

# Processes of Immigration in Rural Europe



# Processes of Immigration in Rural Europe:

*The Status Quo, Implications  
and Development Strategies*

Edited by

Stefan Kordel, Tobias Weidinger  
and Igor Jelen

Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing



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This book first published 2018

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-0676-2

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-0676-3

This publication is co-funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) using funds from the Federal Foreign Office (AA).



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## FOREWORD

The idea for this edited volume grew in summer 2015, when we were able to host a two-day workshop entitled “New migration processes and development in peripheral areas: status quo and strategies” at the beautiful Gorizia Campus of University of Trieste, Italy. Funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) within the programme “*Hochschuldialog mit Südeuropa*” (dialogue with the universities of Southern Europe), the workshop encouraged a broad interdisciplinary scientific dialogue among both senior and junior scientists, as well as students, related to the emerging topic of immigration to rural and peripheral areas in Europe. Attended by 25 international researchers, the conference discussed a range of conceptual approaches and empirical studies from across Europe from various disciplinary angles, and came to the attention of the International Geographical Union (IGU) because Elena dell’Agnese (Vice-president of its Executive Committee) was among the participants.

Figure 0-1 Logo of the workshop in Gorizia in 2016



Thanks to the funding from DAAD, a group of students of the Universities of Trieste and Erlangen-Nuremberg, who had been actively involved in the organization of the workshop, also got the opportunity to gather first-hand knowledge of migration processes to rural areas during a fieldtrip to the Venetian Adriatic coast and the Slovenian Alps. For the students, this experience was a memorable example of research-driven

teaching, while for the scientists, the conference provided new insights into the diverse approaches to research in the field of immigration to peripheral areas.

Figure 0-2 Participants of the workshop in Gorizia in 2016



Source: Tim Petrich.

Since summer 2016, however, it has taken the authors quite a lot of effort to prepare and then finalize their manuscripts for this book, after receiving our many emails (probably too many) requesting changes, checks and double checks. They have been patient, however, and have continued to trust us, for which we have been, and are, very grateful. Thanks to all of you, who together have helped to bring this initially loose idea alive!

You would not be able to hold this book in your hand, without the many people who gave us a helping hand during the whole process of editing. Thus, we are very thankful to Victoria Carruthers from Cambridge Scholars Publishing for always being at hand for questions, to Maggie Studholme who had the sometimes very challenging task of improving language issues in some of the chapters, to Florian Dworzak for creating maps very quickly just before the deadline, and to Moritz Bergdolt and Veronika Vogel in particular for formatting the final manuscript. You saw every missing comma and every wrong line distance. Thanks again!

Last but not least, we would like to address you, the reader in search of new horizons in the field of migration and rural areas. Thank you for buying this book. Now it is time for you to enjoy it and learn more about

the variety of contemporary immigration processes to European rural areas!

Erlangen in December 2017,

*The editors*

## EDITORIAL

# CURRENT PROCESSES OF IMMIGRATION TO EUROPEAN PERIPHERIES: STATUS QUO, IMPLICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

STEFAN KORDEL AND TOBIAS WEIDINGER

### **Rural Mobilities**

European peripheral rural areas have for a long time been seen as areas of out-migration and demographic decline. Accordingly, discourses around the “rural flight” (Beetz 2016) have predominated in scientific and political debates. More recently, however, immigration processes, e.g. lifestyle and leisure oriented movements as well as induced labour or forced migration (asylum seekers) are increasingly affecting areas in Europe that are considered peripheral or rural. In such relatively novel destinations for immigration (cf. new immigrant destinations, McAreavey 2018), an increasing number of migrants arrive and cause various demographic and socio-economic transformation processes (Jentsch and Simard 2009; Bock, Osti, and Ventura 2016). Nowadays, however, migration processes cannot be understood as unidirectional and more or less permanent movements from place A to place B. Instead, more temporary movements currently characterise late modern societies. The EU, in particular, provides a legal framework for the freedom to travel and to choose the place of residence and work (Ackers and Dwyer 2002), which often results in transient migration (Carson et al. 2017). A broader view of migration in rural areas, termed rural mobilities, takes into account “movements into, out of, within and through rural places; (...) linear flows between particular locations and more complex spatial patterns of movement; (...) journeys of necessity and choice; economic and life-style based movements; hyper- and im-mobilities” (Milbourne 2007, 385f.).

Inherent in the understanding of migration as rural mobilities is peoples' (temporary) attachment to places (Bell and Osti 2010; Milbourne and Kitchen 2014), yet they move on if structural or personal circumstances change. In practice, individuals establish manifold relations with more than one place. The most visible manifestations of this are multi-local households (Halfacree 2011; Weichhart 2015) and transnational social spaces (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Hedberg and do Carmo 2012; Faist, Fauser, and Reisenauer 2013; cf. also the importance of localities in concepts of translocal geographies in Brickell and Datta 2011). This emphasis on mobilities, however, should not neglect immobile individuals, i.e., rural stayers (Haartsen and Stockdale 2017).

Immigration to peripheral rural areas results in an ongoing reconstruction of places and thus places remain unfinished (Massey 2005). Accordingly, the "rural" cannot be addressed as static, but is subject to changes and transformations that are not exclusively provoked by immigration, but rather by wider processes of globalization and mobilities (Woods and McDonagh 2011). In light of ongoing population changes, centre-periphery debates have to be taken into consideration. Thereby, a concept of peripheralisation that goes beyond a static understanding of peripherality (Steinführer et al. 2016) could be very helpful.

## **The Diversity of Migration Processes**

Since the 1970s, processes of migration from urban centres to peripheral areas have been conceptualized as counterurbanisation, encompassing the migration of middle aged and relatively well-off people (initially in the U.S, then in Europe from the 1980s; Berry 1976; Koch 1980; Dean 1986). Nowadays, however, immigration processes to peripheral areas are characterized by a certain degree of heterogeneity regarding the socio-economic, socio-demographic and ethnic diversity of protagonists (Woods 2007; Hedberg and Haandrikman 2014; Camarero and Oliva 2016; Nienaber and Roos 2016), resulting in manifold processes of in-migration. The majority of migration in rural Europe is amenity/lifestyle migration, return migration, labour migration and the residential mobilities of refugees / asylum seekers. Conceptualized as consumption-led migration, *amenity migrants* often prefer peripheral mountain regions with a high cultural and environmental quality (Moss and Glorioso 2014), for instance in the Alps (Steinicke, Čede, and Löffler 2012) or low mountain ranges (Bartoš, Kušova, and Tešitel 2008). Frequently associating migration to the struggle for a better way of life, such individuals, i.e., *lifestyle migrants* (Benson and O'Reilly 2009, 2016; Benson and Osbaldiston



2014), are relatively affluent and mostly have resources, e.g., time and money, to decide freely where they would like to live. On an intra-European scale, lifestyle migrants, mostly from Northern and Central Europe, prefer Mediterranean coastlines and their hinterland (for Malta cf. Åkerlund 2017; for Portugal cf. Sardinha 2015; for Spain cf. Kordel 2016), interior rural France (Benson 2011; Gruber, Kobras, and Kordel 2018) as well as Italy (King and Patterson 1998; Seidl 2008). Spa towns with a good health infrastructure are also important destinations (Weidinger and Kordel 2015). Lifestyle migrants are either (pre)retirees (Kordel 2015; Weidinger and Kordel 2016), middle-aged persons or young families, who become economically active as part of their desired lifestyle (lifestyle entrepreneurs, Stone and Stubbs 2007; Carson and Carson 2017). *Return migration* is strongly embedded into the individual's lifecycle and therefore associated with biographical events, such as a parent's need for care or entering retirement (Ní Laoire 2007; Jauhainen 2009; Farrell, Mahon and McDonagh 2012; Stockdale, MacLeod, and Philip 2013; von Reichert, Cromartie, and Arthun 2013; Lundholm 2015). Furthermore, economic reasoning predominates and people decide to return to their rural place of birth when well paid employment is available (Gkartzios 2013). *International labour migration*, even to peripheral areas, came to the fore not least in the course of the EU enlargement in 2004, when people from the new member states sought employment in Austria, Germany, Great Britain and Ireland for instance—not least on a seasonal basis (Nienaber and Frys 2012; Rye 2014; Nienaber and Roos 2016). In rural Southern Europe instead, immigration from MENA countries and Latin America predominates. Thereby, the agricultural sector represents a first step into the rural labour market (Kasimis and Papadopoulos 2005; for Portugal cf. Fonseca 2008; for Spain cf. Hoggart and Mendoza 1999; Camarero, Sampedro, and Oliva 2014; Collantes et al. 2014), while migrants also find work in poorly paid jobs in the manufacturing or service sector, e.g. crafts, gastronomy, tourism, and trades (Kasimis and Papadopoulos 2005). In light of regional disparities and the uneven impact of the financial crisis, intra-European labour migration from Southern Europe to Central Europe, e.g. Germany, has taken place. Rural municipalities and private organizations have started to engage in marketing efforts to attract qualified employees or trainees (Glorius 2016). Against the backdrop of multilayered crises in Africa and the Middle East, a considerable number of *asylum seekers and refugees* have been, and are still being, accommodated in the peripheral areas of many European countries according to national dispersal policies. Asylum seekers and refugees are directed to rural areas to share out the burden, e.g., the costs and pressure

on the housing market; or to speed up integration (Romme Larsen 2012; Weidinger, Kordel, and Pohle 2018). Refugees' housing decisions are commonly seen as provisional, because a wide range of individual and structural contexts, such as changing legal status, family reunification or employment can encourage them to move on.

## **Implications and Development Strategies**

Rural newcomers result in visible transformations of rural areas. "Unexpected groups at unexpected places" (Camarero and Oliva 2016, 93) increase diversity, particularly in the light of low population densities and a relatively homogeneous socio-demographic and socio-economic composition in many peripheral areas (Bock, Osti, and Ventura 2016).

The changing demand on rural housing markets is widely observable, but largely depends on immigrants' socio-economic and socio-demographic structures and aspirations. While lifestyle migrants ask for well-equipped real estate or (vacant) buildings in the historical centre of small villages, a price increase may exclude or even displace the local population (Phillips 2005; Schmied 2005; Weidinger and Kordel 2015; 2016). Furthermore, the buildings may be used on only a temporary basis throughout the year as migrants increasingly prefer multi-local living arrangements. Where return migrants choose their family home as a place to live, the implications for rural housing markets are considered relatively small. However, when they make use of lower price levels compared to their previous place of work, they may invest in real estate. With regard to refugee migrants, there is a particular demand for group accommodations, which are often located in peripheral areas. Former tourist accommodations are frequently used for this purpose (Weidinger, Kordel, and Pohle 2018). Since the share of social housing in rural areas is relatively low in many European countries, refugees rely on the private market and are offered accommodation in poor condition.

Rural economies may benefit from relatively affluent migrants mostly with regard to their expenditures on daily goods, consumer durables and craft services. Especially pre(retirees) are not seen as sensitive to variations in the global economy and can draw on monetary resources (Bennett 1993; Brown and Glasgow 2008). However, these increases in purchasing power can also result in rising consumer prices (Schmied 2005). Younger lifestyle migrants also consider economic activities to be part of their desired lives and become self-employed especially in the tourist business, thereby drawing on various translocal and transnational connections (Carson and Carson 2017; Webster 2017). They, thus, help to

revive traditional crafts and/or local heritage on the one hand, but can also be in competition with local suppliers (Schmied 2005). Furthermore, the stimulus for the local employment market is either limited to the entrepreneur and his/her close relations (“survival self-employment”, Stockdale 2013) or to low-paid and unskilled jobs. Similarly, labour migrants position themselves in rural economies (Kasimis 2005), as they get work in the agricultural, construction and tourist sectors. However, rural areas are mostly addressed as a “place of transit” (Kasimis, Papadopoulos, and Zacopolou 2003; Corrado, de Castro, and Perrotta 2016). With regard to return migrants, there is a potential for skilled workers, who have experience in transnational firms, to help mitigate labour shortages in rural areas that are affected by this (Lang et al. 2016). Although local stakeholders, such as politicians or entrepreneurs, have high expectations in terms of demographic stabilization and the mitigation of labour shortages, there is little evidence of the integration of refugees in rural employment markets (exception: Greve Harbo, Heleniak, and Ström Hildestrand 2017).

With respect to social lives and politics, some lifestyle migrants consider volunteering activities and political involvement (Haas 2013; Janoschka and Durán 2014) to be part of their desired life. In order to fulfil their anticipated rural idyll and to become part of the rural community, lifestyle migrants learn cultural codes and habitus (Sardinha 2015). They may also donate for local purposes (Schmied 2005) and stimulate the arts and cultural scene (Brown et al. 2011). Civic organizations and local governments can thus benefit from the resources of migrants. However, migrants often become involved only in order to protect their rural idyll against processes of change and thereby take up positions that are at odds with the local inhabitants (Halfacree and Boyle 1998; Schmied 2005; Farstad and Rye 2013; Gallent 2015)<sup>1</sup>. Immigrants in rural areas in general, and refugee migrants in particular, often challenge rural identities and place (Hubbard 2005). Whether this results in hostile attitudes or a deliberately welcoming culture, often depends on recent (non)experience of foreign immigration or other transformation processes (Glorius 2017) as well as the attitudes of local elites (Radford 2016). Apart from that, refugees can also contribute to sustaining local infrastructures, such as schools, as they are mostly of young age.

To actively support rural communities confronted with in-migration, European and national funding bodies have created new programs or

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion about migrants’ attachment to rural places in the era of mobilities, see Gieling, Vermeij, and Haartsen 2017.

extended existing ones, such as the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Social Fund (ESF) or LEADER. These programs especially aim at the promotion of social inclusion as well as increasing inter-cultural understanding among host communities and new arrivals, training measures and the creation of jobs for migrants, e.g. in agriculture (ENRD 2016).

In the light of ongoing processes of concentration in urban agglomerations and growing regional disparities, peripheral rural areas increasingly compete for new inhabitants, albeit desirable migrants, who are mainly younger, well-educated and economically strong. They are the focus of marketing campaigns in some municipalities (for Australia, see Connell and McManus 2011 and Gibson 2014; for Sweden, see Niedomysl 2004, Heldt Cassel 2008, and Eimermann 2015). These marketing efforts can encompass advertisements in the mass media, trade fairs or exhibitions, which mostly highlight “soft” locational values such as living environment, quality of life or outdoor leisure opportunities (Niedomysl 2004; Schmied 2005). As the initiatives are directed either towards individuals with various emotional or socio-economic ties to the region (e.g. recurring tourists, former residents) or individuals without these ties, not least, “warm” and “cold” place marketing can be distinguished (Hospers 2011).

## **Outline of this Anthology**

The aim of this anthology is to shed light on the diversity of processes of immigration to European peripheral rural areas and their specific implications for development as well as strategies to cope with them. Contributions from various sub-disciplines of the social sciences, i.e., human and cultural geography, and sociology as well as spatial planning with different regional foci, aim at encouraging theoretical discussions, enhancing empirical knowledge and providing stimuli for practitioners involved in migration and development issues. The edited volume is divided into four parts. In Part 1, conceptual reflections on immigration to peripheral rural areas as well as development prospects provide a basis for subsequent detailed regional case studies. In Part 2, several studies from different regional contexts point out patterns and types of immigration processes, while Part 3 focuses on various realms of integration (housing, economy, social life). Finally, Part 4 highlights issues of integration management, while special emphasis is given to regional and local strategies, undertaken by policy-makers, the private sector and civil society.

## **Migration and Development in Peripheral Rural Areas: Conceptual Reflections**

Discussions surrounding processes of immigration to peripheral rural areas often fail to reflect on terminology and categories are taken for granted. In the field of rural studies, for instance, what is considered to be rural is discussed controversially from various disciplinary angles and within national contexts. The same is true for centre-periphery debates, while the concept of peripheralisation goes beyond a static understanding of peripherality (Steinführer et al. 2016). Within migration studies, the vast majority of scientific literature focuses on permanent migration processes from A to B, yet Urry's new mobility paradigm has inspired studies into previously neglected complex mobility patterns, such as temporary migration, e.g. on a circular or seasonal basis. The chapter by *Menelaos Gkartzios* aims to critique dominant narratives in mobility research in the rural studies literature, such as the middle class colonisation of the countryside which has been researched mainly from a hegemonic Anglo-American perspective. The author discusses how emerging mobilities alter constructions of the countryside and puts specific emphasis on the role of the socio-economic context and language in the production of sociological knowledge thus fostering a critical encounter with rurality discourses. By means of exploring the experiences of refugees settling in a peripheral Swedish municipality, *Susanne Stenbacka* (chapter 2) addresses the rural as "introductory space" for migrants and discusses elements of openness and affinity, i.e. how places and people may be perceived as interconnected. In particular, she discusses whether cosmopolitanism, understood as conceptions and practices, is produced in rural places and in terms of refugee migration. In the chapter by *Ricard Morén-Alegret, Dawid Wladyka and David Owen* (chapter 3), integration challenges are discussed within the sustainability framework. Using the example of a small English town, local perceptions about the main challenges for social, economic and environmental sustainability are illustrated in the context of increasing (international and internal) immigration and tourism.

### **Patterns and Types of Immigration Processes**

The common assumption that rural peripheral areas are areas of depopulation is revised, using the Western Alps as an example, in the chapter by *Roland Löffler and Ernst Steinicke* (chapter 4). Drawing on the concept of amenity migration, the authors illustrate a socio-economic and socio-demographic profile of the "new highlanders" and reveal the

resulting implications on peripheral settlements, neighboring areas and the population structure. Peri-urbanization processes are considered in the study by ***Dritan Rustja*** (chapter 5), taking into account urban peripheries in post-socialist Albania. He shows that peri-urbanization has led to negative development patterns and spatial transformations, e.g. land use change and environmental problems, unemployment and social fragmentation. The reasons why people choose these areas as new places to live often result from personal decisions in pursuit of a better quality of life. ***João Sardinha*** (chapter 6) asserts that the regions of Central Portugal have, in recent years, been attracting migrants seeking improved lifestyles, who are often “running away” from the mad rush of urban life in the countries they have emigrated from. Representations of place, for instance as a social idyll or as a lagging region, struggling with structural change and sparsely equipped with employment opportunities, influence their decisions, and this is explored here. In chapter 7, ***Raúl Lardiés-Bosque*** analyses foreign immigration to rural Spain and ascertains a temporary effect of demographic refill prior to the economic crisis in the 2000s. He accordingly suggests fixing population to rural areas as a main challenge and makes a claim for integrating immigration policies and spatial development. ***Alessandro Gretter*** (chapter 8) focuses on foreign immigration to Alpine communities using the example of the province of Trento. He particularly takes into account past and most recent processes of immigration, arguing that the arrival of forced migrants counteracts the consequences of emigration and demographic change and fosters diversity in small Alpine municipalities.

### **Realms of Integration: Housing, Economy, Social Life**

The arrival of migrants can be seen both as a boon and a burden—depending on stakeholders’ perspectives and the understanding of integration. In the literature, however, the following realms are highlighted in order to analyse the integration of migrants: access to housing, employment and education as well as participation in social and political life (Ager and Strang 2008). The recent accommodation of asylum seekers and refugees in rural peripheral areas, which is at the core of the political agenda in most countries of Europe, the U.S. and Australia, is addressed in the chapter of ***Tobias Weidinger*** (chapter 9). In particular, he asks what mobility patterns manifest for refugees accommodated in rural areas throughout their asylum procedures. By means of a case study carried out in the Bavarian Forest (Germany), the role of structural factors in the decision to stay in the rural is revealed. ***Andrea Membretti and Fabio***

*Lucchini* (chapter 10) argue that in addition to employment opportunities, the availability of affordable housing and the lower cost of living emerge as crucial for attracting foreigners in the Alps. Moreover, they conclude that migration from abroad is often manifested as a “rebound effect” of foreigners from the city (first immigration destination) to rural areas in small Alpine municipalities. Besides their demand for real estate, newcomers also pursue agricultural activities or start businesses as entrepreneurs, for instance, in the tourist sector. Drawing on the example of the specific (historical) experience of the border town of Gorizia (Italy) and Nova Gorica (Slovenia), *Dejan Valentinčič* (chapter 11) analyses the chances of, and obstacles to, the economic and social integration of non-European immigrants. He compares their situation with that of immigrants from former Yugoslavia. *Marco Eimmermann and Doris Carson* (chapter 12) argue that migrant tourist entrepreneurs may contribute to the development of local tourism, as they introduce new external relations to their destinations and facilitate access to new markets, capital and knowledge. Their results suggest that social and cultural differences between Swedish and European entrepreneurs are larger than expected, mainly regarding language, communication and different expectations in terms of service quality, professionalism, reliability and speed of action. This raises the question of how migrants become a resource for rural communities and how migration could be beneficial for the local economy and migrants?

### Immigration Management

Drawing on an example in southern Italy, *Alessandra Corrado and Mariafrancesca D’Agostino* focus on the consequences of migration and asylum policies in the Calabria Region—an area where agricultural production areas and decentralized or extraordinary reception centres and sites for asylum seekers and refugees are receiving a growing foreign population (chapter 13). Despite the new populations being seen as key resources for development, their presence and insertion are often problematic due to local social dynamics or structural characteristics. In the chapter by *Sónia Pereira and Pedro Ojarzabal* (14), the authors indicate that in the area of Bizkaia, Spain, which has a reduced population and low population density, the arrival of migrants has impacted local communities and services. Apart from the perception of migrants by local authorities, the chapter discusses challenges arising from the settlement of international migrants and how they are addressed. In the chapter by *Raúl Lardiés-Bosque* (chapter 15), a study of immigration to rural Aragón

(Spain) reveals opportunities of migration management: public (and private) initiatives were initiated to attract and attract population to rural areas. Special emphasis is put on measures for demographic revitalization at various spatial scales.

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