

New perspectives on international labour migration to Europe's rural regions

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Migrants at work transforming rural Europe

International labour migrants no longer settle mainly in urban gateways but are more evenly spread across Europe's urban and rural spaces (McAreevey 2018, Bock *et al.* 2016, Corrado *et al.* 2016). Estimates suggest that more than 5 million international migrants currently live in the EU's rural regions, though actual numbers are likely to be even higher (Natale *et al.* 2019). In some rural industries, such as horticulture and food processing, migrant workers make up the majority in manual, low-skilled positions, and many rural communities today host large populations of migrant workers from across the globe (Rye and Scott 2018). As a result, even the very idea of everyday rural life is changing as traditional notions associating the rural with a quaint backwardness and sedentarism are challenged by changing social dynamics, cosmopolitanism, and mobility (Burdsey 2013, Woods 2018, 2007, Rye 2018, Bell and Osti 2010). In this book we provide rich detailed descriptions and theoretical analyses of this novel phenomenon which has the potential to transform the lives of both the international labour migrants arriving in Europe's rural regions and the rural communities in which they arrive.

At the time of concluding the volume – spring 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic – the complexities of the migrant labour phenomenon in Europe's rural regions were more evident than ever. State borders – as well as key aspects of everyday life inside the borders – were practically shut down. Many migrant workers in the food industries could not travel to workplaces abroad to make a living for themselves and their households. Others, in place, were severely affected by government measures to limit the spread of the virus, which, for some, led to reduced work hours or even lay-offs. The shut-down also created havoc for other actors in the food production industries, including fears for fields neither planted nor harvested, short- and long-term market failures and large numbers of bankruptcies. In response, a variety of regulative measures were enacted to counter effects of the pandemic that demonstrates the crucial role of migrant labour in Europe's food industries. For instance, the European Commission (2020) issued, in late March, an

emergency notice stating that seasonal farmworkers were to be treated in the same manner as 'critical occupations' in terms of cross-border travelling. The individual chapters in the volume were finalised just before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic (papers were accepted after peer review in January/February 2020). However, they all provide invaluable knowledge about the international labour migration phenomenon and its transformative powers in the rural industries and rural society at large, and as such provide a sound foundation for future endeavours to develop sustainable food production and labour practices in rural Europe. These are insights that will be more important than ever as Europe strives to get back to the 'new normal' after the Covid-19 pandemic.

International labour migration in rural Europe as a multiscalar phenomenon

International labour migration to Europe's rural regions is located within *global* systems, especially those related to labour markets, and *European* societal, cultural and economic structures, and political shifts. Migration regimes are also constantly being shaped at every level and in all aspects by *nation*-states, although there is great variation within states, notably between urban and rural regions but also between rural localities. We argue that every understanding of a specific migration flow needs to examine this wider picture and how larger societal structures shape the current context of labour migration, through a range of possibilities and impossibilities, assumptions and dreams, actions and inactions.

Most importantly, while international rural labour migrants and their host localities each have their unique experiences and practices in relation to the labour migration phenomenon at large, they nevertheless operate within the same globalised international society, as do urban regions. If anything, the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic demonstrates starkly how all localities – whether urban neighbourhoods, small towns, or rural villages – are interconnected and interdependent. Over the last decades these interlinkages have become increasingly evident in the enhanced levels of international migration across the globe, which has led to the coinage of the now widely used term 'Age of Migration' (Castles *et al.* 2014). According to the *International Organisation of Migration* (IMO 2019), there are today some 272 million people residing in a country other than that of their birth. Two thirds of these are considered 'labour migrants,' of which increasing numbers find employment in rural industries in Europe and in other regions of the western world (Dufty-Jones 2014).

These flows of labour migration are closely related to the emergence of global food systems, in which international conglomerates exert control over food production through ownership structures and technological regimes, which impact processing, distribution, and retailing. As shown in several chapters of this volume, labour migration is largely demand-driven

and responds to the dynamics of the current global modes of industrialised and intensive food production, which in turn rely on access to what seems like inexhaustible pools of inexpensive, flexible and docile migrant labour. The international industry of labour recruiters (Martin 2017) and other mediators (Krifors 2020) further work to facilitate these flows in – at least for the employers – ‘frictionless’ manners. Further, the emergence of new communication technologies – both virtual (internet, telephony, and so forth) and physical (such as transport routes and low-fare flights) – has been pivotal in facilitating the recruitment of migrants workers from just about anywhere to jobs just about anywhere. As such, the phenomenon of rural labour migration is deeply related to general globalisation processes which work to reduce physical barriers for personal mobility, and thus labour. This applies both to the food industries – which are in focus in the present volume, reflecting their central role in the rural migration nexus – but also to other parts of rural labour markets (such as tourism and hospitality, health, and service provision) which increasingly recruit workers internationally. These global developments serve to shape or frame every migrant flow we discuss in this book, not simply as macro-level structures but also as everyday practices, ideas, attitudes, and outcomes (O’Reilly 2012).

Europe’s leading position in the world economy and relative affluence makes it an attractive destination for workers seeking better paid jobs and improved working conditions. There are no sound estimates for the total number of labour migrants in rural Europe. However, analysing available survey materials, Natale *et al.* (2019) suggest that about 5.1 million international migrants *reside* in the EU countries’ rural regions, less than half of whom were born in an EU country. The share of international migrants in rural areas varies greatly between states, from near zero in Romania and Bulgaria to 40 per cent in Luxemburg. In total, Natale *et al.* (2019: 5) estimate that five-and-a-half per cent of the EU’s rural population is made up of international migrants. This is about half the number of those living in towns (10.2 per cent) and one third compared with cities (14.5 per cent). In other words, while Europe’s rural regions house larger numbers of migrants, their populations nevertheless appear more homogeneous when compared with urbanised regions. These numbers include diverse categories of migrant, including workers, refugees, students, and retirees. In terms of labour migration specifically, Natale *et al.* (2019) estimate there were approximately 575,000 migrants working in the EU’s agricultural industries, which reflects an increase of 33 per cent between 2011 and 2017. However, real numbers are likely to be far higher (Natale *et al.* 2019, 12), and even more so if circular, non-residential migrants are included. For instance, more than 300,000 migrants, mostly Ukrainians, were given admittance for seasonal work in the Polish agricultural sector in 2017 (see Górny and Kaczmarczyk, Chapter 6). In conclusion (and accepting that records are likely to underestimate actual numbers), this circularity underlines the pivotal role of agriculture in the

context of EU migration, both for its rural regions and more broadly, which features prominently in this volume's composition.

Over the last three decades various geopolitical changes have propelled cross-border labour migration across the European continent, among which the collapse of the Communist regimes (1989–1990) and EU enlargements (2004 and 2007) stand out as particularly significant. Migration has largely flown westwards across the European continent, reflecting strong regional economic disparities within Europe, most pronounced between 'old' and 'new' EU members. In addition, many European countries recruit workers from the African countries, the Middle East and beyond. In several chapters of this volume, these recruitment practices form an important backdrop in understanding the potential of wealthier countries to capitalise upon poorer ones, as well as how such notions become taken for granted and therefore unquestioned by policy-makers and other powerful players, and sometimes the migrants themselves.

Furthermore, three 'European crises' provide an important backdrop for understanding international migration to Europe's rural regions. The first is the 2008 financial crisis, which among other things led to mass unemployment and downscaling of welfare services across the continent. These are not static events that provide a simple backdrop to lives but are triggers promoting action and inaction, as is starkly illustrated in Fratsea and Papadopoulos' chapter in this volume (Chapter 3) about the struggles of Romanian migrants in Greece to ameliorate the profound effects of the Greek crisis.

Second, the 2015 refugee crisis refers to the large numbers of refugees fleeing the Syrian war and other destinations in the Middle East and beyond, who eventually made their way to EU member states. Many of these 2015 migrants arrived in rural destinations and would try to find work in rural industries (see for instance Brovia and Piro, Chapter 4). These events demonstrated Europe's role in the global migration nexus and raised questions about key facets of EU migration policies.

Third, political reconfigurations of the European Union, in part following and interlinked with effects of the financial and refugee crises, changed the willingness and ability to host migrant populations among both policy-makers and the public. Mamonova and Franquesa (2019) contend that right-wing populism has found its 'greatest support among rural communities.' These developments are more likely to be relevant for some flows than others. For instance, Iocco, Lo Cascio and Perrotta (2020) show how Italian right-wing populism established powerful anti-immigration discourses with reference to 'Italian' agricultural and food traditions ('nativism'). Another example is UK's withdrawal from the EU ('Brexit'), which for many voters was motivated by a wish to restrict labour migration from Central and Eastern Europe, and implies that the UK is expected to set up and enforce more restrictive labour migration policies. This, Halfacree argues in Chapter 12 of this volume, has the potential to restructure the very social fabric and cultural imaginary of

the UK's countryside. These are processes that challenge the idea of an 'all-White countryside' (Neal and Agyeman 2006) and actualise the (still) under-developed question of 'rural racism' (Chakraborti and Garland 2011) in the rural studies tradition.

There are other political events with profound and ongoing implications for specific labour migration patterns across Europe. For instance, the Ukraine/Russia conflict in 2014 saw large numbers of Ukrainians migrating westwards to Poland, making that country a main receiver of labour migrants in Europe (Górny and Kaczmarczyk, Chapter 6).

The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic represents yet another 'crisis,' with a global character that unfolds in unique ways across – and within – the European continent. Its long-term effects for migrant labour are still unknown: it may result in reduced mobility across spaces, or it may create a reconfiguration of the food production industries and the ways in which they mobilise migrant labour.

Despite strong structural forces at the global and European scales, the chapters in this volume demonstrate substantial heterogeneity in labour migration practices across Europe's rural regions. National and local contexts each impact rural labour migration, as global change and far-reaching structural shifts are understood and performed in different contexts in diverse ways. Thus, labour migration across European rural spaces represents highly diverse personal characteristics and migration regimes, labour conditions, and overall life situation. Each rural community represents a unique social context for migrants' everyday lives, due to demographic, economic, and sociopolitical characteristics of local communities, and former experiences with international migration. As such, and as argued more extensively by O'Reilly and Rye in the final chapter of this volume, labour migration in Europe's rural regions needs to be researched as a multiscalar spatial phenomenon, where the ongoing outcomes of labour migration emerge from the interaction of the everyday practices of actors, and the dynamics of local, regional, national, European, and global societal structures.

The rural migration context

It is necessary to address some further contextual dimensions of international labour migration, specifically the phenomena conceptualised as 'labour migration' and as 'rural space.' We begin with the latter. Our objective in this volume is to describe and theorise labour migration to Europe's *rural* regions and to understand how it diverges from its urban counterpart. While we acknowledge the many similarities across the rural/urban dimension, this endeavour rests on a belief that the social fabric of rural localities is distinct from that of urban regions, and that these differences inform the social practices that constitute labour migration and are essential for understanding the wider

international labour migration phenomenon. The following chapters provide ample evidence that this is the case, and that the rural context generates different migration practices. Thus, while the very concept of 'rural' has been a contested term in the social sciences, with some even suggesting it should be abandoned (Hoggart 1990), it nevertheless enables us to conceptualise the specific and unique contextual conditions that pertain 1) to rural labour markets (for example, the reliance on specific primary industries such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and the food processing industries), 2) to demographic characteristics of rural areas (such as scattered settlement structures), and 3) to the degree of peripherality (such as distance to administrative centres). However, most importantly for the present volume's focus on international migrant workers has been the rural labour markets' dependency on agriculture and the other industries that recruit large numbers of manual and low-skilled workers.

Despite the arguments above, we are not employing the term 'rural' to identify, demarcate, or define places on a map, not least because, in practice, it can be impossible to draw clear-cut lines between rural and urban spaces. As Martin's chapter (Chapter 13) demonstrates, most of California's rural labour migrants work and reside in 'metropolitan' areas, as do many in the EU when population density is used to distinguish rural from urban (Davidova *et al.* 2019). Nevertheless, places can be geographically urban yet culturally rural. We therefore need to be flexible in our application and understanding of the term as a multidimensional context, defining it in terms of how it shapes the lives of labour migrants in each case.

This volume thus addresses 'rural' as a multidimensional territorial and social construct, primarily conceptualised by reference to labour market characteristics – especially the predominance of agriculture and other food industries – which are further interrelated with demographic characteristics and characteristics of peripherality, including those associated with the imagination and emotions. This definition of 'the rural' is intentionally imprecise. We are using it as an analytical tool (Benson and O'Reilly 2015), a concept that is valuable for its power to identify contextual structural and agentic properties of the emerging labour migration phenomenon across the European continent.

While 'labour migration' is another contested expression in the field of migration studies, in the present volume it has been crucial to emphasise the labour market *context* of migration. The majority of international migrants arriving in Europe's rural regions, as elsewhere (Dufty-Jones 2014), have been motivated mainly by work prospects, and their experiences are defined by the characteristics of their relationship to the labour market, often a generally precarious position as manual workers in low-skilled positions. Other migrants, for instance refugees from the Middle East or, at the other end of the spectrum, western 'lifestyle' migrants, arrive in rural regions primarily for other reasons and will gain different experiences in rural communities,

even where they, at times, undertake work (Benson and O'Reilly 2015, Huete *et al.* 2013).

A further important analytical distinction is between citizens, or residents, of a given nation-state, and those who are considered 'other.' In the literature, the former are interchangeably denoted as 'nationals,' 'natives,' 'locals,' or even, at times, the 'domestic' labour force. In the chapters of this volume, we use the term 'local' to distinguish labour migrants from those who work or live locally, while acknowledging that this can be complicated, and providing further explanations as necessary. A further conceptual confusion is between 'temporary,' 'circular,' and 'permanent' migrants, which may be more clearly defined by state authorities, for instance, in visa regulations and guest-worker schemes, than in migrants' actual practices. What begins as 'temporary' migration may turn out to be repetitive and circular, then permanent.

Finally, the chapters in this volume generally refer to 'international migrants,' or simply to 'migrants' rather than 'immigrants' or 'emigrants' – except where such a distinction is required for clarity. As O'Reilly (2000) argued 20 years ago, migration terms are often used in value-laden ways linked to status, and assuming stasis. For similar reasons, we are careful with our use of the term mobility (Sheller and Urry 2006). Our aim is not to perpetuate normative assumptions about migration as either perpetually mobile or inevitably leading to settlement, but instead to leave such desires, imaginations, practices, and outcomes as questions for each case to examine as relevant.

Emerging literatures – diversity of approaches and common themes

The present volume seeks to contribute intricate analyses of labour migration processes in Europe's rural regions by providing richly detailed, in-depth accounts of a variety of cases. Each of these cases illustrates how migration practices are specific in time, place, and societal context, but there are also some shared characteristics which suggest that individual cases are informed by similar social dynamics. Building on Rye and Scott (2018), in this section we review the rapidly emerging literature on international labour migration to rural societies to identify such key themes. We have identified five strands of literature that stand out as particularly relevant for the understanding of international labour migration to Europe's rural regions, and which provide an important backdrop for the present volume's chapters.

First, there is a large and continually evolving body of research on labour migration to rural localities in the US which is valuable in helping us understand the European experience, despite important differences. As Martin (Chapter 13) demonstrates in his chapter, US agriculture, particularly in the western states, has longstanding historical experiences with employment of salaried migrant labour. However, since the early 1990s, several authors have noticed the even more widespread distribution of international migration

across the US (Massey 2008, Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2005), with most rural industries (including meatpacking, tourism and private service providers) today employing large-scale international migrant labour. While many-faceted, a key theme is that labour migrants are found in the secondary labour market in poorly paid jobs that are difficult, dirty and sometimes dangerous (Leach and Bean 2008). It appears that US labour arrangements are even more exploitative than noted in the European literature, possibly due to the more 'mature' capitalist mode of US food production. The US literature also tends to emphasise the role of migration regulations, possibly because so many migrant workers originate from Mexico and other Latin-American countries and their admittance to the US labour market is subject to strict border regulations (Martin 2019). The result is large-scale clandestine migrant flows; today, approximately half of farmworkers in the US are 'undocumented.' European clandestine flows appear much smaller but, as US studies demonstrate, should not be ignored given these migrants' legally vulnerable position. The US society details the many hardships experienced (Holmes 2013) by these groups, with many 'living in limbo' as a perpetual condition (Keller 2019). The US literature is further instructive in its emphasis on race and racialisation as key dimensions, which appears less emphasised in the European literature but nonetheless surfaces as important in understanding migrants' position in rural labour markets and rural society, as noted in many of this volume's contributions. Finally, the US experience is informative for its relative lack of welfare state arrangements, even for 'documented' workers, which further adds to migrants' 'structural vulnerability' (Quesada *et al.* 2011) and marginalised position. The failure to collectively organise labour interests in the US, and even more so in the rural industries, has also led to disempowerment of migrant workers. As such, Martin's chapter in this volume (Chapter 13) – as well as the general US literature on rural labour migration – may be read as an informative comparative case for the European situation, and as a warning about possible future developments in European agriculture and rural society if Europe should follow the same developmental trajectory. This strand of literature is evidence of why our analyses (as argued above, and in Chapter 14) must include an overview of broader structural shifts such as understanding regulatory procedures, welfare state arrangements, mode of production, and the historical sedimentation of practices and assumptions (O'Reilly 2012).

Second, in the European context, literature has emerged from an initial focus on the large-scale influx of labour migrants that first appeared in the Mediterranean horticultural industries (Rye and Scott 2018). A milestone publication is Hoggart and Mendoza's (1999) analysis of the extensive recruitment of migrant workers in Spain's horticulture industries, which they argue constitutes a 'secondary labour market' which in ways resembles the US experiences. Later works have focused on how the industrialisation of Mediterranean horticulture has made it increasingly reliant on imported

labour – first from countries outside the EU, later supplemented by migrants from the new EU states – and the consequences thereof for the workers. While Almeria’s ‘Sea of Plastic,’ a 450 square kilometre area covered by greenhouse plastic in southern Spain, illustrates the transformation of the agricultural landscape both literally and metaphorically, the ‘ghettos’ of southern Sicilia illustrate the severe implications for the migrant agricultural workers in such rural enclaves. If the US literature is instructive in its illustration of what the rural labour migration phenomenon may imply for Europe at large, the Mediterranean literature provides an important message about what is already taking place within the European context.

The Mediterranean literature has developed into a strong research network exploring the migration/agricultural nexus, which has become institutionalised in the extensive research network on migrations, agriculture and food sustainability. This body of literature demonstrates the strong linguistic barriers that exist in the research field in Europe, as most contributions are published in languages other than English, and are thus often inaccessible or largely ignored by the English research community. Important exceptions are the two edited volumes by Gertel and Sippel (2014) and Corrado *et al.* (2016), which have been instrumental in presenting Mediterranean experiences to the wider European audience. A key objective of the present volume is to create a further bridge between the Mediterranean and English-speaking literatures.

Third, reflecting the more recent flows of migrant labour, a parallel literature has developed in the English-language research community. This has focused also on the industrial and labour market context of labour migration and the often exploitative character of migrant work, for instance in the British horticulture industry (Rogaly 2008, Ivancheva 2007), the wild berry industries in Finland and Sweden (Ahlo and Helander 2016, Eriksson and Tollefsen 2018), and the fish-processing industry in coastal Norway (Aure 2008, Rye 2018). These studies are important both in their documentation of exploitative labour arrangements beyond the Mediterranean region, but they also clearly demonstrate efforts to – and potential of – state interventions through welfare state and labour market arrangements in Europe’s more regulated economies, even though this potential is often not realised. For instance, while marginalisation and invisibility appear to be constant, the everyday lives of Polish farm workers in Germany differ from that of salmon assembly-line workers in Norway’s fish-processing industry, and these differ even further compared with Sub-Saharan workers in Mediterranean horticulture. As such, this strand of literature is instructive to understand the large regional diversity within the European context, as well as providing insights into the effects of migration, labour market and welfare policies. Several of the present volume’s contributions draw on and expand these insights.

A fourth strand of literature focuses on questions of place, identity, and belonging, and migrants’ position in host rural communities. This literature analyses the labour market as just one among many social domains, and

labour migrants as one type of migrant among many. A central topic in this literature is the question of migrants' integration into host communities and how they negotiate their everyday lives as migrants. For instance, Flynn and Kay (2017) demonstrate how Polish migrants seek 'security' and 'normal life' in the rural UK, where employment is just one among many aspects of their striving for better lives. Other major contributions are McAreavey (2018) and Kordel *et al.* (2019), who demonstrate the many analytical interlinkages between labour and migration with sociological perspectives on society. This is important to understand the complexities of the *labour* migration phenomenon and demonstrates that *labour* migration cannot be conceptualised by labour market theories alone. As Şerban *et al.* emphasise in Chapter 2 of this volume, employers – and states – often attempt to recruit abstract 'labour' but overlook that 'labour' arrives as human beings, and, as demonstrated by Aure and Riabova in this volume (Chapter 10), analyses of rural labour migration need to incorporate emotions and aspirations for the future, at both individual and community levels.

A fifth strand of literature further extends the perspective from labour market dynamics to how international migration both challenges and changes traditional conceptions of rural society. As above, the *labour* migrant often appears as just one among many kinds of international migrant, reflecting the often-blurred distinctions between migrant categories. Early examples include Hedberg and do Carmo's (2012) edited volume on rural translocalism, which demonstrates how contemporary rural societies have, through international migration, become inherently multilocal, and Burdsey's (2013) argument that 'issues related to integration, conflict, conviviality and prejudice between different ethnic groups are no longer purely the preserve of towns and cities.' Woods' (2017, 2018) work on 'rural cosmopolitanism' similarly emphasises the 'global' character of rural life and migration. Moore (2019) identifies processes of both exclusion and inclusion of Central and East European migrants in a UK rural village, and, in the Mediterranean context, Alegret-Móren and Wladyka's (2020) work on the relationship between rural migration and rural society analyses communities' demographic sustainability. A final theme, which links back to the more developed US literature's focus on race and ethnicity, is the question of how migrants are treated as 'others,' and, as such, less deserving of labour market and welfare state entitlements, and as a challenge to the traditional image of the rural countryside as essentially 'white' (Hedberg and Haandrikman 2014). Several of this volume's chapters provide examples of such discriminatory social practices that invoke sociological questions of race, racialisation, and ethnicity. However, these dimensions are often referred to – both in lay discourses and in academic works, including many of the chapters in this volume – by use of 'nationality' as a proxy.

Taken together, these strands portray a multifaceted picture of international labour migration to Europe's rural regions, and, as such, mirror the very

diverse character of the phenomenon as it unfolds across rural space. This is anything but a field of research with one or a few dominant perspectives, and we have not been able to be comprehensive in our review (but see Rye and Scott 2018). Substantively, we suggest a few overarching traits which we find instructive for the further advancement of the research field and to which we hope the present volume contributes. First, we hold that the international rural labour migration phenomenon needs to be analysed in the analytical intersection between migration theories, labour market theories and rural studies. Second, we find comparative analysis – across Continents, nation-states and sub-state regions – instructive to understand both commonalities across rural spaces as well as their differences. Third, and despite the emerging literature, which largely relies on qualitative and case-oriented methodologies, we notice a lack of a more overarching theoretical lens that provides a coherent account of the contemporary labour migration phenomenon in Europe's rural regions. This has been the rationale for the book at large but also this volume's final chapter, where we employ practice theory to provide a theoretical framework.

Putting the pieces together in the puzzle of rural labour migration in Europe

The labour migration phenomenon transforms not just the everyday lives of European rural labour migrants but also Europe's rural spaces. Each chapter contributes important pieces to this intricate puzzle, and together they paint a fuller picture of the role of labour migration in contemporary rural Europe. The book is structured in three sections. The first section, 'Transforming Europe's rural industries,' analyses rural industries' increasing reliance on migrants to perform low-skilled, manual labour. Its seven chapters analyse different labour migration flows across the European continent. The first four of these concentrate on the Mediterranean region, which, as noted above, figures as the longest established case of rural labour migration in the European context. Şerban, Molinero-Gerbeau and Deliu (Chapter 2) analyse Romanian migration to Spanish horticulture to question the popular 'triple win' approach to labour migration, which proclaims benefits for migrants, and sending and receiving countries alike. They find that migration is scarcely beneficial for the individual migrants, regardless of changing regulative arrangements. Fratsea and Papadopoulos (Chapter 3) provide a contrasting case of Romanian migration to Greece, accentuating the scope of migrants' agency and strategies for social mobility in the context of the 2008 financial crisis. Taken together, these two chapters demonstrate the relevance of unique features of the social structure in receiving societies for labour migrants' experiences.

Brovia and Piro (Chapter 4) discuss contrasting experiences *within* nation-states in their comparison of migrant housing conditions in two Italian regions

which host large numbers of migrant workers: the Transformed Littoral Strip in Sicily and Saluzzo in Piedmont. Their analysis demonstrates how both a policy focus and a labour market focus are required to understand the farm workers' generally poor work and life conditions, in the context of differing forms of settlement and housing structure.

Analysis of Mediterranean agriculture and its use of migratory labour has largely focused on the intensive horticulture industries. Farinella and Nori's (Chapter 5) illustrate how agro-pastoralism – a multifunctional rural system based on extensive livestock rearing complemented by other agricultural activities – in mountainous regions of Greece, Spain, and Italy is similarly reliant on access to migrant labour, notably shepherding. Despite recognising some individual agency, and more horizontal interactions with their hosts than in other cases, they demonstrate how the farmers' rhetoric of the 'good worker' serves to maintain subordination of the migrant shepherds.

The next three chapters expand the perspective to rural regions and industries that more recently, yet now extensively, recruit migrant labour. Górny and Kazcmarczyk (Chapter 6) address the extensive migration of recent years from Ukraine to Poland, which has served to counterbalance the similarly impressive migration from Poland to western European countries. The demand for foreign farm workers was the initial impetus for Ukraine to provide labour migration to Poland, but these authors find the role of agriculture in the employment of foreign labour has been diminishing in more recent years as Ukrainian migrants use work in agriculture as a gateway to other sectors with better conditions. Stachowski and Fiałkowska (Chapter 7) contrast two different cases of Polish migration: seasonal, circular work in the German agricultural industry, and more permanent employment in Norway's fish-processing industries. Their analysis details the marginalisation of Polish migrants in both rural contexts. However, they find the specific social processes leading to marginalisation – and the shape it takes – are variable. Analysis of the outcomes also rely on understanding the specific working arrangements, the specific challenges labour migrants face, and the role of migrants' strategies in counterbalancing their less privileged positions. In the last chapter of this section, Tollefsen, Hedberg, Eriksson and Axelsson (Chapter 8) analyse an even more marginalised group of labour migrants in rural Europe, Thai berry pickers in the Swedish forests. As larger society acknowledged the poor wage and working conditions of these migrants, legal regulations were introduced to improve conditions. However, the Thai migrant berry pickers continue to be exploited, and fulfilment of their formal rights is still lacking, as a result of processes the authors theorise as 'subordinated inclusion.'

Taken together, the chapters of this volume demonstrate the variety of the labour migration phenomenon in rural Europe, but also point to the many shared characteristics of the rural industrial and societal context. For instance, the dominance of precarious work and living conditions and

processes of marginalisation and subordination in host rural communities appears universal, regardless of policy or legislative attempts to ameliorate them. Their invisible, or even actively ignored, position in the rural localities similarly appears as another general characteristic of the phenomenon of international labour migration to Europe's rural regions. A final common theme is the relatively restricted scope for migrant agency and long-term improvement of their conditions.

The second section is titled 'Transforming Europe's rural societies' and extends the perspective from that of the migrants to the many other agents involved in the rural labour migration phenomenon, such as employers, local populations, and societies at large. The chapters thus demonstrate how international migration at the same time is embedded within but also changes the social structures of the host rural communities, regions, and nation-states. Rye and Scott (Chapter 9) take the perspective of the rural employers, the farmers, who recruit migrant labour to perform manual work tasks in the fields and asks how they make sense of wage and work conditions that are so often characterised as exploitative, at times even 'gruelling' (Guthman 2017, 24). In the course of their in-depth interviews, the Norwegian, UK and US strawberry farmers alike all emphasised what they find to be rather attractive features of migrants' work, not least because, they suggest, the migrant workers have no better job option 'at home.' The chapter clearly demonstrates the presence of different narratives on rural migrant labour, which is important in order to understand the potential of – and barriers to – labour market and migration reforms. Aure and Riabova (Chapter 10) analyse the role of emotions in understanding the long-term experiences of Russian female migrants who participated in a programme to recruit Russian workers to the fish-processing industry in rural Norway around the turn of the century. There was an assumption that the migration would improve the migrants' economic situation and spur development in the home community, but these goals barely materialised. The analysis shows how rural labour migration – before, during, and after migration – is imbued with hopes, aspirations, and dreams, not only by the migrants themselves but also by their local communities. Another example of the interlinkages between labour migration flows and everyday life in rural communities is given by Slettebak (Chapter 11), who utilises registration data from Norway to analyse how international migration streams are reflected in Norwegians' migratory patterns. Effects are minor and labour migrants appear, if anything, to be an addition to expanding populations and labour markets, rather than displacing Norwegian-born workers. As such they can function as a much needed 'demographic refill' for rural regions facing depopulation. Halfacree (Chapter 12) concludes this section by discussing how the UK's withdrawal from the Europe Union in different ways could change rural communities, as well as the everyday lives of their populations. He suggests that sentiments of the 'revanchist rural' has grown in the country, which challenges the status

of, and ambition for, the UK countryside to be a diverse, welcoming, and modern space, not least for labour migrants.

The book's final section – 'Concluding remarks' – contains two chapters which, from quite different angles, provide directions for the further study of international labour migration to rural Europe. Martin (Chapter 13) gives first an overview of how US agriculture developed its current dependence on the recruitment of an internationally recruited labour force from Mexico and other Latin-American countries. The US, in particular Californian horticulture, provides an instructive scenario for how Europe's agricultural industries may evolve in years to come if current global agri-food dynamics are continued. The enduring pursuit of more 'efficient' production – often involving the replacement of smaller family farms with large industrial units reliant on migrant labour, and increased intensification of food production processes – has resulted in rural poverty, migrant marginalisation, and exploitative labour relations. As shown in other chapters in the volume, some parts of rural Europe already resemble the Californian model, and others are apparently following suit. In the final chapter, O'Reilly and Rye outline an overall theoretical framework, a practice theory of rural labour migration, and utilise this framework to identify some key challenges for the study of the phenomenon.

Futures of labour migration to Europe's rural regions

Together, the chapters in this edited volume demonstrate how recent labour migration processes in Europe have changed the social fabric of rural localities across the continent. These processes unfold in diverse ways, with very different consequences for migrants and local populations, and with major differences across rural spaces. International labour migration to Europe's rural regions truly is – to twist Vertovec's (2007) expression – a 'super-diverse' phenomenon. Detailing the many different manifestations of the phenomenon has been a key objective of the current volume. However, taken together, the book's contributions also provide a fuller account of the international labour migration phenomenon currently unfolding in Europe's rural regions. We shall here suggest three kinds of key insights that emerge from the chapters of the book.

New knowledge about the rural labour migration phenomenon

The wage and working conditions of labour migrants may vary across Europe's rural regions, nevertheless, they are generally poor in both absolute and relative terms, and in many instances working conditions are overtly exploitative. Also, many migrants' overall living conditions are clearly sub-standard judged by commonly held standards. These conditions result from the very character of migrants' work in the rural industries, which are characterised by low

productivity and wage capacities, and the fact that most migrants perform the least profitable work tasks – that is, manual and low-skilled jobs. There is also an implicit assumption, shared by many players, that these migrants cannot (and should not) expect better. They are often viewed as ‘labour’ rather than as ‘human beings,’ as Şerban *et al.* (Chapter 2) demonstrate in their chapter. Another key factor appears to be the relative invisibility of migrant workers in rural regions, as they often work and reside in sparsely settled communities, their living conditions circumscribed by the suppositions above. The invisibility is often related to ethnicity and racialisation processes, as the labour migrants are conceived of as ‘others’ and less deserving of inclusion in hosting communities and societies. Finally, many of the chapters illuminate the scope of migrant agency and demonstrate the wide range of strategies employed by the migrants to cope with their marginalised positions in the rural labour markets and rural societies. However, as elaborated in O’Reilly and Rye’s concluding chapter in this volume, the analyses more often highlight how, and why, their room for manoeuvre is so often restricted.

New theoretical perspectives on rural migration

The volume also adds to scientific perspectives making sense of labour migration in Europe’s rural regions and beyond. In their totality, the volume’s chapters clearly demonstrate the benefits of integrating the many dimensions of migration in a coherent analysis that considers how scales play out in practice. While the labour market necessarily provides a focal point in analysis of work-related migration, migrant workers’ experiences need to be analysed within their larger social reality, otherwise we are complicit in viewing them as labour rather than as people. Social practices take place in everyday local contexts, and thus need to be studied in their localised contexts; any analysis should also strive to conceptualise the actors’ practices within a framework that accounts for the interplay of larger societal structures in contiguity. Theories of migration, labour markets, and rural society would all benefit from cross-fertilisation of their perspectives. O’Reilly and Rye (Chapter 14) outline in the final chapter a practice theory approach that seeks to establish such a conceptual framework that avoids single factored theoretical discussions and conclusions. Other approaches are to be welcomed.

New migration and labour market policies

Finally, while our primary aim was not to provide detailed policy recommendations, the analysis suggests some important insights of relevance for policy-makers. First, the book’s contribution confirms that rural labour migrants constitute a large rural population with precarious living conditions. Specific living conditions may vary, but the overall image is one of

marginalisation, invisibilisation, and exploitation. Addressing these conditions is a major challenge for policy objectives of social equality and cohesion in European societies. Second, rural localities invite different policy measures than urban regions. The rural industries, such as those we have focused on here (agriculture and fish processing), largely recruit migrants to manual and low-skilled positions which are among the least attractive in western European labour markets. However, there are also important differences within the rural industries, which means policy measures need to be sensitive not only to the rural societal context but also industrial characteristics, and how they vary over time and place. The chapters may even suggest that rural industries are particularly evasive, though not totally immune (Rye 2017), to nation-state's attempts to regulate labour market conditions. An especially instructive case is Tollefsen *et al.*'s (Chapter 8) analysis of the Swedish attempt to enforce regulations for the benefit of Thai berry pickers, which they demonstrate largely failed. There is a risk that rural labour migrants, due to their general invisibility in rural society, fall under the radar of the general public and policy-makers. Third, the book provides important lessons on the shape that future developments may take and raises the importance of realising the implications of certain choices, such as intensification and consolidation. Here, Martin's (Chapter 13) sketch for what may happen if Europe follows the Californian route is instructive. In some regards, this has already come to pass in Mediterranean horticulture, and it is also noticeable in other parts of rural Europe's industries.

Conclusion

Taken together, the chapters in this volume demonstrate the diversity of labour migration in rural Europe. The phenomenon encompasses highly diverse social practices in terms of personal characteristics and migration regimes, labour conditions, and overall life situation. Each rural community represents a unique social context for migrants' everyday lives, due to demographic, economic, and sociopolitical characteristics of local communities, and former experiences with international migration.

This volume also points to the many shared characteristics of the rural industrial and societal context nested within European labour migration's diverse manifestations. For instance, the dominance of precarious work and living conditions, and processes of marginalisation and subordination in host rural communities appears universal, regardless of policy or legislative attempts to ameliorate them. Another common theme is the relatively restricted scope for migrant agency and long-term improvement of their conditions. They provide, as such, a sound foundation for future endeavours to develop sustainable food production and labour practices in rural Europe. These are insights that will be more important than ever as Europe strives to get back to the 'new normal' after the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have argued here that labour migration in Europe's rural regions thus needs to be researched as a multiscalar spatial phenomenon, where the ongoing outcomes of labour migration are understood to emerge out of the interaction between everyday practices of actors and the dynamics of local, regional, national, European, and global societal structures. Further, we argue that the international rural labour migration phenomenon needs to be analysed in the analytical intersection between migration theories, labour market theories, and rural studies.

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