

Challenges of Climate, Labour and
Generation Change – a Review of the
Literature in the main English-Language
Journals (*Sociologia Ruralis*, *Journal of Rural
Studies*, *Eastern European Countryside*)



Does 'the literature' matter?

- Impressions from May 2017 – a certain degree of scepticism about 'the literature', that is to say the 'western' or rather 'Anglo-Saxon' literature
- Its focus is on things tangential to the problems in Hungary and the region
- It tell us little of interest
- It is uninterested in our work
- Yet it defines the discipline, so we are always marginalised
- Has anything changed? Frankly, not much
- But engagement is better than marginalisation, even if only to demonstrate how parochial the literature is
- Hence this review



Climate Change: a few ecological specifics

- Hungary – increase in average temperatures plus increased climate changeability including flash floods, especially in summer, plus increased rainfall in north and decreased in south, plus increased precipitation in summer and decreased at other times so little net change. Growing season will be longer.
- Therefore: changes in grape variety, less productivity in forests, abandonment of beech, and need to irrigate winter wheat and maize.
- Elsewhere – big (essentially parochial) literature on whether US farmers believe in climate change or not
- General issue: ‘adaptation’ vs ‘mitigation’, adjustment vs measures to address causes of climate change. Most adopt former rather than latter; but latter requires acceptance of science of climate change



Generation change (farm succession)

- Not an issue for corporate farms (management constantly changing); nor, in theory, for peasant farms (few assets; cultural norms re inheritance).
- Becomes issue when: a/ family farms become farming businesses with multiple assets; yet b/ still require a particular life-style which inheritors may not be enthusiastic to adopt.
- The literature identifies the issues, the actors and disputes: accountants, lawyers, financial advisors, disagreements between generations, siblings and other family members
- No Hungarian studies. One Czech study identifying the problem.



Migrant labour – one study in the whole literature

- All but one paper looks at CEE migration *to* western, northern or southern Europe, not at the use of migrant labour *in* CEE.
- Exception is Górny and Kaczmarczyk, 2018 study Ukrainians working in Poland.
- All seasonal only, working on fruit-growing, market-oriented, subsidy-aware farms. If the individuals concerned stay in Poland, they move out of agriculture quickly, especially female workers.
- Farms employed Ukrainian labour because it was cheap, Polish labour was scarce, and its administration was simple
- The average number of employees was five, but it fluctuated according to season and could reach an average of 17.5



Lessons from Greece and Poland??

- Studies of the longer-established, initially mainly Albanian migrant labour in Greece seem to be the most useful for CEE. The lesson seems to be:
- 1/ early migrants move out of agriculture to be replaced by labour from further afield
- 2/ some stay, develop good relations and become 'just like us'
- 3/ yet others then take back new skills to their home countries (Albania)
- One difference between Greece and Poland was that Polish farmers engaged themselves in farming too, whereas some Greeks used the migrants for farming while diversifying their businesses
- This might be related to size of farm



Lessons about migrant labour recruitment??

- Findlay and McCollum produce a typology of recruitment methods which might be useful for comparative purposes. Their five types are:
 - 1/ Gangmaster dominated;
 - 2/ Gangmaster-employer collaborative;
 - 3/ Conventional recruitment agency;
 - 4/ Employer-led recruitment of temporary workers;
 - 5/ Employer-led recruitment of permanent staff.
- These are categorised in terms of:
 - 1/ how labour is sourced (by labour-provider or employer)
 - 2/ who pays it,
 - 3/ who manages it, and
 - 4/ what is the employment status.
- For the last two (employer-led) types, the employer does everything. For the first, the labour provider does everything. For the next ones down, the employer does one thing more and the provider one thing less. **Their finding of an increasing move to informal transnational networks similarly might be useful for comparative purposes.**



General Trends in European Farming

- Van der Ploeg's re-peasantisation theory retains support
- But it is criticised from 'the [orthodox Marxist] Left' for being a new version of Chayanov or Polanyi
- The idea of food regimes remains popular
- There is a literature on 'financialisation' and land-grabbing, but the one empirical study of foreign financial investment in Russian and Ukrainian farming reveals failure
- None of these 'big theories' are adapted to CEE relations
- In the face of globalisation, suburbanisation and peripheralization, farming is complex and developing in ways that **defy simple binaries** such as: productivism vs organic; or farming vs multi-functionalism. Big farms can diversify or be organic: some diversify, others re-peasantise; yet others modernise and specialise



Nevertheless convergence on Nexogenous Growth & a CEE Unicum has been discovered

- The literature is dominated by themes such as ‘social innovation’ and ‘resilience’ used in many ways
- But all strands seem to converge on the importance of Bock’s ‘nexogenous growth’, on the role of **networks linking rural communities to urban actors**. Rural communities need skills and experiences that can only originate outside them. These cannot come through bureaucratic state structures, although the state can and should facilitate the networking process
- Also the literature now reveals a CEE unicum: ‘**quiet sustainability**’ Smith & Jehlička (2013) - widely practised and environmentally sustainable food self-provisioning in post-socialist CEE’

