-Kreis district is also the highest in this assignment. With regard to lower shares, Tuttlingen can be regarded, however, as at medium level compared to other districts. In terms of the broader geographical distribution, the districts around Berlin, the Palatinate Forest, the Black Forest and the Thuringian Forest all exhibit equal levels in both parts.

With regard to particular creative groups, the share of women in legal, social and cultural professions across Germany is 62%, around 80% for artistic and cultural associate professionals and 30% among the handicraft and printing industry workers. The highest and lowest share of each creative group will be considered in the following order to identify any patterns. For the legal, social and cultural professionals, the five lowest shares of women in these occupations can be found in Bavarian rural regions, while the five highest belong to rural regions in various East German federal states. One explanation for the consistently low values in Bavarian rural regions might be explained by the fact that this group, which includes lawyers and archivists, are traditionally regarded as male rather than female occupations. This preconception might be quite strong in Bavarian rural regions, while it might be outdated in urban regions (Stöger, Biehler and Rehberg 2004). The lowest share of women



*Map 7.2* Percentage of women in creative occupations among all employed women, German districts (2013)

*Source:* Federal Employment Agency, author's own design.

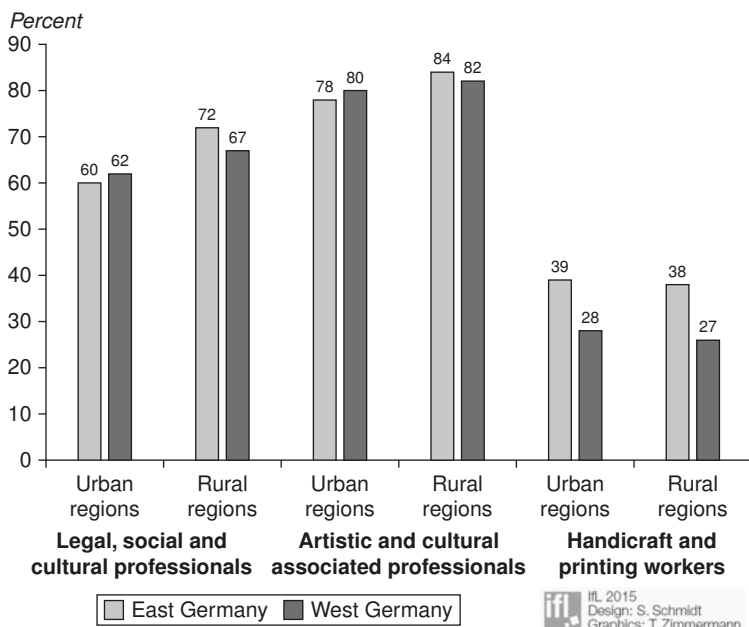
in artistic and culturally associated professions is found in various West German medium-sized cities, such as Mainz or Baden-Baden, while a pattern for the highest share of women in these fields cannot be identified. Looking at female handicraft and printing industry workers, the highest shares can be found in rural East Germany, while the lowest can be found in rural West Germany, however, this pattern is not very pronounced.

The share of women in creative occupations does not differ substantially between rural and urban areas for artistic and cultural associate professionals (urban: 80%, rural: 83%) or for handicraft and printing industry workers (urban: 29%, rural: 30%). However, there are stronger differences between legal, social and cultural professionals, where the share of women in these occupations is 61% in urban regions and 68% in rural regions.

Beyond that, in West Germany the share of women in creative occupations compared to men is much lower than in East Germany especially among handicraft and printing industry workers (Figure 7.1). The observation that women tend to work in these occupations to a greater extent in East than West Germany might be explained by the fact that the German Democratic Republic promoted the employment of women in 'male-dominated' occupations far earlier than did West Germany (Foster 2001). In Figure 7.1, the differences between East and West Germany and between rural and urban regions are combined to get an even more detailed impression of the distribution of women in creative occupations in Germany.

The figure shows that the rural regions in East Germany have the highest, or one of the highest, shares of women in creative occupations across all individual groups. Furthermore, it is remarkable that the share of female handicraft and printing industry workers in West Germany is considerably lower than that of East Germany, by more than 10% in both rural and urban regions. Comparing the results for urban regions in East and West Germany, it is conspicuous that the differences are smaller than that between the respective rural regions across all three creative groups.

A further finding relates to the qualifications of women in creative occupations. Legal, social and cultural professionals are usually academically qualified, while the other two groups consist of vocationally qualified women (Figure 7.1). The results depict that the greatest proportion of female academics in creative occupations is in the rural regions of East Germany, at 71%, and the lowest share is in urban East German regions, at 60%. With regard to the vocationally qualified, the highest



*Figure 7.1* Percentage of women in creative occupations by occupation type, urban–rural and East/West Germany in 2013

*Source:* Federal Employment Agency, author's own design.

share of women is, again, in rural areas of East Germany, at around 84%. In contrast, the lowest percentage of vocationally qualified women working in creative occupations is 27%, living in rural areas in West Germany.

#### 4.2 Exploring determinants for the distribution of women in creative jobs

The following section presents the results of the analysis of the possible determinants for the distribution of women in creative occupations. The regression results for the hypothesis tests based on the literature review in the previous section are shown in the Table 7.1.

Starting with the public provision of health and education in a region, the results show the same tendencies for both rural and urban areas. It seems that the public provision of health and education services positively influences the amount of women in creative occupations. This outcome is in line with that of Fritsch and Stützer (2009) and therefore

Table 7.1 Determinants of share of women in creative occupations in urban/rural regions

	Rural regions			Urban regions				
	Aggregated	Legal, social and cultural professionals	Artistic and culturally associated professionals	Handicraft and printing industry workers	Aggregated	Legal, social and cultural professionals	Artistic and culturally associated professionals	Handicraft and printing industry workers
Share of employees in the health and education sector Public provision indicator	2.22 (5.81)	1.15 (3.17)***	-2.85 (2.1)	-6.43 (2.12)**	1.36 (1.94)	9.64 (1.95)***	-6.20 (3.01)*	-2.07 (2.99)*
Share of foreigners (cultural diversity)	8.03 (5.64)	7.39 (3.09)*	2.00 (0.96)**	1.36 (2.06)	-2.14 (4.00)	1.86 (3.58)	-2.87 (4.64)	9.13 (10.31)
GDP per capita	-3.36 (3.83)***	2.31 (2.65)**	3.01 (4.25)***	-1.22 (1.76)	-1.80 (1.02)***	3.94 (1.55)**	2.26 (2.64)***	7.10 (7.17)
Prosperous regions	4.21 (3.38)	1.46 (1.85)	4.83 (2.97)	2.07 (1.24)*	-2.73 (2.66)	-2.45 (1.32)*	-3.50 (2.23)	-6.29 (6.09)
Female labour force participation								
<b>Control variable</b>								
East Germany (=0)/ West Germany (=1)	1.73 (1.75)	1.26 (1.51)	7.92 (2.42)	3.97 (1.00)	-7.06 (3.60)*	-2.27 (1.78)	-6.08 (3.01)	1.29 (1.84)
Constant	4.32***	-3.23	3.85	1.38	2.53 ***	-4.17	2.99	-4.27
No. of observations	192	192	192	192	196	196	196	196
Adjusted R-squared	0.3	0.16	0.39	0.42	0.39	0.41	0.29	0.29

Note: Coefficient and standard error in parenthesis, significance test: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1, not all control variables listed.  
Source: Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2013).

might confirm the thesis that regions with a higher quality of life attract women working in creative occupations. These results are consistent across all differentiations; however, they are merely significant for one group. It should be noted that the effect is strongest and has the highest degree of significance for legal, social and cultural professionals in both urban and rural regions. Since this outcome is consistent across both types of region, it seems that this occupational group, which is distinguished from the other two groups as being academically qualified rather than vocationally trained, appreciate public provisions most. Policy makers should therefore be aware of this point and target their policies accordingly. It could also be relevant for companies, since job advertisements could highlight the favourable working environment for women in terms of available public provision.

The results with regard to the share of foreigners cannot be interpreted consistently for all differentiations. It seems that there are differences with regard to rural and urban areas, since this indicator consistently shows a positive influence in the countryside but no consequent outcomes with regard to the urban regions. Rejecting or confirming the hypothesis that stipulates that an area with a higher share of foreigners seems to positively influence the share of women in creative jobs, needs to be done independently for urban and rural areas. In terms of the rural areas, a society with a higher number of foreigners positively influences the number of females in creative jobs. The results are significant for two of the three differentiations – namely the legal, social and cultural professionals and the artistic and culturally associated professionals. Therefore, the hypothesis can be validated for the results regarding rural areas, which is in line with the results from Fritsch and Stützer (2009). Regarding the outcomes in urban districts, the results are not consistent and are never significant. This implies that the hypothesis should be rejected here. The high standard errors deriving from the regression estimations undermine this conclusion. However, these results could also question the operationalisation of the variable, since the share of foreigners in regions requires a much more differentiated consideration. Important impacts are, for example, socio-economic and cultural determinants and the integration of foreigners into local society. Nevertheless, those interrelations are hard to capture in the context of a quantitative analysis.

The third hypothesis dealt with the influence of the region's prosperity on the number of women working in creative occupations. This hypothesis has been derived from the argument that prosperous regions are more likely to expand their creative sector due to the fact

that creative occupations are often not seen as bread and butter jobs and are therefore more likely to be supported in more affluent regions. However, a counterargument could imply that regions marked by greater prosperity often have high living expenses and Rohrberg and Schug (2010) argue that it is more important for actors and artists to be able to afford living expenses, especially at the start of their careers. The outcomes cannot be differentiated according to rural and urban regions like the previous hypothesis, but according to various creative groupings. It seems that the prosperity of a region positively influences legal, social and cultural professionals and artistic and culturally associated professionals in both rural and urban districts. All four differentiations are significant. Whereas the results with regard to handicraft and printing industry workers are not consistent and do not have significant outcomes. Hence, the hypothesis that the prosperity of a region has a positive impact on the share of women in creative occupations can only be partly be confirmed.

It is remarkable that the indicator measuring the influence of female labour force participation on women in creative occupations shows distinct differences between urban and rural regions, like the share of foreigners. While it seems that there is a positive impact on women in rural areas, the influence in urban areas exhibits negative tendencies; although the results are never significant. Since the direction of the impact is consistent within distinct regions, the results might imply important implications for this analysis. However, since the results do not show any consistency between the different creative groupings, the following interpretations will be more general for women in creative occupations and focus on urban–rural differences. With regard to the results for urban areas, it could be concluded that women prefer alternative employment fields to creative ones. For instance, if other occupational fields offer higher salaries or other decisive factors, it is more likely that women will prefer to work in those fields, which seems to be more likely in urban labour markets. Furthermore, it might be possible that creative occupations are chosen only in cases of low employability in general, due to a lack of opportunities in the labour market (Burns and Kirkpatrick 2008). But it is also worth considering the assumption that people working in the creative sector prefer the calmness of a rural environment to develop their creativity (e.g. Ermann 2011). However, people working in the creative field often have a first or second residence in the city to promote and sell their products. Furthermore, the arguments by Fleming (2009) need to be considered since social isolation and scarce resources, such as infrastructure, might also hamper creative



expansion. Basically, those different explanations have to be related to the very different types of creative employment.

## 5 Conclusion

This chapter explores differences in the distribution of women working in creative occupations and living in rural or urban areas, and identifies determinants for this distribution. The descriptive analysis revealed that there are no clear patterns discernible in the distribution of women in the creative sector according to the population density of the region they are working in. The analysis indicates that in Germany East–West differences are more pronounced than urban–rural differences. Furthermore, the common assumption that creative work is mainly concentrated in metropolitan areas cannot be supported by this analysis in the case of Germany. In this context, the regional economic development due to an expansion in cultural occupations which has been examined by other authors (e.g. Ermann 2011, Mossig 2011) is of great interest. Such an analysis would extend the scope of this contribution and is therefore advised for further research.

With regard to the influencing factors for the distribution of women working in creative occupations, some conclusions can be drawn. Female employees in creative occupations seem to value a comfortable working environment in terms of the provision of public services or economic prosperity with GDP as an indicator. Distinct trends can be identified, especially for academically qualified women in creative occupations, in regions with a favourable provision of public goods, measured through the share of employees in the public health and education sectors. The promotion of employment should therefore also consider positive features, such as public infrastructure with regard to childcare facilities. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, Skoglund and Jonsson (2013) highlighted that, at least in Sweden, the support of the public sector often hampers the expansion of creative development in rural areas. The literature review revealed that the expansion of the creative sector is of great interest in academic discourses, however, further research should focus in more detail on gender-related issues. A distinct analysis of the labour market for women and men could examine the reasons that might positively influence female labour force participation. Identifying these factors can help to develop policies, which in turn support higher employment rates of women in general. This chapter presented one step in this direction, however, it should be expanded, for example by considering other occupational groups.

The analysis has delivered several insights into the regional distribution of women in creative occupations in Germany, although certain aspects could not be considered in the frame of this investigation. The conceptual idea can be viewed as 'measuring the immeasurable' as it is hard to assess the creativity of people by means of their occupation. It might be that individuals employed as bakers reveal a higher degree of creativity than sports coaches. However, the former is not classified as a creative occupation, while the latter is. Therefore, the data on creative occupations can be regarded merely as a rough approximation for the purposes of this chapter. Furthermore, there are some data limitations. The German Social Insurance Statistics do not include freelance artists, entrepreneurs and civil servants in their database. According to Haak (2005), about half the musicians, performing artists and visual artists work as freelancers and would therefore not be included in this analysis. This strong shortcoming needs to be considered when evaluating the empirical analysis. Another limitation deals with the ISCO 2008 classification and the definition of occupational groups. The data needs to be easily separated by gender and available at administrative district level. These requirements are only fulfilled for a certain level of the ISCO classification. A more comprehensive analysis with more detailed occupational groups is therefore not possible on administrative districts. This problem is also reflected in the choice of the explanatory variables since different variables which should be included, based on the literature review, are unfortunately not available at administrative district level. Therefore, an analysis with more differentiated data of the occupational groups would be required. Furthermore, socio-economic characteristics of women working in the creative industries should also be included since, for example, the economic aspect of the decision to work in specific occupational fields is supposed to be an important influencing factor. Beyond that, a deeper knowledge about differences between men and women in their professional orientation, their readiness to migrate for employment reasons and their preferences for certain environments are important topics in this context.

## Notes

1. MINT occupations refer to mathematics, informatics, natural science and technology.
2. The ILO classifies jobs into a strictly defined set of groups by means of their tasks to enable a comparison in an international context.

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# 8

## The Hidden Potential of Female Entrepreneurship in Rural Poland

*Ewa Rollnik-Sadowska*

### 1 Introduction

Despite the economic transformations that have occurred since 1989, Poland is still characterised by a low level of urbanisation with rural areas still covering more than 90% of the land surface with a rural population of over 39% of all residents (Central Statistical Office 2013: 37, 120). A typical Polish village still remains marginalised in comparison with urban areas not only with regard to socio-economic living conditions, including access to certain goods and services, but also with regard to the labour market situation. Regional differences in supply of and demand for labour do not solely depend on the macroeconomic situation, but are also affected by the demographic composition, developments in information and communication technology and transport and educational infrastructure. The labour market situation for women living in rural Poland is characterised by a particularly difficult situation due on the one hand to their less direct involvement in farm management and, on the other hand, fewer job vacancies for women outside of agriculture. Taking into account the outflow of the younger female workforce in rural areas it seems crucial to establish alternative professional employment opportunities for women which reflect the socio-economic conditions of the Polish village. Self-employment is one possible option in this context. Entrepreneurship can be considered not only as a means of individual financial security but also as a way to foster regional development. Often, such enterprises cultivate rural traditions and cultures and are based on the local knowledge, abilities and skills of rural women. In many cases these women play a pioneering or key role in new business development in rural areas (Anthopoulos 2010). Additionally, they are the initiators of social revitalisation in

the rural economy, which can be understood as stimulating participation by inhabitants in the social life of rural areas (Warren-Smith and Jackson 2004). Women, more often than men, are also the initiators of social networks created in the local environment (Galindo, Guzman and Ribeiro 2009: 304). As highlighted in the European Commission's Report 'Women active in rural development', women contribute to the development of rural communities as they 'often have the added advantage of an awareness and knowledge of local needs and special interpersonal communication skills' (EC 2000: 13).

In the context of this paper, the concept of rural has a certain territorial dimension. It uses the rural area definition in the 2010 OECD typology based on population density<sup>1</sup> (Eurostat division) and, beyond that, it considers economic and labour market indicators that are related to different structural settings (see Map 8.1, Copus et al. 2011). Against this backdrop the paper includes an analysis of rural labour market structures and the particular situation of women based on labour market indicators and statistical data.

The chapter is based on the analysis of several secondary studies which included both quantitative and qualitative research and were undertaken on behalf of the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (Balcerzak-Paradowska et al. 2011) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (2013). The statistical data used mainly refers to the Labour Force Survey of the Polish Central Statistical Office, Eurostat and European Commission reports. Furthermore, it refers to primary research comprising a case study analysis (2014) and research conducted by the author in 2007 among 448 women running their own companies in the Podlaskie province located in eastern Poland (Map 8.1). On this basis the chapter deals with the following research questions:

- What are the peculiarities of rural labour markets in Poland (Section 2) and what characterises the particular labour market situation of women living in rural areas (Section 3)?
- Can self-employment be treated as a viable and relevant professional activity development for women in rural Poland and what are the key motives and barriers to female entrepreneurship (Section 4)?

The chapter concludes with two examples of successful female entrepreneurship in rural Poland and a consideration of the barriers to business development in rural Poland, including recommendations on how to overcome these obstacles.

## 2 Peculiarities of rural labour markets in Poland from a European perspective

Over the past 25 years the rural labour market in Poland has undergone profound changes including those relating to political transformation, the economic integration of Europe, globalisation and demographic processes. Since 1990 rural areas have had to contend with many structural problems connected with the transition from a socialist to a free market economy, such as reduced employment opportunities, increased unemployment and a decrease in income from agricultural activities (Zgliczyński 2010).

Today's economic and social situation in rural Poland is, on the one hand, a result of the economic situation in the country as a whole and, on the other hand, closely related to social and cultural conditions, such as certain mentalities among the rural population and the demographic structure of rural communities. Poland's membership of the European Union and participation in the Common Agricultural Policy have also played a role in shaping the economic and social life of rural Poland. Even though Poland's farmers receive substantial EU subsidies, those operating in the European agricultural market are often unable to compete with other EU countries.

In the European agricultural market, Poland is among the countries with the lowest development potential and statistics show that the country has a very low productivity level. Between 2010 and 2012 rural labour productivity in Poland reached 27% of the EU-27 average, which was one of the lowest levels in the EU (EC 2013a: 129). This was mainly due to the substantial number of small-sized rural holdings in Poland and low mechanisation. In 2010 the EU member states with the greatest number of farms and labour input were Romania (32% of all farms, 17% of total labour input), Italy (14% of farms, 10% of labour input) and Poland (13% of farms, 19% of labour input) (*ibid.*: 110).

In 2012, Poland and Romania were the two countries with the largest number of employees in the primary sector (1.9 and 2.8 million people respectively), accounting for 41% of total employment in the primary sector in the EU-27 and 76% of the EU-N12 (*ibid.*: 99). The large number of small farms in Poland, characterised by a labour surplus, derived income from agriculture (including EU subsidies), social security payments such as pensions, benefits and sometimes paid work (Wilkin 2010: 176). Moreover, the predominantly rural regions of Romania, Bulgaria and Poland showed the lowest share of employment in the non-agricultural sector in 2010 (59%, 68% and 75% respectively). In contrast, Belgium,



Map 8.1 Structural typology of rural Poland and location of case studies

Source: Copus et al 2011; authors' own design.



Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden (EU-15 area countries) and Slovakia (EU-N12 area country) showed a non-agricultural sector employment participation above 95% (EC 2013a: 254). These labour market conditions are mirrored in the prevailing economic structures of rural Poland; Map 8.1 indicates that the agrarian type, which is characterised by a high share of gross added value derived from the primary sector and which tends to show ‘many of the characteristics of the process of socio-economic “depletion”’ (Copus 2015: 31), strongly prevails, in particular in the eastern and northern parts of the country. In contrast rural structures that refer to the consumption countryside or that show diversified structures with a strong service sector, often indicating the emergence of new ruralities able to adapt to global economic changes, are not so widespread. They can be found chiefly in areas close to larger cities and regional centres (Map 8.1, Copus 2015, Copus et al. 2011).

The rural labour market in Poland can be categorised by agricultural and non-agricultural employment options. Regarding agricultural employment, the determinants affecting farm management mainly include the size of agricultural holdings, the mechanisation level of the production process and the level of agricultural education of farmers, which all influence labour productivity. In contrast, the development of non-agricultural employment options is significantly affected by limited access to modern technologies, the level of education of the inhabitants of rural communities (determining their ability to use ICT services) and the poor condition of the transport infrastructure. Limited transport infrastructure is still a problem in many rural regions, impeding access to markets and, in more general terms, resulting in the social isolation of some communities. In particular, in rural regions characterised by a high dispersion and numerous small villages, providing traditional public transport services is difficult and very expensive. This aspect is more relevant for some eastern European countries, notably Bulgaria, Romania and Poland, where the overall quality of infrastructure is lower (EC 2008: 10). In addition, Polish rural inhabitants have limited access to modern technologies. In 2012 only 37% of Polish rural households had digital subscriber line coverage (EU-27 average: 76%) and 61% had a subscription for a broadband connection (EU-27: 64%; EC 2013a: 270f).

In comparison to other European Union countries, Poland has the highest number of rural inhabitants (2012: 12,838 thousand) with the third largest rural population (after France and Germany) in the EU-27. Nevertheless, in 2011 the crude rate of population change was negative, at a level of  $-1.3$  (Eurostat 2014). In eastern European countries

the exodus from rural to urban areas (especially to the capital cities) is, at present, a relevant phenomenon. Furthermore, migration abroad – notably of young men and women – is having negative impacts on the socio-economic development of rural areas (EC 2008: 8). Simultaneously, demographic factors influence several dimensions of the rural labour market by shaping the structure of the labour supply.

As a result of these conditions, the rural labour market situation in Poland (similar to other countries of central and eastern Europe) is worse than in the majority of the EU-15 countries.<sup>2</sup> In 2012 the employment rate in sparsely populated<sup>3</sup> rural areas in Poland reached 59%, which was 5% lower than the EU-27 average (EC 2013a: 82). On the other hand, the unemployment rate of 11% in sparsely populated areas in Poland was comparable to the EU-27 average of 10% (ibid.: 88). However, this figure does not include hidden unemployment which applies, in particular, to women living in rural Poland. According to the definition adopted by the Labour Force Survey, unpaid family members contributing to the operation of the farm are treated as paid workers and are not included in official unemployment figures. In 2013, the vast majority (87%) of contributing family workers in Poland were employed in rural areas (Central Statistical Office 2014: 90) and females constituted 63% (ibid.: 89).

The comparatively high level of hidden unemployment in Poland is closely related to the fragmentation of farms and the slow, but gradual, mechanisation of agriculture, mainly due to the availability of EU structural funds. It is estimated that, as a result of the above conditions, the level of hidden unemployment in rural areas in Poland amounts to 600,000 people (Kowalski 2013). These employees can be regarded as surplus labour, whose work does not affect the level of production.<sup>4</sup>

### **3 Women in Poland's rural labour markets – an indicator analysis**

Unemployment in rural areas of Poland has a different character to that in urban regions. First of all it is more difficult to combat as the labour market is less flexible. The ongoing economic transformation has contributed not only to a reduction in the activity of rural people but it has also revealed the social and economic developmental delays in agriculture and rural areas. Hence, the rural labour market is still significantly affected by the recent economic transition.

Women in rural Poland are in a peculiar situation. Firstly, they are rarely the owners of rural households but are generally contributing

family workers. Secondly, there are insufficient employment opportunities for women in the non-agricultural sector as the labour demand is mainly focused on job offers in production, which are primarily directed at men.

The results of the 2010 Agricultural Census in Poland indicated that women represented 46% of all farm employees (Central Statistical Office 2010: 134). Compared with men, the structure of women's employment was much more homogeneous. The majority of women (71%; 58% of men) worked exclusively on their farms, 27% (men: 38%) mainly worked outside (and additionally on the farm) and only 2% (men: 4% were mostly involved in farm labouring) additionally working outside. Based on the analysis above it can be concluded that the limited non-agricultural labour market in Poland is less accessible for women than for men. This is due to the specificity of available work in the non-agricultural sector (a demand for male manual workers) as well as a lesser degree of employment flexibility among women due to family responsibilities and poor access to childcare institutions in rural areas (Wójcik 2010: 27–32).

The labour market indicators for men and women from rural areas presented in Table 8.1 confirm the findings in the previous paragraph. Moreover, they prove that the situation of women in the rural job market is, in certain aspects, worse than that of women in urban areas.

As demonstrated in Table 8.1, women from rural areas are also characterised by having the lowest employment and activity rates among the groups listed. In addition, the differences in the employment rates between men and women, with 19% in rural and 14% in urban areas, are significant.

Table 8.1 indicates that being economically inactive is a status that applies more to women than men living in rural areas. In Poland, the most common reason for this inactivity is retirement; in 2013, 48% of women

*Table 8.1* Selected labour market indicators for men and women in rural and urban Poland (third quarter 2013)

		Unemployment rate (%)	Employment rate (%)	Activity rate (%)	Inactivity rate (%)
Rural areas	Women	11.1	41.9	47.1	52.9
	Men	8.6	60.6	66.3	33.7
Urban areas	Women	10.6	44.0	49.2	50.8
	Men	9.3	57.7	63.7	36.3
Total in Poland		9.8	50.7	56.2	43.8

*Source:* Labour Force Survey in Poland, third quarter 2013 (Central Statistical Office 2014: 69).

and 46% of men were inactive because of retirement (Central Statistical Office 2014: 133). This is due to the comprehensive range of early retirement plans, which were available until 2009 in Poland. Since 2009 certain favourable pension conditions have been phased out. In particular, women frequently view retirement as a time to fulfil family responsibilities towards grandchildren and ageing parents. The second, most common reason for inactivity in Poland is participation in further education (17% of inactive women and 25% of inactive men) (ibid.: 131). Furthermore, in the case of women, the inactivity rate is higher in rural than in urban areas. For men, the situation is reversed. This may corroborate the theory that rural labour markets are often more male oriented and women find better job opportunities in urban areas due to a higher share of service based economies (Krzyszowski et al. 2007: 57, 59, Krzyszowski et al. 2008: 72).

In addition, it can be assumed that in rural areas, due to an inadequate social infrastructure (e.g. lack of childcare facilities and facilities for elderly people) women often sacrifice their professional career to care for dependent family members (see, for example, Camarero and Sampedro for the case of rural Spain in Chapter 10). The significance of flexible work to enable family responsibilities is also indicated by the significant share of part-time workers among women in rural areas (12%), which is marginally higher than for women from urban areas and is more than double the number of men from rural areas (5%) in part-time work (Central Statistical Office 2014: 69).

Furthermore, there is a particularly difficult situation on the labour market regarding school leavers, which poses a serious threat to the human capital of rural Poland. In 2013 the unemployment rate for school leavers from rural areas reached 41%, which was almost double that of urban areas (28%) (Central Statistical Office 2014: 85). Younger people often leave home for educational purposes because there is a poor infrastructure for compulsory education in rural areas of Poland, which is due to both a lack of schools and teaching staff and an inadequate transport infrastructure. Moreover, there are no opportunities for higher education in rural areas (for the impacts of higher educational infrastructure on rural development and female migration decisions see, for example, Peer in Chapter 11 on Austria). Education represents more than 21% of the determinants for inactivity in rural areas (ibid.: 132) and it is often connected with youth internal migration.

To summarise, it can be concluded that the labour market situation in rural Poland is more problematic for women than for men. Therefore, there are compelling reasons for young women to migrate, in particular to the capital cities of the regions, which strongly affect the

demographic composition of rural communities<sup>5</sup>. Hence, the search for alternative economic activity for women in rural areas can be considered an important task for regional and socio-economic policy makers.

#### **4 Entrepreneurship as a relevant economic activity for women in rural Poland**

Entrepreneurship is one of the pillars of a market economy. In the current economic climate in Poland the development of entrepreneurship is considered an important factor in fostering socio-economic growth and improving the labour market situation (Ministry of Economy 2014: 10).

Entrepreneurship can be considered as both the attitude of an individual and a socio-economic activity. The classical theory of entrepreneurship developed by J. Schumpeter, described the entrepreneur as a person engaged in a creative activity involving the implementation of a new concept (Schumpeter 1962). Basically, entrepreneurship can be regarded as a form of economic activity (i.e. founding one's own company) which contributes to small and medium-sized enterprise development. The expansion of the small business sector has become an important source of new jobs, adding value and reducing unemployment by utilising the entrepreneurial abilities of citizens in many European countries (EC 2013b: 7; Rollnik-Sadowska 2010: 7). In this chapter, the term entrepreneurship is used in reference to economic activity.

In Poland, entrepreneurship, realised in self-employment, is often considered a professional alternative for those facing a difficult labour market situation and having problems finding full-time employment. This situation applies, *inter alia*, mainly to women – in particular, those living in rural areas.

In the following, the analysis of entrepreneurship of women in rural Poland is presented on the basis of the results of secondary and primary research. The first source of secondary data is research conducted on behalf of the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development in Poland in 2011 (Balcerzak-Paradowska et al. 2011). The research included a quantitative standardised questionnaire (paper and pencil interview) conducted among Polish entrepreneurs, employed, unemployed and economically inactive persons (806 women and 996 men). Qualitative research was based on individual in-depth interviews and focus groups. The second source of secondary data regarding female entrepreneurship in rural areas of Poland was obtained from research undertaken in 2012 on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (2013). It primarily

consisted of standardised questionnaire surveys conducted among 3,200 women from rural areas of Poland. The results presented below are also based on primary data obtained from a questionnaire answered in 2007 by 448 women running their own companies in the Podlaskie province, in which women from rural areas comprised 24% of the sample.

According to the Polish Labour Force Survey one-third of Polish women were self-employed in 2013 (33%) (Central Statistical Office 2014: 89). The study of female entrepreneurs from the Podlaskie province concluded that women are proactive with regard to establishing their own business and are more often motivated by push factors, in the sense of negative motivation such as unemployment or low income, rather than pull factors, or positive motivation (Rollnik-Sadowska 2010: 118f., 127).

The results of the empirical studies conducted on behalf of the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (Balcerzak-Paradowska et al. 2011) reveal no significant differences between men and women in the motivation, positive or negative, to take up self-employment. The most common reason for starting their own business was taking advantage of favourable circumstances (22%), a lack of regular employment in one's profession (18% of women and 20% men), and a desire for independence (16% women and 14% men). Financial factors, especially the need to improve family financial security, were further reasons for starting one's own business (men: 11%, women: 8%). Simultaneously, the reason which differentiated the motives of men and women for setting up their own business was the willingness to support their partner's activity and the need for flexibility in organising childcare, mainly indicated by women (ibid.: 9).

In addition, over two thirds of both groups had previously worked as contracted employees prior to establishing their own business. No significant differences between men and women could be identified when considering the mentioned obstacles once starting an own business. The most common problems were excessively high non-wage labour costs (e.g. social insurance contributions), problems attracting new customers, complicated financial formalities, time-consuming duties relating to, *inter alia*, obtaining permits or licences and the volatility of the labour laws (ibid.: 9). One of the major obstacles perceived by 12% of the surveyed entrepreneurs was limited access to capital, especially the provision of the large collateral required by banks to secure a business loan, a difficult condition for small companies to fulfil. Beyond that, women were more likely than men to point to limited access to childcare facilities as a barrier to running their own business (ibid.: 9).

The research results also proved that men and women had different beliefs concerning the advantages and disadvantages of self-employment. The advantages mainly concerned stress-free work conditions, higher earnings, the opportunity for personal development and job security. Respect and prestige were more often valued by men (94%) than women (86%). Surprisingly, factors which may be relevant to reconciling work and family responsibilities, such as flexible working hours and the possibility of working from home, were hardly mentioned and there were no significant differences between the sexes.

Although self-employment was often perceived as a solution to reconciling professional and family roles by women who worked as contracted employees, the unemployed and the professionally inactive, none of the female entrepreneurs surveyed indicated that self-employment provided them with a better opportunity to reconcile professional and family life (*ibid.*: 10). Basically, the research results produced the profile of a typical Polish businesswoman as young, well-educated, usually living in a relationship with no children (*ibid.*: 11). After starting a family, they usually have more children than the average family in Poland. Many of the surveyed female entrepreneurs indicated that they were encouraged to change their economic status through financial motivation, responding to favourable circumstances and a need for independence. In general, studies undertaken on behalf of the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (*ibid.*) showed that there was no feminine or masculine entrepreneurship. However, one factor which negatively affected the situation of women running their own companies, in contrast to men, were care responsibilities towards children, especially infants.

The research results of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor for Poland in 2012 (Węclawska et al. 2013: 17) proved that female entrepreneurial capacity was considerable although, for unknown reasons, it was not utilised to its full extent. Women spot opportunities for establishing a business, however, they are hindered by a lack of self-esteem and the fear of failure. This results in a substantial difference between men and women in starting business activities. Nonetheless, it should be noted that in the case of early-stage entrepreneurship, the difference between men and women in the years 2011–2012 decreased and, as a result, the percentage of new enterprises established by women increased. It is also worth mentioning that, among the European countries surveyed, in Poland there is the greatest difference between women and men in terms of perceived opportunities when running one's own business<sup>6</sup> (women 23%, men 18%) (Węclawska et al. 2013: 17–18). Also, the results of research conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture

and Rural Development (2013: 7) indicated that women in Poland often perceived self-employment as an attractive form of professional activity: 27% of women from rural areas would have liked to find work outside the agricultural sector; and 14% were eager to set up their own company (in preference to running the farm). Regarding their professional aspirations, the majority of the surveyed women said that they wanted to develop their own ideas for a business activity, to modernise farms or set up their own non-agricultural activities, including non-governmental organisations (*ibid.*). The learning objectives that they wanted to pursue were primarily business management education, human resources training or continuing formal education in foreign languages.

However, women who chose to start their own business in rural areas faced particular barriers. The main obstacles to economic activity development for the surveyed women in rural areas were poor transport and IT infrastructure and insufficient access to knowledge. Beyond that, poor social infrastructure was considered a serious hindrance to the development of professional activity. Like women from urban areas they needed to ensure the care for children under five and those of school age, at least those receiving primary school education. Additionally, access to care institutions for dependants – the elderly and disabled – is very limited in rural areas in Poland. As it is, for women in rural communities who mainly feel responsible for those family members, insufficient social infrastructure impedes any professional activity (Little and Panelli 2003: 281–289). One solution would be flexible forms of employment, including running one's own business from home but the obstacle of limited access to the Internet in rural areas precludes this option in rural Poland.

## **5 Two examples of female entrepreneurship based on rural traditions and cultures**

Despite the barriers to developing women's professional activity in rural Poland, including entrepreneurship, there are good examples of women-led companies operating successfully in the market. Moreover, this success is frequently attributed to the particular rural context of the activity. The products or services offered, derived from specific rural traditions and culture, are often a unique asset, filling a market niche. Properly marketed, reaching the target group of consumers, they can provide substantial profitability for the entrepreneurs. The following two examples, based on case study surveys carried out in 2014, illustrate how elements of a local culture can be transformed into a successful business in rural regions.



The enterprises selected for analysis are located in two different Polish provinces: the Podlaskie region; and the province of Silesia (see Map 8.1). These areas are characterised by differing economic and cultural conditions, while Podlaskie is an agricultural region, Silesia is characterised by its industrial tradition. However, due to their borderland location, these regions are multicultural, with a strong impact on the prevailing traditional rural activities. The studied companies represent business concepts originating in individual creativity, skill and talent, with a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property (Rossello and Wright 2010: 16), all important factors in a rural competitiveness that contributes to local and regional development.

### **5.1 Koniakow Crochet Lace – transforming a traditional local product for new target groups**

The first example of a successful family enterprise run by women is a company that produces crochet lace in the village of Koniakow, located in southern Poland in the Silesian Voivodeship. Of approximately 3,000 inhabitants, about 400 women are employed in the production of Koniakow lace (<https://www.koniakov.com>). The lace specificity lies with its design, which is based on floral motifs. Most of the patterns have been passed down from generation to generation and new designs have been created recently (see Figure 8.1).

Its tradition dates back to the late 19th century when there was a fashion among townspeople to adorn clothing, lace being a significant element. Local schools started teaching crochet, and the women from Koniakow became actively involved in crocheting. Initially, the lace was used for making bonnets, which were an essential element of a married woman's attire. In 1900 lace began to appear in inserts in pillowcases, blouses and shirts, followed by rectangular and square crochet napkins. The turning point was the creation of round napkins, which made the village famous. Today, table runners and tablecloths with Koniakow lace adorn tables around the world, including churches and royal and presidential residences (<https://www.koniakov.com>). Crocheting skills have been embraced not only by older women, but also by young girls from Koniakow, Istebna and neighbouring villages (Kajzar 2013).

Nowadays, the younger generation is involved not only in lace production but also in promoting and cultivating the Koniakow tradition (for example, by applying for the inclusion of Koniakow lace on a UNESCO list) and in marketing and sales, mainly based on e-commerce. The range of products has been expanded, especially by the addition of handmade lace lingerie (Figure 8.2). This range has gained a number



*Figures 8.1 and 8.2* Transforming a local tradition – Koniakow Lace in Silesia  
Source: <http://www.kajzar.pl> (accessed 08 November 2014), used with permission.

of awards at prestigious exhibitions, including 'Designed in Poland' (Frankfurt 2004) or 'Made in Poland' (Berlin 2005). Koniakow crochet lacemakers have been supported by an important patron of the arts, the Chancellery of the President of Poland. The Koniakow Lace company case study shows how the cultivation of local traditions connected with everyday household activities can be used as the basis for an effective and profitable business. According to the respondents' opinions crocheting has always been a part of female everyday life in the rural Koniakow area:

While men have been working hard on farms, women have fulfilled household duties and additionally produced lace items – for example tablecloths. [Woman who organises the production process]

An important factor supporting this business development is the cooperation of the female inhabitants of Koniakow and the neighbouring villages. It is especially important in the case of large orders, when the workload must be spread and more lacemakers have to be engaged in the production process. In individual in-depth interviews, conducted in 2014 among people engaged in Koniakow crochet lace production, a sales manager illustrated the advantages of this flexibility of the production:

The number of lacemakers who are engaged in the manufacturing process is changeable as it is adapted to the current demand... during the season, for example before Christmas, all the lacemakers are involved but when it is out of season only the best lacemakers realise the orders. [Sales manager, son of one of the lacemakers]

Representatives of the younger generation responsible for the sales process, who were asked about the barriers to running the business, mentioned economic obstacles. The main one being insufficient domestic demand connected with the high price of handmade products.

## **5.2 Tartar Yurt – an enterprise built on regional assets**

The second example of successful female entrepreneurship in rural Poland is Tatar Yurt in the village of Kruszyniany. The agrotourist business is located in the northeast of Poland, in Podlaskie province, three kilometres from the Poland–Belarus border and 50 kilometres from the capital city of the region, Białystok. It is a family business run by two generations of Tatars. The main initiator and developer of the company

is a woman that originates from Wielkopolska, the Tatars' environment. She moved to Kruszyniany, the roots of her husband's family. In an in-depth interview carried out in 2014 she raised her personal and emotional attachment to the place:

it turned out that my husband's grandfather knew my ancestors, and besides, I fell in love with Kruszyniany, which is a magical place.

The family set up their agrotourist business not only by adopting the family property of the husband's grandfather but also following the woman's family social capital. She is a historian and a tourist guide and, as she mentioned during the interview:

I knew that there is a lack of such places in Kruszyniany... I wanted people arriving to Kruszyniany to go to the mosque and later on to our house to drink coffee and to talk with us

The border location makes Kruszyniany village a place where different cultures and religions converge – Catholic, Muslim and Orthodox. The woman entrepreneur has taken advantage of the area's natural and cultural uniqueness and has been promoting Tatar culture. In the interview her societal commitment as a key motive for founding Tartar Yurt came to the fore:

I began this enterprise in order to activate the Tatar community and the whole village... it was a village of old people. I wanted the village to begin to live again, because the Tatars left and they arrived only to visit their grandparents.

This family initiative met a high demand and now Kruszyniany is promoted as a themed village with a comprehensive range of Tatar culture. Tatar Yurt offers not only accommodation but also Tatar cuisine and guided sightseeing tours of the region, it also promotes and organises many cultural Tatar events (Tatarska Jurta 2013). The services offered are based on the specific cultural and natural conditions of Kruszyniany but, importantly, they have been adapted to meet current market needs. Tatar Yurt can also be treated as a successful rural business contributing to improving the regional labour market. Being a typical family business it assures employment mainly for family members but also for many villagers. Moreover, by attracting tourists from all over the world this family business caused investors to further develop the catering and

accommodation base in Kruszyniany. As a result many vacancies are on offer for young people. It prevents the outflow of regional human resources. However, it is surprising that the owners of Tatar Yurt, despite increasing competition, do not mention economic obstacles as barriers to doing business. According to them, the main disadvantage is the lack of cooperation and support from community authorities and some of the villagers.

The major success factors in these case studies appear to be the products offered, which fit the rural context of the respective regions: Koniakow lace as a regional product and the multicultural nature of Kruszyniany. Sound management by representatives of the younger generation, who are aware of new sales channels and market trends, who are flexible and charismatic leaders, covers other important issues. Also the cooperation structures built around family members and local female residents seem to be important elements for the success of the enterprises. The significant role of women in these two economic activities is expressed through the knowledge of the women and the female leaders' management style. Apart from that, the women in charge of both businesses analysed the problems regarding their company's development. Both companies experienced a low demand for their products and services and encountered problems attracting new customers. Beyond that they complained about a lack of support from local authorities.

Considering, these two examples of businesses run by women it seems worth verifying the thesis that managing one's own company can be a promising alternative for female professional activity in rural areas through further research involving a larger number of cases.

## **6 Conclusions**

The situation of women in the rural labour market, as presented in this article, clearly indicates the need to support female professional activities in rural Poland. Encouraging entrepreneurship and promoting self-employment as an alternative professional activity not only improves the individual situation of female company owners, but also contributes to an increase in the GDP of structurally weak rural areas and assures employment alternatives outside agriculture. Creating the right conditions to foster the economic activity of women in rural areas is a very important factor due to the brain drain of young people, primarily young women, and the ageing population in rural Poland. Furthermore, rural entrepreneurs cultivate and promote the regional culture.

Important obstacles are poor transport infrastructure, insufficient information and communication technology development (mainly limited Internet access) and inadequate child, elderly and disabled care facilities. Therefore, investment in infrastructure development in rural areas seems to be a precondition to enable young women to participate in the labour market and to establish their own business. The benefits of that investment should be considered in the long-term, as a means to counteract the negative economic and demographic trends in rural Poland.

A key issue in boosting rural entrepreneurship among women is improving access to education in their local area and providing them with opportunities for lifelong learning by offering individual guidance, workshops and training. Professional counselling would help women to discover their creative potential and show them how to commercialise it. Workshops could provide them with the training necessary to set up their own business and should include methods of obtaining finance. Specialist training, tailored to individual needs, could concentrate on such areas as the basics of finance and accounting, marketing and management. A system of mentoring, whereby experienced rural entrepreneurs present their success stories and the problems encountered in establishing and operating one's own company, could also be implemented.

Setting up an own business is often a promising alternative to avoid unemployment. However, the created companies are mainly micro- and small enterprises in service-oriented sectors, acting in a risky economic environment, which are vulnerable to recession. Support from local and central authorities is required to reduce operating costs, to ensure access to capital and to bolster the brave steps taken by entrepreneurial women.

## Notes

1. Data findings are based on the 2010 OECD typology, which uses a three-step approach to determine urban or rural areas for NUTS3 regions, namely: identify rural populations at the level of 1 km<sup>2</sup> grid cells; classify NUTS3 regions according to the share of population for each type of grid cell; and then adjust the classification based on the presence of cities. (Eurostat 2014)
2. Exceptions are Spain and Greece, which have been suffering from high cyclical unemployment since the economic crisis of 2008, and Portugal with an skewed age structure of the rural population.
3. In the case of labour market indicators, the data was taken from the Labour Force Survey of Eurostat, which adopted the classification of degree of

- urbanisation for the regions at NUTS2 level. According to this classification the areas identified were: thinly-populated, intermediate urbanised and densely-populated.
4. The surplus was calculated as the number of people exceeding full-time employment in existing farms, with a certain potential of production.
  5. That applies mainly to a lower share of people of working age in rural than in urban areas, in 2010 it was 63.1% and 65.7% respectively (Central Statistical Office 2010: 27).
  6. Among the surveyed countries, beside Poland, only Latvia presented a greater difference between women and men in terms of perceived opportunities when running one's own business in favour of women (a 2% difference).

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# 9

## Business Clusters and Social Cooperatives – A Chance to Promote Female Entrepreneurship in Rural Poland?

*Boguslaw Bembenek, Teresa Piecuch and Joanna Sudol-Pusz*

### **1 Female entrepreneurship and rural development: an introduction**

Making up 91% of its territory and being inhabited by over 56% of its citizens, rural areas constitute an essential part of the EU's geographical characteristics and identity (*ec.europa.eu*). Many of these areas struggle with serious socio-economic and infrastructure problems, thus, it is very important to constantly seek new ways of improving rural dwellers' quality of life, developing entrepreneurship, and enhancing the competitiveness of farms and agricultural enterprises. The significance of positive attitudes towards change, a constant motivation to acquire knowledge and a need for self-fulfilment among the local population are rarely considered in the frame of regional development policies. Nevertheless, the success of those policies depend heavily on the strategic thinking and way of making decisions of regional actors, and on the entrepreneurial attitudes and actions of the local population. Against this backdrop women's entrepreneurship has attracted growing attention in the light of the importance of new business creation for economic growth and development. While 'the policy rationale for the development of women's entrepreneurship was traditionally focused on issues like poverty alleviation, women's equality and empowerment, and social inclusion' (Lotti 2006: 2; for the case of developing countries see, for example, Jamali 2009) positive effects of female commitment are increasingly appreciated in the context of rural development

strategies. There is evidence that contemporary women are becoming increasingly entrepreneurial with more and more of them taking a risk and deciding on the challenge of being an enterprise owner. They want to be independent and fulfil their professional careers. However, the needs of female entrepreneurs differ depending on what stage of development and which individual life situation they are in (Davis 2011). Their motivation is empirically associated with different factors, such as personal characteristics, life path circumstances, environmental factors, job dissatisfaction, divorce and boredom in their previous jobs (Okafor and Amalu 2010). It turns out that, in contrast to male company owners, profit is not the primary motive for female entrepreneurs. Women are capable of relinquishing profit in order to attain other objectives they consider important. Most women start their own first business to enhance their flexibility and life balance in managing their traditional responsibilities as wife and primary caretaker of their children (Alam et al. 2011). Women are aware that their situation in the labour market is very difficult and that they want to be independent yet are frequently forced to support their family on their own. Due to a lack of suitable or attractive jobs they decide to create some, for themselves and people in their social environment. Research shows that women start their businesses with relatively fewer resources, such as human, social and financial capital, than male entrepreneurs (Yordanova and Davidkov 2009). They are also more conservative when it comes to taking out a loan, and are more likely to use personal savings and other personal assets to fund their businesses (Weiler and Bernasek 2001). Empirical research suggests that female company owners prefer consensus building with their subordinates and are more inclined to use a democratic method of management (Robichaud et al. 2005, Yordanova and Davidkov 2009). A wide array of institutional factors determines women's entrepreneurial attitudes; formal institutional impacts are related to gender equality recognised by law, labour market legislation, tax legislation, childcare infrastructure (with regard to gender equality policy see Oedl-Wieser in Chapter 12). Beyond that informal factors, such as cultural traditions, societal customs, human rights, values and attitudes towards women and their role in society, discrimination against women in the workplace, religious beliefs and family values all affect women's entrepreneurial ambitions (Aidis et al. 2007). While formal institutions are crucial factors regarding the opportunities for entrepreneurship, informal institutions can strongly influence perceptions of entrepreneurial opportunities (ibid.). Taking the socio-economic disparities between regions in Europe into account, it seems essential to constantly create new ways

of actively supporting the development of women's enterprises, especially in areas where it is difficult to find a job. This refers, for example, to many rural areas in Poland. Hence, entrepreneurial actions, which could result in a self-employed person setting up a company might be facilitated by social economy entities.

Against this backdrop, the objective of this article is to characterise business clusters and social cooperatives in rural Poland as both a potential factor in stimulating women's entrepreneurial attitudes and as places with attractive employment. In this context *business clusters* represent geographically bounded concentrations of similar, related or complementary businesses with active channels for business transactions, communications and dialogue, that share specialised infrastructure, labour markets and services, and that are faced with common opportunities and threats (Rosenfeld et al. 2000: 1; see Section 3.2).

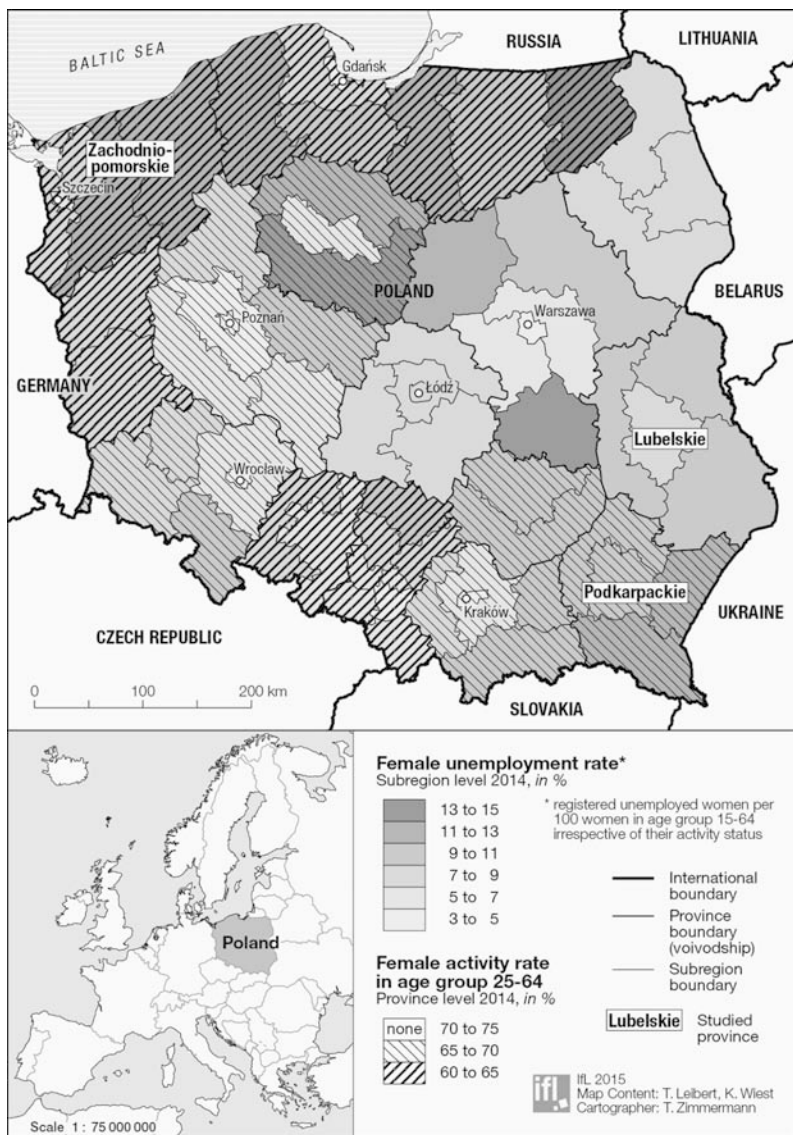
*Social cooperatives* are sets of organisations that share the following specific principles or operational features: solidarity, mutual assistance, membership open to all, democratic management and people-based decision making and distribution of surpluses. All of which depend on the activity carried out by each person, irrespective of the capital invested (Igual and Vidal 2002). A key aim of many social cooperatives in rural Poland is to offer the opportunity to groups of people characterised by, so-called, low employability to participate fully in economic and social life (see Section 3.1). Examples of Polish business clusters and social cooperatives in the following sections indicate that the labour situation of women living in rural areas undergoes constant change, especially with regard to the activities of non-governmental organisations and public authorities to support women's entrepreneurship, and professional and social activation. These case studies describe examples of clusters and social cooperatives in which enterprising women from rural areas have implemented their own, ambitious objectives. The qualitative research method, applied in an experimental form, provided insights into the experiences and motives of enterprising women.

## **2 Women's employment in rural Poland**

Women's occupational situation in modern society is becoming increasingly recognised. However, women's employment situation in Europe still shows considerable regional disparities. Research shows that 51.4% of all female village residents in Poland are not working; approximately 11% are still in education/training, 12% are retired or use sickness benefit, 7% have never worked or have given up a job. The female

workforce in rural areas (not including staff in agriculture) can be characterised as follows ([ptps.org.pl](https://org.pl)). The services employ that largest share of women (41%), 25% in the public sector and 21% industry. Among the indicated share of women, 15% hold a managerial position, 54% are manual workers; 44% have participated in various courses to upgrade their skills. Typically, the unemployment rate in rural areas is somewhat higher than in the larger cities. In 2014, it ranged between 3.3% in the city of Poznan (Wroclaw 3.8%, Warszawa 4.5%, Krakow 4.6%) and 14.8% in Wloclawski region. Differences in their integration into the labour market can also be found between the eastern and western parts of the country. The lowest activity rate of women between 25 and 64 years old can be found in the provinces of Warminsko-Mazurskie (62%), Zachodniopomorskie (63%) and Slaskie (64%). The highest female activity rate can be found in the provinces of Lubelskie (70%), Łódzkie (71%), Podlaskie (71%) and Mazowieckie (74%), which are located in the eastern parts of Poland (Map 9.1). The activity rate is influenced by different factors, amongst others are: unpaid or voluntary work; the care of children and the elderly and the shadow economy are for example all not included in this parameter. The activity rate of Polish women ranks more or less in the midfield compared to other European countries.<sup>1</sup> However, prevailing family models and gender stereotypes often make it difficult for Polish women to pursue a career in business, even if they are well educated. Furthermore, women who choose to emphasise their careers rather than (only) being mothers and housewives often face criticism and prejudice – particularly in the more rural parts of the country. Despite increasing gender equality, and men's involvement in the household, women still carry the greater part of the burden of combining work and family life. This is compounded by stereotypical female role models which refer to women's identity as a caretaker. In Poland, there are more than 1.3 million women who consciously give up work to be a housewife ([tvp.info](http://tvp.info)) and in rural areas women that are going to work are still confronted with insufficient childcare. The difficulties of reconciling work and family are aggravated through a low level of flexible forms of employment in rural areas ([tvp.info](http://tvp.info)).

Nevertheless, there is a growing interest in the social and economic role of women living in rural areas which is associated with the new EU development concept of low-urbanised areas. Defined as balanced and multifaceted models of rural development the concept stresses the need to connect economy, environment and society in local development strategies, namely through considering the ecological, residential, recreational and socio-cultural functions of a rural area (Krzyszowski 2008).



Map 9.1 Location of case studies and female unemployment rates in Polish provinces 2014

Source: EUROSTAT (2015); GUS (2015).

It assumes that every commune has a particular economic potential, workforce resources and, more or less recognised, groups of enterprising people, who may activate the existing local potential; and women are supposed to have a particular role in this context.

New instruments to support rural entrepreneurship that came with EU membership not only constitute a chance to improve the economic situation of rural Poland, but are also a challenge for women living in the countryside (Ołowska et al. 2006). Furthermore, the implementation of EU programmes towards socio-economic activation of local systems and the exchange of experiences between local authorities in the EU will impact rural women's situation in the labour market and their participation in social life (Krzyszowski 2008: 103). Against this backdrop several projects have already been launched in Poland, on national and regional scales, to foster female entrepreneurship in particular, for example, like the project 'Enterprising women in rural areas' ([musterin.pl](http://musterin.pl)) or 'How good to be an enterprising woman' ([rownosc.info](http://rownosc.info)). Solving the problems that constrain rural women's activity, requires projects at regional level that consider economic, social, cultural and political aspects; and regional and local conditions that determine women's situation in labour markets, their ways of deactivation and activation are to be taken into account. Further, positive changes shall occur, especially with regard to the material, social and institutional infrastructure of rural environments. The changes should provide more equal opportunities for young people, especially young women. Changes in rural women's awareness and mentality shall proceed, not only with reference to family roles, but also to the rights and duties of potentially professional activities. Since starting an enterprise is a venture for rural women facing pressure and a difficult financial situation on their own, social cooperatives and business clusters are presented as further possible ways to support female job prospects in rural Poland in a particular socio-economic context.

### **3 Business clusters and social cooperatives – two ways of supporting female entrepreneurship in rural Poland**

#### **3.1 Entrepreneurial dimension of social cooperatives**

A key characteristic of the social economy is to reach not only economic but also social objectives, and to aim at positively influencing social change and development (Prabhu 1999). The social economy sector in Poland includes a diverse range of institutions, some emerging from the traditional non-governmental sector and others more closely

associated with the private sector. Over 19% of 64,500 non-governmental organisations (NGO) take advantage of the chance to run an income generating business activity. Social enterprises in Poland, just as in other countries, offer creative approaches to maintaining financial self-sufficiency while fulfilling a clearly defined social function. However, Poland's social economy sector has yet to utilise its full potential (*ekonomiaspoleczna.pl*).

Social cooperatives are important parts of the social economy and represent one of the most recent legal forms of social enterprise (Duraj 2011: 49). They are usually oriented towards social and professional reintegration, social and economic activities for jobless and/or disabled persons and to restore and sustain the ability to carry out work independently in the labour market (CECOP 2006). According to the definition provided by the International Co-operative Alliance, a social cooperative is a socio-economic entity established as an autonomous association of people who voluntarily agree to satisfy their needs, economic, social and cultural aspirations (Ustawa z dnia 27 kwietnia 2006 r.). Running a mutual enterprise based on the work of each of its members is the object of the cooperative function. Social cooperatives usually offer opportunities for permanent professional activity, personal development and entrepreneurial activity that enables the implementation of cooperative members' goals, meeting their material and, particularly, their immaterial needs. Thomas (2004) points out that social cooperatives have a greater inclination to set up networks with other actors in the same region, especially trust networks, which show lower levels of bureaucracy, higher work motivation, including empathy, and greater end-user involvement. This trust based climate propagated among economic actors can lead to lowering transaction costs and fosters relational and network economies (Thomas 2004: 255).

Borzaga, Depedri and Tortia (2009) emphasised that cooperatives and social enterprises are regulated by laws that differ greatly between countries, which makes any attempt to give them a sufficiently general interpretation independent of national specificities particularly difficult and complex. Generally, social cooperatives are supposed to encourage local job creation, social cohesion, the creation of social capital and to alleviate critical factors, such as providing care or integrating disabled people into the working world (Mancino and Thomas 2005). Basically, social cooperatives may function in many areas of human life by performing various kinds of service for local communities and may contribute to a professional activation of people in a difficult labour market situation. Duraj (2011) emphasises that the social cooperative is set up to develop

its activity on the basis of: its establishment by citizens; decision-making rights not based on ownership of capital; restricted distribution of profit within the cooperative; and a democratic style of management.

The contemporary model of social cooperatives is therefore not only focused on profits since, apart from generating income, it is supposed to attain social objectives like social and professional reintegration (Baranowski 2012). Taking into consideration their purpose, Rymśa and Kaźmierczak (2008: 12) indicate that 'the easiest way to measure the effectiveness of the social enterprise is through the scope of worker (re)integration, for example by counting the number of places of work created for marginalised people'. Usually the social enterprise develops from a local, collective initiative and is formed, in essence, thanks to local, social capital. As a positive side effect of management or as a consciously established social aim the capital is multiplied. Therefore the social enterprise can be a unique tool for transforming social capital into other kinds of resource: material, organisational, human, and infra-structural (Rymśa and Kaźmierczak 2008). Social cooperatives that simultaneously conduct business activities and realise social objectives are the key entities of a social economy, in which social entrepreneurs play the main role, and for whom the most important task is the realisation of a social mission. It influences the way in which they perceive the environment, the chances and opportunities that occur in it and the manner in which they realise their objectives. The issue of earning profit is not (the most) important for them – rather it is considered as a means of realising social objectives (Dees 2001). Borzaga and Galera (2012) indicate that social enterprises are increasingly regarded as successful mechanisms for reconciling equity and efficiency with the creation of economic and social value. They can be interpreted as concrete expressions of a growing sense of social responsibility on the part of citizens, which cuts across countries with profoundly diverse characteristics in terms of welfare systems, levels of economic development and degrees of democratisation. According to Duraj (2011), the social enterprise's cooperative model is synonymous with orienting its business activity at the implementation of definite social programmes, focused on sales of its products and services to its members and in commercial markets.

### *Social Cooperatives in Poland: examples from practice*

At the beginning of the 21st century social cooperatives experienced a renaissance in Poland. Although the history of the Polish cooperative movement is very long, and encompasses both the period of development and support for their establishment and functioning, and years not



conducive to such an activity. Nonetheless, the dynamic development of social cooperatives in Poland was viable thanks to an act of law (and a few amendments) of 27 April 2006, determining the rules of running, connecting and liquidating a cooperative (Ustawa z dnia 27 kwietnia 2006 r.). In September 2011 there were 447 social cooperatives registered in Poland. At that time, small entities, comprising five to nine members prevailed. Their activity was mainly oriented towards the provision of various kinds of service, including cleaning commercial spaces, services and catering ([ekonomiaspoleczna.pl/wiadomosc](http://ekonomiaspoleczna.pl/wiadomosc)). The following social enterprises are typical of social cooperatives in rural Poland and show factors such as the significance of women in running social enterprises, forms of economic activity and the effects of the implementation of joint activities and promotion of entrepreneurship.

One example of a social enterprise formed by entrepreneurial women is *Nasutów Social Enterprise*. It was established in 2007 in the Lubelskie province (see Map 9.1) within a project initiated by the Nowy Staw foundation and women from Niemce Commune, members of the Communal Centre of Social and Professional Activation which promotes self-help and social entrepreneurship in rural areas (Kaźmierczak 2008). It is locally rooted, hence it will be a permanent factor in the activities of local inhabitants and the development of local communities. The enterprise undertakes cleaning, taking care of gardens and green areas, catering, organisation and management of events and conferences. The staff is made up of seven women who received training in how this type of enterprise functions and develops. The work of the social cooperative enhances the job prospects of local women, improves their social and professional qualifications and offers them an opportunity to acquire practical skills. It is distinguished by the organisation of work that facilitates flexible employment, adjusted to the women's family situation. This example illustrates that social cooperatives are specific entities, which women often set up and get on well with. Many social cooperatives in rural Poland provide catering services, cleaning, care (children and the elderly), which are very well executed by the women and may facilitate their re-entry into the labour market after, for example, a period of raising children. Basically, this type of entrepreneurial activity can generate spillover effects, positively impact other women in vulnerable situations and encourage them towards entrepreneurial initiatives.

Another example of a social cooperative established by women is *Pod Kasztanami* situated in Rzepnowo village in the province of Zachodniopomorskie in northwestern Poland ([podkasztanami.org](http://podkasztanami.org)). The female founders aimed to develop new local employment opportunities

and wanted to help other long-term unemployed people. Since 2011 the social cooperative has provided traditional catering services based on regional cuisine, multimedia (mainly recording local events) and the organisation of training courses and conferences. Right from its beginnings it cooperated with the local activity group *Ziemia Pyrzycka*. The chief initiator was a woman with a good understanding of the needs of the local community. She is an example of a female entrepreneur who, in a rural milieu, realised a range of initiatives for the benefit of common local development.

These two examples might illustrate how women previously excluded from the labour market can gain experience in business and entrepreneurship and can practise responsibility in the frame of a social enterprise. Basically, social enterprises have the potential to unlock the activity and entrepreneurial potential of individuals, once considered weak entities of social and economic life and deprived of independent, unrestrained activity. Therefore, to foster regional and local socio-economic development it is worth supporting this type of entity in the social economy through adequate public funds, the development of social capital, knowledge transfer and the promotion of the merits of social entrepreneurship. Local women are supposed to play a significant role in this context.

### **3.2 Business clusters as incubators of entrepreneurship development**

In the theory of economics and management and in economic practice there are a number of definitions of a cluster. Most frequently, a cluster is seen as a spatial concentration of enterprises that cooperate and compete and which are linked by means of a network of scientific and research institutions, institutions of business support or local authorities. Anbumozhi (2007) defines clusters as a geographic concentration of companies in a specialised field that cooperate with the local community to share resources efficiently, leading to improved economic gains and the equitable enhancement of environmental quality. According to Kuah (2002) a business cluster can be an incubator of entrepreneurship development since it creates the conditions conducive to the formation and the development of new enterprises and since it enables the creation of an environment of entrepreneurship, in which barriers to undertaking economic initiatives become less constraining. Beyond that cluster structures foster the development of tangible and intangible resources and attract a disproportionate amount of new entries, such as new members with new resources. Firms in vibrant clusters can tap into

an existing pool of specialised and experienced capital resources, thereby lowering their search costs and time wasted on the learning curve. Firms in clusters usually grow faster than average. As a rule companies within clusters have an intimate knowledge of their suppliers' costs and managers are able to compare costs and employees' performance with other local firms – this is also a result of a close working relationship with each other (Kuah 2002).

*Agricultural clusters:* Cluster structures function in the field of advanced innovative and knowledge-intensive technologies and in traditional sectors like agriculture. The concept of clusters has become a popular strategy for rural economic development, although their benefits to local areas have not been fully examined (Gibbs and Bernat 1997). This results from the fact that agricultural activity is an economic sector with an inclination to concentrate.<sup>2</sup> Rosenfeld (2009) emphasises that some of the new influences on rural clusters are competition from less advanced regions, global supply chains and increased functional integration. Beyond that energy costs and environmental concerns, immigrant workforce and more heterogeneous communities, as well as consumer preferences for product and location and expanding digital communications networks, impact the organisation of rural cluster, within which are also modern agricultural industrial clusters. Bernat (1999) considers that rural industry clusters, being locations where economic activity is relatively dense, may therefore contribute to greater levels of human capital, and thus to higher labour productivity and wages. Those among the agricultural clusters which are actively orientated towards knowledge acquisition, development and transfer, and which use it to solve problems, can be called rural knowledge clusters. These kinds of clusters are specialised networks of innovative, interrelated firms centred outside the major metropolitan areas, deriving competitive advantages primarily through accumulated, embedded and imported knowledge among local actors about highly specific technologies, processes and markets (Munnich et al. 2002).

These characteristics of the agricultural market create certain possibilities for small entities integrated within a cluster, such as effective competition with other participants in the market and a greater chance of influencing the changes occurring in particular sectors of the economy. The cluster structure, functioning particularly in rural areas that are characterised by considerable land fragmentation, constitutes a realistic chance for the integration of its members and gives a more competitive, complex product offer to the clients. Rosenfeld (2009) suggests that rural clusters are generally underserved by financial markets, in part because of

distance from financial centres and venture capital but also because the type of industries that tend to cluster in rural areas are not in technology based growth sectors. Considering that the functioning of clusters are not separately regulated in Polish law, an agricultural cluster can have a legal existence and the capacity to perform acts in law determined by functioning, for instance, as a group of agriculture producers. Another solution is the formalisation of clusters on the basis of civil law contracts and the legal personality of the cluster's coordinator. This is one way to obtain external funds for cluster development. It is worth emphasising that cluster development in rural areas can contribute to an intensification of economic initiatives undertaken by farmers, people living in rural areas, and agricultural organisations. Furthermore, it fosters a balanced integration of policy, economic and social actions, sustains an environmental balance and permanence of the basic ecological processes, aims to fulfil the needs of the people living in rural areas, now and in the future (Socińska 2012).

*Best practice examples from agricultural and tourism sector in eastern Poland*

Clustering in the agricultural sector presents many benefits, such as creating an environment for inter-firm cooperation, facilitating the diffusion of innovations and acting as a means to efficiently channel public support to increase competitiveness in the agricultural sector (Galvez-Nogales 2010). An example of a cluster in which entrepreneurial women found a proper environment for further development in rural areas is the regional cluster *Subcarpathian Flavours (podkarpackiesmaki.pl)*. It is an association of 30 manufacturers of traditional, regional, local and ecological products. Its main activity is the development of cooperation in the promotion and production of food based on regional and local tradition. The cluster members want to promote traditional food and open outlets selling products under the Subcarpathian Flavours logo. The cluster will help manufacturers to seek EU programmes which support the purchase of innovative machines and appliances. The production of traditional food is particularly considered as a chance for small family firms and farms and might offer job prospects for both female entrepreneurs and female employees especially. There are a lot of enterprises in the Podkarpackie region that operate in the sector of traditional, regional and ecological products, however a number of them are still economically weak entities, which have little chance of succeeding in a highly competitive environment without any support, particularly with gaining funds for investment and effective marketing.

Another example of a cluster functioning in rural areas is the *Organic Food Valley Cluster*, an association of various entities acting for the promotion and development of organic food in eastern Poland and providing a supra-regional platform of cooperation ([dolinaeko.pl](http://dolinaeko.pl)). It is an open cluster, which can be joined by businesses and organisations that support the development of organic farming and the production of organic food to increase the competitiveness and innovativeness of local producers through: the introduction of new and improved products and services; delivering knowledge to the producers in the sector related to production, processing and marketing of organic products; and to support the cooperation between research institutes, entities focusing on promoting and improving innovation, and entrepreneurs dealing with production and processing organic products (PARP 2011). Through representatives' cooperation in the sector of business and science, and the promotion of common products, cluster activities are conducive to increasing the scale of organic production and the number of workplaces in the sector of organic food production. They add to the improvement of access to complex information and knowledge within the scope of production, processing and marketing of organic products.

Beyond the agricultural sector tourism is an important field for the formation of business clusters in rural Poland. Not least due to the rather difficult situation for women in the primary and secondary sectors in the rural labour market women often act as initiators and members of tourism clusters. These clusters, in many cases, consist of entities in the tourism market located in rural areas, functioning within the scope of rural tourism and considered as an alternative main source of income to agriculture. An example of such a tourism cluster is the cluster of Tourist Brands of Eastern Poland. Its mission is to support institutions and entrepreneurs operating within the area of tourism, training and recreation and sport services through the creation of fixed frames of cooperation based on the transfer of knowledge, technology and innovative solutions between the cluster members, business institutions, scientific and research units and local authorities (*klaster turystyczny.pl*).

The aforementioned examples of rural clusters illustrate that cluster structures create a favourable environment for economic development, building and strengthening market competitiveness, which is particularly important for micro and small enterprises. Moreover, it has to be emphasised that simultaneous cooperation and competition in a cluster of locally concentrated households, agricultural enterprises and other stakeholders (e.g. local institutions, scientific and research institutions

and institutions of business support) related to them formally or informally, fosters permanent growth of productivity, effectiveness of the conducted activity and can stimulate balanced development in rural areas.

## **4 Conclusions**

Considering policies and activities undertaken for the benefit of rural areas, women's contribution and potential is rarely recognised and acknowledged in Poland. Female activities, the enhancement of women's potential in the labour market and encouraging them to display entrepreneurship are not sufficiently emphasised in the country's development policy and, in particular, in policies for rural development. The conditions that should be created in rural areas to support women's entrepreneurship are fulfilled to a small extent and relate chiefly to the conditions of self-employment, but not employment. Barriers to the development of women's entrepreneurship in rural areas and to a growth in their participation in the labour market are: insufficient flexible work; huge spatial distances, including the difficulties ensuing from road infrastructure and communication; and inadequate access to social infrastructure, relating mainly to the care of the elderly and children. Furthermore, a significant barrier is women's material situation and insufficient finance for investment.

As the key direction to women's involvement one should indicate the support for entrepreneurship reflected in the establishment of microenterprises in rural areas by women, since more and more of them are interested in this form of participation in the labour market, which is closely connected to self-reliance and independence. The interest of country dwellers in the formation of microenterprises in rural areas is primarily caused by the decreasing income from farming. Therefore, the standard of living of country dwellers creates the need to seek new, alternative sources of income to finance their existence and production.

In this chapter, social cooperatives and clusters were indicated as possible ways of stimulating and supporting women's entrepreneurship in rural economies. Successfully realised examples of these types of initiative in different regions of rural Poland were presented as examples of usable and imitable good practices. They might constitute a promising option for ambitious, active, entrepreneurial women, who encounter difficulties in finding satisfying jobs, and might offer additional options in restricted labour markets for women in rural Poland.

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## Notes

1. The highest activity rate of women in rural areas can be found in Sweden, the lowest in Italy (Krzyżanowska 2014: 67, see also Wiest in Chapter 1).
2. The Polish *klaster rolniczy* is also translated as rural or agricultural cluster.

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## **Part III**

# **Women's Living Situations in Rural Areas and Gender-Related Policies**

# 10

## Exploring Female Over-Migration in Rural Spain – Employment, Care Giving and Mobility

*Luis Camarero and Rosario Sampedro*

### **1 Introduction: unbalanced sex ratio structures in rural Europe**

Demographic imbalances between men and women have long existed in rural areas. The masculinisation of rural areas caused by the differences in migration behaviour between men and women is a phenomenon that is rooted in the migration from country to city during the industrial revolution (Tilly and Scott 1989) which persists today. Research on the causes of this differential migration has grown in recent years, along with increasing concern over its effects on rural development and the social sustainability of rural areas. Hoggart (2004) has suggested the importance of rethinking rural development policies as they have not been able to halt the exodus of women.

Today there is abundant evidence in social science literature of the masculinisation of rural areas. Of particular note have been studies on remote rural areas in the circumpolar regions (Hamilton and Otterstad 1998) and in other northern regions: Canada (Corbett 2007), Finland (European Commission 2000), Norway (Dahlström 1996, Limstrand and Stemland 2004) and Iceland (Bjarnasson and Thorlindsson 2006). There have also been various studies demonstrating the existence of the same phenomenon in southern Europe, such as France (Bourdieu 1962, Demossier 2004) and Spain (Camarero, Sampedro and Vicente-Mazariegos 1991, Camarero and Sampedro 2008), and in other regions, such as Brazil (Abramovay 2000).

These studies, although quite different, concur on the importance of the gender imbalance phenomenon among the young adult population

in rural areas and share a concern about its impact on life and the future in rural communities and on the possibility of achieving more egalitarian societies in general.

Although related to very different realities, the current situation in many parts of rural Europe could be considered alarming. Recent Eurostat data point to the seriousness of the phenomenon in certain Nordic and southern Mediterranean countries. The sex ratio (the number of women per 100 men) among the population aged between 15 and 64, residing in predominantly rural areas, reaches figures such as 93 in Macedonia, 93.2 in Spain and Greece, 93.8 in Iceland, 94.4 in Finland, 94.7 in Norway, 95 in Germany and 96.3 in Bulgaria. All these figures are below the expected relationship in the absence of migration (Eurostat 2011, see also Wiest in Chapter 1).

Within Europe, Spain is one of the countries that has undergone the most intense process of masculinisation. In some regions of the country, particularly in the north and the interior, the imbalance in the sex ratio reaches levels close to those of the most remote circumpolar regions. Based on empirical data on Spanish rural areas, this chapter reviews the explanations that have been offered for differential migration by gender and looks at issues that have hardly been analysed until now: the importance of labour mobility in rural areas; its role in access to more and better job opportunities; and the restrictions placed on female mobility due to women's care-giving responsibilities for dependant persons.

## **2 Rural masculinisation: four explanations**

In 1899, Adna Weber (1967) was the first to present data dealing with the feminisation of cities in his celebrated book, *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century*. At that time, this was explained by the higher mortality rate of urban males, rather than differential migration by sex. Weber (ibid.) referred to the higher infant mortality rate of boys and to men's employment in more hazardous occupations and emphasised the relationship of the higher mortality rate of men to the contempt of moral order, such as vice, crime and excesses of all types. A later reflection on gender imbalance in the 1920s was carried out by Sorokin and Zimmerman (1929), who pointed to four social causes, discarding any type of biological cause: first, the correlation between urbanisation and urban feminisation, motivated by the specific demand for labour in different urban centres, which implied selective migration; second, the family nature of agricultural activity that only permitted women employment in the domestic sphere; third, the perspective that female

psychology led women to prefer urban life; and finally, land inheritance systems that favoured men.

For a long time, little more was added to this analysis and the studies carried out were limited to describing the correlation between urbanisation and urban feminisation, especially in the United States. The explanations followed certain lines pointed out by Sorokin and Zimmerman, the masculinisation of agricultural work or women's attraction to cities, an attraction usually explained by the greater comfort of urban life (Landis 1948). These studies recognised that the issue lay in the gender-selective character of migration flows and focused increasingly on relating these differences to types of occupation. The sex ratio was examined in relation to specific urban typologies defined by their productive specialisation (Greenberg 1949a and 1949b). By the 1960s, based on comparative studies in diverse places in the world, researchers began to accept that differences in gender distribution and differential migration were related to types of occupation, arguing that the differences were between masculinised agricultural occupations and feminised industrial jobs (Hunt 1965).

The incorporation of a gender perspective into the studies led to more accurate analyses and opened up the interpretive field. From a broader territorial perspective, Boserup (1970) established a relationship between the differences in activity rates of women in the country and the city and differential rates of female emigration. For example, in Latin America she observed a contrast between the low rate of female activity in rural areas and a high urban rate, while in Africa she found the opposite, which corresponded to a feminisation of rural to urban migrations in Latin America and a masculinisation in Africa. Her findings were confirmed in later studies (Bilsborrow 1992). Thus, Boserup (1970) established three factors that intervene in the tendency toward greater or lesser female migration: the existence of economic opportunities in the cities; the connection to agricultural activity; and, reflecting on the case in Asia, the cultural constraints placed on women's mobility. In this chapter we want to focus on the restriction of female mobility, caused by constraints linked to women's responsibilities in rural areas to care for dependant persons, mainly children, the elderly and disabled people.

In short, based on the academic tradition we have just summarised, there are four fundamental explanations for why women leave rural areas to a greater extent than men.

## **2.1 Social and economic devaluation of family agriculture**

The first explanation has to do with the deep social and economic devaluation of family agriculture and its institutions resulting from

historical processes of industrialisation and urbanisation in Europe. Bourdieu (1962) studied this process in the French region of Bearn in the 1960s. Male pre-eminence in the transmission and management of family farms, along with the institution of the stem family, which established the transmission of a family's agricultural assets to a single heir, was a basic element in the social order of traditional peasant societies in much of southern Europe. The loss of the social and economic value of agriculture led to a deep crisis in the institution of male inheritance. Male heirs obliged to maintain the inheritance and family tradition, found it increasingly difficult to compete with the economic and symbolic returns enjoyed by their kin in industry and urban services. The dramatic increase in bachelorhood in rural areas (Bourdieu 2002) is the clearest indication of this loss of value of farmers, and rural men in general, in the matrimonial market and of women opting for lifestyles closer to the ideals of upward social mobility.

## **2.2 Patriarchal organisation of family agriculture**

The second explanation is linked to gender studies in geography and rural sociology and is focused on the patriarchal organisation of family agriculture. In the 1980s and 1990s a number of studies revealed the social and economic invisibility of rural women, especially those working on family farms and in other types of family business. In the same years in which the wives of farmers in France were demanding to be recognised as farmers themselves (Lagrange 1987), authors such as Whatmore and Little in the United Kingdom were analysing the mechanisms that led to the invisibility of women's work on family farms (Whatmore 1991), as well as the lack of alternatives and the confinement of women's economic activity to the domestic sphere in the United Kingdom (Little 1991 and 1997). Further specific research also pointed to other factors, such as the difference in social benefits for urban women wage earners in comparison to women farm workers (Almás and Haugen 1991). In short, women's abandonment of rural areas expresses their rejection of a situation under effective discrimination and was political in nature, already described by Whatmore (1990: 255) as young women 'voting with their feet', abandoning rural areas in search of better living and working conditions.

## **2.3 Rural restructuring and masculinisation of rural labour markets**

The third explanation is found in studies on rural restructuring and focuses on major transformations in the productive organisation of

rural areas and in the functioning of rural labour markets that have taken place in recent decades (Marsden, Lowe and Whatmore 1990). Thus, in addition to the well-known process of deagrarianisation, these studies point to the defamilisation of agriculture (Arkleton Trust 1992), the diversification of economic activities and the integration of rural inhabitants into urban labour markets (Fuguitt 1991, Oliva 1995). It is argued in this case that the modernisation of agriculture and its gradual industrialisation have turned it into a primarily masculine occupation, without having created enough alternative employment in other sectors to absorb female employment. Studies from the perspective of *feminism of difference* argue that productivist or industrialised agriculture has a 'masculine character' and for this reason women feel distant from it and reject *doing agriculture* in this manner (Haugen and Brandth 1994). Rural restructuring has led to a deeply masculine configuration in the primary economic sectors of the rural world. Hence, the concern in rural development policies for diversifying occupations and creating employment opportunities for women in sectors such as rural tourism, agro-food processing, organic agriculture and local personal services has been rising. Such policies have stressed locality as the driver and organiser of development and especially employment, a feature the theory of rural restructuring has placed great emphasis on (Bradley and Lowe 1984, Marsden, Lowe and Whatmore 1992).

## 2.4 Higher education as female brain drain factor

Studies on rural emigration have pointed out the importance of education level as a predictor of rural emigration (Bilsborrow 1992, Johnson and Fuguitt 2000, Domina 2006). The tendency of young, rural women to achieve higher levels of education than men means that education becomes a very important factor in explaining their greater tendency to emigrate. Corbett has emphasised the phenomenon of female brain drain to explain rural masculinisation (Corbett 2005 and 2007). He finds that individuals with higher levels of education abandon rural areas or do not return to them upon finishing their education; instead they look for more skilled work in urban areas. This phenomenon is much more frequent in the case of women.

The different educational experiences of young men and women in rural areas have led to analysing the conditions which alienate rural youth from the home region. Some studies have found that young women want to break with their mothers' models of economic activity, while young men are more comfortable with traditional masculine economic activities (Dahlström 1996). Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006) demonstrated

how other factors, not strictly related to job expectations, influence decisions to emigrate, such as lifestyles, family expectations or rural identities. Along these lines, Rye (2006) found that young men maintain a representation closer to the 'rural idyll' and young women a representation closer to the 'rural dull' (for the conception of the rural idyll see for example the contributions from Wiest, Baylina et al. and Tuitjer in this volume). Rye noted that the emigration differential of young rural women has to do with the closure of rural communities, with the lack of leisure opportunities for women and with the low expectations they have for social recognition, and that these diverse factors emerge and are concisely expressed within their job expectations.

### **3 The fifth element? Labour markets, mobility and gender**

All of these explanations are useful for understanding the phenomenon of rural masculinisation and help us understand its scope and complexity. In this chapter we argue that there is a fifth factor that, until now perhaps, has not been given enough attention, that of labour mobility. Our hypothesis has to do with the recomposition of rural labour markets, the growing role of mobility in the employment strategies of rural inhabitants and gender differences in mobility patterns.

Although theorists of rural restructuring have already noted the growing connection between rural inhabitants and urban labour markets, this issue has only slowly become a central theme in rural studies. Hodge and Monk in 2004 published an article in the *Journal of Rural Studies* that analysed six *stylised fallacies* in rural studies. The fourth fallacy referred to rural labour markets. Usually, these are considered to be limited (i.e. small and offering lower salaries), but this only applies to *local* labour markets in a narrow sense. If we consider intense mobility as a characteristic of rural inhabitants' employment strategies, this view changes. In contrast, if we apply criteria of geographically restricted – read as local – labour markets, these acquire an artificial dimension in the sense that they are partial and are simply reduced to residual labour markets, composed of those groups with limited mobility.

In Spain, the labour mobility of the rural population has been analysed as one of the characteristic features of rural restructuring from the end of the 1990s (Oliva 1995 and 2006). Indeed, within the logic of what has been called 'compression of space-time' (Harvey 1989), the traditional match between residence and workplace has changed into a more complex relationship made possible by mobility. The settlement structure in Spain – far from the dispersed rurality of northern Europe – and



the spectacular improvement in highway infrastructure after entry into the EU have accelerated and intensified this process. Oliva (2006), taking Urry's notion of 'automobility' (2004), demonstrated the importance of self-organised and private mobility strategies in managing everyday life and the constant interchangeability between local and extra-local work in socio-professional biographies.

The widespread practice of commuting in the rural population has shattered the concept of the rural labour market as a local labour market. But mobility is a resource that allows access to new and better job opportunities, while it segregates rural populations and creates new forms of social inequality between those with mobility and those without. Age, gender and social class are not neutral dimensions in this sense. Cresswell (2006) has explored the geographies of inequality by looking at the disparities between different social groups in relation to their mobility capacity.

Studies carried out in Spain reveal that women show less labour mobility, and that their labour mobility is closely linked to their life cycles and the social function of caring for dependant persons (Camarero et al. 2006). This is consistent with research in other contexts that has also pointed out women's responsibility for care-giving tasks (Halliday and Little 2001). Some authors have even suggested the possibility that the myth of the rural idyll strengthens the domestic role of women in rural communities (Little and Austin 1996, Hughes 1997). In our opinion, the progress towards more egalitarian lifestyles among rural couples is much more significant, just as it has been in large cities. This still does not prevent – as also happens in urban environments – domestic and care-giving tasks from continuing to fall primarily on women, which links their daily mobility closely to their traditional gender roles (Noack 2011).

#### **4 Rural masculinisation, labour mobility and gender: some empirical data**

We will now look at some empirical data that illustrates the possible connection between rural masculinisation, labour mobility and gender. The data refer to rural areas in Spain and, therefore, to one of the countries of southern Europe with the highest levels of rural masculinisation. We focus our attention on three issues we consider to be important: firstly, the collapse of rural labour markets as local labour markets; secondly, the way in which labour mobility is related to access to skilled and unskilled jobs; and thirdly, the fact that in the case of women,

labour mobility is closely tied to life cycles and to caring for dependant persons, in the context of an ageing population.

#### **4.1 Data and methodology**

The data presented refer to settlements considered to be rural, which, in Spain's case, are normally defined as municipalities of less than 10,000 inhabitants. The municipality is the smallest administrative unit and can be composed of various settlements. It is a territorial unit on LAU 2 level in Eurostat classifications. Rural municipalities have an average density of 24 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, they occupy 80% of the territory and represent 21% of Spain's population.

The data come from two different sources. The demographic and employment data are from Spain's 2011 Population Census. The data related to work conditions and care for dependant persons are from the Rural Population Survey (RPS), a representative survey of the Spanish rural population between 30 and 50 years of age carried out in 2008. The RPS included a sample of  $n=795$  men and  $n=1000$  women. For the worst-case estimate of proportions  $p=q=0.5$  and a confidence level of 95.45%, the sample errors are less than 2.4% for the whole sample and  $e=3.6\%$  for men and  $e=3.2\%$  for women. More detailed information on the survey can be found in Camarero et al. (2009).

Our analysis focuses on the rural population between 30 and 50 years old, a group we have named the *support generation* because of the quantitative and qualitative weight this group has in the demographic structure of rural areas in Spain. In addition, because of its position in the life cycle, it is the most active age group in terms of both productive and reproductive work. This group is the key to development opportunities in many rural areas.

#### **4.2 Masculinisation as the demographic setting for the rural world**

Masculinisation, together with ageing, is one of the main demographic features of rural areas in Spain. The imbalance in the sex ratio in certain regions of the country – especially in the north and interior – is dramatic, with fewer than 80 women to 100 men in certain age groups in the smallest municipalities. As can be seen in Figure 10.1, the gender imbalances fit perfectly with the rural–urban continuum, as the smaller the municipality, the greater the level of masculinisation.

The relationship between the number of men and women in an age group in the absence of migratory movement is a function of life expectancy trends. Considering that there are generally more male than

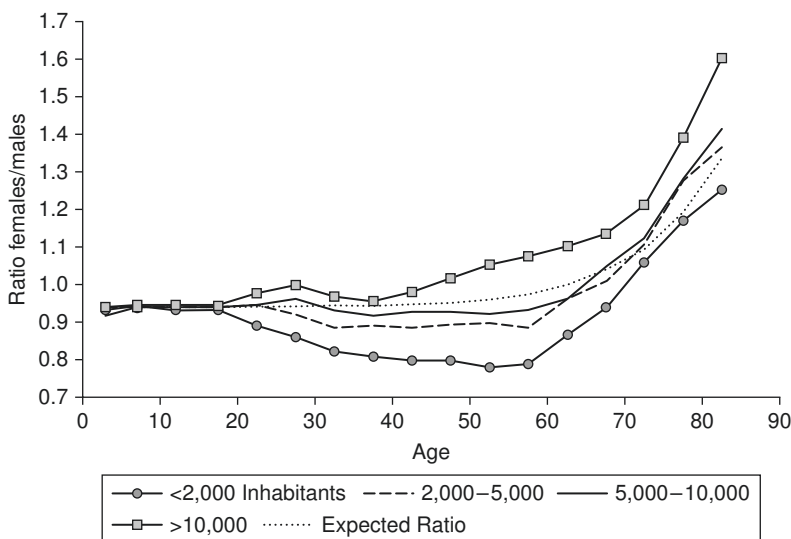


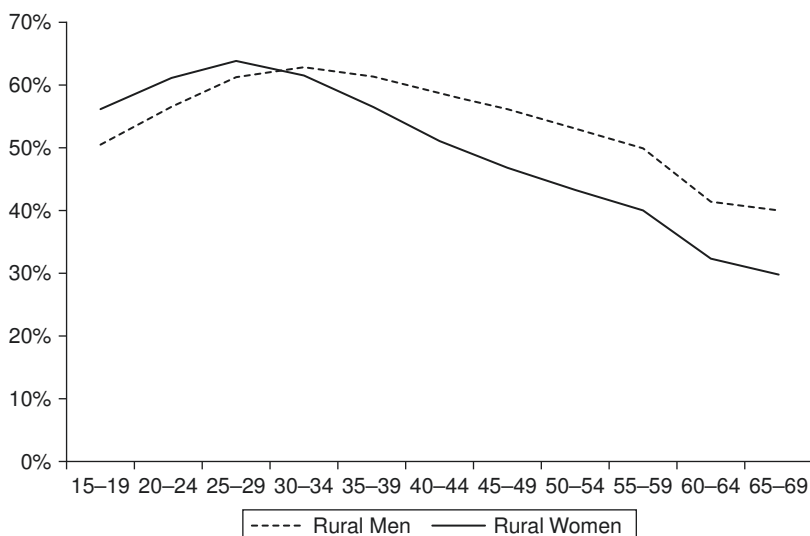
Figure 10.1 Sex ratio by habitat size and age

Source: Spanish Population Census, 2011, expected ratio series; estimate based on 2011 mortality tables (Spanish National Statistics Institute); authors' own design.

female births and that the life expectancy of women is greater than that of men, the population becomes more feminised as age increases. The dotted line in Figure 10.1 represents this *expected ratio* in the absence of migratory movements; at around 60 years of age a similar number of men and women in the population is reached.

The differences with respect to the expected series of ratios – dotted line – occur because of migratory movements. When the data series is below the line, there is masculinisation – more men than women in a specific age group. If it is above the line, there is feminisation – more women than men in an age group. As can be seen in the graph, masculinisation in rural areas, especially in smaller municipalities, is appreciable at very young ages and increases when we look at what we have called the support generation, where we find an average of only 81 women for every 100 men in the smallest municipalities.

Although rural masculinisation and urban feminisation are fundamentally the product of the emigration of women to urban areas, in the case of Spain we also have to take into account the influence of foreign immigration in the first decade of this century. The influx of foreign workers, primarily men, to certain agricultural areas has contributed to



*Figure 10.2* Rural commuting by age

*Source:* Spanish Population Census, 2011; authors' own design.

the increase in rural masculinisation, while more feminised immigration flows – especially from Latin America – have been concentrated in urban areas (Camarero, Oliva and Sampedro 2012).

### 4.3 Collapse of local labour markets: men, women and labour mobility

The decline of family agriculture in many rural areas and the improvement of transportation and transport infrastructure have extended job opportunities for rural inhabitants to places outside their own municipalities of residence. In Spain, almost half of rural workers have jobs outside their municipalities, they are commuters. As shown in Figure 10.2, young people are the most mobile, with the percentage of commuters decreasing with age.

The different patterns of labour mobility of men and women are worth noting. For young rural women labour mobility is fundamental and a higher proportion of them commute compared to their male peers. However, after reaching 30 years of age, their labour mobility markedly decreases with respect to men. It seems clear that this effect has to do with the life cycle and specifically with women starting families and related responsibilities for managing the home and caring for dependant

persons. This seems to indicate that there is a moment in which women are pushed to take on family responsibilities, which tend to tie them to employment in their place of residence. The practical consequences of this on their employment opportunities can be understood if we analyse the relationship between mobility and the type of employment that the rural population finds within and outside their municipalities of residence.

#### 4.4 Labour mobility and social segmentation of rural labour markets

One of the most important phenomena when analysing labour mobility of rural population is the significant social segmentation between mobile and immobile workers. This segmentation systematically reflects the greater qualifications and better working conditions of mobile workers in comparison to immobile workers. Given the number of mobile workers, it is difficult to conceive this segmentation as an exogenous phenomenon, exclusively due to the presence of new residents in rural areas.

The division between mobile and immobile workers is found among both men and women, as can be seen in Table 10.1, but it is more intense among women. The percentage of women working in professional, management and administrative positions outside their municipality of residence is almost double the percentage of women employed in such

*Table 10.1* Distribution of rural inhabitants' occupations by sex and place of work (aged 30–50)

	Work in the municipality		Work outside the municipality	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Professional or management	11.0%	13.3%	20.0%	27.3%
Mid-level management and administrative	14.1%	21.0%	21.5%	30.3%
Employment in retail, hotel and restaurant sectors	9.5%	21.9%	6.1%	14.4%
Industry, transport, construction	38.5%	10.9%	38.5%	7.9%
Unskilled manual labour	5.8%	3.0%	5.1%	2.6%
Agricultural employment	18.6%	8.0%	6.5%	3.0%
Cleaning, domestic services, personal care	2.6%	22.0%	2.5%	14.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source:* Spanish Population Census, 2011.

positions in their place of residence (57.6% versus 33.3% respectively). The jobs held by women in their own municipality are primarily low-skilled manual labour.

An analysis by education level also confirms the differences in local and external labour markets for rural women (Table 10.2). An significant finding is that more than half of those who work outside their municipality of residence have university degrees (51.5%), while in contrast, close to half of those who work in their municipality of residence have completed compulsory secondary education (45.7%). The data therefore suggest that professional jobs are mainly located in external labour markets so the chance to commute might be an important precondition for access to them. Lacking opportunities to commute might constitute an important handicap for rural women, especially for those with higher levels of education, even if certain professional jobs may allow working at home with flexible schedules.

The data indicate that the restrictive nature of rural labour markets for women is circumvented by mobility. In general, mobility and access to jobs outside their municipality of residence increases the chance of women from rural areas finding better quality employment appropriate to their education level.

Regarding job quality, Figure 10.3 shows the relationship between labour precariousness and mobility for men and women. A precariousness index has been constructed taking into account employment stability, the regular or irregular nature of work contracts and the length of the working day. The values on the index range from 1, which is the situation of stable, full-time employment and complete social service coverage, to 5, which represents the greatest precariousness with

*Table 10.2* Distribution of rural inhabitants by sex, education and place of work (aged 30–50)

	Work in the municipality		Work outside the municipality	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Without a degree	2.3%	1.5%	1.1%	0.6%
Obligatory education	55.8%	45.7%	42.0%	25.8%
Secondary school graduate	21.9%	22.7%	23.4%	22.0%
University	20.1%	30.0%	33.6%	51.6%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Source:* Spanish Population Census, 2011.

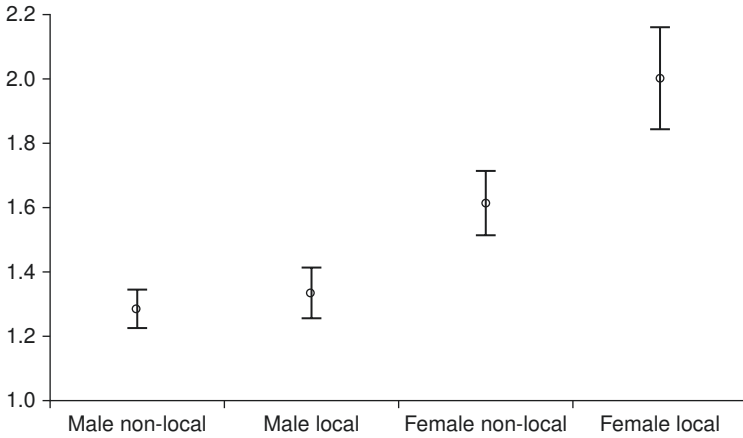


Figure 10.3 Labour precariousness by sex and place of work, rural population aged 30–50

Source: Rural Population Survey, 2008.

temporary contracts, work by the hour and without legal coverage. Figure 10.3 demonstrates the ranges of the average rates of precariousness, with a confidence level of 95%.

Women in rural areas suffer from greater job precariousness than men. If we take mobility into account, we see that there are no appreciable differences in the quality of employment related to mobility in the case of men. However, precariousness for women is greater when they work locally. In other words, employment quality is lower for women employed in their municipality of residence in comparison to women who commute outside their locality.

#### 4.5 Labour mobility and gender: care giving as an obstacle to mobility

The mobility of rural women undergoes a sharp decline at around 30 years of age, a finding we previously pointed out as being related to the life cycle (Figure 10.2). After examining the social segmentation associated with labour mobility we can gauge the consequences of this period in women's lives to a greater degree.

Despite the advance towards a more egalitarian distribution of domestic tasks among couples and the improvement in care-giving services available for dependant persons – children, the ill, the elderly – in rural areas, women continue to have most of the responsibility for care giving and

the family. The fact that the decline in women's labour mobility coincides with the age at which they start their own families suggests that these tasks play an important role in hindering their mobility. Much has been written about the way in which taking care of young children complicates women's employment. In this chapter we also want to take into account the effect of caring for dependant adults. This is of particular importance in a rural context in which there is a high share of elderly people. In the case of Spain, more than one-fifth of the rural population is over 65-years-old, according to the Population Census of 2011.

A specific analysis of the activity of support generation members in relation to care giving for the dependant population was carried out in the 2008 Rural Population Survey. Data show that the percentage of persons in the support generation regularly involved in care-giving tasks is quite high. Approximately 10% live with a dependant adult (someone who has difficulty with mobility and/or taking care of him or herself), and 22% take care of a child under six. In addition, more than one-fourth of the support generation stated that they had taken care of an elderly family member outside of their household during the previous week. Together these data indicate that approximately half the support generation has a family member who needs regular care and attention.

Furthermore, if we analyse the relationship between the presence of dependant persons in the household and labour activity, we find that while this does not affect the rate of male activity, female activity is considerably reduced. For example, the percentage of economically active women declines from 81% to 69% when there are dependant adults in the home, and from 81% to 75% when there are children under six years.

To get a better understanding of the impact that caring for dependant persons has on the economic activity of men and women we carried out a logistic regression enabling us to measure the influence of different variables on economic activity: age;<sup>1</sup> presence of children under six in the home; presence of dependant adults in the home; and attention to older persons who do not live in the home, during the previous week.

As can be seen in Table 10.3, none of the variables having to do with care giving affect male activity; only age is significant. In contrast, in the case of women the presence of children and dependant adults is significant. Having young children reduces the activity rate by over half (0.458), as does living with dependant adults (0.519). It is important to note that the effect of age is the same for men and women (0.999). Age has a quadratic effect on becoming economically inactive and is equal for men and women. This equality suggests that women's early



Table 10.3 Logistic regression coefficients (dependant variable: economically active percentage)

	Men			Women		
	b	Sig.	e <sup>b</sup>	b	Sig.	e <sup>b</sup>
No children			1			1
With children	17.547	0.995	41.7x10 <sup>6</sup>	-.780	0.001	0.458
No dependants			1			1
With dependants	-.061	0.932	0.941	-.657	0.014	0.519
Did not take care of family outside the home			1			1
Took care of family outside the home	0.525	0.359	1.690	0.054	0.781	1.056
Age <sup>2</sup>	-.001	0.043	0.999	-.001	0.000	0.999
Constant	4.937	0.000	139.335	3.103	0.406	22.262

Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness of fit: Men:  $p=0.366$  (Ji-square=8.729,  $df=8$ ). Women:  $p=0.828$  (Ji-square=4.307,  $df=8$ ).

Source: Rural Population Survey 2008.

abandonment of economic activity is fundamentally related to the presence of persons requiring attention and care in the home.

The data reveal two important inequalities that hinder women's access to the labour market in rural areas. On the one hand, the restrictive nature of local labour markets demands a high mobility cost, both for access to certain jobs and to maintain better employment conditions, or conditions similar to those of men. On the other hand, women's greater responsibility for care giving and domestic tasks, combined with the significant ageing of the rural population, significantly reduces their opportunities for mobility.

## 5 Discussion and conclusions

Rural masculinisation is linked to a persistent pattern of higher levels of female emigration from rural areas. This is not a new phenomenon, but today it continues to characterise the reality of many rural areas in Europe. The imbalance between the sexes among the most economically active generations has profound implications for the social sustainability of rural communities and opportunities for rural development. Rural masculinisation threatens the goal of achieving a geographically more balanced and equal society.

The analysis of the causes of greater female emigration from rural areas has shown that it is a complex phenomenon in which diverse factors converge. In general, studies have focused their attention on the lack of adequate job opportunities available in rural areas in relation to women's expectations, taking into account the growing education level of young women and the crisis in traditional domestic roles. Explanations have pointed to the decline of the agrarian economy and the patriarchal nature of family systems of production. They have also focused on the lack of job opportunities outside the family context, as rural labour markets are masculinised and dominated by blue collar jobs. Lastly, education has become a key factor for young women in cutting ties to the rural home region.

Through focusing our attention on issues related to employment we might neglect other non-work related factors, more connected to culture or living conditions in rural areas. However, the female exodus from rural areas persists, despite the undeniable improvement in living conditions in the rural areas of most European countries, the convergence of urban and rural lifestyles and the growing social value of living in rural environments. This suggests that job expectations and opportunities, although not the only factors, continue to be strategic in understanding women's dissatisfaction with living in rural areas, where, as noted by Rye (2006), different sources of female frustration arise, converge and are expressed.

In this chapter we have incorporated a new element into the analysis of job opportunities for women from rural areas: labour mobility, a resource widely used by rural populations in Europe to have better access to jobs. Zelinsky (1971) had already noted in the 1970s the relationship between emigration and commuting as part of a general theory of mobility. For him, emigration and commuting represented different, and up to a point interchangeable, ways of adjusting residence to the labour market. It does not seem unreasonable to propose that female emigration, if it is linked to the lack of opportunities for women in rural labour markets, could also have to do with limitations women face commuting.

Based on the evidence in Spain, one of the countries with the highest levels of rural masculinisation, we have shown that the extension of commuting in rural populations has reduced the local character of rural labour markets. Commuting is also associated with deep social segmentation between mobile and local workers, with mobile workers finding more skilled employment and better working conditions. Women experience a dual inequality in relation to labour mobility: on the one hand, the access to skilled occupations and jobs with equivalent

working conditions to those of men demands a higher cost in terms of mobility; on the other hand, their greater responsibility in care giving and domestic tasks significantly reduces their opportunities for labour mobility.

The collapse of rural labour markets as limited local labour markets is a reality not only in Spain but also in large parts of Europe. Mobility is the central mechanism for dealing with rural–urban differences, not only in terms of job opportunities but also regarding access to a range of services. Thus, unequal access to mobility first of all produces inequality (Cresswell 2006). Regarding gender, the persistent greater involvement of women in caring for dependant persons has a major effect on their capacity to move and on the ways they acquire mobility. It is not just an issue of responsibility for domestic tasks and childcare, in the context of an increasingly ageing population, providing care and assistance to dependant elderly family members is also an important element to consider.

Public policies that foster equality and regional development must focus on equalising the mobility conditions for men and women and must ensure that the care and attention required for a dependant population in rural areas does not fall entirely on the private efforts of women within their families. This could contribute to reducing migration differences and, therefore, the masculinisation of rural areas. In a situation of significant demographic imbalance, a small correction in the relationship between sexes could have not only significant effects on rural population trends and on regional development opportunities, but also on progress towards more equal and socially sustainable communities.

## Note

1. In order to better fit the function of loss of activity with respect to age, the squared value of this variable was used ( $\text{age}^2$ ).

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# 11

## Decentralised Higher Education Infrastructure in Rural Areas to Impede the Outmigration of Highly Qualified Young Women

*Verena Peer*

### **1 Introduction: higher education infrastructure and regional development policies**

Demographic change has been identified as one of the prevailing and enduring challenges confronting rural areas in Europe (EC 2010). This chapter focuses on the outmigration of young, qualified women as one severe manifestation of demographic change in rural regions. Selective migration processes have been related to, more than other factors, the lack of innovation and regional development potential necessary for economic, societal and political prosperity (Frey 2007). Furthermore, it is associated with the loss of founders of the next generation and a decline in financial resources for the rural communities since in the Austrian system municipalities receive money from the state, depending on the number of inhabitants they have (Weber and Fischer 2012).

The outmigration of young inhabitants, especially young women, is attributed to the general trend towards higher education and the fact that higher education infrastructure is mostly located in urban agglomerations. Furthermore, rural areas are often associated with a lack of attractive working opportunities, thus leading to low levels of return migration.

Regional politics in several European countries, for example in Germany, Finland, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Austria, have responded to these developments by decentralising higher education institutes (HEIs), often in the form of, so-called, Universities of Applied

Sciences. These decentralised location patterns of HEIs are aimed at reducing the outmigration of highly qualified, young inhabitants, especially women from rural areas, thus enhancing the potential for regional innovation and stimulating the image and quality of the rural region in general (ÖROK 2011, Peer 2013). A key question in this context is whether the decentralisation of HEIs is an adequate instrument to counteract the outmigration of young women or if it merely postpones migration to a later stage in the life cycle (e.g. after graduation). Besides offering additional education possibilities at tertiary level, HEIs are considered to have relevant impacts on regional development paths. Through the decentralisation of HEIs, further educational opportunities are provided that may lead to an increased participation by the regional population in higher education and may also offer an opportunity for those graduates from secondary schools who would otherwise migrate to cities to attain tertiary education. Basically, HEIs are considered significant representatives for a region (Charles and Benneworth 2001), supposed to attract new enterprise, support new ideas and ways of thinking and, thus, influence the creative potential and milieu of a region. The study programmes on offer not only align to regional needs but also focus on new trends, initiate new developments in the regional labour market and develop and support existing industries, all of which may also increase the demand for highly qualified women (Boucher et al. 2003).

Against this backdrop, this chapter investigates the factors that influence the migration behaviour of young women who have studied at decentralised HEIs in three rural regions in Austria. After discussing the key drivers influencing female migration in rural areas (Section 2), the applied theoretical framework and previously conducted methodological approaches, including the selection of case studies, are presented (Section 3). Section 4 gives insights into the empirical findings. The empirical results and attempts to answer the posed questions are summarised in Section 5.

## **2 Factors influencing the migration behaviour of young, qualified women – recent debate**

This section gives a brief introduction to the most common migration theories in order to shed light on the migration decisions of highly qualified, young women. Thus, it takes current approaches and scientific results into account to provide a basis for the theoretical framework applied in this chapter.



Brain drain, the outmigration of the most qualified inhabitants, has dramatic consequences in rural areas especially. Basically, it leads to a loss of development potential (Frey 2007) which corresponds to a diminished demand for goods and services and dwindling financial resources for rural communities. Furthermore, families are absent who would otherwise help to maintain demand for infrastructure and services (Weber and Fischer 2012). Increasing outmigration causes a loss of public services, financial resources and it triggers social erosion. In this context the outmigration of young women is often seen as closely connected to their manifold roles in rural regions as mothers, caring relatives, partners, employees, entrepreneurs, consumers, investors, supporters of the intellectual property of a region and its hope for the future (ibid.). Against this backdrop, the current paper looks at young women's decision-making processes and the factors that influence their decision to migrate from, return to or stay in their rural regions of origin.

There are three types of theoretical frameworks that can explain migration behaviours: macro-theoretical, micro-theoretical and integrative theories. Macro-theoretical migration models define the migration process as the result of external determinants as push or pull factors influencing individual decisions. The effects are ascribed to GDP, wage levels, unemployment rates, rental fees, quality of the environment, population density, and so on. Scientific surveys focusing on the east-west migration of young women in Germany have provided evidence that more young women than men have left their rural region of origin in eastern Germany (Milbert, Sturm and Walther 2013). The quantitative and qualitative difference between men and women was strongest in the 25 to 30 age cohort. The main reasons for this outmigration were attributed to general wage levels, the provision of higher education, the structure of the labour market and the settlement structure. Kühntopf and Stedtfeld (2012) have proven that young women are more mobile than young men in the same cohort up to the age of 30 and that they are significantly attracted by urban agglomerations. Criticisms of macro-theoretical models are that they only focus on objective indicators and data and do not take account of individual perceptions of these environmental factors.

Micro-theoretical approaches attempt to overcome these failures by focusing on the individual and his/her subjective perception of the environment, which can be distilled into both economically shaped models and those rooted in social science. The rational choice approach (Etzrodt 2003), human capital theory (Sjaastad 1962), job search theory (Aldashev 2007) and economic neoclassical migration

theory (Armstrong and Taylor 2000) are just a selection of economically focused theories belonging to this type. What these theories have in common is their assumption that the decision to migrate is an individual, rational decision driven not only by income expectations but also by other perceived economic indicators in the targeted region, such as wage level, unemployment rate, per capita income, and so on. On the other hand, micro-theoretical migration theories in the social sciences focus on the role of individual emotional factors that may influence the decision to stay or move (For the five-scale-decision model according to Janis and Haberkorn, see Haberkorn 1981; or Werterwartungstheorie according to DeJong and Fawcett 1981). The abovementioned theories are built on the conviction that the individual makes a rational decision based on complete information concerning the possible alternatives and environmental circumstances (which, at the same time, is one of the main criticisms of these theories). There is scientific evidence (Huinik and Kley 2008, Wiest and Leibert 2013) that the decisions of young women to migrate are based on rational thinking and not merely on the thirst for adventure, being mainly influenced by the objective of finding an adequate working opportunity. Taking into consideration the different theoretical attempts to analyse this decision-making process, it becomes evident that the economically shaped models are not appropriate. Besides the wish of having adequate working opportunities, partnerships, quality of life, an intact environment and social inclusion have also been proven to play predominant roles in the migration behaviour of young women (Milbert, Sturm and Walther 2013, Weber and Fischer 2012, Kühntopf and Stedtfeld 2012). It has also been shown that women display different mobility patterns to men throughout their lives: while they are more mobile at an earlier age, they reduce their mobility earlier, most often as soon as they enter the phase of starting a family (Kühntopf and Stedtfeld 2012).

The present scientific survey applies an integrative approach to explain the decision to stay or move by combining micro- and macro-theoretical approaches. The focus is on subjective perceptions of the environment and on migration as an individual, rational decision. The underlying methodological framework is the action-theoretical model according to Werlen (1988) and advanced by Rolfes (1996) and Peer (2013).

### **3 Theoretical framework and methodological approach**

Building on the assumption that migration – defined as the relocation of the place of residence – is a rational decision influenced by

various personal and non-personal factors, the action-theoretical model (Werlen 1988, Rolfes 1996, Peer 2013) is applied as a heuristic framework in this chapter (see Figure 11.1). It distinguishes between different phases in young women's life, including: their decision to attend study programmes and HEIs; their orientation to the labour market in the final stage of their studies; their entrance into the labour market (and corresponding migration decisions); changes in workplace and housing in later life stages, which also includes the question of whether they return to their rural commune of origin or not. Furthermore, the applied framework distinguishes between personal and non-personal determinants and differentiates: (a) personal–emotional factors; (b) subjective perception of the regional environment (push and pull factors); and (c) the available information (Figure 11.1). The extent to which the different factors influence the different phases of the professional cycle is elaborated in Section 5.

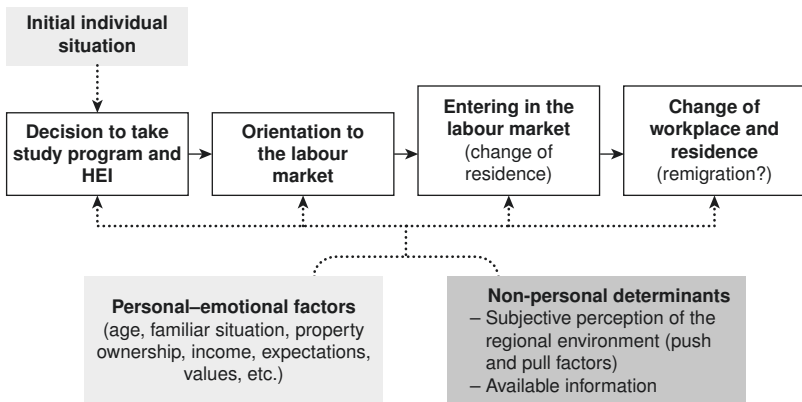


Figure 11.1 Action-theoretical model

Source: Werlen 1988; Rolfes 1996; author's own design.

### 3.1 Research design: an online survey among female graduates

To investigate the factors that influence migration decisions by young women in rural areas, a multiple case study approach according to Yin (2003) was applied. The case study analysis allowed for an in-depth investigation of the selected case study regions. Both quantitative and qualitative data were processed to answer the research questions. The quantitative data was gathered through an online survey of female graduates from three selected regional universities (HEIs) located in rural

Austria and through a survey of the teaching staff and the Austrian companies where they completed their internships. As regional universities are a new phenomenon in Austria – the first one was founded in 1994 – the focus was on graduates from the longest existing study programmes at each university. The deans of the respective study programmes supported the survey by providing a full contact list for teaching staff and encouraged them to participate in the survey. Every lecturer received a personal e-mail with the survey attached and the chance to return it either via e-mail or by regular mail. Furthermore, each university provided a database of companies where students completed their compulsory internships. The internship is often their first contact with the labour market and influences both their subjective perception of structural conditions in the regional labour market and their personal career prospects. Thus, the companies where the internships were completed were invited to participate in the survey. The person responsible for organising the internship received an e-mail with a link to the online survey.

The return rate of the graduate online survey differed considerably between the three case study universities with 78 female graduates participating in the online survey in Bad Gleichenberg compared to 40 in Feldkirchen and eight in Hagenberg. The number of teaching staff who responded were eight in Bad Gleichenberg, three in Feldkirchen and seven in Hagenberg. Of the solicited companies that cooperate with Bad Gleichenberg 59 participated in the survey compared to 40 for Feldkirchen and 27 for Hagenberg.

With regard to the return rate among female graduates, this was very much dependent on the organisation and willingness of the respective alumni associations that supported the dissemination of the online questionnaires. It has to be pointed out that the young female graduates could not have been reached without the support of these associations. Taking a self-critical perspective on the applied methodological approach, that there were 60 questions to the questionnaire could also have had a deterrent effect. Nevertheless, gaining detailed information on the decision-making processes of young women was given a higher priority by the author than the mere return rate of the survey. In Hagenberg especially, a university with a technical focus, the number of female students is rather low (and it was even lower ten years ago when the first study programmes were offered). Consequently, the return rate of the online survey was also very low, consisting of eight participants. The responses given are taken as a first impression but cannot deliver

statistically significant results. Therefore, it is also important to collect qualitative data because it offers the opportunity to interpret the results via triangulation.

Apart from the quantitative data collected via online surveys from the abovementioned graduates, teaching staff and companies, exploratory interviews with the deans of the selected universities and qualitative interviews with 19 stakeholders from the three case study regions were conducted. The stakeholders included representatives from regional politics, regional management, the chamber of commerce and the labour market on regional and federal levels. The information from the interviews supported a general understanding of the regional (labour market) situation and ongoing developments, facilitating the interpretation of the quantitative data gathered in the online survey.

While the quantitative data was analysed via binary logistic regression models and other descriptive statistical methods, the qualitative data was subject to a qualitative content analysis. The triangulation of the findings from qualitative and quantitative sources strengthens the reliability of the empirical findings (Todd 1979).

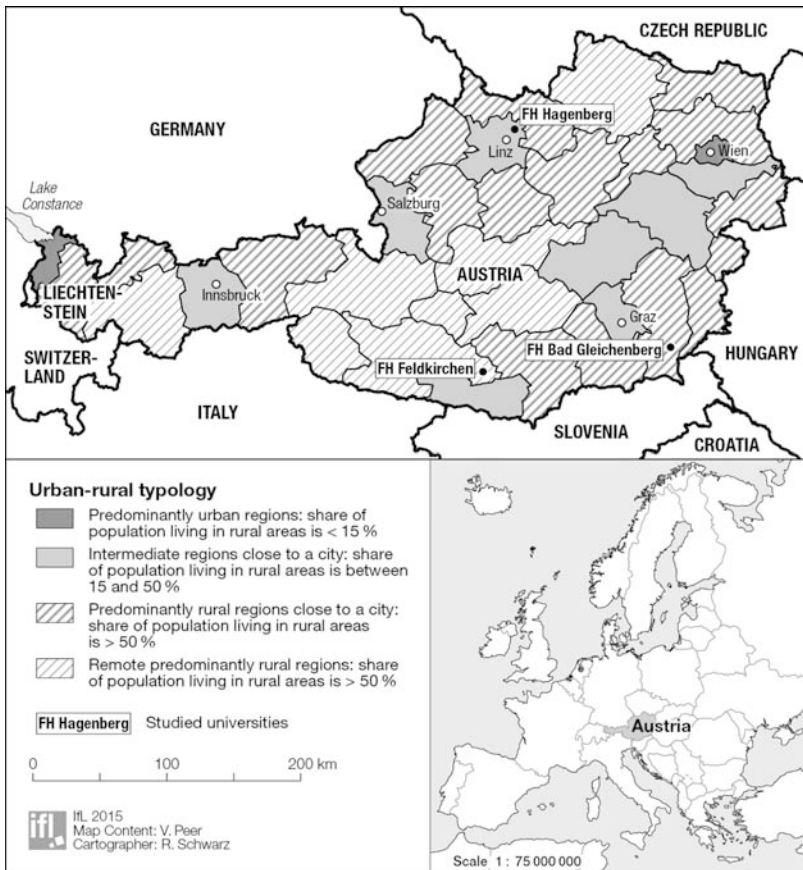
### **3.2 Selection of the studied universities**

In order to enable a multiple case study analysis, a careful selection of decentralised rural universities in Austria was obligatory. In the research context the term decentralised refers to HEIs located in communities with a size of less than 5,000 inhabitants and rural is defined as ‘those areas that lie outside defined urban agglomerations’ (ÖROK 2009). The choice of the universities was conducted conscientiously, taking the following parameters into account:

- Location: all the selected HEIs are located in rural areas, situated a noticeable distance from urban agglomerations;
- Fields of study: every HEI represents a different focus in its study programmes, ranging from social to economic to technical studies.
- Track record: all the chosen HEIs have existed for at least ten years to allow an investigation of a sufficient number of female graduates.

These requirements applies to six HEIs in rural Austria. However, only three agreed to participate in the research (see Map 11.1). The University of Applied Sciences Hagenberg is the oldest rural decentralised HEI in Austria and is situated in a rural region in Upper Austria. The community of Hagenberg is located about 23 km from the city of Linz. The

development of the HEI Hagenberg (<http://www.fh-ooe.at/campus-hagenberg/>) is closely linked to the foundation of the Softwarepark Hagenberg in 1992 and based on research, economy and education. The study programmes focus on software engineering, media technology and design. Softwarepark Hagenberg is one of the biggest employers in the region and offers manifold working opportunities for highly qualified graduates. Although the introduction of study programmes in the field of media design led to an increase in female graduates, the technology focused study programmes still lack female students. This situation is



Map 11.1 Location of HEIs studied and urban-rural typology of Austria

Source: ESPON EDORA.

not unique to Hagenberg but depicts the Austrian and European situation, which is characterised by a shortage of technically skilled people in general and women in particular.

The University of Applied Sciences in Bad Gleichenberg (<http://www.fh-joanneum.at/>) was founded in 2001 and is located in the structurally weak area of eastern Styria. The community of Bad Gleichenberg is located 65 km from the city of Graz. Based on a regional tradition in the field of tourism in general and the recent development of spa tourism, the tertiary education programmes offered focus on health management in tourism.

The University of Applied Sciences Feldkirchen in Carinthia (<http://www.fh-kaernten.at>) was founded in 2001 and focuses on study programmes in the field of nursing management, health and social work. This choice of study programmes is influenced by the Evangelisches Diakoniewerk Waiern, a non-profit institution that focuses on education in the social sector, care and spiritual welfare. The Diakoniewerk Waiern is also one of the region's biggest employers in the field of health and social care. Feldkirchen is located 25.8 km from Carinthia's capital city, Klagenfurt.

The research project focused on the female graduates of the study programmes with the longest tradition in Austria, such as Software Engineering and Media Technology in Hagenberg, Health Management in Tourism in Bad Gleichenberg and Social Work in Feldkirchen. Thus, female graduates from one economic, one social and two technical fields of study took part in the survey with a total of 89 women participating. The participants were 28 years old on average and had approximately three years of work experience.

## **4 Empirical findings**

Taking account of key events in the life cycle of young women, like deciding on a study programme and a HEI, their orientation and entrance to the labour market, changes in workplace and/or housing, this section focuses on the first jobs and whether respondents considered a return migration to their community of origin. Special emphasis is given to the differences in interviewees' decision making and of their imagining of rurality and their (often) rural community of origin. As there are – not always but often – differences between graduates from social, technical and economic fields of study, the results are presented separately for each case study.

#### **4.1 Orientation to the labour market**

When making the decision to attend a certain study programme, personal study interests are most important followed by nearness to the place of residence as influencing factors. Most students came from the, so-called, university region, defined as the catchment area within a reasonable commuting distance, that is, 51% of the students in Health Management in Tourism in Bad Gleichenberg and 44% of the students studying Social Work in Feldkirchen originated from communities within a radius of 30 km–50 km of the HEI (Fürst 1984, Lassnigg and Unger 2005). Overall the majority of students came from the federal state where the HEI was located, that is, 63% of all students at the HEI in Bad Gleichenberg came from Styria in general and 78% of all students at the HEI Feldkirchen originated from Carinthia in general.

However, almost none of the young women checked the opportunities in the regional labour market before enrolling in their study programme. Interest in professional possibilities in the regional labour market often arise at a later date, in the final stages of study. Company websites, online job fairs, personal contacts and the obligatory internship are mentioned as the main sources of information. The young women stated that they consciously choose the company where they do their internship. Young women from the economic and social field of study chose companies for an internship where they would like to be hired as a permanent staff member afterwards. On the contrary, young women in the technical fields of study chose an internship where they could gain international experience and travel. For them, the image and reputation of the company were of most influence. Both graduate and company surveys revealed that graduates subjectively perceived companies with a good image to be located in foreign countries.

In addition to the available information, the female graduates' subjective perceptions of their own region, as well as the perceived opportunities in the regional labour market, influenced their decision to either stay or move.

Of the female graduates from the economic field of study 32% considered it very unlikely that they would find an adequate job within 50 km of their community of origin. The typical workplaces for graduates of Health Management in Tourism were private enterprises of a medium or large size that focused on (thermal) spa tourism. While most of these enterprises were located at a reasonable distance to urban agglomerations, the tourism sector in rural areas is characterised by family businesses with low wage levels and low career opportunities, although



unemployment rates are low. Tourism constitutes a small segment of the Styrian labour market, slowly improving in quality and professionalism. Thus, there are not enough adequate positions for all the graduates who migrate within Styria or within Austria as a whole.

Of the young women from the social field of study 39% emphasised low wage levels in the labour market and high competition from graduates of other fields of study (28%) in their region of origin. On the other hand, both the chances of finding a workplace within 50 km and workplace security are perceived as good. Workplaces in the field of social labour can mainly be found in medium or large public companies/institutions, like NGOs, Caritas, youth welfare and municipal authorities that are primarily located in urban areas. According to labour market experts there is a demand for social labour in rural areas, nevertheless no companies or other employers are located there. Due to an ongoing academisation of social labour in the labour market, the recognition and image has improved while at the same time competition from graduates in other fields of study (mainly psychology) is increasing.

Female graduates from the technical fields of study at HEI Hagenberg were very optimistic about the regional labour market; they perceived as very good wage levels, career prospects and the chances of finding an adequate place of work within a radius of 50 km of their current residence. Moreover, competition in the labour market, insecurity of workplace and unemployment rates were perceived as low. While some of the biggest employers were located in the cities of Vienna and Linz, other international cities were also considered to be primary workplaces. According to the dean of the study programmes around 30% of the graduates left their study region for a first job and found it somewhere else in Austria, 30% joined a company in Softwarepark Hagenberg (one of the biggest employers in the fields of software engineering and media technology and design in Upper Austria) and another 30% looked for their first job abroad. A considerable number of graduates also found their own business after a couple of years, although this applies more to male graduates than to female.

Besides the available information and the subjective perception of the regional labour market, personal–emotional factors have to be considered as important influences. For all surveyed young women, an adequate professional position was the most important criterion for the first job (65% of the graduates from HEI Bad Gleichenberg, 89% from the HEI Feldkirchen and all of the female graduates from HEI Hagenberg). Concerning the other influencing factors, the female graduates showed considerable differences depending on their area of study. The young

women from the economic field of study at HEI Bad Gleichenberg emphasised the reachability of the place of work from their place of living (70%), a significant influence from their familial situation (60%), career prospects in the company (60%) and the salary (42%). Young women from the social fields of study from HEI Feldkirchen placed special emphasis on their personal familial situation (82%), good accessibility from their current place of living (72%) and security of the workplace (63%). The young women that were enrolled in technical studies at the FH Hagenberg mentioned career prospects, company image, accessibility of the place of housing and personal values as very important influencing factors. Less important to the surveyed participants from all three fields of study were property ownership, their age, personal contacts and for the graduates of the technical fields of study their familial situation.

Considering the different fields of influence, the personal–emotional factors turned out to have the strongest effects on their search for a first job and, thus, on their decision to stay or move.<sup>1</sup> The answer to the question of whether they wanted to return to their community of origin immediately after finalising their studies is shown in Table 11.1.

A prime motive not to return to the community of origin comes from the image of a region characterised by perceived low wage levels and the lack of development and career opportunities. This leads to where the young women migrated to in order to fulfil their expectations.

*Table 11.1* Willingness to stay or return to community of origin immediately after graduation

	<b>Bad Gleichenberg, Economic studies (N= 78)</b>	<b>Feldkirchen, Social studies (N= 40)</b>	<b>(Hagenberg, Technical studies) (N=8)*</b>
No, I did not want to return to my community of origin	47% (36)	41% (16)	(81%) (6)
I wanted to return to my community of origin but didn't do it	14% (11)	7% (3)	(19%) (2)
I returned to my community of origin after finalising my studies	39% (31)	52% (21)	(0%)

\* in brackets due to low number of cases

## 4.2 Entering professional life

As mentioned before, an occupation relevant to the received training is the main factor influencing the decision to move or stay. Interestingly, the majority of the surveyed female graduates found their first place of work within a daily commuting distance of 50 km from their community of origin. Of the female graduates from Health Management in Tourism in Bad Gleichenberg 12% mentioned another community somewhere in Austria as the second most frequent location for finding a job. The interviewed experts confirmed that these graduates tended to migrate back to their region of origin or migrate out to another community in Austria, depending on the availability of adequate work opportunities. Of the graduates from Social Work in Feldkirchen 23% mentioned a community within the federal state of origin as the second most common place of work. Thus, these graduates showed the highest level of sedentariness within their region and federal state of origin among all surveyed graduates.

In contrast, the migration behaviour of graduates from technical fields of study focused on larger cities within other Austrian federal states or abroad. A more detailed consideration of the structure of the place of work reveals that young women graduating from socially related study fields in Bad Gleichenberg more often have their place of work in larger and medium cities,<sup>2</sup> while graduates from economically related fields of study mainly work in larger cities and communities. The graduates from technically related fields of study tend to migrate to large cities.

The expectations of the location quality of the place of work turn out to be rather similar between the young women. The availability of a residence at a reasonable distance to the place of work is the most important factor, followed by the image of the place and region and low travel costs (see Figure 11.2). Urban flair, shopping facilities and after work meeting places turned out to play a subordinate role as qualities of location of workplace.

The expectations of residences show that short day-to-day distances, an intact environment and the accessibility of the workplace are considered most important. While female graduates from social fields of study emphasised the importance of short day-to-day distances, women from economic fields of study considered social embeddedness, affordable housing and service costs as particularly important factors.

On the other hand, characteristics associated with an urban environment, such as anonymity and urban flair, are not regarded as that important (see Figure 11.3).

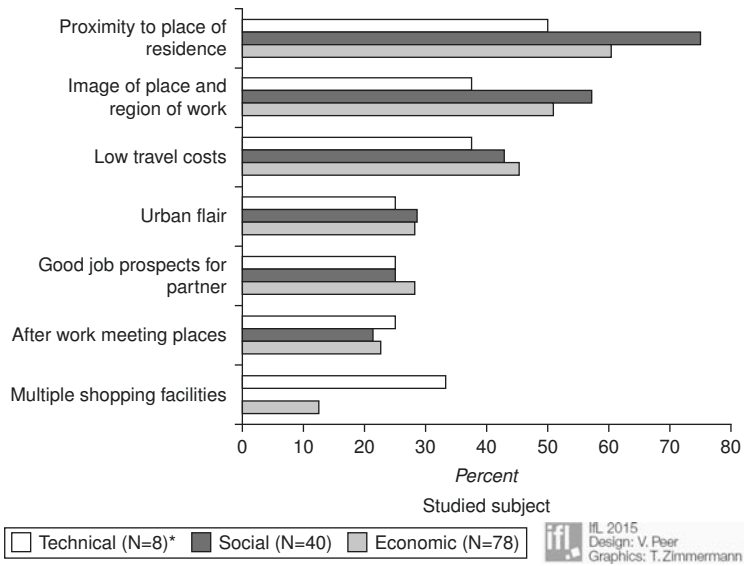


Figure 11.2 Expectations of workplace by field of study among female graduates  
 Source: Author's own survey.

A comparison between the expectations of young women towards their residences and workplaces with the location qualities of their (rural) community of origin, helps to shed light on the question of whether rural life is a general push factor for highly qualified young women.

The young women's assessment of the qualities and deficiencies of their communities of origin show that many of the qualities of location they are looking for at their place of living are met by their communities of origin, such as social embeddedness, attractive housing opportunities and low cost of living. A comparison of the location quality of their (rural) community of origin with their expectations of the workplace revealed that the community of origin does not offer the image, the adequate job opportunities or the career prospects they are looking for. Furthermore, the region of origin is generally associated with low wage levels. Thus, it appears that the rural community of origin is taken into account as a place to live but not as place to work by young, highly qualified women. The decision to stay or migrate is first of all a question of an adequate job opportunity within a reasonable distance.

As the mobility of the surveyed young women is lower than estimated by the interviewed experts from economic, regional development and

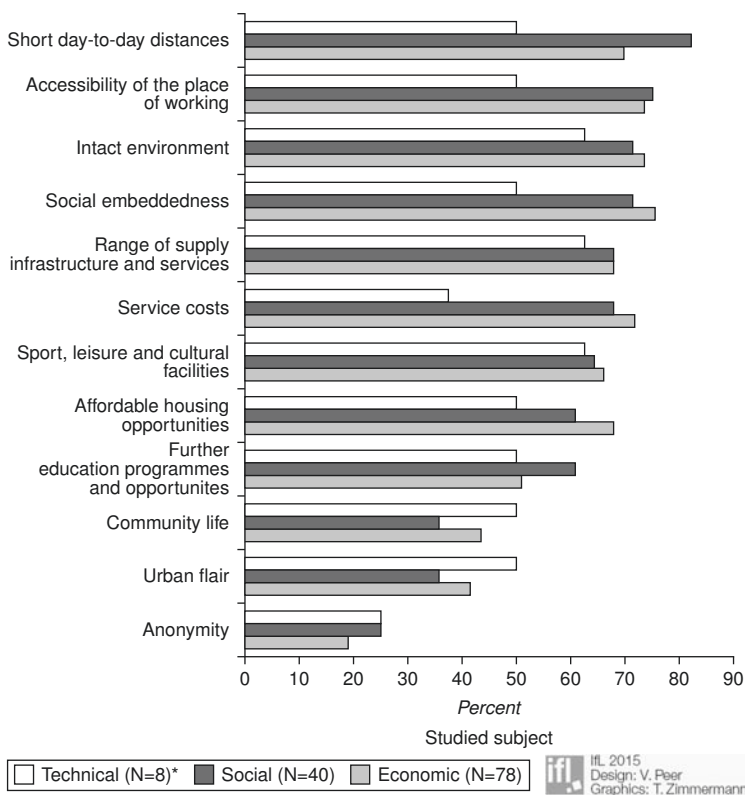


Figure 11.3 Expectations of place of residence by field of study among female graduates

Source: Author's own survey.

labour market policy, the question is whether they have been able to find an adequate job. The majority of the young, qualified women confirmed that education was a prerequisite for their first job and that they got a position within a company in line with their education (60% of the graduates from the HEI Feldkirchen, 33% of the graduates from the HEI Bad Gleichenberg). This applied to those working in rural areas as well as to those who found their first place of work in a medium-sized or large city. Surprisingly, the young women had not found that high mobility led *per se* to better professional activity; data analysis revealed a negative correlation between the first job gained in an urban agglomeration and the necessity of an academic degree. Migration towards medium-sized and large cities cannot be equated with getting an adequate working opportunity.

### **4.3 Return to rural areas by young, highly qualified women – myth or reality?**

In literature, the phase after finishing studies is often considered to be the most mobile in the life of a young woman (Kühntopf and Stedtfeld 2012). At the time of the survey, 22% of the graduates from economic fields of study, 33% from social fields of study and 8% from technical fields had their main residence in their communities of origin. Up to a quarter of the surveyed women (26% from economic, around 22%, from social and technical fields) could imagine returning to their (rural) communities of origin. Only 19% of graduates from economic and 10% of graduates from social fields had no intention of going back. The most important precondition for return migration is an adequate and attractive job opportunity for oneself and one's partner. This is followed by attractive and affordable housing opportunities and by adequate work opportunities with career prospects in the surrounding area. Thus, the reasons for return migration go hand in hand with preconditions linked to working life.

The female graduates who mentioned that they could not imagine returning to their communities of origin, argued that they felt comfortable at their present place of work and with their housing situation. Furthermore, they reported that they were satisfied with their current job position. Finally, they asserted that they did not feel especially tied to their community of origin. It can be concluded that the non-return of highly qualified graduates is more linked to pull factors from the present place of living and work than to the push effect of their rural community of origin.

## **5 Discussion and conclusions**

Taking into account that a high percentage of young women originating from a community at a maximum distance of 50 km to the location of the HEI, the mobilising effect of participating in higher education can be confirmed (Nutz 1991, Lassnigg and Unger 2005). Although the most important reason for choosing a certain HEI was interest in the study programme, their vicinity to the HEI made it possible for them to enrol in tertiary education. Reasons for this are not only rootedness or family obligations but also financial restrictions that would not allow them to study outside their region. In general, the choice of study programme reveals pronounced gender differences with more young women enrolling in social study programmes and only a low number expressing an

interest in technical fields of study (Rolfes 1996, Falk and Kratz 2009). There is empirical evidence that young women within the same fields of study often show similar tendencies towards mobility. Whereas graduates from social fields of study display the lowest range of mobility, young women from technical fields show the highest.

The study results show that, among all influencing factors, the personal–emotional factors are most significant and correspond to the mobility behaviour of young women. Harder (1993), Fabian and Minks (2008) and Falk und Kratz (2009) have all proven that the familial situation (partnership, children, own parents) reduces mobility while certain expectations regarding wage levels lead to increased mobility.

Considering housing preferences, the mobility of young women is not always directed towards larger cities but towards communities that show similarities regarding their size and infrastructure supply to their communities of origin. Most of the young women interviewed are quite satisfied with their community of origin as a place to live but not as a place to work. This finding is in line with other studies that show that a high percentage of young women would like to stay or return to their rural community of origin but that limited opportunities in the regional labour market are important obstacles (Milbert, Sturm and Walther 2013). Reasons for this can be traced to a lack of information about regional job opportunities and a lack of interest when starting studies. Beyond that, young women often upskill themselves in professional fields, and therefore position themselves nationwide in the labour market, in particular in urban agglomerations, while men more often tend to align their education to the needs of the regional labour market (Wiest and Leibert 2013).

Although it has been proven in other surveys that large cities do not have the often mentioned ‘magnet effect’ on young women (Jakowitsch 2013), urban agglomerations fulfil the expectations that their community of origin cannot, such as wage levels, further education opportunities and adequate work opportunities.

Although short day-to-day distances between residence and workplace are a well-known determinant, soft location factors, such as image, further education opportunities and an intact environment – also named amenities (Florida 2002) – gain in importance. The quality of life of a region, nearness to family and friends and a certain environmental and cultural milieu, turned out to be very important. In the survey young, highly qualified female graduates showed a higher degree of sedentari-ness than originally expected.

Reasons for this can be found in the interplay between HEIs and the regional environment. HEIs do not run by themselves, rather, they are dependent on, and influenced by, regional circumstances and initiatives in other fields, such as regional economic activities and labour market initiatives. In all three case studies, the labour market conditions for young women have evolved in various ways, providing different absorption capacities for highly educated, young women. For the graduates from Social Labour, the labour market was centralised, mainly located in urban areas where public and private service providers were situated. Most of the graduates commuted to their place of work or looked for a living opportunity close to the urban agglomeration. In general, access to higher education opportunities led to an academisation and therefore with a valorisation of this profession. With regard to graduates of Health Management in Tourism, a parallel development between the education system and the labour market had taken place. Similarly, the development of quality in tourism and the formation of new industries in the field of spas and so on, the labour market in Styria and in Austria as a whole has developed the demand for a highly qualified labour force. A totally different situation has transpired for graduates of the technical study programmes Software Engineering and Media Technology in Hagenberg. These programmes were not aligned to the regional labour market; instead, they had provided new impetus to the regional, national and international labour markets and had thus developed their own demand.

To keep young, qualified female employees in the region, regional policy has to provide more information on opportunities within the regional labour market, for example with regional job fairs, tours of regional companies already in secondary education or information events.

Despite a general upskilling of women it can be observed that traditional gender roles are still prevalent. Since young women often still take care of and feel responsible for domestic tasks, soft location factors, like short day-to-day distances, attractive child care facilities and cultural and leisure facilities, are often considered to be important preconditions to taking up employment. Beyond better possibilities for young families to coordinate professional and private lives, those assets also contribute to the image of a rural area and therefore might also influence female migration behaviour at a certain stage of life.

This chapter focused on young women who had enrolled in decentralised HEIs situated in rural regions in Austria and investigated the manifold factors which influenced them when looking for their



first job and making the decision to stay in, leave or return to their rural community of origin. The examination of their expectations regarding their housing and working environment indicated that highly qualified young women are heterogeneous in their preferences and do not generally decide for or against their rural environment or for or against an urban life. Instead, their preferences covered both; while their rural communities of origin often fulfilled their expectations regarding a place of residence (e.g. social embeddedness, an intact environment and affordable housing opportunities), urban areas were often preferred as places to work due to their image, their offer of adequate job opportunities, further educational possibilities and expected income. Thus, highly qualified young women lived a, so-called, regional lifestyle (Weichhart 2009) wherein living and working were not necessarily expected to be in the same place but within an acceptable distance. It turned out that the lifestyle of young women cannot be considered as either rural or urban, rather, they try to combine the benefits of both (see also Baylina et al. in Chapter 2). The preference for the urban or the rural is also often a question of different stages in life as family formation, familial networks, social embeddedness and safety gain in importance – values that are often related to rural living (Wiest and Leibert 2013). Thereby, the role of decentralised HEIs can be seen as bridging differences between the advantages of urban and rural ways of living through the provision of education, offering attractive working opportunities, strengthening the regional image, offering cultural opportunities, stimulating new ways of thinking and with incentive effects on regional development. Through these manifold effects HEIs may help to improve the quality of life, which in turn may also influence the willingness of young women to stay or to come back.

## Notes

1. This is, on the one hand, the quantitative result of the online survey where the female graduates were asked to provide information on the significance of certain factors on a Likert scale 1–5 and as the result of the binary logistic regression analysis that has proven to exert a significant influence on independent variables from the field of personal–emotional factors on the decision to migrate or not.
2. Community is defined as <5,000 inhabitants; small city is defined as between 5,001–19,999 inhabitants; medium-sized cities 20,000–100,000 inhabitants; large city with more than >100,001 inhabitants.

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# 12

## Gender Equality in the Regional Development Discourse – Only Rhetoric Modernisation? Austrian Experiences

*Theresia Oedl-Wieser*

### 1 Introduction

Gender equality is rarely present in regional development discourse in many European Union member states. Regional policy and rural development policy are still perceived by many stakeholders – politicians, programme developers, civil servants, local and regional actors – as gender neutral policy fields without impact on gender inequalities in society. Nevertheless, in political practice it is obvious that programmes and measures often reproduce significant levels of gender inequality (European Parliament 2007, Squires 2007). The commitment to the implementation of gender equality in the Structural Funds and Rural Development Programmes of the European Union since the early 1990s stands in stark contrast to the gender-specific outcomes. In regional development discourse gender equality<sup>1</sup> and the strategy of gender mainstreaming<sup>2</sup> are often no more than rhetorical references rather than an integral part of programmes (PPMI 2009, Oedl-Wieser 2015, Bock 2015). With regard to the manifold structural problems in rural areas throughout the European Union – limited added value, low employment rates, poor standards of social infrastructure and widespread demographic decline – it appears essential that regional policy and rural development policy engage in an integrative approach. Policy makers cannot continue building almost exclusively on sector wide policies and have to consider other economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects, reflecting the diversity in rural society. For the vitality of

rural regions it is necessary to develop future-oriented strategies and to change perspectives (Dax et al. 2009, Bock 2010, Leibert and Wiest 2014, Schmitt et al. 2014). In this context the manifold potentials of rural women should be recognised more by local and regional stakeholders. Since women are involved in the labour market, especially in the service sector, are entrepreneurs and activate social life in rural areas through their voluntary work, their contribution is essential for economic and social cohesion in rural areas. Taking that into account it is astonishing how underestimated and little appreciated this involvement often is in the public sphere.

At present many of the socio-economic problems in rural areas are not sufficiently recognised regarding gender-specific aspects, neither in their scope nor in their increasing diversity. In this respect, it is important to capture the different needs and interests of men and women. Due to different living conditions, particularly relevant through differences in participation in the working sphere, household and care work, qualification, income and mobility, political measures and instruments have different effects on men and women. The prevailing ignorance of gender specificity generates continuous social costs because regional resources and potential are left unexploited, political intervention loses efficiency and political legitimacy is diminished (Aufhauser et al. 2003b, Damyanovic and Wotha 2010). Overall, the interrelationship between gender issues and rural development needs to be recognised by male stakeholders in rural regions. So far, gender equality has been viewed as a social rather than an economic problem and not as an integral factor when considering regional and rural development policies and projects. Refocusing on the feminist claim of gender equality, which refers to equal achievements of social, political, economic and cultural rights, status, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men in all spheres of society, has also to be true for rural areas.

Several arguments underline the importance of gender issues and of women's involvement in regional and rural development discourses and processes. Firstly, it is simply a democratic principle that women, who represent more than half of the rural population, are represented adequately in political decision-making bodies in the regions (descriptive representation). Gender equality is now widely endorsed as a central policy goal by governments and international organisations across the world. It is increasingly framed as central to the realisation of modernisation and economic efficiency (Squires 2007: 1). But evidence from across the EU indicates a low rate of participation by women in relevant agricultural and rural development bodies; this means, for instance, that

decisions on the Common Agricultural Policy are made, on the whole, by men (Prügl 2010, Oedl-Wieser et al. 2012, Matysiaka 2015). Secondly, gender equality is an integral part of EU primary law. This means that those involved in policy making have to integrate and promote the perspective of gender equality in all policy fields (Abels 2011, Oedl-Wieser 2011). Thirdly, from a feminist perspective it is necessary that the needs and interests of women find their expression in the programmes and measures of Structural Fund and Rural Development Programmes (substantive representation). There is great scepticism among rural stakeholders regarding the possibility and necessity of linking gender equality issues to measures and projects in rural development processes. Missing gender awareness and gender competence, and individual and institutional resistance, may prevent effective implementation of gender equality (Marchner und Pircher 2010, Oedl-Wieser 2012). Fourthly, it is a far-reaching loss for regional development discourses and processes if the manifold potential, knowledge and expertise of rural women are not utilised. Despite strong evidence that the creation of gender equality boosts sustainable economic growth in rural areas, social and gender equality issues are still subordinate to economic interests. Countries like the Scandinavian welfare states, which possess a high female employment rate and a low gender pay gap, demonstrate more dynamic economic development and are further developed in the service sector. It has been proven that gender equality has key economic dimensions in rural regions (Löfström 2009, Schratzenstaller 2010). Finally, enhancing the discourse about gender equality in rural regions can raise people's awareness of women's potential and problems and can help to transform conservative views on gender role models in rural regions (Schmitt et al. 2014, Oedl-Wieser 2015).

All these legal, normative and economic reasons indicate that a gender-oriented, regional and rural development policy is an important quality criterion and a relevant location factor in rural areas that strengthens sustainable development and innovation (Dax et al. 2009). Given this situation, overcoming the barriers to a successful implementation of gender equality in regional and rural development policy has to be scrutinised. The strategy of gender mainstreaming is a means for implementing gender equality and, ideally, it widens the scope for agenda setting and introduces gender concerns in all policy fields. Further, it claims to be transformative through encouraging change in the roles and behaviour of women and men, and of institutional structures and practices, by eliminating gender inequalities in existing routines (Benschop and Verloo 2006). As the strategy of gender mainstreaming addresses

gender issues within existing policy paradigms and contexts it faces big challenges. The promotion of gender equality is therefore, in most cases, not the main policy goal but a means of delivering another policy (Rees 2005, Kantola 2010, Bock 2015). Additionally, one has to take into account the hidden hierarchy of power and the power dynamics of those involved and their decisive influence on framing gender equality issues in regional and rural development policies (Benschop and Verloo 2006, Pini 2006). If only a small proportion of the claims of gender equality is implemented there is the risk of 'de-theming' and 'de-politicising' this socially relevant theme in rural regions (Wetterer 2003b: 290, Benschop and Verloo 2006). That means that major claims for gender equality as the eradicator of hierarchical gender order, significant changes in unequal gender relations and the transformation of rural society towards more equality are concealed because political stakeholders only place those issues which promise to benefit them on the political agenda of regional and rural development policy.

This chapter offers an overview of the concept of gender equality and the strategy of gender mainstreaming. In Section 3, the phenomenon of rhetoric modernisation of gender equality is discussed and the inadequate conditions for implementing gender equality in regional and rural development policy is illustrated by the Austrian case in Section 4. The importance of strategic framing of gender equality in regional and rural development policy is analysed in Section 5, referring to the programming process of the strategic framework and the Rural Development programme in Austria for the European Union funding period 2014–2020. Finally, recommendations for the implementation of gender equality in regional and rural development policy and concluding remarks are given.

## **2 Gender equality and mainstreaming strategy: a contested policy issue**

The European Union plays an important role in opening policies for gender-related intentions at the level of the European Union, as well as on a national, provincial, regional or local levels (Squires 2007, Abels 2011, Abels and Mushaben 2012). It depends on the member state as to whether or not the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy achieves a transformative character or remains a further requirement of administrative integration. The strategy of gender mainstreaming is a means for implementing gender equality and, as such, it ideally widens the scope for agenda setting, introduces gender concerns in all

policy domains and encourages changes in the roles and behaviour, not only of women but also of men. Moreover, it questions the presumed neutrality of bureaucratic policy making. In this sense it seems to be a very demanding strategy. It seeks to engage with and transform the policy-making process in a way that it will better represent the substantive interests of women (Squires 2007).

Gender equality implies that interests, needs and priorities of both women and men have to be taken into consideration in all facets of life, and that the diversity of different groups of women and men – regardless of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or disability – is recognised. Through gender equality policies direct, indirect and structural inequalities should be reduced and everybody should be treated equally in society. Furthermore, it should strengthen women's self-determination through empowerment, building self-confidence and enhancing agency (Cordes 2010). Although gender inequality is a structural problem throughout the political system and in society, certain circumstances in (peripheral) rural areas additionally reinforce gender inequality, such as distance and insufficient mobility, lack of attractive jobs, unfavourable availability of educational institutions, male dominated structures and withdrawal of the public and private sectors (Leibert and Wiest 2014, Dax et al. 2009). It is necessary that the different living conditions of women and men, and of particular groups of the population, like young and elderly people, migrants and disabled persons, are all analysed and considered routinely. Therefore, it is necessary to close the large gaps of gender-disaggregated data and to conduct periodic, gender-specific analyses at regional level. Due to the implementation of a gender mainstreaming strategy, policy-making processes in all policy fields have to be reorganised, improved, developed and evaluated in the EU and its member states. This process is to ensure that those involved in policy making integrate and promote the perspective of gender equality (Council of Europe 1998, European Commission 1996). In this context the strategy of gender mainstreaming addresses gender issues within existing policy agendas, which need implementing by considering both the agenda of the policy field and institutional structures (Oedl-Wieser 2012). These circumstances make embedding gender equality objectives quite challenging and difficult.

Gender mainstreaming is a contested strategy and the main points of concern are that gender mainstreaming lacks a clear and concise methodology for achieving its goals, if the goals are even defined at all clearly. It further represents a vague policy instrument which is implemented top-down and which can be integrated very easily into neoliberal and



efficiency oriented state politics and administration. In addition, the fact that, parallel to the implementation of gender mainstreaming, the funding for women's policy agencies for positive action and for women's projects in many countries was cut, stimulated mistrust in this new strategy (Stratigaki 2005, Stiegler 2005, Bacci and Eveline 2010, BKA 2010).

### **3 Phenomenon of gender equality rhetoric modernisation**

Since the early 1990s the Structural Funds, and later on the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), have been committed to taking gender equality between women and men into account when designing, implementing and evaluating programmes. Research reveals that there are already important barriers within the European Commission and the EU's political system with regard to a lack of commitment to gender equality issues among civil servants, as well as the formulation of less powerful instruments and of soft law regarding gender equality. Results from various studies indicate that the European Commission is stronger in policy formulation than in developing accompanying arguments, procedures and instruments for putting policy into practice (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2009: 129f.). For many years a persistent gender bias has been made visible by periodic assessments of the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the EU's Structural Fund and Rural Development programmes (European Commission 2002, European Parliament 2007, PPMI 2009, ECORYS 2010).

But what does the phenomenon of rhetoric modernisation of gender equality mean in this context? Wetterer (2003a: 6) argues that 'conceptual shifts in gender equality policy towards gender mainstreaming do not necessarily result in a change of paradigms. It seems that it is often only spoken about gender equality policy – in the sense of rhetoric modernisation – than to implement real changes'. Feminist scholars have observed that a depoliticisation of gender equality issues has taken place. Political goals and interests that originated in feminist movements continuously lost substance during their implementation in political processes and in social discourse. Even though the inequality of men and women and the unequal structure of gender relations persist in society (Banyard 2010, BKA 2010) the discourse about gender equality is dynamic and omnipresent. The insight that only talking about gender equality does not necessarily change the actual, existing gender inequalities in society is called rhetoric modernisation. A negative consequence of which is that

claims and interests of gender equality policy are concealed and are thus no longer visible in political discourse (Wetterer 2003b: 290).

Benschop and Verloo (2006) argue that the strategy of gender mainstreaming as a means of implementing gender equality in all policy fields implicitly avoids policy conflict, depoliticises issues and neutralises the encompassing approach of gender equality policy. They conclude that it might even be more fruitful to conceptualise gender mainstreaming as a contestation, rather than a collaboration, process. Knowing the rhetoric and concealing practices may help in understanding why gender equality has been handled so ineffectively within regional and rural development policy and how this may be changed (Bock 2015). For many years, a more efficient and effective implementation of gender equality has been requested in various European Union and national documents (Oedl-Wieser 2011). In the political discourse of regional development gender equality and gender mainstreaming are often no more than a rhetorical reference rather than an integral part of programmes. As a consequence, the needs and interests of rural women are regularly overlooked by stakeholders in politics and administration, and the Structural Fund and Rural Development programme measures are not effectively targeted towards the specific needs of the local population. Thus, rural society cannot benefit fully from women's potential and is failing to harness expertise for the political process of rural development.

## **4 Implementation of gender equality in regional and rural development policy in Austria**

### **4.1 National and regional frameworks**

As already mentioned, regional, rural development and common agricultural policies are policy fields which, originally, were not much concerned with gender equality issues. At first glance it seems rather difficult to implement a strategy of gender mainstreaming in policies promoting infrastructure, providing market support or paying direct payments or compensatory allowances to mountainous or less-favoured areas. However, both men and women living and working in rural areas are affected by these policies, often in different ways and intensities. However, several examples of implementing gender equality in regional and rural development policy already exist, related to both political agendas and to issues of gender and women specific measures and projects (ECORYS 2010, Netzwerk Land and ÖAR 2013, Bock 2015). In the following, the focus is on attempts to implement gender equality

in rural development policy in Austria. Since Austria's accession to the European Union in 1995, research and evaluations have been conducted to analyse the process and degree of implementing the gender mainstreaming strategy (Aufhauser et al. 2003a, Oedl-Wieser 2004 and 2011).

In response to the insistence of women's organisations and an increasing awareness of gender issues at the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW), an Equal Opportunity Group was set up for one year at the steering committee of the Rural Development Programme to develop actions for promoting equal opportunities for women and young people in rural areas (Oedl-Wieser 2015). The following activities have already been implemented: training in gender competence for stakeholders of rural development in the Austrian provinces; counselling of Local LEADER<sup>3</sup> Action Groups to integrate the issue of equal opportunities for women and young people in the Local Strategy (BMLFUW 2013); modular vocational training for women to participate in rural and regional development processes (Frauen: Fachakademie Schloss Mondsee et al. 2014); and awards for excellent equality projects (Netzwerk Land and ÖAR 2013, BMLFUW 2013).

Nevertheless, results from qualitative research show that civil servants in Austrian provincial authorities who are responsible for implementing the Rural Development programme do not have sufficient gender awareness to apply gender equality through the strategy of mainstreaming (Marchner and Pirchner 2010). They often hardly understand the importance of gender issues to their field of work. There is great scepticism regarding the possibility and necessity of linking gender equality issues to measures and projects in regional development processes. The missing gender competence and individual and institutional resistance may hamper an effective implementation of gender mainstreaming. There is very little cross-departmental cooperation in the administrations at a provincial level, such as women's policy bureaus, equality offices or departments dealing with youth and generations.

The male dominated structures of mainstream politics, business and economic groups in rural regions hinder an increase in the descriptive and substantial representation of women in new rural governance structures. Referring to the 86 Austrian Local LEADER Action Groups in the funding period 2007–2013, the analysis reveals<sup>4</sup> that gender relations on the boards of these Local Action Groups show a massive underrepresentation of women in the rural political sphere. Municipality mayors in Austria, of which only 5% are women, represent the core of the boards, leading to very low female representation (3.5% of chairs and 12.4%

of board members). Moreover, social partner organisations<sup>5</sup> often elect male representatives to the board (Oedl-Wieser 2008, Dax, Oedl-Wieser and Strahl 2011). This has considerable adverse implications for rural women. Also, the, so-called, new or intermediary regional governance organisations (Regional Managements, LEADER Managements, etc.) remain highly influenced by traditional structures of policy making, business and administration.

A further restricting factor for the implementation of gender equality in regional and rural development policy is a lack of support structures in rural regions dealing with social and gender issues in regional development. Considering the requirement and the claim of involvement by rural actors in rural governance structures the question arises of who decides on the selection of members. This is substantial in respect to the fact that there are multiple ways to construct gendered power and inequalities through institutional processes and practices (Krook and Mackay 2011: 4). There is evidence that members of the 'new' intermediary structures of regional governance are to a large extent, so-called, local and regional key persons in politics, administration, business and interest groups, who have already established powerful positions (Pini 2006, Thuesen 2010, Pollermann, Raue, and Schnaut 2012). This raises the question of how power relations are distributed within rural governance structures in relation to institutional, economic and knowledge resources. Further, it has to be analysed whether partners from the civic sector, such as Women's Policy Agencies, have enough political power and resources to participate in an equal way (Bock and Derkzen 2008, Jones and Little 2000, Oedl-Wieser 2013).

#### **4.2 Strategic framing – appropriate means**

The approach of strategic framing seems to be an appropriate means for implementing the issue of gender equality in different policy fields (Verloo and Lombardo 2009). In political practice, one has to differentiate between two processes of implementation: on the one side the political process of democratisation, in which women's voices are included in the policy-making process; on the other side, gender equality policy – and gender mainstreaming in particular – is increasingly organised as a technical process, whereby politicians and civil servants should carry out the gender mainstreaming process, occasionally with the consultation of gender experts (Verloo and Lombardo 2007). A precondition for strategic framing is putting the gender equality issue on the political agenda. The realisation of institutional change depends on the framing of the problem in public and whether it is perceived as a problem at all (Sauer 2005).

Asking how to transform the implementation of gender equality from a rhetorical reference to an integral part of programmes and measures in practice, it is crucial to address both processes of framing. On the one hand it is important to strengthen the velvet triangle<sup>6</sup> of femocrats, feminist activists and female experts to have a stronger voice in the regional development discourse. Therefore, the promotion of Women's Policy Agencies, regional and local women's interest groups and initiatives has to be considered as a key factor in gaining more influence in the regional development process. Until now they have often not been appreciated as significant partners, despite having extensive experience with innovative projects well-tailored to women's needs in regional and local contexts. They tend to have the motivation and the potential to transform conservative perspectives on gender role models in regional society. On the other hand, political and administrative actors should carry out the institutional embedding of gender equality and raise the gender sensitivity of stakeholders.

In the following, these two strands of processes are illustrated by exemplifying the planning process for the Austrian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020. Regarding the political process, diverse inputs were given during the consultation processes for a new programme from women's sections of interest groups like ARGE Österreichische Bäuerinnen,<sup>7</sup> the Chamber of Agriculture, the Chamber of Labour, the Conference of Equality Officers of the Austrian Länder<sup>8</sup> and from the conference participants of 'Women in rural areas – potentials and perspectives'.<sup>9</sup> The themes of these statements are related to the needs of women living in rural areas in general and comprise basic social services like child and elderly care, more jobs, enhancing social inclusion and social innovation, preventing the brain drain of young women and strengthening the political participation of women. The statements were also addressed especially for farm women with targeted education and training, diversification and investment and green care<sup>10</sup> projects that enhance gender competence. Further issues are related to training women's self-determination, empowerment and agency, especially in the context of regional governance processes.

The technical process of the new EU programming period had already started in Austria in 2012 with the STRAT.AT 2020 process. During this process two focus groups related to equality between women and men and social services in rural regions were hosted. The Partnership Agreement outlines how gender equality will have to be integrated and implemented to a certain extent in European Structural and Investment Funds (ÖROK 2014). In the draft of the Austrian Rural Development

Programme gender equality issues are especially addressed in the chapter referring to cross-cutting questions, as well as in priority 1 (fostering knowledge transfer in agriculture, forestry and rural areas) and priority 6 (promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas). An assessment of gender equality and equal opportunities was included in the *ex ante* evaluation of the Austrian Rural Development Programme (BMLFUW 2014).

## **5 Recommendations for implementing gender equality at regional level: lessons from Austria**

Taking the significant connection between gender equality, economic growth and employment in rural areas into account, the results of the evaluation of the Structural Fund and Rural Development programmes show a continued need for gender equality policies. Beyond that, the implementation of gender equality is a core requirement of social justice (Oedl-Wieser 2015, PPMI 2009, European Parliament 2007, ECORYS 2009, Squires 2007). The scope of measures with a transformative character in terms of social and equality orientation is often negligible. Basically, instead of promoting rural women's agency and empowerment, these programmes often preserve and perpetuate traditional gender roles and patriarchal structures in rural societies. Unequal conditions have persisted due to the longstanding negligence of gender equality in regional development discourses or processes. In respect of these unsatisfactory circumstances it is obvious that future-oriented strategies and changes of perspectives are indispensable. In order to break up traditional and often restrictive structures the promotion and activation of social and creative capital in the regions is one important factor (see, for example, Bembenek et.al. in Chapter 9 on rural Poland). It could very well bring crucial impulses for regional development. In rural regions, projects to better integrate migrants or to improve the compatibility of job and family can contribute to improving the quality of life. It is also decisive to encourage dialogue with critical and creative persons, since people who have left the regions often have relevant know-how for regional development (Dax et al. 2009, Oedl-Wieser 2010). Beyond that, rural development policy should act more intensively as an engine for gender equality and for improving the living conditions of women and men in rural areas. A huge amount of literature and handbooks on implementing gender equality for all policy fields is already available and it is time to make use of this expertise (see Oedl-Wieser 2011). Against this backdrop, the following recommendations are addressed in

the future funding period (2014–2020) of the European Union. To effectively develop the transformative potential of gender equality in regional and rural development policies and to ensure that it will not remain a marginalised issue, it is necessary to start discussions and take concrete steps throughout the political multi-level system, like the European Union, nations, Länder and regions (see Table 12.1):

Referring to the strategy of gender mainstreaming, which needs strong top-down support, this principle can also be transferred to the political multi-level system. The greater the pressure at the level of the European Commission – the General Directorate for Regional and Urban Policy and the Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development – the higher the chances for the implementation of gender equality in member states may be. The more commitment to implementing gender equality is incorporated in important documents and directives of regional and rural development policies and the Common Agricultural policy, the better actors at national, Länder and regional level (e.g. social partners, NGOs, women’s policy agencies, rural women’s networks) can refer to it. With strong signals from the European Commission the more the pressure to support gender and equality related issues in member states will increase.

For an effective implementation of gender equality in regional development processes at national level, a clear formulation of objectives is needed. Such binding objectives should be verified periodically. Furthermore, a proactive communication strategy concerning the systematic implementation of gender equality between administrators at national and provincial levels is of great importance. Training staff and providing financial resources during this process could enhance gender sensitivity and competence at both national and provincial levels. Civil servants implementing Structural Fund and Rural Development programmes at provincial level should cooperate more closely with women’s policy bureaus, equality offices or departments dealing with youth and different generations. Together, they should develop concepts and strategies for an enhanced implementation of gender equality in regional and rural development policies. This should also be a process of institutional learning and lead to an enhanced gender awareness.

At regional level it is necessary to develop well-tailored training courses for regional and local actors to build up gender sensitivity. This is also important for formulating local development strategies and implementing gender-related projects. The promotion of women’s policy agencies, women’s networks and initiatives would be a big step forward in combating existing patriarchal structures, which still characterise the

*Table 12.1* Recommendations for implementing gender equality (GE) at different levels in rural and regional development

EU level	National level	Federal state	Regional level
Commitment of the politicians and officials for implementing GE <sup>1</sup> is needed			
Actors at different policy levels:			
Council, EC <sup>2</sup> , DG Agri, DG Regional and Urban Policy	Minister and high officials of Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Regional Policy	Heads of departments for Agriculture and for Regional Policy	Chairs of Local Action Groups (LEADER), Mayors, Regional Managers, LAG Managers
Recommendations on different policy levels:			
Anchoring the concerns of GE and non-discrimination in all relevant documents for rural and regional development policies (EC)	Clear formulation of GE objectives in rural and regional development programmes and periodical evaluation	Officials should apply their federal laws on GM <sup>3</sup> and gender budgeting when implementing rural and regional development programmes	Well-tailored training courses for stakeholders should be developed to build up gender sensitivity
Enhance the promotion of GE in rural and regional development policies inside and outside the EC	Staff and financial resources should be provided for implementing GE in regional development	Cooperation between departments for GE, agriculture and regional development should be strengthened	Rural regions should get assistance for the discussion and formulation of GE key projects, actions or measures
EC should honour its commitment and strengthen the pressure on member states for an enhanced implementation of GE and GM	Create guidelines for a gender-related check on the outcomes and effects of project applications	Bring together the experience of different rural regions and establish a community of practice	Through implementing GE, hidden and unexploited potentials of rural women could come to the fore
Policy of communication and information with respect to GE should be improved – DG Agri, DG Regional and Urban Policy	Quality and relevance of gender-disaggregated data should be improved in the monitoring process	Institutional learning should lead to enhanced gender awareness among officials	New women role models could be generated and the agency of rural women enhanced through the exchange of best practice examples

*Continued*



Table 12.1 Continued

EU level	National level	Federal state	Regional level
Embedding GE in mainstream measures and in the formulation of specific measures for women and other disadvantaged groups	Strategic cooperation and networking between femocrats, political actors, experts and feminist grassroots activists	Increase of funding for gender-disaggregated regional data pools and for research to enhance the required shift in perspectives on GE	Empowerment of rural women could break up traditional and patriarchal structures in rural societies
Re-politicisation of GE is necessary – creation of affirmative actions such as gender-specific measures and projects, quotas on boards and steering committees			
Promoting rural women’s networks and initiatives which contribute significantly to promoting the gender equality issue in regions			

Notes: <sup>1</sup> GE: gender equality, <sup>2</sup> EC: European Commission, <sup>3</sup> GM: gender mainstreaming  
Source: Oedl-Wieser (2011; 2015).

political sphere, work and families in many rural areas of the European Union. Unfortunately, existing expertise and knowledge about gender equality in the region is underused. By supporting such women’s networks and other gender-related structures important incentives could be provided for developing rural areas. These groups address other areas of concern in regional development processes, such as gender pay gaps, reconciliation of work and family, lower mobility of women or violence against women and children. They have the motivation and potential to transform conservative perspectives in gender role models of rural people.

Not only do institutional barriers have to be considered in respect of gender equality and its effective implementation, but also the lack of support structures and know-how in rural areas. Especially at regional level there is a need for specific support services and well-tailored training courses for members of Local LEADER Action Groups and for people implementing projects. In many cases, managers of Local Action Groups are interested in gender mainstreaming but find it difficult to convince board members of the importance and advantages of gender equality for their region (Dax et al. 2011). Through best practice examples dealing with gender issues and new female role models in rural areas the social spaces could be enlarged to where diverse concepts of living are accepted more easily.

The responsible authorities at national level should enable and enhance the participation of women in Structural Fund and Rural Development programmes. There are many instruments available, such as the delegation of members to advisory boards and steering committees, the proactive invitation of rural women's policy agencies to participate in rural development processes and decision-making bodies, quotas, specific women and gender-related measures. A final important step is improved data benchmarking with gender-disaggregated indicators included in all reports, as well as gender impact and gender budget analyses of projects and funding.

Women are to be seen as active partners with a high potential and not primarily as a problem group, which is a widespread view. It is essential to improve monitoring schemes in terms of defining more well-tailored gender-specific indicators<sup>11</sup>, to implement gender impact assessments and gender budgeting, to analyse gender-specific effects and to assess the extent of the implementation of the strategy of gender mainstreaming in the whole evaluation process (*ex ante, mid-term, ex post*).

At all spatial levels it is important that the existing expertise and knowledge of gender experts and women's initiatives is used and that the participation of women in decision-making bodies for regional and rural development policy increases significantly. For a future gender-sensitive orientation of regional development it is vital that the different living conditions of men and women in rural areas are examined and made visible. In many places there is a huge lack of gender-disaggregated regional data and data pools. Increased funding for research related to the complex cross-cutting issue of gender equality in rural development would be helpful to enhance the required shift in perspectives on gender equality.

## 6 Conclusions

Indeed, policy is necessary to boost the descriptive and substantive representation of rural women as important protagonists in regional economic development. To strengthen the political power of women in rural governance and to push equality issues from rhetoric into practice it is absolutely necessary to increase pressure from several sides and to implement a range of diverse strategies. These include the initiation of serious incentives for gender equality at European Union level, the fostering of strategic cooperation and networking between femocrats and political actors at national and Länder levels, and a new form of local and regional feminist grassroots activism. Therefore, it is decisive

that women's and gender issues are also seen as an economic topic rather than the social one it has been viewed as so far. It is time that it becomes an integral factor to be considered in regional development policies and projects.

Regarding all these findings, it seems necessary to intensify the feminist analysis of rural governance structures and processes. Refocusing on the feminist claim of gender equality, which refers to equal achievements of social, political, economic and cultural rights, status, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men in all spheres of society, this also has to be true for rural regions. It implies that interests, needs and priorities of both women and men have to be taken into consideration in all spheres of life. Regional and local women's organisations contribute significantly to fostering the gender equality issue in regions and to raising people's awareness of women's potential and problems. Increased funding for research on women's participation in rural governance is absolutely necessary to raise awareness and to enhance the required shift in perspectives on gender equality. Feminist analysis should not be simplistic analysis focusing on the numerical representation of women but should link their limited presence or absence to the question of power and, further, explore how women's self-determination, empowerment and agency could be strengthened in rural governance processes.

## Notes

1. Equality between women and men can only be attained by simultaneously lowering the barriers to the equal participation of women and men in all spheres of society (equity aspect of gender equality), re-evaluating and improving the social recognition of 'typically female' assets (difference aspect of gender equality) and eliminating binary approaches embodied in categories of 'typically female' and 'typically male' (diversity aspect of gender equality) (Aufhauser et al. 2003b). Main thematic priorities of gender equality policy of the EU for the next few years comprise equal economic independence, equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, equality in decision-making, dignity, integrity, ending gender-based violence, gender equality in external actions and horizontal issues like gender roles, legislation and governance (European Commission 2011: 11).
2. Gender mainstreaming involves the incorporation of gender considerations into all policies, programmes, practices and decision-making so that, at every stage of development and implementation, an analysis is made of the effect on women and men, and appropriate action is taken.
3. LEADER: Liaison Entre les Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale. The LEADER programme was established in 1991 as a European Community initiative with a specific focus on rural innovation and the task of improving the quality of life at a local level through a bottom-up approach. Beyond

- supporting 'hard' economic interventions, this also includes activities to enhance social processes, which can be considered as major driving forces to rural development.
4. The author was involved in the selection process of the Local Development Strategies of LEADER for the funding period 2007–2013.
  5. The Austrian Social Partnership is a system of cooperation between the government and major economic interest groups: the Trade Union Federation (ÖGB); the Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ); the Federal Chamber of Labour (BAK); and the Chamber of Agriculture (LK).
  6. The velvet triangle is a cooperation between femocrats, feminist activists and female experts at regional and local levels. Femocrats are feminist women in the administration supporting gender equality issues in their working field. The term was introduced by Alison Woodward (2004). Gudrun-Axeli Knapp speaks of a 'magic square' (2013) in this context.
  7. Largest association representing farm women in Austria.
  8. Austria has nine federal states (Länder).
  9. The conference took place in February 2013 at the University of Applied Life Sciences in Vienna. About 180 participants signed the Conclusion of the Conference (Larcher et al. 2014)
  10. Green care is an inclusive term for many complex interventions, such as care farming, animal-assisted therapy, therapeutic horticulture and others (Sempic et al. 2010: 11).
  11. Gender-specific indicators could be new or secured jobs, participation in courses for further qualification, promotion of young female farmers, or implemented gender-oriented projects.

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