



Gendered Rural Spaces

Edited by
Pia Olsson & Helena Ruotsala

Studia Fennica
Ethnologica

Studia Fennica
Ethnologica 12

THE FINNISH LITERATURE SOCIETY (SKS) was founded in 1831 and has, from the very beginning, engaged in publishing operations. It nowadays publishes literature in the fields of ethnology and folkloristics, linguistics, literary research and cultural history.

The first volume of the Studia Fennica series appeared in 1933. Since 1992, the series has been divided into three thematic subseries: Ethnologica, Folkloristica and Linguistica. Two additional subseries were formed in 2002, Historica and Litteraria. The subseries Anthropologica was formed in 2007.

In addition to its publishing activities, the Finnish Literature Society maintains research activities and infrastructures, an archive containing folklore and literary collections, a research library and promotes Finnish literature abroad.

STUDIA FENNICA EDITORIAL BOARD

Editorial board

Markku Haakana

Pekka Hakamies

Timo Kaartinen

Pauli Kettunen

Leena Kirstinä

Hanna Snellman

Johanna Ilmakunnas

oa.finlit.fi

EDITORIAL OFFICE

SKS

P.O. Box 259

FI-00171 Helsinki

www.finlit.fi

Gendered Rural Spaces

Edited by Pia Olsson & Helena Ruotsala



Studia Fennica Ethnologica 12

The publication has undergone a peer review.



VERTAISARVIOITU
KOLLEGIALT GRANSKAD
PEER-REVIEWED
www.tsv.fi/tunnus

The open access publication of this volume has received part funding via a Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation grant.

© 2009 Pia Olsson, Helena Ruotsala and SKS
License CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 International

A digital edition of a printed book first published in 2009 by the Finnish Literature Society.

Cover Design: Timo Numminen

EPUB: eLibris Media Oy

ISBN 978-952-222-154-4 (Print)
ISBN 978-952-222-802-4 (PDF)
ISBN 978-952-222-803-1 (EPUB)

ISSN 0085-6835 (Studia Fennica)
ISSN 1235-1954 (Studia Fennica Ethnologica)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21435/sfe.12>

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0. International License.
To view a copy of the license, please visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>



A free open access version of the book is available at <https://doi.org/10.21435/sfe.12>
or by scanning this QR code with your mobile device.

Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Pia Olsson & Helena Ruotsala</i> Introduction | 7 |
| <i>Ann-Catrin Östman</i> Land and agrarian masculinity – space and gender in <i>Finnish Cultural History</i> 1933–1936 | 18 |
| <i>Pia Olsson</i> The domesticated woman as an ideal – women’s place in rural Finland. | 33 |
| <i>Katariina Heikkilä</i> Farm space as an arena for female entrepreneurship | 51 |
| <i>Helena Ruotsala</i> Is there room for women in the reindeer forest? | 70 |
| <i>Nancy Anne Konvalinka</i> When equal-part inheritance is not equivalent: Gender and the value of land in a Spanish village. | 87 |
| <i>Mari Immonen</i> There’s no future for us here! Mari youth on living in Shorunzha | 99 |
| <i>Tiina Suopajärvi</i> Forestry professionals in childhood forest. | 117 |
| <i>Katri Kaunisto</i> Men at work – forestry work and masculinities. | 137 |

Introduction

Georges Perec has argued that he cannot say much about the countryside: 'Countryside does not exist, it is an illusion.'¹ The people living and working in the countryside, on the other hand, have a lot to say. For us, the authors of this publication, the countryside is not an illusion: it is the focus of our interest. It is not a neutral space, but is rather loaded with different cultural, economic, social and political codes and meanings. The emphasis here, however, is on rural spaces as gendered spaces. Space and place, together with time and the social context, are considered the major dimensions in ethnology. Ethnological research has always held fast to its place, and for a long time its place was the countryside.

The articles comprising this book have evolved within a research network called Gendered Rural Spaces. They are all elements of the authors' larger projects connected to their postgraduate or post-doctoral research. The network was established when a new kind of interest in the countryside and its rural residents became visible at the beginning of the 21st century among Finnish ethnologists. At the same time questions of both gender and space seemed to be increasingly topical in the discipline.

Rural spaces and the peasant culture are traditional subjects of interest in Finnish ethnology. Thus, in a way our network has come back to the roots of the discipline as we again bring rural issues into focus. However, the traditional viewpoint on rural questions has been labelled gender neutral, thus promoting the idea of rural homogeneity. In this respect the peasant culture was equivalent to the national folk culture. Ethnological research has thus produced a Finnish national rural space, as Kaija Heikkinen argues in her article on gendered spaces and displacement in the countryside.² Both the male and the female have been the subject in traditional research on the peasant culture – which in itself is exceptional in comparison with research in history, for example – but the emphasis has been on the external consequences of gender, as in the gendered division of work. Its more experiential consequences and symbolic meanings were not included in these discussions. Thus, research dealing with rural questions was based on and formulated gender ideals at the same time. Ideas of manhood and womanhood affected its practices, emphases and interpretations.³

The members of our network are all involved in cultural research and have found gender to be an important basis on which to analyse the phenomena under investigation. As the articles show, our relationship with theories of gender varies, but we all share the basic objective behind the studies. With our various sources we have sought to understand how both society and individual lives are structured by gender.⁴ We believe that our research themes also clearly show the process of producing gender and the ways in which accepted gender-based behaviour has been constructed at different times and in different groups. We understand that gender is not a separate category, but is always related to other kinds of differences.⁵ This idea of intersectionality in which subjectivity is seen as constituted by ‘mutually reinforcing factors’ such as ethnicity, nationality, age and religion has also been the implied principle in our project.⁶ Discussion of gendered spaces leads to wider questions such as power relations and displacement in society, which globalisation makes even more relevant.

Our project focuses on changing rural processes on the micro level, in other words how the changes affect people’s everyday lives. The fieldwork material consists of interviews, written oral-history material and material collected by means of participant observation. The context of the collective memory is formed by stories that transmit meanings and help us to understand the past. We wanted to analyse oral-history material as motivated and constructed by a multiplicity of different factors, and to see how the informants used these discourses to reconstruct – to understand and explain – their life histories. Working with this kind of material has meant that, at least in principle, we have been working with sources that make it possible to place personal and experiential knowledge in the spotlight of the research. We nevertheless understand that true and authentic experience is always transient to researchers, and that we can only produce interpretations and conceptualisations of real experiences.⁷

The individual articles in this volume are connected in that the shared starting point was the occupational, structural and environmental changes that took place after the Second World War. Even though the concept of livelihood and how it has changed is an essential background factor, this is only one of our research themes. Our main objective was to map the life of rural people as an entity in which their occupations, social relations and values are interconnected. The articles thus focus on the way of life and the pressure of change that affects it, and the relationship between locality and individual places. How are individuals responding to these changes? What are their strategies, solutions and tactics? How have they experienced the change process?

One of the effects of occupational change concerns how individuals experience control over their lives, in this context the opportunities rural inhabitants have to make choices and to exercise spatial control. The deep change in the countryside has marked a turning point, if not a break, in the lives of individuals and families living in rural areas. This level of individual and multi-vocal experiences is the focus of our articles.

Rural Spaces

The concepts of *rural* and *countryside* are ambiguous. In traditional ethnological research they were taken as given, however. This is understandable because the majority of Finns lived in the countryside until the 1970s, and rural life was considered to be typical Finnish everyday life. The shift in research focus from the rural towards the urban happened in ethnological studies at the same time as big social changes were taking place in the countryside. The social changes were therefore not considered focal in the discipline, something that was later criticised.⁸ The countryside is seen in recent ethnological research as an area for production and dwelling. It has also become the object of different kinds of visions, goals and projects, and this is also visible in the research that has been carried out.⁹

Interest in spatial issues, space and place has continued in ethnology and anthropology. Ethnologist Johanna Rolshoven writes that cultures do not simply occupy space but also produce, design and maintain it. Therefore, space is a central notion in the ethnography of everyday life, evolving from a concept to a tool for contextualising knowledge from fieldwork.¹⁰ Globalisation as well as increasingly dense time and space, are challenging our perceptions about place. Cultural globalisation creates new trans-local spaces and forms of public culture embedded in the imaginations of people that dissolve notions of state-based territoriality.¹¹ One example of contemporary trans-local everyday life in the countryside is that of the long-distance shift workers who leave their home area in Mari El to work for a month either in distant places several thousands of kilometres away or in their neighbouring republics. This could be the future of the adolescents Mari Immonen interviewed in her study on Mari youth living in a rural village.

The environment – in this case the countryside – has become an arena of different discourses and views, and it is not seen merely as a geographic location of, or background for, human activities and daily life: it is a complex structure consisting of time-stratified meaningful experiences.¹² According to Doreen Massey, ‘place’ should not be understood only in a physical or integrated sense, as separate and stable, but should rather, as a concept, incorporate the idea of a meeting place in which connections, relationships, impacts and movements are intertwined.¹³ Interest in space and place is necessary in terms of understanding the world we are constructing and producing, and of being able to participate in the discussion in our disciplines.¹⁴

The different developmental processes in rural areas have a lot in common on both national and international levels. People in the countryside have experienced occupational and environmental, social and cultural, political, ecological and economic changes in recent decades. Migration from the country to the cities and the other way around is one reflection of these changes. Today over half of the Finnish population are town dwellers, and migration from rural areas has escalated in recent years. Structurally the countryside is changing in some places to a sort of middle *rurban* ground in which rural and urban spaces meet, and the rural landscape is becoming integrated into the

urban milieu. These changes are also evident in the landscape. At the same time, modern agriculture and new sources of livelihood are also changing the ‘traditional’ rural landscape: huge plastic cubes of fodder have replaced hay poles, for example. These traces of modern agriculture do not fit in with the images holidaymakers have of the countryside. There has been a tendency to advocate locking the countryside into the value systems of outsiders, people who are not living there.

As a way of coping with this structural change people living in rural areas have developed new strategies and occupations to enable them to live and /or work there. At the same time, a contrary development is taking place: people from the cities want to move to rural areas to live permanently or to find occasional ‘peace’ in their second homes. The same processes are going on in different parts of Europe, but in this publication we focus on Finland and also on a rural village in the Morki region in the Mari Republic of Russia, and a small agricultural village in Spain. In some cases rural spaces are also contested spaces – in other words the actors at these sites have different levels of control over resources or access to power, and this could lead to confrontation or conflict in terms of engendering change in the environment.

Rural and urban spaces are not opposites, however, and they have rather, in the course of history, been complementary in terms of ‘feeding’ each other. Nevertheless, the norm in modernisation theories involving Western countries and engaging in the notion of ‘development’ has been the urban phenomenon, and the rural phenomenon differs from this norm in being outside or under-developed. Questions concerning the urbanisation of rural areas are complex and global, and attract different individual solutions and strategies. What will happen to the people living in rural areas, and how will they experience the changes? It would also be beneficial to determine what kinds of strategies people use in these processes, and how they have found solutions in the new situations.

Through the concept of space we are also implicitly addressing questions of identity. What is the relationship between space, place and identity on both the local and the individual level? Local identity explains the meaning of a place in situations in which either the individual or the community is obliged to leave their home because of a project that changes the environment or because the community is under economic pressure, for example. Thus, this study adds a new dimension to global processes. In addition, our local case studies diversify the image of developments in rural societies in the border areas of the European Union in that they raise various new questions: What alternatives or strategies do the inhabitants have in order to respond to the events that have taken place in different parts of the European countryside? Are the similarities gendered? What are the differences and similarities? Could these processes be developed? Can we learn something from the experiences of people in different areas and societies?

As we see it, the countryside is a gendered space and place. Space and its formation are considered cultural and social phenomena. The focus is on the *lived space* with its social practices, incorporating the senses, the imagination,

Rural spaces are connected with different cultural, economic, social and political codes and meanings. In this book these meanings are analysed through gender. The articles concretely show the process of producing gender and the ways in which accepted gender-based behaviour has been constructed at different times and in different groups. Discussion of gendered spaces leads to wider questions such as power relations and displacement in society. The changing rural processes are analysed on the micro level, and the focus is set on how these changes affect people's everyday lives. Answers are looked for questions like how are individuals responding to these changes? What are their strategies, solutions and tactics? How have they experienced the change process?



STUDIA FENNICA
ETHNOLOGICA 12
ISBN 978-952-222-154-4
49
www.finlit.fi/kirjat