

17<sup>th</sup> IMISCOE Annual Conference, Luxembourg, June 30 – July 2, 2020

Session: “De-centering and de-nationalising approaches to mobility and migration studies through studying villages”

## **Still, stuck or embedded? The village as a place of multiple mobilities**

Annett Steinführer (Johann Heinrich von Thünen Institute, Germany)

Tialda Haartsen (Groningen University, The Netherlands)

Aileen Stockdale (Queen’s University Belfast, Northern Ireland)

### **Abstract**

In many European countries, rural areas are first and foremost considered as spaces of out-migration. Particularly young adults are faced with education and job offers elsewhere contributing to a ‘mobility imperative’ (Farrugia 2016). This norm of having to leave the village to gain the necessary skills for a successful life is formulated by peers, parents, teachers and other key persons. Under the mobility lens, younger adults who stay (as well as all other socio-demographic groups ageing in place) are commonly seen as immobile and ‘stuck’ in their traditions, norms and behaviour.

In this paper, we sketch a more complex picture of current mobility processes in villages. We focus on the residential biographies of villagers and discuss which patterns of residential mobility (including return migration) and immobility are to be found at different life course stages and among different social groups. We question the dichotomies of mobility/leaving and immobility/staying and argue that other types of mobility are prerequisites to enable staying. Other mobilities include car-dependency to access service provision, commuting to the workplace, and digital mobilities. Village residents’ work-life arrangements require at least a regional mobility which leads us to question if the village is an appropriate scale for rural mobility studies. Moreover, we allege that a sole perspective on the individual is insufficient: mobility and staying practices are expected to vary between different household members.

In the paper we present preliminary findings from a large standardized questionnaire survey that was conducted in three European countries (Germany, the Netherlands and Northern Ireland) in late 2019 as part of the STAYin(g)Rural research project. This international project seeks to shed new light on contemporary rural stayer types and staying processes across the life course, and focuses on three life course stages: young adulthood, family formation and post-retirement.

### *Reference*

Farrugia, D. (2016): The mobility imperative for rural youth: The structural, symbolic and non-representational dimensions rural youth mobilities. *Journal of Youth Studies* 19(6), 836–851.