

1 Gender and Rural Globalization: An Introduction to International Perspectives on Gender and Rural Development

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Introduction

In the Introduction to the book *Rural Gender Relations* in 2006 we discussed how globalization and liberalization of agriculture irrevocably changed rural life and with it rural gender relations. A lot has happened since 2006; yet we could very well repeat the same sentence introducing this book ten years later. Globalization is, after all, still ongoing and the liberalization of agricultural policies is still a topical issue today. Actually, it is the accelerating process of globalization and the sociological theories that elaborate on it, which convinced us of the need for reflection and a new collection on rural gender research.

Giddens defines globalization as the 'growing interdependence between different peoples, regions and countries in the world as social and economic relationships come to stretch worldwide' (Giddens, 2001, p. 690). In particular, he refers to the interchange of products and capital through global trade, the interchange of people through global travel and migration, as well as the interchange of culture, ideas and

world views. Globalization, moreover, affects politics in terms of expanding collaboration as well as interdependency. There is increasing awareness that we are facing challenges that may only be addressed through collaboration (e.g. climate change) (Beck, 2016). On the other hand, we see that the fast travel of information through information and communications technology may 'globalize' local political events in an unforeseen manner and interrelate places at great geographical distance. Globalization does not stop at the border of the rural, as Woods (2007) has demonstrated. After all, farmers in many rural areas deliver agricultural products to the world market and are, hence, closely involved in global trade and through their organizations in global negotiations. The same is true for other 'global production sectors' such as forestry and fisheries, energy, biofuel, minerals, as well as the non-agricultural rural entrepreneurs and rural residents more generally. They all are increasingly involved in worldwide connections and networks of collaboration, not least because many rural areas are receiving 'newcomers' from all over the world.

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This idea of the interconnected world in which the travel of information is unbound has inspired Manuel Castells's theory of the network society in which he elaborates on the importance of electronically processed information networks to organize social structures and relations (Castells, 2000). These networks constitute a means by which information is exchanged and relations are established. As these networks are virtual and unbound by geographical location, traditional spatial barriers, such as remote location, lose their importance. It is the extent to which networks criss-cross and interconnect that defines their power and not their geographical location. In theory, rural peripheral locations may be as included in the network society as central and urban places. In practice, the so-called 'connectivity' of rural residents is often lower because, among other factors, of the limited accessibility of high-speed Internet (Salemink *et al.*, 2016).

Urry (2007) and Cresswell (2010) elaborate on the movement of people, ideas and things that go along with the network society and contribute to globalization. They define the current time as an era of mobility and stress the importance of understanding humans as travellers. According to Urry, modern mobility includes the ongoing corporeal travelling of people and objects between places; the pluri-local senses of belonging to, and engagements in, places that create translocal social networks; and the imaginative, virtual and communicative 'travelling' that vivifies and invigorates those networks. The mobility turn is relevant for rural studies in several ways: it opens our eyes to the fact that rural residents are far less sedentary or immobile than often assumed (Milbourne and Kitchen, 2014), yet also underlines the huge disadvantage of rural areas when mobility is structurally limited through lack of infrastructure (Bell and Osti, 2010).

Taking account of mobility has consequences for theoretical frameworks as well as research methodologies. This is forcefully expressed in what Beck and Sznaider (2010, p. 382) call 'the cosmopolitization of reality', in which not only cross-border

communication and collaboration increases but also the material and immaterial interdependence among social actors across national borders. These borders become more fluent and pervious as a result and may challenge commonly known differences between nations and/or localities. Turning to Europe, we have already seen that rural–urban distinctions are increasingly difficult to identify for gender relations (Shortall, 2014). This calls for multi-sited and comparative research or a cosmopolitan perspective, following Beck's idea of 'the cosmopolitan turn' (Beck and Sznaider, 2010). Its explicit aim is to go beyond the usual isolation of social matters as local or national phenomena and their traditional separation as a concern of so-called 'developed or developing' countries, and to understand how they are co-created in a global interplay of forces. Beck therefore argues we should let go of the usual methodological nationalism and localism to understand the construction of social relations. In terms of rural gender relations, this means that we should look beyond rural places when trying to understand their construction and functioning; also, separate discussions of Southern and Northern rural gender relations make less and less sense in an increasingly connected world.

Globalization and Rural Gender Studies

Globalization matters greatly for rural gender studies in our view. Globalization offers chances as it promotes the inclusion of even remote rural areas in the global network society. As a result many of the traditional structural and cultural barriers may no longer hamper rural women's empowerment and, hence, promote more equal gender relations. The increasing material and virtual mobility and connectivity may, in addition, promote collaboration of men and women across rural–urban and national borders. It also includes risks of course when the rural becomes part of a global field of action and with it competition and conflict at a global level. Higher levels of

mobility render travelling affordable also for rural residents, yet also enable outmigration – in particular of young women as we have seen (e.g. Johansson, 2016) – as well as the entry of newcomers from all over the world. Both may change the existing structure of rural societies. In the following we discuss how such developments are taken up in research. We reflect upon the development of rural gender studies as described in the previous book, the relevance of the then defined research themes and the emergence of new topics and methodologies. Thereafter we introduce the structure and content of the current book.

In the Introduction to *Rural Gender Relations* (2006) we argued that rural gender studies started with research that revealed women's engagement in farming, which was continuously overlooked. Gender research of that time also identified how development policies and projects that ignored women's productive role, undermined women's position in society and created unequal gender relations (Bock, 2006). In the course of the 1980s rural gender researchers were among those who criticized the dominant idea of modernization as development, as it supported the profits of capitalist firms and countries, contributed to social inequality more generally, reinforced patriarchy and with it the dependency of women. At the same time research revealed the important role that women played in the maintenance of family farms and the elaboration of alternative pathways towards organic or multifunctional agriculture, part-time farming and rural entrepreneurship (e.g. agritourism).

Rural gender research is strongly influenced by mainstream gender studies in terms of theoretical and methodological development as well as research topics. This is clearly reflected in the growing attention to differences among women and the flexibility of gender identities in terms of dominant definitions of rurality and sexuality. In the following years this topic has been further developed, also theoretically, which is mirrored in increasing attention to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning (LGBTIQ) identities and queer

theory (Keller, 2015). Rural gender researchers also followed up on the mobility turn with more research into the effects of globalization and the increased mobility of women and men on rural gender relations.

Based on this we may argue that rural gender studies in the global North and South followed roughly the following development path, when developing research on the following topics:

1. The visibility of women in agriculture and rural development.
2. Critique of (rural) development and patriarchy.
3. Struggle for empowerment and recognition of women's agency.
4. The acknowledgement of heterogeneity and flexible gender identities.
5. Mobility, globalization and transnationalism.

Rural gender studies started with research into women in agriculture and development and proceeded from there. The development is, however, not linear as most of the themes remain relevant despite the emergence of new ones, as we will demonstrate by giving just a few examples. Gender and agriculture is still a very topical issue; it is however studied in a different way, taking account of the theoretical and methodological insights gained, and of the relevance of mobility and globalization. New research looks, for instance, at how the increasing involvement of women as paid labourers in the expanding plantation agriculture in the global South affects their position (Canning, Chapter 21, this volume), into women's and men's involvement in agriculture as migrant labour or how women's access to agricultural innovation could be improved (FAO, 2016). There is also still research going on which critically evaluates the attempts of rural development policy to involve rural women in targeted projects, which more often than not reinforce traditional rural identities and relations (Shortall and Bock, 2015). In the global South gender is still an important focus in mainstream development projects, even though several researchers have a rather critical view of it. Already in 2007 Cornwall *et al.* reflected critically

on their own role in mainstreaming gender. In a recent article Cornwall (2016) elaborates how current attempts to empower women have lost their critical stance by focusing too much on the economic involvement of women. In doing so we have, in her view, foregone the earlier focus on supporting women's agency, which renders any attempt to transform gender relations futile.

One interesting development is the growing interest in heterogeneous and flexible gender identities. This is evident in the types of questions being asked in research about rural masculinities and in the acceptance of LGBTIQ orientations and identities in rural areas in different parts of the world (Abelson, 2016). It often confirms earlier research that pointed to the conservative character of rural areas as well as the limited inclusion and integration of those who are considered different (Cloke, 2007). Finally, there is an expanding body of research into rural mobility and migration. Such research examines the arrival of labour migrants in Europe who contribute to the revitalization of rural areas, the ambivalent reception of refugees as well as the continuous trend of population decline in (remote) rural areas throughout the world, the dreams of those who leave as well as the experiences of those who stay behind (Bock *et al.*, 2016). In addition, several researchers have meticulously detailed the mobility of rural residents and 'the rural' in Europe, addressing the supposed immobility of the rural in this era of mobility (see Chapter 2, this volume).

This Book

The developments discussed above inspired us to edit a book that explores how rural gender relations are changing in a globalizing world. It analyses the development of rural gender relations in specific places around the world and looks at the effects of the increasing connectivity and mobility of people across places. The book is not geographically or geo-politically organized but integrates experiences across the globe through the discussion of four themes

which reflect the above listed key themes in rural gender research: agriculture, international development, gender identities and mobility. Each theme is introduced with a paper that gives an overview of the state-of-the-art in that specific thematic area and integrates the case studies that follow. The contributors present empirical work from the global North and South, and more particularly Sweden, Norway, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, the UK, Poland, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Uzbekistan, India, Africa, Asia and Latin America, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA.

The first section (Chapters 2–6) examines how mobility affects men and women in rural areas. It explores gender differences in mobility patterns and analyses how mobility affects rural gender identities and relations. The section opens with Chapter 2, an overview in which Bettina Bock discusses the development of mobility research and the attention given to the impact mobility has on gender relations and vice versa. She then introduces the chapters that contribute to this section. Chapter 3 by Donatella Greco and Chiara Zchetti reports on the experiences of Ukrainian women who work in rural areas of Italy as domestic caregivers. In doing so they cover the inadequacy of the Italian welfare system, which no longer supports the availability of sufficient services in rural areas, particularly for (elderly) citizens with limited mobility. In Chapter 4, Nargiza Nizamedinkhodjayeva, Bettina Bock and Peter Mollinga discuss how labour migration in rural Uzbekistan, which increased enormously in the aftermath of its independence, affects the livelihood of those who stay behind and how the importance of the economic contribution of labour migrants impacts on household relations in terms of gender and generation. In Chapter 5, Jessica Duncan and Monika Agrawal explore how land grabbing hinders the mobility of pastoralist communities in Gujarat in India and how the restricted mobility affects their livelihood, personal well-being and gender relations. Chapter 6 by Janet Momsen compares how two opposing migration streams – tourist immigration and labour emigration – play out in two

regions with very different histories of migration: the Caribbean islands and the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico. She demonstrates how migration may strengthen the position of women through their increased involvement in gainful employment as well as the interaction with other lifestyles, norms and values.

The second section (Chapters 7–11) focuses on agricultural change and the development of agricultural and rural policies, the response of individuals within farm households and the implications for gender relations in rural areas. It starts in Chapter 7 with an overview of the development of research on gender and agriculture by Sally Shortall and an introduction of the chapters in this section. In Chapter 8, Margaret Alston presents a longitudinal study of farm families' struggles with the impact of climate change in Australia. She discusses how farm families' strategies to cope with drought and the reduced farm income affect gender relations and put pressure on farm families' well-being. In Chapter 9, Susanne Stenbacka follows a group of female entrants into farming and analyses the values that motivate them to start farming. Based on her study she concludes that the new female entrants differ from men in terms of their economic aspirations and aspired quality of life. They are active and ambitious farmers yet shape farming in their own way, different to the hitherto dominant masculine worldview. Chapter 10 by Majda Črnič Istenič and Chrysanthi Charatsari studies and compares agricultural education and extension programmes in Slovenia and Greece in order to understand to what extent women participate in such programmes and if and how participation fosters their empowerment as farm women. In Chapter 11, the final one of this section, Anne Cassidy looks at the views of young women and men who are not the heirs to the farm and their role in contributing to the smooth succession and maintenance of Irish family farms. She unravels how Irish farm youths' socialization into traditional gendered position teaches, in particular women, not to expect to inherit yet to support their brother's

takeover of the family property without objecting to sacrificing inheritance rights.

The third section (Chapters 12–17) focuses on the construction of identities and the changes occurring in the definition of rural femininity and masculinity as a result of rural transformations. Sally Shortall opens the section in Chapter 12 by presenting an overview of research on rural identity and gender identity. She then introduces the chapters of this section. In Chapter 13, Lori McVay examines the identity of women leaders in Northern Ireland in order to understand how these women managed to become leaders, against all traditional odds, and which events and life choices shaped their identity. In doing so she elaborates how growing up in a rural context may nurture women's confidence and readiness to lead in the sense that taking on responsibility is considered part of a rural lifestyle. Chapter 14 by Marit Haugen and Berit Brandth studies how divorce affects the gendered identities in farming. Divorce has been considered particularly destructive in farming, where the unity of farm and family is perceived as the basis of its functioning and continuity. Their chapter demonstrates how divorce dismantles not only the socio-economic unit but also attacks the personal identity of farm women and men – as being a farmer is inseparably part of the personal identity of both. Losing the farm family undermines men's identity as farmers, whereas women – who generally leave the farm – have to let go of their farm identity altogether. How important farming is for the identity of men emerges too from Chapter 15 by Mark Riley and Heather Sangster, who study how retirement affects the male farming identity of farmers. They point at the central role of farm labour, of being physically involved in work on the farm. Proof of bodily strength and continued involvement in the farm are crucial for farm men's sense of self even if farm management is actually transferred. The importance of work as part of men's identity after retirement is also a theme of Chapter 16 in which Caoimhe Ni Dhonnail compares two different initiatives to tackle the social exclusion of elderly men and women in

rural and urban areas. She demonstrates how men are often more vulnerable to loneliness when they lose work and how difficult it is for initiatives to involve men if there is no room for a post-work masculine space that allows men to reconfirm their masculine identity, for instance through do-it-yourself, wood carving and metal work. Chapter 17, the final chapter of this section, looks at the identity of female village representatives in Poland. Iłona Matysiak's key question is whether accessing the position of village representative promotes women's position in politics, which had traditionally been a male position of privilege. Based on her research she demonstrates how women's entry is facilitated by the devaluation of this position and does not lead to a gain in political power even though it promotes women's participation in village affairs.

The fourth section (Chapters 18–23) examines the role of international development policies in advancing women's well-being in the less developed parts of the world and some of the unintended consequences of such interventions. It starts with an overview in Chapter 18, in which Bettina Bock and Margreet van der Burg discuss the development of research in this field in terms of important topics as well as theories and methodologies. They underline the recurrence of gender equality on the international political agenda as an important precondition for sustainable development and food security in the light of an ever-growing world population. Their chapter closes with the introduction of the contributing chapters, all of which look at the changes of rural gender relations from the viewpoint of international relations and international development politics. Chapter 19 by Carolyn Sachs and Elisabeth Garner reviews recent literature on the feminization and masculinization of agriculture resulting from the reorganization of the agri-food system in both the global North and South contexts. They demonstrate how new developments in family farming and industrial agriculture, as well as the emergence of new alternative forms of farming, go along with shifts in gender relations and identities which may or may not provide

opportunities for the empowerment of women. In Chapter 20, Wendy Harcourt presents evidence of glocal networking among rural women when presenting case studies in rural India, Tanzania and Italy from a feminist political ecology perspective. In doing so she stresses the importance of interaction and collaboration across place and between different groups in order to effectively promote equitable and sustainable development across the globe. Chapter 21 by Megan Canning looks at labour conditions in the sugarcane industry in Malawi and discusses how wage work in plantation agriculture redefines traditional gender roles and relations, realizing gain and loss at the same time. Gaining income improves women's position within the household, while at the same time women are prone to exploitation and sexual intimidation at their working place on the plantation. In Chapter 22, Francesca Alice Centrone, Bettina Bock, Angela Mosso and Angela Calvo present their experiences with the development of novel gender indicators and their usefulness in the light of the increased importance of accountability. Gender indicators are most often used at the international level. Gender indicators may, however, be useful also at regional or even project level by assessing the extent to which projects and policies do actually contribute to more equal gender relations and empower women in terms of, for instance, access to health, education, governance, knowledge and technology. In Chapter 23, the final chapter of this section, Susie Jacobs reviews current trends towards the formalization of land tenure practices and compares the effects of individual or joint land titling on the position of women in different countries across the globe. She concludes that titling may strengthen women's right to land, although the increased privatization that goes along with it may also undermine the right of access of the most vulnerable groups, especially when it is the state or a corporate business that acquires formerly common land.

The book closes in Chapter 24 with conclusions and reflections on the position of gender in rural research agendas and in rural academia more generally.

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