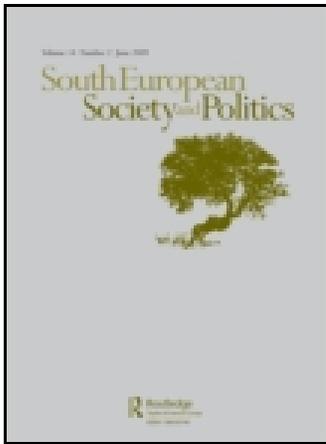


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# Rural Immigration, Family Farm Modernisation and Reactivation of Traditional Women's Farming Tasks in Greece: Masculinities and Femininities Reconsidered

Michael Petrou

*This paper aims to explore how agricultural modernisation in a Greek lowland community and a new form of business organisation of family farms, due to the mass employment of low-cost immigrant farm workers, reinforce masculine gendering of farming, often contributing to the reactivation of tasks typically labelled as female, such as cooking for the farm workers and administrative work. However, even though technological and structural modernisation have strengthened the material and symbolic capital of male farmers, the farmer has ended up in a crisis of identity as women seek to get away from agriculture and rural life.*

*Keywords: Greece; Rural Immigration; Family Farm; Women's Employment; Masculinities; Femininities*

The questions of the unequal gender division of labour in agricultural production and the subordinate position of women on the family farm are well documented in the existing literature on gender and farming (Brandth 1995; 2002; Coldwell 2010; Gidarakou 1999; Saugères 2002a; 2002b; Shortall 1992; Whatmore 1991a). It is largely acknowledged that farming is conceptualised as belonging to the masculine sphere of activity: the male farmer is head of the family farm, whilst the importance of the contribution of farmers' wives to the farming economy remains usually unnoticed. Even if the modernisation of agriculture has a positive impact on women's position on family farms, as mechanisation reduces the manual and other ancillary work assumed by family farm helpers such as farmers' wives, the assumption that modernisation is conducive to gender equality is by no means self-evidently true. Whether or not it applies depends on particular interacting regional, cultural and historical factors in rural societies (Silvasti 2003, p. 155).

Profound socio-economic changes are observable in the Greek countryside relative to the end of the 1980s. They are related both to rural modernisation and to more general restructuring of the agricultural milieu in the context of European integration. One important factor contributing to the rural revival has been the massive influx of immigrants since 1989, particularly from the Balkans and Eastern Europe. As shown in relevant studies of rural Greece (and Southern Europe), migrant labour contributes to covering vital manpower needs on farms: needs arising out of the demographic deficit (particularly in mountain areas and other less favoured regions) and out of the younger generation's rejection of farm employment (Kassimis 2008; Kassimis & Papadopoulos 2005; King 2000; Ribas-Matteos 2004). Immigrant labour has also had a significant impact on gender employment in Greek family farming as, in a first phase, immigrant farm workers free subordinate family members from the necessity of carrying out manual farm work and other secondary tasks (Papadopoulos 2006). Nevertheless, as demonstrated in the following analysis, it is by no means self-evident that the presence of immigrants will mean complete disengagement of women from the work of the family farm.

Within the discourse of the family farm, embracing a theoretical approach focused on the gendered political economy of the farm (Whatmore 1991a), this paper explores how the mass employment of immigrant farm workers in a Greek lowland community has contributed to the reactivation of a series of gendered and interdependent social and labour relations, both on the family farm and in local society.

The research problematic focuses more specifically on two main points. Firstly, it looks at the way in which, at the local level, the employment of immigrants has come to affect the gender aspect of labour relationships within the family farm, given that the availability of this low-cost workforce has influenced the productive strategies of the farm (optimisation/intensification) as well as the daily organisational practices of the agricultural household. Secondly, it examines how these strategies and practices bring into question traditionally constructed farming masculinities and femininities and, in conjunction with the values and representations of the local cultural system, filtered through conventional stereotypes of race and ethnicity, have come to reveal local forms of apprehending gendered identity.

### **Rural Immigration and Reconfiguration of the Gender Division of Family Farm Labour**

The massive influx into Greece of economic immigrants from the Balkans and Eastern Europe over the last twenty years represents a new structural factor in the reconfiguration of the gender division of labour on family farms. Their arrival in the midst of a phase of structural crisis in European and Greek agriculture, characterised by labour shortages, the ageing of the active workforce and a reluctance on the part of the younger generation to succeed their elders in running the farms, has made it possible for family farms to improve their competitiveness in the context of globalised markets.

The undertaking of heavy work, or merely auxiliary tasks, by immigrant farm workers frees the male farmer to devote themselves to more management-oriented tasks (administration, marketing of their products), reinforcing their position as bosses and as producers. It also frees farmers' wives from menial farm work. Women can now stay at home, occupying themselves exclusively with domestic tasks, or else enter the regional labour market for full-time or part-time employment away from the family farm. Migrant employment is particularly favourable for larger farm holdings in lowland areas, where it makes possible the intensification of production systems and better commodification of produce (enlargement of trade and distribution networks). On such farms it is expected that when migrants are employed the women of the farm will withdraw from engagement with farm work. Masculinisation of the labour force is thus more specifically characteristic of larger farms (Kassimis 2008).

In any case, today's persisting agricultural crisis in Europe is bringing into question the phenomenon of male supremacy in farming. Agricultural production may lose its significance as an exclusive activity capable of ensuring the socio-economic survival of the farming household. With both male and female family members beginning to be employed in off-farm activities as part of a general move towards multifunctionality in farming and the pluriactive household, the 'one-man-farm' model is in reality losing ground, as is the model of the male farmer as the family's exclusive breadwinner (Bye 2009; Ni Laroire 2001; Shortall 2002). Formally, through control of the land, men still retain their position as head of the family farm, but they are losing ground in terms of the social prestige attached to their work.

On the other hand, even in agricultural areas of full-time farming, the agricultural crisis hitting farm incomes may, for farmers' wives, restore the ascendancy of traditional female and auxiliary farming tasks, such as administrative work. Once again, women have been seen as a flexible 'all-purpose reserve labour force', undertaking menial tasks and other agricultural work of secondary importance on the farm (Shortall 1992). And as B. Brandth (2002, p. 184) notes, the farmer's wife attaches more importance to the survival of the family farm in the face of external threats (natural, political, economic) than she does to her own personal interests, in this way sidestepping questions of her devaluation as a working person and oppression as a woman. The close ties and interconnections between the family farm and the farming family shape household strategies and farmers' practices, such as gendered work roles and flexibility of farm operations, in the struggle to survive in a changing, precarious economic environment (Wallance 2002).

Adopting an anthropological approach, this article seeks to highlight the present-day contradictions in the socially constructed gender identities and roles on the family farm and in the farming household in a developed lowland rural community. On the one hand, the model of the farmer as empowered head of the family farm has been fractured through rural restructuring, women turning away from peasant ideologies and ways of life. The self-image of men based on an imagined relationship with patrimonial land and male dominance has been demythologised through the problem of inability to find wives. On the other hand, masculine-dominated farming

in our case-study community has been strengthened through the presence of hundreds of male immigrant workers employed in the fields as farm hands, with the attendant revival of such traditional women's work as cooking for the farm workers, not to mention administrative work on a more capitalist and business-oriented family farm.

These contradictions in gender identities and roles, reflecting both the occupational plurality that has come with rural restructuring and the instability produced by agricultural crisis, trap individuals (women and men) between traditional farm identities and new material and social realities of their working lives and their engagement with farming. The transformation of the male farmer into entrepreneur and boss as a result of the recruitment of migrant farm workers generates a whole range of women's identities in agriculture, whose specific characteristics depend on whether or not the woman becomes involved in the activities of the farm. This case study distinguishes four main types: (i) older women who cook for farm workers (reactivation of traditional female ancillary tasks), specifically on smaller and medium-sized farms, (ii) younger women who perform secretarial and/or managerial work (traditional or upgraded female ancillary tasks), primarily on larger entrepreneurially oriented farms, (iii) young women who are off-farm income earners, and (iv) older and younger women who are housewives. This typology aims to shed light on the plurality of rural femininities and women's response to farm modernisation and changes in the identity of farmers in the local community.

### **Research Context and Methodology**

This paper draws on a further processing and analysis of primary ethnographic material in the agricultural community of Drossopigi (pseudonym) in the context of a broader anthropological research project on farming modernisation, the contribution of immigrant workers and the negotiation of socio-cultural and productive relationships in the local society. On-site investigation was carried out between 2002 and 2004 (Petrou 2005) as well as later through additional piecemeal research conducted between 2006 and 2009 for the purpose of monitoring developments (Petrou 2008). The paper focuses on the dynamics of gendered relations, and of the constant and changing masculinities and femininities under the influence of stereotypical perceptions concerning the foreign worker.

The community of Drossopigi, from which I draw my ethnographic material, is a lowland community situated in the prefecture of Boeotia 100 kilometres northwest of Athens. Modernisation of agriculture got underway in this community in the 1960s (mechanisation, introduction of intensive crops such as carrots, potatoes and cotton). This period was characterised by large irrigation and drainage works on the plains of the Greek countryside in the context of national development policy in the agricultural sector. In the 1980s, with the country's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) (1981), the modernisation process in Drossopigi reached a peak with the help of the Common Agricultural Policy. As a result, women largely withdrew from the

productive processes of the family farm as mechanisation of farming replaced farm hands with machines.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the arrival of migrants, who had been pouring in from the Balkan countries by the hundreds since the opening of the borders in 1989, became an occasion for further intensification and specialisation of farming in the framework of the productivist model. The proximity to the consumer market of the country's capital has enabled producers to specialise in the cultivation of garden vegetables (carrots, beans, table tomatoes, onions), greatly increasing the areas under cultivation and so their profit margins. The existence of an extensive informal sector employing immigrant farm workers (which is also present everywhere else in the Greek countryside) allows wage levels to be held below the legal minimum (Kassimis 2008), as well as making possible the maintenance of intensive crop cultivation. There are around 100 permanent (and officially registered) Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Romanian and Albanian immigrants in the community. The number of immigrants greatly increases with the arrival of seasonal farm workers in summer and can reach as high as 1800 (registered and non-registered), approximately three times higher than the permanent indigenous resident population of 595 (latest available data, Census 2001). It should be noted that all the migrant farm workers are male.

But intensification of farming brings some women out of the household again to work on the family farm. Notwithstanding the intervening mechanisation and modernisation of the 1970s and 1980s, which enabled farms to dispense with a great proportion of the female labour, now a new modernisation (the dynamic introduction of garden vegetables, the deployment of wage-earning farm labour) has brought about a (re)activation of traditional women's tasks, in other words the '(re)agriculturalisation' of certain households. It is perhaps worth pointing out that this is a model for 'modernisation' that nevertheless involves a regression to the conditions of 1950 (manual labour, mud, hardship).

A qualitative methodology was needed to gain an insight into people's perception of themselves and others, their lives and life expectations, the work on and off the farm. The basic research data were accordingly obtained through participatory observation in a context of daily involvement and personal real-life interaction with the members of the community in their collective and individual activities, in the coffee shop, in the tavernas, in the fields during their working time, in the cooperative, in the neighbourhoods, during celebrations and in the inhabitants' own houses (Bernard 1994).

Above and beyond the more general spectrum of interpersonal and familiar relations with many of the residents in the community, there were six key informants who stood out from the rest. They were: two elderly and long-established producers, one employee in the municipality offices who was also a farmer and had a high educational level, a young and professionally very active producer, an elderly woman with a most dynamic presence in local farming life and the Secretary of the Community of Drossopigi, who entrusted to me archive material and documents with demographic and agricultural data. Ethnographic observations were supplemented by 50 semi-structured interviews (15 women and 35 men) and 20 in-depth life history

interviews (10 women and 10 men) with a view to carrying out a penetrating investigation into daily practices, interactions and individual experiences and so coming to an understanding of their social relationships and correlating them with broader social functions.

Of the overall ethnographic material that emerged from the research project as a whole, the part that was selected for this paper was that related to women's employment, the attitudes and life expectations of men and women, and rural femininities and masculinities reconsidered. Content analysis of the interviews showed that the presence of significant numbers of foreign migrants being employed on the farms, has the effect of activating a range of activities, types of action and processes of redefinition of individual and collective identities on the basis of situatedness (indigenous/ foreign), gender (masculinities/femininities), and intergenerational conceptions (traditional/modern) regarding marriage, gendering, work, and consumption patterns.

### **Agricultural Technology and the Male Migrant Labour Force: The Reinforcement of Farming Masculinity**

Indicative of agricultural change and the great turnaround in the farming options at the local level is the case of George, a producer employing around 15 people on his farm:

The foreigners are an inexhaustible reservoir of labourers. Before they came we got the family to harvest the crops: four people. My father arranged for us to pick the carrots on the weekend when we didn't have school and when the whole family was together. The most we could set ourselves was a hectare and a half so that we would be able to pick them. Today I cultivate nine hectares of orchards and two hectares of vineyards.

But above and beyond the enlargement of the family allotments and the increase in profits, farmers have been freed from time-consuming agricultural labour. One relevant case is that of Stefanos, a big producer (15 hectares of garden vegetables) who in recent years has branched out into the marketing of fresh vegetables. He explains the advantages of having a Romanian foreman on his farm:

The Romanian has freed my hands ... I have set up a company with two other partners and I'm getting involved in business because I see that work is going to the supermarkets. I am on the move all year round, bringing together products from various areas in Greece and I promote them in a number of different markets.

What we see, in other words, is an extended form of capitalist organisation of farming where the objective is not simply subsistence but business profit. It could be said, then, that the realities of the large-scale cheap wage labour of immigrants in conjunction with the circumambient influence of the contemporary market and of commerce shape an unprecedented professional and social profile, with the emphasis on organisational management and entrepreneurial activity. Taking this instance as our

point of departure, we see that the identity of the farmer today, or rather his evolution from an ordinary producer into an employer/boss and sometimes into a merchant/entrepreneur, begins to acquire significance through the employment of foreign labourers on his farm. And, as was very characteristically mentioned by one of the community's older producers,

The Greek farmer doesn't go out digging in the fields because with the immigrants he is starting to have it easy. The immigrants have made us bosses, businessmen and dealers.

Technological and organisational changes and new amenities in farming are serving to highlight features of a changing masculinity that is moving towards 'a less manual and more white-collar' identity (Brandth 1995), in which the distinctive qualities of male farmers become linked to technological and organisational competence and authority over farm workers. At the same time, the employment of immigrants in the community has freed not only the producers but also the other members of the farming household, such as farmers' wives and daughters. Indeed, it would be bewildering if the latter should today turn up to work in the community's fields at harvest time, whereas in the recent past the women were dynamic participants in the productive process. This testimony from a young woman of 28 living in the community is indicative:

There is no reason for a woman to work in the fields today. I am not in any way involved with farming, as our mothers' generation was. With the foreign workers doing everything, is it likely that we women would go?

It may be surmised from the derogatory stance of the women towards the immigrants that the arrival of the latter has freed them not only from dirty and exhausting manual labour in the fields but also from the necessity of being part of the 'second-class' workforce on the lowest rung of the culturally constructed local social hierarchy. The latter is now composed of poor, low-wage and usually uninsured foreign farm workers. The image of a long-suffering and poor migrant who works all day in the fields in the cold and the mud has come back to remind them of periods they and their families have lived through which were characterised by hard daily labour and economic backwardness in their everyday life on the farm. This conjures up a depressing picture of deprivation and subservience with which the women until recently identified themselves and which they want to forget.

### **Reactivation of Women's Traditional Farming Tasks**

Employment of immigrants may have brought a certain kind of liberation for the female workforce, but there are still farms operating in accordance with a very different logic, which highlights the changing texture of work for the farmer's wife as it adapts to the evolving needs of the farming milieu in the context of the broader restructuring of the countryside. In the limited space of this article I propose to mention only two ethnographic examples, comprising diametrically opposed cases of the re-emergence

of types of informal employment of farmers' wives within the framework of family farm survival strategies.

### *Farmers' Wives Cooking for Farm Workers*

The first case concerns, typically, older women (over 60) of a low educational level (primary school) and relatively small farms (less than 4 hectares) with low incomes, which do not employ a large number of immigrant farm workers (typically 3–5 individuals). On farms of this type, women undertake work related to a variety of activities to do with victualling workers: maintenance of the vegetable garden and smaller livestock, bread- and cheese-making, and cooking.

The next ethnographic example from the everyday activity of a relevant farming household is typical. It is from the family of Mr Stathis, 63 years old, whose family comprises his wife, 60 years of age, his son, a farmer, 33 years of age and his daughter, a supermarket employee in Thebes, 28 years old. The farm is 5.2 hectares in area (industrial tomatoes, onions, beans and a vineyard – summer employment for five immigrants). The food for the farm workers is prepared by the wife, often with the help of the daughter. The fact that the male immigrants are housed in makeshift accommodation and the provisioning of the farm workers with food in exchange for a reduction in wages are well accepted by the immigrants. Madame Panayota spoke of the difficulties her household had been obliged to face in recent years:

With the foreigners we started having much more work than before. They were good for us women because we weren't working any more in the fields. But for me, as for some other women of the village, summer is a terrible tyranny. From June to September I spend the middle of the day cooking for the workers. We have made an agreement with them. Others give them 20 euros for their daily wage. We give them 15, but we have to provide them with one meal every day. We do it to reduce their wages. This year, when we have five workers, that's 25 euros daily, in other words 750 euros profit per month. The food costs us hardly anything because it is from my vegetable patch, and the meat is from our livestock.

Calculations in monetary terms conceal the women's workload of preparing raw materials and organising meals in accordance with the different cultural food practices of the ethnic groups. Madame Panayota continues as follows:

The calculations have changed that we made each year, because we are no longer just the family but we have more mouths to feed in the summertime. For the cheese, for example, that I give them, I need more milk than before to make it, so that from the livestock that is born I don't sell it any more but keep it and raise it myself, so that we have more meat and milk.

As for the effects on the farm economy of access to the unpaid labour of farmers' wives, the abovementioned ethnographic example is illuminating. One day, when Mr Stathis and his son were looking over a new mechanised agricultural tool (a cutting machine) that Mr Stathis had just bought, he commented on the selling price, making a brief calculation,

This is what thrift can achieve. Eight million of the old drachmas to purchase, but take away the 4 million that we have saved over 5 years through the food we give to the workers, and there immediately is 4 million profit.

It is obvious that employing immigrants to do farm work activated the 'reserve family labour force' and specifically that of the farmers' wives. The women turn out to be the 'all-purpose means' for achieving reduction in production costs through their indirect contribution to the daily recompense of the farm's labour force. In other words, women's informal economic contribution becomes part of the aggregate capital investment (the cutting machine). Nevertheless, the two male family farm's members credit the success vaguely to the family without specifically naming the farmer's wife, observing that 'we have' and not 'she has' saved it. Thus, even if the mechanisation of farming once contributed to a reduction in manual labour for women, another kind of agricultural modernisation, based not only on mechanisation but also on the employment of immigrants in the agricultural work of the community, turns out in certain cases to be tying women even more narrowly to the female role in the household.

The women's contribution is not subjected to a comprehensive assessment as the work contribution of a really-existing person who should be taken into account and evaluated as a worthy and equal partner in a productive process. This farm labour process dimension is neglected in the 'productionist' approach, as women's work is not directly associated with the commodity production process in family farming (Whatmore 1988, p.240). And, once again, unequal gender relations in farming families are legitimated through the vital need of the farm to survive.

#### *Farmers' Wives Undertaking Administrative Farm Work*

The following case concerns younger women (under 40 years of age), of higher educational level (high school and/or technical school graduates) and on large farms (more than 10 hectares), commercially organised and employing a large number of foreign farm workers. The women here appear to have taken on certain executive tasks of organisational/secretarial support for the farm at the same time that the husband, freed from agricultural employment because of the immigrants, is becoming active outside the farm in search of new collaborators and new markets. The farm wives are thus enabled to take on tasks that are seen as compatible with quintessentially feminine qualifications, such as organisational ability ('the personification of good housekeeping'), patience in 'listening to others', sociability, skill in doing numerous things at the same time, etc. They accordingly take responsibility for the secretarial and accounting work of the farm, but again 'behind the scenes' and in a position of dependence on the spouse/farm head.

The person in question in the next, characteristic, ethnographic example is Marina, 37 years of age, married and the mother of two children. The spouse, a producer with 13 hectares of vegetable gardens, travels throughout Greece in his own refrigerated truck to promote his products. 'Behind the scenes' Marina takes care of the storeroom in the courtyard of the house, sees to the dispatch of orders and, utilising her calculator and mobile phone, rigorously monitors the weighing of the sacks, the filling

in of the invoices, the receipt of payments, etc. Her anxiety to reconcile familial with 'professional' obligations comes through in her words:

Since the time that the immigrants came here, the number of hectares that we have under cultivation has very much increased. My husband has bought a refrigerated truck and he goes to different parts of Greece to sell our products. Our work is going well, thank God. But everything has a cost, since I now have to spend a greater part of the summer here in the storeroom supervising the work. All of this for me, at first, was a veritable Golgotha, because at the same time I had my housework to do, washing, cooking, looking after the children and the house. Even more than this is the psychological fatigue, as I haven't had a summer holiday for five years.

It is obvious that whatever women do on the farm it is 'in addition to', rather than 'instead of', their domestic tasks and responsibilities in the context of patriarchal gender relations on the family farm and in the farm household. Although conflicts arose between domestic duties and farm labour needs, women are not willing to challenge the consensus that establishes their social identity of 'good wives and mothers' (Anthopoulou 2010; Whatmore 1991b, pp. 74–75).

The new obligations for this particular woman, which have arisen out of the further intensification/verticalisation of their farm organisation, again highlight the issue of the non-remunerated, and in many ways undervalued, work of farmers' wives, reflecting the hierarchical work relationship between women and men. We see not only informal involvement of women in the running of the farm but also their further entrapment in the broader household milieu (storeroom/office). Here, once again, is confirmation that – even in this case of direct contribution to commercial agricultural production – women's jobs are regarded as subordinate, constituting the background against which men define their masculine identities (Saugères 2002a, p. 156), which derive not only from technical ability and mastery and control of the land, but also from marketing skills and authority over the farm workers.

It should be pointed out that the abovementioned ethnographic examples are not representative tendencies that characterise the overall functioning of farming households in the community. They are, however, indicative insofar as they highlight the diversity and structural complexity of the various types of farm, as well as the differing economic and social priorities and family strategies. At the same time, it is interesting to investigate a cultural dimension of these strategies insofar as they are likely to be associated with a reordering of relations between the sexes and the indigenous ways of understanding gender identity, both spatially and temporally, with assignment of multiple rural masculinities and femininities.

### **Indigenous Forms of Perceiving Gender Identity: Masculinities and Femininities in Discussion**

#### *Younger Women Seeking Off-Farm Work and Life: Femininity Redefined*

The employment of immigrants in the community is thus, for some farming households – and specifically those with low incomes – marked by the reappearance of

certain forms of women's manual employment on the farm (reactivation of the vegetable garden, cheese-making, cooking for the workers, etc.). Even if some of the older women have remained 'by their husbands' side' as helpers on the farm, the younger village women are turning against both farming and country life in general. They mention the difficult conditions of farming life and the patriarchal structures of the family, saying that what they most miss in the village is entertainment and opportunities for conviviality (Gidarakou 1999, pp. 153–154).

Rejecting the difficult working conditions and mode of life of their mothers (hard work, virilocal ideology, position of subordination), young women compare themselves with women of the cities and in particular with wage earners (Silvasti 2003, p. 155), who enjoy relative economic and social independence. Maria, 27 years old, who works in a nearby small town, and Anna, 23 years old, who is studying economics in Athens, both of them unmarried village girls, speak in this connection:

Maria: There is nothing to keep me in the village. Can a properly brought-up young girl live here in the fields among Indians, Pakistanis and Albanians? And if at some moment my husband tells me to cook for the workers, do I have to do what our mothers did? Become a housewife in the home and look after the children and cook for Indians and Albanians? Why should a young girl do that when today she is able to study, to have her own job, her own car, her own income so as to dress as she wants and go – I don't know – to the gymnasium in Chalkida [a nearby town]? Anyway, the producers might have become bosses and businessmen, but essentially they are still farmers who are living amidst the occupational insecurity of farming. And keeping company with Albanians and Pakistanis. Their work is still the fields.

Anna: There is no place in the village for a woman to go out and enjoy herself. In the evening the cafeteria fills up with Albanian, Romanian, Pakistani and Indian workmen. But even if it wasn't for the migrants, you still couldn't go out on your own because you would be labelled as a woman of easy virtue who goes out for coffee because she wants to be picked up. These men still haven't got past that and a lot of them don't like a woman to go out on her own or with her girl friends. There is still the traditional mentality in the village that wants a woman to be stigmatised if she goes out on her own for a cup of coffee.

Farming workplaces and coffee shops are key sites where hegemonic masculinity embeds its power in rural community life (Campbell, Bell Mayerfeld & Finney 2006; Campbell & Bell Mayerfeld 2000; Leyshon 2005). In parallel with the various cultural and socio-economic changes that may be identified in the community in recent years, such as the transformation of producers into entrepreneurs, the adoption of new urban consumerist models, etc., certain perceptions linked to the social control and restrictions imposed by the local community on the social and individual behaviour of women therefore continue, by and large, to exist. The traditional family model with the woman (as mother and wife) who is the guardian of family ethics and harmony (Du Boulay 1986; Dubisch 1983) continues, for many of the residents of the community, to occupy a central position in the system of values, with the result that every type of deviation from it (going out for coffee, extroversion in women when they are enjoying themselves) brings with it a social stigma for the entire family (Cowan

1991). The young women themselves therefore feel trapped in 'social appearances', whether for reasons that have to do with the moral restrictions that the local community imposes on young women or that are linked to jeopardising the moral status and social capital of the families they come from.

The situation is aggravated through the intrusion of xenophobic stances and racist stereotypes into the attitudes of the women, fuelled by the vigorous presence of foreign migrants in the village. In particular, the mass media's promotion of the image of the immigrant as potential criminal has a direct impact in women's decisions not to be seen in public places of the community, despite the fact that no instances of criminality have been observed. Within this context the racist and xenophobic proclivities of the women are expressed either through sentiments of it being dangerous to circulate alone in the fields or in the village, or through further downgrading of the farmer as a person who consorts with foreign agricultural workers. Most likely, the women's aversion to migrants is a conditioning factor behind their need to separate themselves definitively from the low-status workforce image with which they have until now been associated.

In light of the above, it is arguable that by making the choice to marry a farmer the young women of the village think they will risk becoming trapped in a situation of control and restriction of their personal potential and aspirations. At the same time this model, which appears to be conditioned in many cases by such phenomena as cooking for the farm workers, is inevitably compared with the model of female emancipation in terms of which quite a few girls in the community define themselves as liberated and independent, in particular through the adoption of urban consumerist models and behaviour (Oldrup 1999).

#### *Women's Life Expectations and Masculinity in Crisis*

There is a conflict between the young women's aspiration to abandon the community and marry outside of it and the young men's desire to remain in the village. This desire is significantly linked, on the one hand, to the dynamic – and in many cases profitable – image of present-day mechanised agriculture and, on the other, to the virilocal character of the community. Indeed, patrilocal residence and the pronounced male dominance in the collective life of the community play an important part in shaping the man's personality. The greater, and indeed the best, part of the fields are handed down from father to son, as is the paternal house in which the bride will take up residence. Maintaining the continuity of the family landscape is both a duty and a source of pride. As the young farmers of the community characteristically say, 'Our grandfathers and fathers struggled and bled to keep the land and its boundaries out of the hands of the usurers and the banks.'

As B. Brandth (2002, p. 191) argues, young men are usually attached to the family farm because it is their place of birth and the only workplace and lifestyle they have ever experienced. For many of them, it has been in their family's possession for generations. Mastering and dominating the farming landscape is thus an element in

the masculine identity (Little 2002; Saugères 2002b). Nikos, a 38-year-old farmer of considerable dynamism, still unmarried, asserts in this connection,

At this moment, I have an infrastructure worth millions [of drachmas] and a well-established job. Why should I give it up and take the risk of doing something else? In any case, I have lived my life here in the fields. I love my village and I wouldn't change it for anything. In a way it is mine; it belongs to me and I belong to it. I want to establish a family here but there are no girls here because they go away.

The fact that very few marriages are taking place in the community – in the last ten years there were only three – is generally agreed to be a problem. Most of the men under the age of 40 are unmarried while the girls, for their part, are aspiring to a better life in the city, seeking – each as the case may be – to embark on studies, to get married or to find employment, which indeed means mostly low-skilled and low-paid work in the service sector (Saugères 2002b, p. 373).

For most of the men, the attitude of the young women is incomprehensible, as argued by Petros, one of the unmarried men in the community:

In the village today the living conditions are ideal for a young girl. Women today can take it easy because it isn't necessary for them to work as the women did once. It is easy for them to devote themselves to bringing up the children because there are the foreigners to do all the work. Even the parents-in-law don't live any more under the same roof with the couple but in a little house nearby off the courtyard so that there don't need to be the quarrels there once were. And our houses too, today, are tastefully designed and furnished with all the comforts ... But in spite of all this, the girls don't want to marry here.

Despite the emergence of the nuclear household model (Vlahoutsikou 1997, p. 283) and the supposedly modern lifestyle, women are not willing to stay in the village. It is characteristic that the young men of a marriageable age have invested large sums of money in preparing a fully equipped household. These investments are of notable symbolic value insofar as they are linked to the way in which quite a number of unmarried men in the community try to regain the interest of the young women so that they will remain in the village, belying the image of backwardness. With the recent renovation of his house as the point of departure, one young producer, Leonidas, 38, remarks,

I wanted the renovation of my house to include modern furniture and up-to-date decoration. It was for this reason that I appointed an interior decorator, who directed me to the name shops in Athens where I could buy them. So the house is now ready to receive the woman I will marry.

But a high proportion of young unmarried men cannot hide the fact that ultimately they are not succeeding in persuading the young women to marry them. In fact this young man, Leonidas, lives in a contradictory reality. On the one hand, he has upgraded the technical–organisational infrastructure of the farm he took over from his father and his grandfather and he has built a modern house; on the other, he feels his failure to fulfil the traditional roles of his male identity and his obligation towards his elders: by

marrying and securing the continuity of the family name and the ancestral land (McDowell 2000; Ni Laroire 2001). He must 'stay behind' while the women leave the rural areas. For all the progress and all the features of urban life adopted by young farmers, conventional ideas, representations and images of rural masculinity and women's social standing persist and influence the local gender order.

It is in this particular context of the local society that masculinities develop, acquire new forms and are reinforced in the new context of agricultural modernisation and transition to entrepreneurial forms of farming. Young men are in fact trapped in 'rooted masculinities' of an apparently immutable rural world (Ni Laroire & Fielding 2006). It is thus argued that, to the extent that motivated young women have decided to move out of the local communities, rural areas have metamorphosed into places for young men lacking in initiative, living on the farms that – and in accordance with the ideals – they have inherited from their fathers (Bye 2009).

Furthermore, despite all the improvement in the economic and professional situation of farmers, their constricting day-to-day association with the foreigners who work on the farm seems, in the thinking of the women, to generate an outlook equating the bosses with the workers, eliciting associations of the long-suffering wage-earning farmer toiling in the muddy fields just to stay alive. To quote one unmarried man in Nikos's village:

When I am out in the fields it is not uncommon for me to feel that I resemble my workers. Like the time when it was drizzling and the tractor broke down. There were seven Indians struggling to fix it. Six of them and one more: me. This is what the women see and they think of the farmer as low-class. She will say: 'He is a peasant.' That is not true because this is our profession. We are farmers, not peasants. I have put a lot of work into the fields. I've reached the point today where I have twenty-five people working for me. I do business with professional traders, I travel, I have built a modern house all on my own. In my field I regard myself as professionally successful, but I still haven't established a family. I don't know what else to do. I am beginning to think that everything I have achieved has been in vain.

Despite the evolution of the Drossopigi producer into a dynamic entrepreneur and employer who has upgraded his socio-economic and productive status, he does not cease to be at times anything more than another worker on the land. Thus, even when an occupational characteristic is perceived as having recognised status, it can at the same time be seen from another viewpoint as socially demeaning. The producer's status as boss coexists at times with the status of being a 'white Indian', in the sense that he appears to be just one more 'long-suffering agricultural day-labourer', toiling in the mud as his Indian farm workers do. It may very well be this last-mentioned characteristic, when taken in conjunction with the men's negative stereotyping of women and their present-day social position, that in the eyes of the young women weakens the image of the successful and dynamic businessman, turning them against the idea of remaining in the village and marrying one of their fellow villagers. As a result, producers become active participants in a situation of chronic conflict between individual and collective redefinitions of the 'self', leading to the discovery that the

shaping of their own self-image is a process that is perennially unfinished and under continual renegotiation.

In the community under examination, the masculinisation of farming, the cultural loading of male virilocality, urban consumerist models and behaviours, stereotypical perceptions of the ethnically 'other', in conjunction with local ideological assumptions, have all conspired to create the structures within which men and women are actively reorganising their relationships and resetting the action boundaries of their roles, in the process also redefining their identities. It is a documented fact that predominant constructions of gender are both reproduced and contested through everyday discourses and practices in modern agriculture (Brandth 1995; 1994; Saugères 2002a; Campbell, Bell Mayerfeld & Finney 2006).

### **Conclusion**

The present paper has attempted to investigate changing femininities and masculinities in a dynamic community in the Greek countryside, in the context of the rapid agricultural restructuring that has attended the mass influx of migrants into Greece and the consequent availability of a migrant workforce. The transition to entrepreneurial forms of farming and the metamorphosis of the farmer into the entrepreneur-employer is inextricably linked to new forms of farming masculinities based on mastering and coordination of human activity (e.g. assistant family labour and foreign farm workers) and other activities (e.g. land, investing capital in modernising the farm and the house) (Coldwell 2010).

The paper has provided insights into both constant and changing constructions of gendered relations through highlighting emerging ideologies and practices of farming masculinity as filtered through social representations and stereotypes of class, race and ethnicity. It identifies a variety of ways of being a rural man and a variety of responses of rural women to the changing identities of farmers, some involving their staying in the community and others their leaving. This discursive approach enables us to understand how rural men's and women's identities are (re)negotiated through everyday practices and through a multiplicity of subjective positions of men and women in the farming community and the local community more generally. In a rapidly changing agricultural context, personal predicaments that farm men and women are facing make them more aware of the positional nature of their own identities. The massive presence of immigrants came to shed light on subcutaneous gender self-determinations and reveal indigenous forms of perceiving gender identities.

Nevertheless the modernisation of farming, with all the attendant multiformity and structural complexity of different farms, typically entails simultaneous mobilisation of a perennial 'reserve labour force': the women. Through the return to 'traditional occupations' or specialised organisational tasks, women are deployed to reduce production costs and keep the farm running smoothly. The former includes cooking for the workers; the latter, office work. While the employment of immigrants leads, as we have seen, to further modernisation of the farm, that modernisation does not

necessarily include the opportunity for the ancillary members of the family, particularly the women, to exit from farming. Nor does it necessarily lead to changes in the conditions under which they participate. To the extent, indeed, that women's occupations are assessed by men more or less in accounting terms, all types of occupation acquire a deeper cultural dimension if they trigger representations of femininity that pertain to the specific traditional model of the 'hard-working woman'. But today this role is counterposed to a modern model of female emancipation (studies, professional exit routes from farming and from the community, adoption of urban consumerist models and behaviour), by means of which considerable numbers of young women in the community invest themselves with meaning as liberated and independent. It is this model, too, which is expressed by their evident expectation that they will marry out of the community and not marry a farmer.

On the other hand, while the male farm head may indeed have strengthened his position on the farm through the mechanisation of agriculture and his employer status, he often faces the problems of the bachelor because the women seek in every way possible to get away from the farming milieu. Moreover, the crisis of the productivist model and the contraction of farm incomes, when taken together with the profound socio-economic changes taking place in the countryside, all tend to undermine the traditional 'leadership model' for men based on a stereotyped gender-based division of labour on the farm and in the household. Young farmers can no longer base their male identity on the image of their fathers and grandfathers and this opens a breach both in their self-evaluation and in the social stereotypes (McDowell 2000). Even though technological and structural changes reinforce patriarchal power relations and the material and symbolic capital of the male farmer, the farmer has ended up in a crisis of his masculine identity. Within the general context of agricultural crisis and changes in the rural way of life as a whole (e.g. diversification, pluriactivity of farming families, off-farm employment for women), men gradually lose their powerful position as 'head of a patriarchally organised family working group' (Brandth 2002, p.189) and as unique 'breadwinner' of the family. In the broader context of agricultural restructuring, a 'melancholic masculinity' becomes identifiable (Coldwell 2010), its key feature being the presence of young farmers tied to traditional masculine identities despite the technological, cultural and social progress that globalisation has brought.

By contrast, for a considerable number of women – those who have sought a better way of life in the city – their social position seems to have improved. But for those who have remained in the agricultural community and on the farm – notwithstanding the fact that they contribute economically to the household, indirectly making possible the very existence of their husband's farm – their contribution remains publicly unrecognised. Farmers' wives (and mothers and family nurses) are subaltern figures: it is their duty to assist other members of the farming family, given that the economic security of both the farm and the household is dependent on such arrangements. This applies even more when the woman withdraws from the public and visible part of farming to take on some of the farm work in the invisible private sphere of the household (e.g. cooking for the immigrants, keeping the books). What is involved is a new form of

invisible and unpaid woman's work that formally remains outside the commodity production process but, given the crisis and the uncertainty that has been so prevalent in the farming sector in recent years, is called upon to support the viability of the farm through 'factotum' jobs (housekeeping, self-consumption, commodity production).

But essentially even the man suffers from growing weaknesses as a producer, because notwithstanding his advantageous position (head of the farm, entrepreneur, owner of the land and the homestead, the family name, etc.), young women do not wish to marry him – even though he may be quite affluent, with a modern house, lands, and income. This attitude not only is a reaction against domineering rural masculinity, but also reflects the further social devaluation of the farmer that results from his consorting with immigrant farm workers. Women reject him socially because they see him as low-class: a peasant. They are also aware of the negative stereotypes that influence his orientation towards women. They may see him as a long-suffering day-labouring 'white Indian', thus identifying him with his labour force.

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