

## **Whither sustainable livelihoods? Understanding rural inequality through a political economy-informed livelihood pathways approach**

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Livelihood approaches to understanding rural poverty and inequality in low-income countries have had a significant influence over the last three decades. Such approaches have enabled a welcome shift in rural poverty research from conventional econometric-driven and single sector analysis to a ‘people-first’ approach that takes the individual life-world as the starting point of analysis. However, in recent years formal livelihood frameworks have increasingly been critiqued as ‘a method in search of theory’: that is, pre-occupied with micro-individualism and agency, particularly in the unproblematised and overly-instrumental use of the livelihood capitals framework. This is at the expense of understanding the broader social and political relations that structure livelihood possibilities and outcomes. In response, Ian Scoones (2015) has recently proposed an integrated approach that combines the insights of livelihoods analysis with critical agrarian political economy. Such a combined approach can address critical questions of why certain livelihoods are possible for some, but not for others. There remain, however, theoretical tensions in combining these two different frameworks, particularly because for agrarian political economy the primary analytical category is class, while for livelihoods the focus is the individual or household. This paper proposes that a livelihood pathways-based approach provides a way forward for resolving these tensions. This is illustrated with reference to insights from a study of contract farming in Maharashtra, India.

## **The “ruralisation” of housing crisis in Hungary: the transformation of allotment gardens**

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This paper concerns the ruralisation of housing crisis throughout the transformation of allotment gardens. Peri-urban rural fringes have historically played a key role at uneven spatial development throughout the social history of Hungary. These areas have traditionally fulfilled an intermediary role in demographic flows between urban-rural developmental hierarchies shaping an affordable housing close to the urban core areas. The housing usage of allotment gardens is the latest phenomenon of spatial exclusion and housing crisis in the peri urban areas showing the “ruralisation” of housing exclusion after the 1990s transformation.

Hungarian allotment gardens (“zárkert”) are situated outside of the administrative border of the city therefore these are registered agricultural but not residential areas. One consequence of their remoteness is that these gardens are usually lacking communal services, e.g. public utilities are not connected and the post service does not reach out to them either. During state socialism these garden plots served as mixed farming and recreational spaces. However, after the regime change in 1989, these recreational activities and agricultural functions declined and these spaces gave housing function because of their still optimal geographical proximity to the city and the cheap dwellings available there.

In my paper I give a brief overview of the most important theoretical points of my anthropological investigation that was based on my field work experience at an eastern suburban neighbourhood in Budapest. The focus of my research was to understand how the former rural allotment gardens have been transformed after the post-socialist transformation in Hungary and what kind of new post-rural functions appeared since the regime change there. My research question is in correspondence with the broader theoretical framework of how residential areas in post-socialist urban centres have been shaped in and around the city and how excluded people shaped the former rural areas on the peri urban edges into habitable places.

## **Working Group 6: Politics and policies of rural authenticity and the return of nationalism and populism**

### **Spectres of the 20th Century Political Ideas and the Nowadays ‘Authentic Rurality’: An Analysis of the Romanian Public Discourse on agri-food issues**

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Recent research on Romanian consumers’ buying behaviour patterns shows that about 81% of the food that Romanians buy in one month is produced in Romania. About 92% of those choosing national products are mainly targeting perishable food: dairy, meat, fruits, vegetables. The main reasons for buying these products are the desire to support Romanian companies, small producers and, in general, the national economy and the perception that the domestic food is more natural, fresher, safer and has a better quality. The way consumers relate to Romanian products is consistent with the public discourse