

RURAL GENTRIFICATION OR URBAN AGRICULTURE? A CASE STUDY ON SİRKELİ-ANKARA

Ceren ERCOKUN*

ABSTRACT

Rural gentrification means socio-economic and spatial transformation of rural areas with decrease in productive population, rural activities and agricultural activities. It brings urbanization of the countryside. Expropriation of local people and rural poverty, unemployment, migration of young population, inaccessibility of basic services are important problems of rural areas. Agricultural production and agricultural land, pastures are lost, rural structures began to be abandoned.

In contrast, some urbanites longing for nature, make urban agriculture, urban farming, or urban gardening in rural areas or urban periphery. Urban agriculture is the practice of cultivating, processing and distributing food in or around urban areas. Urban agriculture can also involve animal husbandry, aquaculture, agroforestry and urban beekeeping. Urban agriculture provides access to nutritious, healthy and safe food. It creates a sense of belonging between urbanites, and farmers in urban-rural space. It also gives a learning opportunity of growing food and makes efficient use of land.

However, land owners have the privilege of altering natural and built landscapes. Inheritance of agricultural land reproduces inequalities. Ownership of agricultural land enables production of symbolic wealth. The migration of middle-class migrants into specific locales changes the locale's physical appearance, social status and socio-demographic composition.

This study aims to put these urban agriculture and rural gentrification paradox with a case study in Sirkeli-Ankara. Sirkeli which was a village turned to neighborhood of Pursaklar district in Ankara. However, the rural activities are still on-going by the villagers and urbanites making urban agriculture. In this context, socio-spatial literature research on rural gentrification and urban agriculture were made. In depth interviews were made with the villagers, urbanites which have weekend houses and making urban agriculture and real estate owners. All kinds of visual and audio material were used to make discourse analysis through multimedia and key highlights are revealed.

Keywords: Rural Gentrification, Urban Agriculture, Sirkeli-Ankara

* Lecturer, Gazi University, Environmental Sciences Graduate Program, Ankara,
cerenercoskun@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The world has entered a new era with the development of information and communication technologies. In this new era, the mobility of goods and services flows increased all over the world and in return, consumption and production values increased. Human settlements were the most affected by these changes. Urbanization has become one of the greatest striking phenomena of the twenty-first century. Today, the number of people living in cities exceeds 50% of the world population. This ratio is expected to exceed 68% in 2050. (United Nations, 2018). The production and consumption habits that started to change with the industrial revolution brought about many problems on a global scale. Global warming, rapid destruction of species, melting of glaciers, rapid depletion of natural resources, as well as natural habitats and rural areas are under threat.

Pressure on rural areas in the world and Turkey is increasing and definitions for rural and rural areas are changing due to the factors such as population and demographic changes, mobility of the population, need of housing, increase in demand for nature and recreation areas. In addition, the local administrative system in Turkey has undergone through drastic changes along with Law no 6360 in 2012. With the law, the number of the metropolitan municipalities raised to 30 and all the rural areas in 30 metropolitan municipalities have the status of urban, eliminating the rural-urban distinction. How to plan rural areas with urban status in metropolitan municipalities is another debate.

2. BACKGROUND OF CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Rural Gentrification

The rapid population increase in urban areas is a result of the migration of people from rural settlements to urban areas and the population is also decreasing in rural settlements. As a result of this decrease in the population in the rural areas, a new group has started to settle in these areas (especially on the periphery of metropolitan cities) that have not experienced rural production before. Social, physical and economic developments of this group named as newcomers , urbanites or rural gentrifiers are examined by geographers, urban planners and economists under the title of "rural gentrification and this new situation in the rural areas is tried to be explained in various aspects (Scott, 2011).

Dünckmann summarized the social and economic changes in rural areas under four headings:

- Rural areas have shifted from agricultural productivity to post-productivity period (The concept of 'post-productivity' was introduced in the 1990s as an

attempt to explain and theorize changes and trends in contemporary agriculture (McCarty, 2005).

- Rural areas have changed from rural areas to consumption areas.
- Transition to gentrification is increasing in rural areas, which have become settled regions of the middle class.
- Social segregation and differentiation is increasing in rural areas (Dünckmann, 2009).

The concept of gentrification was first introduced by urban societies in 1964 by sociologist Ruth Glass, to explain the purchase of middle and upper class residences in London's workers' quarters, and the changes in urban quality and social changes in these areas.

However, the developments from 1964 to the present day (technological, social, economic and physical) have led to the mutation of the concept of gentrification and to gain different depths of meaning. (Ehrström, 2016).

The first traces of the term rural gentrification were seen in the literature in the mid-1980s. (Nelson, 2018). Firstly, British researchers used this concept to explain the changes taking place in the periphery of cities (Hamnett, 1991) is a term used to describe the changes that occur in the rural areas and the urban periphery under various headings (and still much debated).

The issue was discussed by some researchers in various aspects. Some of the authors put forward a glance in terms of human desires; reaching the nature, peaceful life, recreational opportunities and slow living effort focused on rural settlements. Some authors consider the issue economically and argue that the difference in value between the income generated by the use of rural lands for agricultural purposes and the opening of these areas to residential use and the land rent that will result will direct the rural gentrification processes. Some authors evaluate rural gentrification through population movements and try to explain the change of rural indigenous and urban middle class within the framework of physical and social changes.

Similar changes in rural areas, especially in the periphery of metropolitan cities, as in the United States and Britain, occur in rural settlements in Turkey. The physical, economic and social structures of rural settlements in the urban periphery have started to change.

2.2. Original Value of the Study

With the keyword "rural gentrification", the research conducted in the YÖK database on 20.11.2019 did not reveal any thesis work. When gentrification was searched alone, 20 records were found.

The search for "rural gentrification" in Prequest Dissertations & Thesis Global yields 172 results as of 22.11.2019 (Figure 1). When the graph is examined, it is seen that the number of theses related to the subject has increased especially after 2010. Only 33 of the theses are about urban planning. The number of theses related to environmental sciences is 23. When the search is restricted to doctoral theses only, the number of 172 falls to 125.

Therefore, this contributes to the original value of the study. In the Scopus Database, the literature on rural gentrification increased especially in 2000 and beyond. Many of these studies are listed as articles, book chapters and papers. Most work has been done in the United States and the United Kingdom, then in Canada and Spain.

Finally, of the 174 studies, 159 of which were in the social field, only 31 (11.4%) were in the field of environmental sciences (Figure 5). Therefore, this study will contribute to the literature in the field of environmental sciences and urban studies.

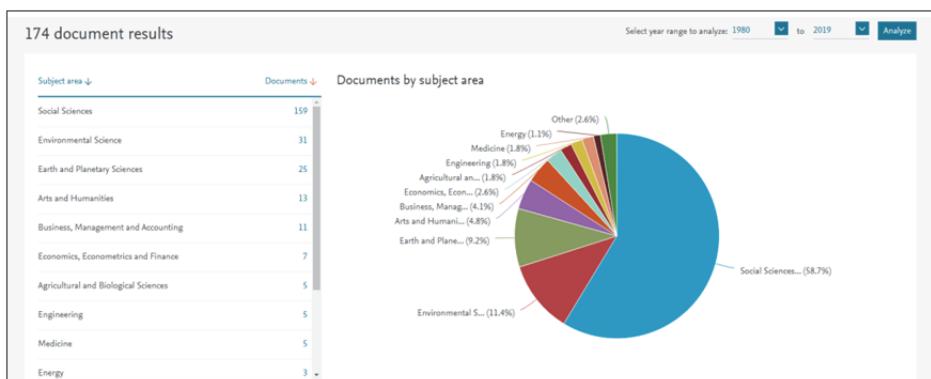


Figure 1. Rural gentrification studies in Scopus database by fields

2.3. Word Cloud

When the keywords of the articles written on the rural gentrification are examined, it is observed that concepts such as rural, urban sprawl, sustainability, consumption, population movements, scale, transformation, nature, healthy food and rent are often discussed in order to understand the subject of "rural gentrification" (Figure 2).

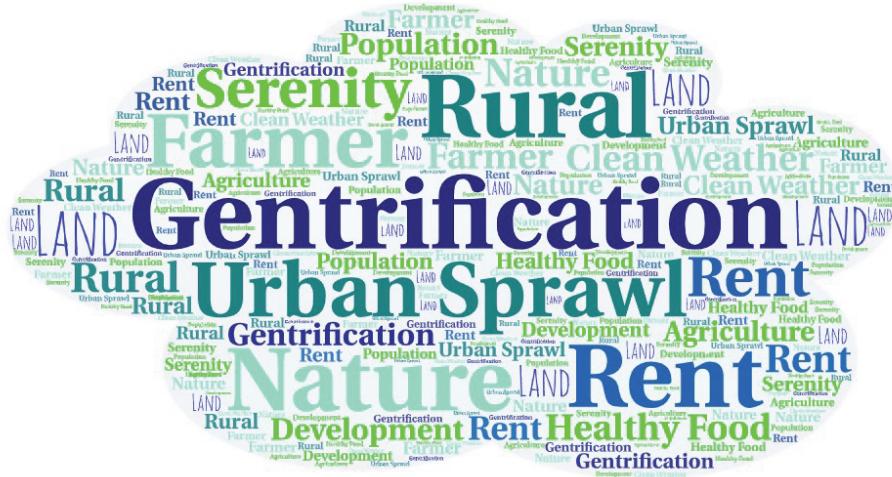


Figure 2. Common keywords of articles on "rural gentrification" in word cloud format

3. METHODOLOGY

The hypothesis of this study is: "Rural gentrification as a result of urban sprawl threatens the sustainability of rural areas".

This study aims to put these urban agriculture and rural gentrification paradox with a case study in Sirkeli-Ankara. Sirkeli which was a village turned to neighborhood of Pursaklar district in Ankara. However, the rural activities are still on-going by the villagers and urbanites making urban agriculture. In this context, socio-spatial literature research on rural gentrification and urban agriculture were made. In depth interviews were made with the villagers, urbanites which have weekend houses and making urban agriculture and real estate agents. All kinds of visual and audio material were used to make discourse analysis through multimedia and key highlights are revealed.

It is based on the use of spatial quantitative data based on field study. In addition to the comparison of satellite imagery on the temporal change of the study area in the city, the population statistics that will enable the comparison of the changes in the economic and social structure of the rural area studied are the main data sources to be used in the study.

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Sirkeli settlement, which is selected as a case study area, is located in the Pursaklar district in the north of Ankara metropolitan area. (Figure 3). The distance to the Kızılay city center is 33 km. Sirkeli, which has been in town for

many years, lost this feature with the change of the metropolitan law and became a settlement consisting of two neighborhoods.

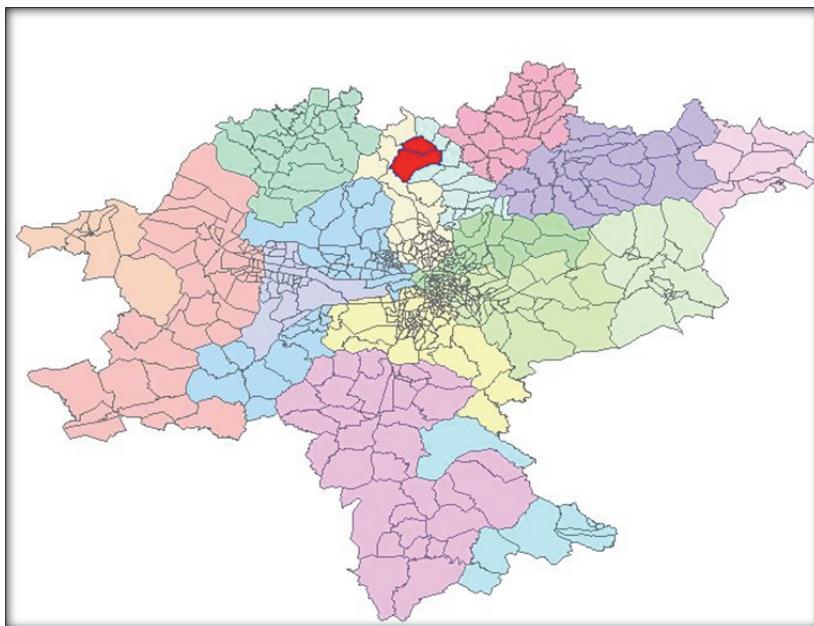
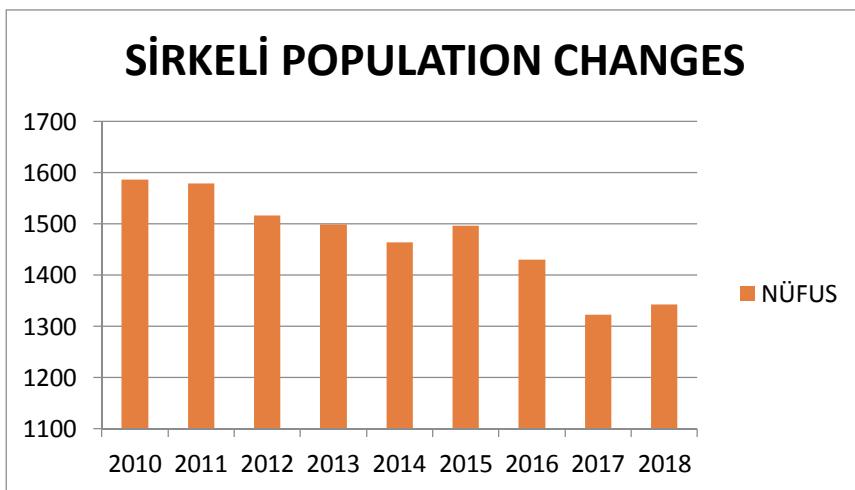


Figure 3. Location of Sirkeli (Yeşilova and Yeşilyurt neighborhoods)

When the population between 2010-2018 is examined, it is seen that the settled population tends to decrease (Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Population change in Sirkeli (Yesilova and Yesilyurt) neighborhood
(Source: TURKSTAT).**

Selection criteria for the study area are:

- One of the rural areas which is close to Ankara metropolitan area,
- In recent years (especially after the zoning amnesty/peace law) many new developments have occurred in the region (Figure 5,6,7),
- Excessive number of rural areas that have not lost their rural character.

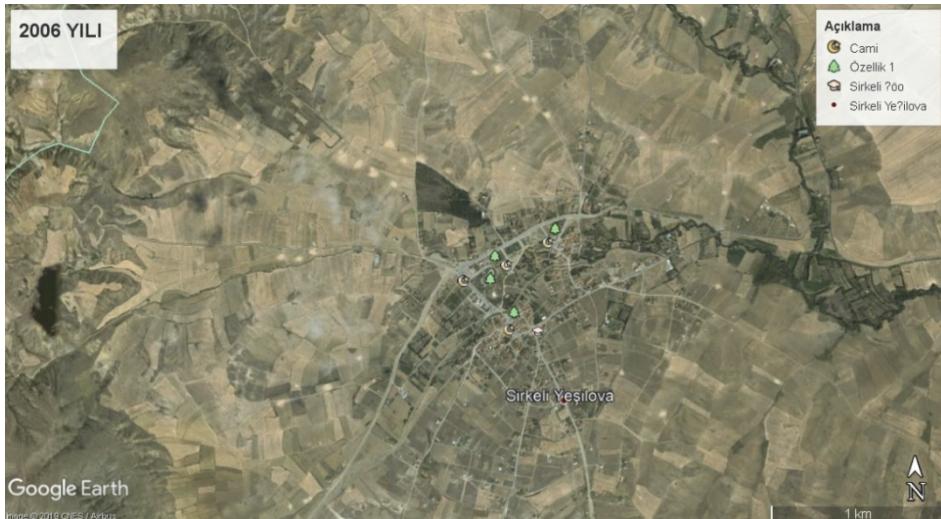


Figure 5. Satellite image of Sirkeli Yesilova and Sirkeli Yesilyurt Neighborhoods in 2006. (Source: Google Earth)

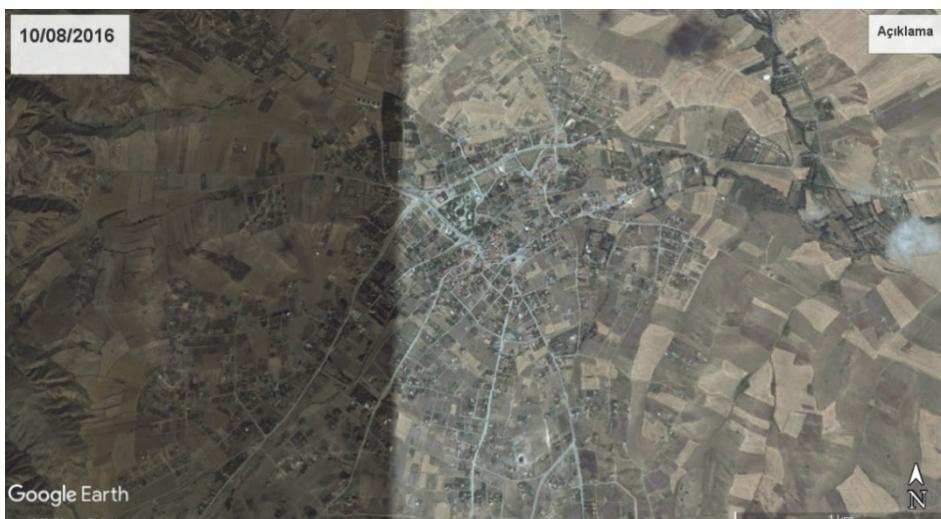


Figure 6. Satellite image of Sirkeli Yesilova and Sirkeli Yesilyurt Neighborhoods in 2016. (Source: Google Earth)

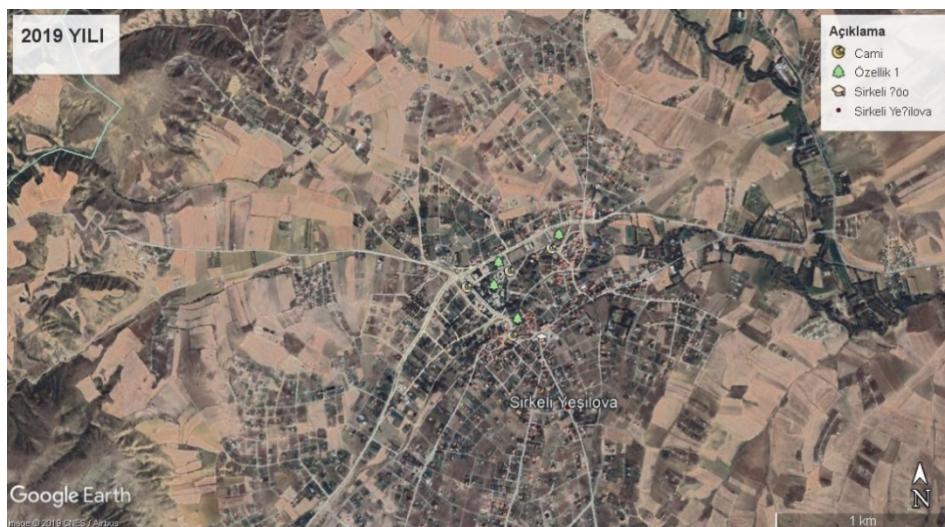


Figure 7. Satellite image of Sirkeli Yesilova and Sirkeli Yesilyurt Neighborhoods in 2019. (Source: Google Earth)

4.1. In-depth Interviews

One of the depth-interviews was made with the real estate agent, M. Eşlik in 26.12.2019.

He evaluates the situation of Sirkeli and changes in land as:

"I am not a native of Sirkeli, I settled in Sirkeli many years ago because of its central location and beautiful nature. There was a very different settlement 20 years ago, we used to catch fish from the creek passing through the village, but today there is no water in the creek. The main source of income was agriculture in those days. Today, this decreased to 20-30% in the settlement. The main subject is urban rent nowadays. In fact, the ratio of people bought land outside the village has exceeded the settled population of the village, and if they behave in an organized way, they can win the muhtar elections in the village. Land prices today are around 130 TL per square meters and these prices do not change much. Depending on the income, some of these newcomers put containers, some make prefabricated houses and others build three-storey villas. Everyone grows fruit trees in their garden and produces natural vegetables".

The other interviewee was a newcomer, M. Kahveci who has built a weekend house in Sirkeli about four years ago. He states that:

"I am the retired high school principal, our main home is in Demetevler. I love the atmosphere of this settlement, I am 75 years old, but I can spade two acres of land by myself. The city is too crowded, unhealthy and difficult to live for the

elderly. When I return to the city, I find the environment overwhelming. The high blood pressure and diabetes of my wife has recovered when we moved here. We grow bean, pumpkin, corn and tomatoes here. I feed four families with these produce. I use a drip irrigation system; I take seeds from the local market. Our house is a 2-storey house with steel construction and I made the lower basement independent unit for my son by taking advantage of zoning amnesty-peace law".

Another interviewee was a newcomer, Ö.Yalçiner who has built a weekend house in Sirkeli about three years ago. She states as:

"We want to take our children to the garden at weekends to integrate with soil and nature, not shopping centers. Since our house is in Yenimahalle district, we searched for a land. As a result of a few suggestions from real estate agents, we liked the Sirkeli settlement north of Bağlum, because it was flat and green, and in 2014 we bought a land of 750 square meters through a real estate agent there. As our child was small, we felt the need for a kitchen, toilet and room to put him to sleep, so there was a need to build a house to meet these needs. We built a single-storey masonry house on a simple ground concrete without foundation, from gypsum blocks, which are alternative building materials. We've had the necessary construction license, and we've been using this house every weekend except for very cold and snowy winter days for three years. This was previously a green poplar, but because the peasants saw the poplar as commercial, they cut it piece by piece and sold it to the citizens as land. Now we have two new buildings as our neighbors. We wanted to grow crops in our garden with the principles of permaculture and we did not touch some poplar trees. In accordance with these principles, in our raised vegetable beds; we use mixed planting and companion plants techniques. We have an herb spiral and we try to irrigate our plants by harvesting rain water. However, as in every garden in this area, we have drilled a well and we use this well for irrigation. Since we are in the village, every afternoon, cattle and cows come to graze. We also occasionally buy raw milk, flat bread, butter and village eggs from the villagers. Neighbor relations with the villagers and the residents of the weekend house such as product-growing conversations and fruit and vegetable exchange, continues. Our two and seven-year-old children are able to recognize fruit and vegetable varieties, planting, hoeing and watering, and have a pleasant time in nature".

The last interviewee was a villager, O. Yılmaz, who is a shepherd as well. He tells:

"I'm a local. I raise livestock. But since I couldn't find many shepherds to run most of my animals, I had to dispose of them. Our work has no daytime, and if the animals are pregnant, they can give birth in the middle of the night. Taking care of the animals, cleaning the oath to give the children and my wife is very hard,

they do not want to do. In addition, all the land is surrounded by wire fence, the land near the village where the animals will graze, is limited, we plant our own forage plants, if we take feed with animals from outside, we have no chance of making money from this business. We have eggs enough ourselves, we can sell milk out. Sewage has just arrived in the village, they have dug all the roads, did not pour asphalt again, waits until the next election, and we walk around in the mud".

Discourse analysis means to search for meaning beyond the word-sentence-text. Discourse analysis is an analytic technique rather than a theory (Salkie, 1995). The important keywords are analyzed as word cloud after these in-depth interviews. It is observed that concepts such as agriculture, nature, no pesticide, native seed, permaculture, happiness and husbandry were the common keywords from these interviews (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Word cloud of interviews

5. CONCLUSION

Ankara, the capital of Turkey, is experiencing continuous urbanization and complex rural–urban transformation after the new metropolitan law. This study empirically examined the socio-spatial transformation processes in Sirkeli settlement of Pursaklar district to explore principles of the sustainable reconstruction of village space and improve our understanding of rural gentrification from the socio-spatial perspective. Rural gentrification plays a key role in the link between

indigenous villagers and newcomers-urbanites. Indigenous villagers, being the active rent-seekers, contribute to gentrification through a combined effect with Turkey's urban transformation law and new metropolitan law. The villagers' houses or lands were transformed for weekend or seasonal use under land rent surplus. Loose land management and development control, based on zoning amnesty or zoning peace, has provided opportunities for both urbanites-newcomers and villagers to promote rural redevelopment. Based on the existing legal framework, the villagers provide land to earn rent, and the urbanites promote rural gentrification by opening new vegetable gardens or orchards to gain self-sufficiency in food/urban agriculture. Finally, the legal policy is an important factor for the development of rural gentrification, and market power is an important driving force based on the existing legal and demand based framework.

REFERENCE

- United Nations (2018) World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision
<https://population.un.org/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2018-Highlights.pdf>
- Dünckmann, F. (2009). Chapter 2 From suburbia to rural backwater: Exurban rural development in Germany. In Beyond the Rural-Urban Divide: Cross-Continental Perspectives on the Differentiated Countryside and its Regulation (pp. 57-78). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Ehrström, P. (2016). Transformation and Survival Strategy—Rural Gentrification and Social Sustainability in Gentrified Metropolitan and Urban Ruralities, the Case of Sundom, Vaasa, Finland. In Metropolitan Ruralities (pp. 125-158). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Fuguit, G. V., & Beale, C. L. (1996). Recent trends in nonmetropolitan migration: toward a new turnaround?. *Growth and change*, 27(2), 156-174.
- Hamnett, C. (1991). The Blind Men and the Elephant: The Explanation of Gentrification. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 16(2), 173-189.
doi:10.2307/622612
- Ley, D. (1994). Gentrification and the politics of the new middle class. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 12(1), 53-74.
- Nelson, P. B., & Hines, J. D. (2018). Rural gentrification and networks of capital accumulation—A case study of Jackson, Wyoming. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 50(7), 1473-1495.
- McCarthy, J. (2005). Rural geography: multifunctional rural geographies-reactionary or radical?. *Progress in human geography*, 29(6), 773-782.
- Phillips, M. (2005). Differential productions of rural gentrification: illustrations from North and South Norfolk. *Geoforum*, 36(4), 477-494.

- Salkie, R. (1995). *Text and Discourse Analysis*. Routledge, London.
- Scott, M., Smith, D. P., Shucksmith, M., Gallent, N., Halfacree, K., Kilpatrick, S., & Cherrett, T. (2011). Interface. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 12(4), 593-635.
- Smith, D. (2007). The changing faces of rural populations: "(re) Fixing" the gaze'or 'eyes wide shut'? *Journal of Rural Studies*, 3(23), 275-282.